Noord’s Participatiesamenleving
Towards a spatial response to government participation
Noord’s Participatiesamenleving
Towards a spatial response to government participation
REPORT

Lynn van Calmthout - lynnvancalmthout@hotmail.com
Student ID - 4105559
First Mentor - Roberto Rocco
Second Mentor - Maurice Harteveld
Third Mentor - Arie Romein
Research Group - Complex Cities
Department of Urbanism - Faculty of Architecture - TU Delft
Cover - Wordcloud Participatiesamenleving
(by author, made through Tagxedo.com & Ilovenoord.nl)
Date - June 24th, 2016
MSc Urbanism
Thesis Plan - AR3U012
Graduation Oriëntation - AR3U040
Graduation Studio: Urban Transformations & Sustainability - AR3U100
Preface

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.

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 report provides a framework and an extensive explanation for the graduation project, which was developed over the course of one and a half years.

This project could not have been finished without the input by many of the TU Delft tutors, especially my mentors Dr Roberto Rocco, Dr Maurice Harteveld and Dr Arie Romein. My sincere gratitude goes out to them, for always having my back, trusting this research would eventually be finished, and being honest and helpful every little step of the way.

I would also like to thank Humber, the most patient and caring person on the planet. I wouldn’t have survived this year without you, my love.
# Table of Contents

## 0 - Project
- 0.1 - Aims  
- 0.2 - The final product  
- 0.3 - Research Questions  
- 0.4 - Methodology  
- 0.5 - Time line

## 1 - The Participatiesamenleving
- 1.1 - A new line of policy  
- 1.2 - The effect  
- 1.3 - A troubling perspective: Englands Big Society  
- 1.4 - What to expect?

## 2 - Theoretical Framework
- 2.1 - Threats  
- 2.2 - Opportunities  
- 2.3 - Fainstein on Amsterdam  
- 2.4 - Conclusions

## 3 - Amsterdam Noord
- 3.1 - On Amsterdam  
- 3.2 - Historical development  
- 3.3 - Spatial analysis  
- 3.4 - Demography  
- 3.5 - Trends  
- 3.6 - Noord’s Participatiesamenleving

## 4 - Proposal
- 4.1 - Structure of the proposals  
- 4.2 - Framework

## 5 - Illustration
- 5.1 - The garden village of Nieuwendam  
- 5.2 - Purmerplein Development Envelope  
- 5.3 - Analysis Purmerplein  
- 5.4 - Design directions for the Purmerplein

## 6 - Reflection
- 6.1 - Societal relevance  
- 6.2 - Academic relevance  
- 6.3 - Relevance within the Research Group and Mentor Team  
- 6.4 - Ethics  
- 6.5 - Results

## 7 - Conclusion
- 7.1 - Recommendations for further research and implementation

## 8 - Literature

## Appendix I - Theory paper

## Appendix II - Citizen Initiative Catalogue
Introduction

Growing up, I lived on a small pedestrian only dead end street in Amsterdam - we called it the Path. Technically, this Path was made up of the residents back porches, which they decided to share as a common entrance. Almost no one used their official front door to enter, gradually transforming the path into the formal access point. When I was two years old, a group of parents including my own built a small fence at the open end of the street, thereby preventing the younger children from running into the busier adjacent street.

This was the environment I grew up in: protected, but with the freedom to roam around all open gardens surrounding the Path. The territory was shared by adults, children and pets alike, providing a little community of similar minds.

For one, the Path is a beautiful example of a collaborative citizen initiative. It proves the sheer potential of putting people in charge of their own environment: when the safety of their children was at stake, the people came together swiftly and effectively, achieving results quicker and with more local support than the municipality could ever have done.

Since 2013, the Dutch government (among others) has been implementing policies which shift formerly governmental responsibilities onto citizens: the participatiesamenleving. The structure applied by the inhabitants of the Path is exemplary for the way in which society should focus according to this policy direction: collaborating, protecting the common interest together, and taking matters into their own hands. Such an approach, when applied to health care or education could strengthen support, involvement and effectiveness: power to the people!

Years later, after we and many other families had been replaced by new inhabitants, things have changed at the Path. People have built fences around their gardens. The most telling difference I found, was the way the common territory was managed now. When the paving of the Path had to be replaced a while back, the involved neighbours couldn’t agree on a common tile. In the end, every home owner paved only their own porch, causing the Path to turn into what it secretly always had been: a patchwork of adjacent territories.

The common goal that had led my parents to coöperate in building a fence with their bare hands, had become inferior to the personal ownership. And though one could interpret the variety of tiles as an exciting diversity, I only see the impracticality of those separate patches for the children to play with their roller skates, for them to run around on, and for skipping rope. You could say nobody protected the common interest, and those without a voice have felt the impact the most.

The second half of the story shows one of the imminent dangers of the participatiesamenleving: if people are responsible for their own lives, who will protect the common interest? How will we make sure not only the vocal, the rich and the educated control the way society’s run? The have-nots and the less capable need to have a voice as well, even if they do not impose it as heavily as their active neighbors.

This disconnect was what prompted me to look into the impact of this policy direction on urbanism in particular, and made me wonder: how can municipalities put the participatiesamenleving concept into practice through action, and benefit from the spatial impact?
0 - Project

0.1 - Aims

0.1.1 - 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.

0.1.2 - 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.

0.1.3 - 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.

0.1.4 - Noord

The final goal for the graduation research is to present workable policy solutions for Amsterdam-Noord to achieve a pleasant environment for all inhabitants. The current confusion about responsibilities causes 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, and involve all residents in the development of their environment, regardless of their capabilities.

0.2 - Final product

So as to offer insight into the effects of and the possibilities for the participatiesamenleving, an integral proposal will entail both a strategical framework and a set of design examples. Also, to show the potential and the ongoing trend, a case study booklet will provide overview of past initiatives.

0.2.1 - Framework

The framework is aimed at the municipality and/or the district council, so as to provide a communicable set of policy suggestions. It will include (a) a map of suggestions for existing, likely and necessary locations in which the policy makers should strive towards the facilitation of (participatory) initiatives. Also, (b) a minimalist set of rules will provide handles on how to deal with the aforementioned location suggestions. An extended explanation and suggested time path for the transition (c) will accompany these elements in order to provide a cohesive policy direction.

0.2.2 - Designs

A set of small scale design interventions will serve both as an example for the municipality to accompany the (possibly abstract) framework, as well as an inspiration and communicative tool towards the inhabitants of Amsterdam Noord. A technical public space design (a) will
offer the municipality guidelines for their role in the facilitation of citizen initiatives. A series of design impressions then provides ideas for citizen initiatives in the public domain. These are meant to show the realm of possibilities, not as literal blue print designs.

0.2.3 - Website & Catalogue

The framework will be communicated mainly through a suggestion for a website design, which could be set up initially by the municipality, and gradually turn into more of a forum where citizens discuss their findings and ideas amongst themselves.

Combining a map of the area with a series of existing participatiesamenleving initiatives should present the potential and the willingness of the area and its residents to the municipality. The website can well serve as inspiration to citizens, and guide as well as connect them in their search for predecessors.

A municipal flyer (based on Appendix II) containing information about existing citizen initiatives in Amsterdam Noord seeks to achieve the same goal, and provides the district council with an easy communicative tool to get citizens interested to start their own projects.

0.3 - Research Questions

0.3.1 - General Hypothesis

A general hypothesis could be:

If implemented without proper 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. To prevent such scenarios, communicative policy changes can provide the means to both legislators and citizens to develop cities towards more sustainable and pleasant living environments.

0.3.2 - Main Research Question

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

How can Amsterdam Noord put the participatiesamenleving concept into practice through action, and benefit from the spatial impact?

0.3.3 - 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 and actions does the participatiesamenleving concept inspire and how have similar policies impacted the spatial lay-out before and elsewhere?

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.
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.

3. How does 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.

4. Which interventions could help Amsterdam Noord benefit from the spatial impact of the participatiesamenleving concept?

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.

0.4 - Methodology

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

0.4.1 - Theory

The theoretical basis was developed throughout the first 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. They offer a background as well as a general idea of the threats and opportunities of the participatiesamenleving concept.

0.4.2 - Analysis

The analytical phase forms the link between the theory and the design, by looking into specific examples and policies stemming from the participatiesamenleving concept, as well as doing a case study for a town in the UK and both spatial and demographic analyses for Amsterdam Noord.
0.4.3 - Design

The design section was pushed towards the second half of the time frame, so the design would benefit the most from the prior research. Concluding the analysis for Amsterdam Noord as a whole, a policy framework provides an extensive toolbox as well as a communication tool for dealing with citizen initiatives. A set of exemplary designs for a desirable future provides a more spatial idea about the impact of these policies. This research was done using interviews, location visits and spatial analysis.

0.5 - Time line

The first semester of the graduation research was mostly spent on literature research and narrowing down the subject through interviews and congresses. To gain understanding of the subject, a case study of the effects of the comparable British Big Society was conducted.

In the following semester - after summer - the case of Amsterdam and Noord in particular was investigated further, through spatial analyses and location visits. Halfway through this period, an extra presentation session was organized to reflect and discuss among the mentor team.

The last phases of the project were spent on defining the structure of the (design) proposals, on designing and reconsidering the final materials. Some extra time was reserved for finetuning the connection between the research and the design. The story line benefitted immensely from the additional time, which allowed for a few extra iterative phases.
1 - The Participatiesamenleving

1.1 - A new line of policy

1.1.1 - The start of the participatiesamenleving

In 2013, the Dutch government led by (Liberal) Prime Minister Rutte announced it would start actively adjusting policy in order to support 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 1991 zeitgeist:

“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 ambition 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 exception (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).

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 and paragraph 1.3. It is well-known PM’s Rutte (Dutch) and Cameron (British) have a bond which transcends their colleagueship. 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 of which are illustrated on the next page). According to Christopher Choa, this trend will change the way our cities are shaped as well, seen as “people may be less territorial” (2015).

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 former expensive-to-maintain governmental services into the responsibility of civil society and the private sector, the government hopes to dramatically decrease costs.
1.2 - The effect

1.2.1 - On a national scale

The Dutch government is retracting its 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.

As for the field of urbanism, the major change is seen in the scale of the projects the national government takes on. Although there are still large projects at hand - such as the Room for the River, the refugee shelters, and several infrastructural projects - the current government refrains from large visionmaking. This means the direction stemming from the participatiesamenleving remains as broad as it was when first introduced, and there is a clear lack of common goals for the separate developments.

1.2.2 - On a local scale

Because of the national government retracting its involvement in many services, the responsibility for their organization is displaced to municipalities (and sometimes provinces). Among others, this includes health care, job provisions and youth support (Movisie, 2015). The most noticeable example is health care: the decentralization of health care distribution has a direct impact on every citizen which needs regular care, such as elderly or mentally ill people. A change in health care distribution left the municipalities to decide the budgets, facilities and structures for care homes, hospitals, general practitioners, mental health care and youth support. From 2015 onwards, problems arose from the new responsibility structure,
Dijkklunch 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.

due to the fact that municipalities did not have conclusive information about the health care needs in their district. This caused a severe lack of availability of shrinks and doctors, often leaving those in need of health care without any help (Van Steenbergen, 2015).

Also, because the national government is not producing large visions, municipalities are starting to develop their own visions and strategies. As a result of this renewed focus on the larger scale, municipalities lack oversight on a smaller scale. Responsibilities for matters like garbage collection, community centers and public space become less of a municipal cause, and are increasingly arranged through citizen initiatives. The consequences of this shift are a decrease in municipal overview of activities, an increase in active citizenship and a deficit in certain service areas (Abels & Brandsma, 2015).

In urbanism, a similar shift is visible. If we take the Amsterdam municipality as an example, we can clearly see a focus on broad strokes, with little to no policy being made for smaller topics. The water front and metropolitan public transport are on the top of the priority list, as they probably should be. But matters which impact local residents’ lives directly - such as public trash cans, and public greenery, see Appendix II - are hardly or not at all taken care of in some cases.

1.2.3 - On the people

Because the participatiesamenleving and all aforementioned effects have been discussed thoroughly in the national and local media, the people of the Netherlands have responded in a number of ways.

In many cities, the most visible development are the initiatives small groups of concerned citizens have started, taking matters into their own hands and inviting others around them to do the same. Appendix II shows some examples in Amsterdam Noord, some of which were more succesful than others. Research has shown most of these initiatives (especially the ones which have a social media presence) are carried by white people in their forties (Dijk, 2015, p.16; Denters et al., 2013, p.20).

On the other hand, many citizens in the Netherlands remain unaware of the possibilities of citizen initiatives, or they simply do not have the time, money, knowledge and/or the network to start one. Consequently, deprived neighbourhoods lose access to services, without getting any replacement (Abels & Brandsma, 2015).

This directly impacts the urban environment, especially in areas where the municipality expects a high level of citizen involvement. In well-off areas, residents create unique, interesting, shared spaces which cater to all of their specific needs - sometimes excluding outsiders in the process (Kok, 2014). However, areas containing a lot of elderly, poorer and lower-educated citizens trail behind, with municipalities treating these areas the same as their well-off counterparts.
1.3 - A Troubling Perspective: Englands Big Society

1.3.1 - Comparable policies

As said before, the participatiesamenleving bears an uncanny resemblance to the British Big Society program, which was presented as the governments main focus in 2010. Conservative prime minister David Cameron was a vocal advocate for the policy direction since its formal introduction - although his government has stopped using the term Big Society officially when it was received less enthusiastically than predicted.

Inspired by the Thatcherist notion that the state is an inefficient service provider, as well as by volunteering trends in society, Cameron invited professors (such as Phillip Blond) and screenwriters (Phil Redmond) to co-venture in the development of a new world view: Big Society. In the Big Society, citizen-driven communities get a more prominent role in local decision-making, all while the government becomes more transparent and less imposing (Appendix I provides a more complete explanation of the Big Society).

The policy direction is very similar to the Dutch participatiesamenleving in the sense that it shifts responsibilities formerly associated with government towards citizens. Cameron’s statement of: “Big society, not big government,” was echoed by Mark Rutte when he spoke of the need for “smaller government” (VVD, n.d.).

The main difference between the Dutch and the Brits however, lies in the implementation rigour. The major societal and ideological change Cameron strives for, including the removal of several layers of governmental decision-making, was introduced swiftly and thoroughly, and had impacted (almost) all sectors. In the Netherlands on the other hand, the participatiesamenleving has had its impact, but one might wonder whether the observed changes stem purely from an already-present trend. And although there have been some massive changes in some services, most participatiesamenleving policies have hardly left the concept phase. Most telling are the many layers of government remaining in the Dutch system: moving some of their responsibilities onto citizens, but at the same time keeping their cards very close to the chest. God forbid losing some influence.
1.3.2 - Vanguards

Interestingly, the Brits have introduced Big Society spatially, whereas the Dutch still struggle to define this policy topic properly. In England, several vanguard areas were appointed, so as to experiment with the implications of the new policy direction. These areas were Liverpool, Eden, Sutton, and Windsor and Maidenhead (Roberts, 2011). A brief description of three of the projects will be followed by a more extensive discussion on the Eden Vanguard.

Liverpool was originally chosen to be one the more urban vanguard areas, fit to be an experiment mostly because there already was an active residents’ group present. The Big Society was a promising perspective for Liverpool especially in regards to the housing market, as its residents hoped to be able to instate a local housing trust. However, when funds for housing and communities were cut drastically, the Liverpool City Council felt it had no other choice but to withdraw as a vanguard area, fearing the Big Society might just be a ploy to reduce government spending.

The London borough of Sutton has held out longer than its Liverpool counterpart, training youngsters to become community organisers (Stothart, 2010). Many of the Sutton projects were initiated top-down, but local housing corporations defend this practice as a start-up system. They claim some of the poorer areas in Sutton need a little push to be able to work within the bottom-up context.

In Windsor and Maidenhead, the Big Society is an active line of policy until this day. The district council has shifted some of its powers onto the parish council; public space in particular should fall under parish responsibilities (Stothart, 2010). The council explicitized the parish does not have to take care of services themselves, but rather steer and guide service deliverance (Bateson, 2014, p.27). Also, citizens, schools and businesses can adopt a street in Windsor and Maidenhead, thus taking over responsibility for public space.

The case of Eden (Cumbria) is different from the other vanguard areas, being the most rural experiment of all. The Eden Valley has the lowest population density (25p/km2) in all of England, as well as the greatest proportion of green (97,9% of space).

Practically, the town has known a system of effective community participation for centuries, profiting from local traits such as active and capable communities, strong local leaders and existing communal plans. In a way, Eden already had a Big Society.

Still, efforts were made to strengthen community involvement in Eden. The Big Society policy introduced one civil servant aimed solely at ‘barrier busting’; forced government to address community priorities; provided specialist, technical advisors, funding, and negotiation support. Local residents later commented on the progress, saying the Eden context was very fruitful, especially due to the presence of motivated, skilled local participants, of funding for start-
ups and feasibility studies, of advice and support, and of a flexible government including supportive civil servants.

They also emphasized the need for ongoing support, and explicitize several important considerations, beginning with the fact that not all communities are the same. The Eden case was succesful, yes, but that does not mean the same tactics can be copied directly to any other town - although it would be useful to exchange knowledge and experiences on a national level. A mixture of public and private funding assures local involvement, and advice and support are vital. Another thing the Eden residents mention is the need for an accessible and usable infrastructure, the simplification and transparency of bureaucratic processes, and - most important of all - a cultural overhaul. Because good practice can inspire possibilities for others, but a basic change in attitude is key for the Big Society to work (Bateson, 2014).

1.3.3 - Critiques

One thing that stands out in all the mentioned vanguard projects, is the fact that all of these towns already had active communities. Critics wonder to what extent the new policies have impacted participatory projects, if they did at all.

And that is not all. Some of the Big Societies biggest critics are made up of those who helped create it in the first place. Kisby and Blond (2010) predict class differences to grow due to the Big Society, because the policies do not acknowledge the influence the British elite has - they expect fragmentation and dislocation.

In the end, the Big Society rhetoric has largely died out. Some beautiful community projects have benefited greatly from its policies (Boonstra, 2015, p.212), but hardly any large initiatives have started under its wings. Meanwhile, many funds have been cut partially or entirely, without enough of a replacement potential, leaving especially unlucky areas without a range of services (compare the headlines below).

1.4 - What to expect?

1.4.1 - The dream

If all the positive trends are combined into policies and distributed over the Netherlands, the participatiesamenleving could prove to become a truly promising future: where everyone can enjoy the benefits fellow residents 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 facilitate such trends, and at the same time make sure no one is left out of this new system.

1.4.2 - Issue statement

In order for the newly applied policies stemming from the participatiesamenleving 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 considering 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).

1.4.3 - Focus

Citizen initiatives are the most commonly applied means through which the participatiesamenleving concept is brought into action spatially. Many citizen initiatives for public space strive to arrange former governmental tasks on the level of the people. Therefore, the spatial impact of the participatiesamenleving in urbanism can be found mainly in the rise of citizen initiatives, and the ways in which to deal with these as a designer.
Several authors have elaborated on themes which relate to the spatial component of policies similar to the participatiesamenleving. 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 two categories: those that warn us for the threats a policy direction like the participatiesamenleving could bring, and those that describe opportunities.

### 2.1 - Threats

#### 2.1.1 - 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 to be a positive exception however, 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 view point (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 that same equality and justice Fainstein commends the Dutch for to decrease. The relation she assigns between governmental redistribution and equality 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 (to ensure justice and equality), but also include a more general consideration for the effects and dangers towards justice and equality in the Netherlands.

2.1.2 - Hajer

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 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.

Also, the notion of common interest is extremely relevant to this policy direction. If everyone could do anything they wanted anywhere, at any time, who would protect the common good? This is an aspect of the participatiesamenleving that needs to be crystal clear, and for now, it is not.

2.2 - Opportunities

2.2.1 - 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 (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? Healey’s research evidently outlines the participatiesamenleving-model as an opportunity for spatial policies in richer areas, but does not deliver adequate handles for dealing with poorer neighbourhoods.

2.2.2 - Forester

American planning theorist John Forester – who focuses his research 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, battling 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 could fulfill a similar role, likely serving as a link between people and government. This would inspire some to become activists, and others to become more of a governmental advisor/mediator.

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 is a communicative tool, but that would imply ignoring the entire field of urban design as well as its implementation. I would suggest designers focus their efforts on the spatial side of things, while remaining conscious of the social impact as well as the political context of their work.

2.2.3 - 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 ‘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 central in Merrifield’s rhetoric, is less evident in the participatiesamenleving, although it may be an underlying motive for the policies. The state, which for a long time used to be purely focused on money, is reintroducing people into the policies, trying to treat them as individuals with potential rather than numbers. It is important to keep this human centered onlook in mind when working out spatial policies and designs for the participatiesamenleving.

2.2.4 - 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

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).
reshaping of geographic landscapes” (1989, p.10).

As such, Soja goes against the widespread assumption in urbanism that geography is the neutral layer; he proclaims geography is socially constructed, and 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 as a human right.

For this 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 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 through spatial interventions.

2.2.5 - Hajer

Maarten Hajer – mentioned before in section 2.1 – describes 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 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 self-absorbed 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. Through the shift towards the participatiesamenleving, a whole new form of participation is proposed: government participation. Of course, one could question whether the participatiesamenleving actually decreases the gap between government and society – since responsibilities are moved from one towards the other, but no middle ground is defined.

2.3 - Fainstein on Amsterdam

Urban planner Fainstein discussed more than just politics (section 2.1.1): 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 (Fainstein & 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).
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).

Fainstein, 1978, p.132):

“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 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.”

However, as discussed before, Fainstein worries the demise of the welfare state will affect Amsterdam negatively in the long run, when tourism and businesses 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 observe 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 part of the everyday vocabulary (Lysen and Sullivan, 2009; Aboutaleb, 2014; Pen, 2014).

The rapid rise in Airbnb rentals is another threat for the former Amsterdam way of life. This venture could be interpreted as an aspect of the same sharing economy which inspired the participatiesamenleving. The quick introduction into the city without a proper policy framework shows exactly how unregulated citizen-driven initiatives can provide pleasure for some, but nuisance for most (DutchNews, 2016; Slee, 2016). Airbnb is booming, while Amsterdam residents and legislators have no leg to stand on in preventing tourist overcrowding and noise complaints.
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. As Amsterdam-Noord until recently provided an approachable way in for new Amsterdammers, this area is particularly suitable to contribute to the recovery of Amsterdam’s just image.

2.4 - Conclusion

There certainly are upsides to the participatiesamenleving as a policy direction, if related to the field of urbanism. Opportunities for heightened democracy, improved connections between people and government, policies about humans instead of euros, and allowing citizens to intervene in their own environment, are certainly wonderful notions which could positively impact urban environments as places for living, not capital. As mentioned in the previous chapter, citizen initiatives could prove a perfect method for delivering these opportunities to the people.

These opportunities will only be worthwhile pursuing, however, if the threats associated with the participatiesamenleving are handled properly. If the Dutch government neglects support for spatial policy implementation on multiple scales, as well as a serious consideration of the policy’s effect on equality and justice, things could go sideways very rapidly. Explicit guidelines and policies focusing on the protection of the common good in citizen initiatives are not to be forgotten, especially in poorer as well as diverse (and crowded) areas.
3 - Amsterdam Noord

One place where many of the participatiesamenleving trends find their form is Amsterdam Noord, where 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 (as Fainstein predicted in paragraph 2.1.1). 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.

Therefore, Amsterdam Noord was the location where the spatial completion of the research was conducted.

3.1 - On 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.

Tourists know Amsterdam for its canals, the Red Light District, the architecture, some museums and the coffee shops. Several large scale events, such as Kings Day and The Gay Pride Parade attract people from all over the Netherlands to come visit the capital for a day. The historical inner city, the free spirit and the attractions make Amsterdam a popular destination for travellers from all over the world.

Among urbanists and planners, Amsterdam is most known for its ‘just’ reputation (compare section 2.3), for the level of central authority over planned developments and for the municipal plot distribution policies both in the past and present.

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).

3.1.1 - Noord

This research focuses on Amsterdam-Noord: the Northern borough of the capital, separated from the city center by water. Amsterdam-Noord (also referred to as ‘Noord’) originally consisted of a series of villages housing part of the Amsterdam harbour workforce, and has developed into a legitimate part of the city over the course of the last century (Roemer, 2009,
The neighbourhoods of Amsterdam Noord (by author, 2015).

Graduation Report - Lynn van Calmthout - 4105559 - June 24th, 2016
in Gemeente Amsterdam, n.d.). The borough covers about a quarter of the city’s surface area.

Noord is separated from the rest of the city by the IJ water, a former bay in the Zuiderzee. When the Zuiderzee was closed off by the Afsluitdijk in the 1930’s, turning it into the IJssel lake, 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 (bicycle friendly) ferries, or one of the bridges and tunnels accessible by car.

The largest part of the borough is made up of open polders containing tiny villages: ‘Rural Noord’ (see the previous illustration). The built environment contains several garden villages: popular residential areas, despite the limited size of most homes.

3.1.2 - Governance

Amsterdam has a municipal council, currently led by Labor mayor Van der Laan.

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. Because of the presence of a separate district council, the borough has managed to keep the distance between citizens and government smaller than the rest of Amsterdam.

3.2 - Historical Development

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 felons. From the 18th century on, 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 of 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).
3.3 - Spatial Analysis

3.3.1 - First impressions

As well known as Amsterdam and its views are, Noord has only recently become of interest to the general public. For decades, the borough was seen as dull, poor, deteriorated: not a place to be. However, since the municipality has deemed Amsterdam Noord to become one of the main development areas for the city, new attractions and initiatives have started sprouting quickly. The borough has become a true haven for residents looking for affordable housing in Amsterdam, in a safe neighbourhood for children to grow up. An overview of the different impressions of Noord is shown above, including both high-end developments and older, less well kept neighbourhoods.

3.3.2 - Water in Amsterdam Noord

Amsterdam Noord, like most of the Netherlands, has always had an active relationship to its water. The borough contains two major dykes: Northern IJ Dyke and the Waterland Sea Dyke. The latter is visible throughout many parts of the borough, offering characteristic landscapes at especially the Nieuwendammerdijk, the Schellingwouderdijk and towards Durgerdam village. These dykes protect the city from both IJ water and the Ijsselmeer.

The area is cut in two by the broad water body of the North Holland Channel, which runs all the way to the Waddenzee. Several smaller channels include Johan van Hasselt Channel and the Zij Channel, which can form major obstacles for those wanting to cross them.

Several lakes are situated throughout the borough, the largest of which is the Schellingwouderbreek.

Historical Northern dykes and the location of Noord (Reh, Steenbergen and Aten, 2005; author, 2015).


3.3.3 - Green in Amsterdam Noord

As for large green structures, Amsterdam Noord contains significantly than the rest of Amsterdam does. Of course, Rural North accounts for most of the greenery in the borough.

The two major parks in Noord are called North Park and W.H. Vliegenbosch. The first is an all round city park, housing a variety of functions, such as sports, playgrounds, a swimming pool, fields, and a café initiated and run by citizens: Noorderparkbar. The North Park borders the large channel and is widely used by residents from all over Noord. W.H. Vliegenbosch on the other is used mostly by surrounding inhabitants, and contains significantly less functions. It is generally regarded as unsafe for children, supposedly posing a scene for rape and exhibitionism.

3.3.4 - Amsterdam Noord’s Buildings & Development

The crisis has not passed through Noord without effect - less houses were built, housing prices lowered (image on the left) - 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 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 on the previous page, as well as an inventarisation of all current building sites.

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 definitely 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 having a stronger resemblance to the city center. Whether or not this is a desirable transition should be deliberated carefully. Practices such as planning for gentrification, which are regularly employed in the center, may be less applicable in the originally poorer neighbourhoods of Amsterdam Noord.

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

3.4.1 - Economy

As mentioned before, Noord used to revolve around harbour- and industry activities. 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.

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

Currently, the main economic sectors in Noord are industry, retail, construction, transport & logistics, services and wholesale (Stadsdeel Amsterdam-Noord, 2009). Even throughout 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.

3.4.2 - Education

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 still studies on a VMBO-level (pre-vocational education). Because of the influx of new residents from other parts of the city, the average education level is rising.

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).

3.4.3 - Population

Noord houses both Dutch and non-Dutch citizens. The last group will likely grow over the course of the coming decades.

All age groups are present in the borough, although the elderly and children are over-represented compared to the city’s average. Noord has the lowest percentage of people in their 20’s and 30’s of all of Amsterdam’s boroughs. Nevertheless, an increase in households with children is expected over the upcoming years.

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).

More immigrants are expected over the coming decades (Pollman and Van Zelm, 2013, p.6).
3.4.4 - Two groups

The people of Amsterdam Noord can roughly be divided into two groups: the old ‘original’ inhabitants and the ‘new’ inhabitants.

The old group consists of the former harbour employees, of households which are poorer, non-white or elderly, and has often been living in the borough for years. These residents were there long before the fancy new developments, before the large-scale infrastructure, and before the crime rates went down.

The newer generation consists of different groups, which have come to Noord because of the new developments. They include hipsters, yuppies, students and creatives, who profit from the pleasant environment combined with the low housing prices. With them come coffee shops, flea markets, and gentrification - but higher education, better housing conditions and improved facilities as well.

3.5 - Trends

As mentioned earlier in this report, several aspects of the participatiesamenleving can already be found in Amsterdam-Noord.

3.5.1 - Creative hubs

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 on the next page. 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.

3.5.2 - Citizen initiatives

Another example of the participatiesamenleving in Amsterdam Noord can be distinguished from the same map, which gathers recent large- and small scale initiatives in the area. An elaboration on this topic can be found in Appendix II - Citizen Initiative Catalogue.
3.5.3 - Municipal participation

The district council of Amsterdam Noord adjusts visions and plans regularly, and they have started doing so based on their inhabitants’ projects as well. The council 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).

Another example of such government participation was applied in the case of The Ceuvel. (also see Appendix II) This former brown field was too polluted to develop into an official new function. While the district council was unable to agree on a solution, a group of interested citizens proposed to temporarily develop the location into a creative hub. When this initiative leaves in ten years, the ground’s pollution will have diminished to a point where the field is available for development once more.

A situation in which the Noord council 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 district 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 district council heard about this, they decided to adopt the ambition for the entire (3500 residences) development area.

Thus, the council 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 council, because “the people wanted this” and “what could be wrong with sustainability”, while Buiksloterham’s residents shrug off any responsibility for the district councils behaviour.

### 3.6 - Noord’s Participatiesamenleving

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.

#### 3.6.1 - The future

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 creates a complicated situation, in which a lack of clarity for all actors involved remains.

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 vulnerable, where goods and food are produced together, and where the public realm is maintained and utilized together.

#### 3.6.2 - Opportunity for initiatives

Research shows citizen initiatives are more likely to occur in certain neighbourhoods than in others (Dijk, 2015). An indication for the likeliness of initiatives was constructed through
considering the percentage of immigrants, single parent families, duration of stay, singles, volunteers, students, DIY-builders, and industrial businesses. The result is shown in the previous image.

3.6.3 - Noord’s participatiesamenleving

In many ways, Amsterdam Noord is increasingly starting to show similarities to the city center. Healey’s analysis of Amsterdam (section 2.2.6) thus loses its actuality, with the relation between the inner city and the outer rings starting to look something like the image below.

![Image](image-url)

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).

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 areas, but also induces friction between different groups in society.

3.6.4 - Government participation

A crucial element for the success of the participatiesamenleving in Amsterdam Noord lies in the role the district council and/or the municipality takes on. Currently, the district council tends to employ an all-or-nothing approach.

For instance; attempting to push for citizen initiatives to replace governmental responsibilities such as garbage collection, the municipality has tried cancelling part of the garbage collection altogether. In parts of the city, this inspired residents to start their own collection system. Other areas neglected to do so, resulting in an unpleasant situation for all involved.

To prevent such scenarios, the government tends to keep the responsibilities close to home, where they are easily managed and overviewed, albeit expensive. This has often led to the discouragement of enthusiastic citizens, who then often abandoned their initiatives.

Thus, it seems unrealistic to expect citizens to start the change the national government has initiated. Local government needs to start this transition, in order for the people to take over. A facilitating attitude should help citizens get started in taking over larger responsibilities. By gradually decreasing municipal involvement in the development of citizen initiatives, a more self sustaining system should develop in which active citizens support each other. That way, people can learn from each other, not having to re-invent the wheel.
4 - Proposal

A set of proposals for Amsterdam Noord’s actors to deal with the participatiesamenleving and its related developments are shown to provide inspiration and suggestions for policy and initiatives. An illustration of possible outcomes when these policies are applied is provide in the chapter 5.

4.1 - Structure of the Proposals

To achieve a complete package of measures with which to tackle the participatiesamenleving, it is important to reach all actors accordingly.

4.1.1 - For the district council

Over the past few years, the district council has had to face budget cuts and task force reductions, and has thus been forced to let some responsibilities slide. Citizens have picked up part of these responsibilities, with varying outcomes. It is time for the council and the municipality to come to terms with this new situation, in which the residents get to participate in the development of Amsterdam Noord as well.

The gut reaction in regards to many services has been to let go altogether - not just in Noord, but in municipalities across the country. However, this is not a sustainable strategy, as it eliminates the possibility for top-down intervention, and leaves less-capable citizens out in the cold. A better strategy would be to allow citizens to take over certain services and areas, all the while keeping a governmental overview.

To be able to work in this way, nurturing the participatiesamenleving initiatives without choking them, the district council needs a framework. A framework including a map which points out locations which are developing or developed, and locations where development is sorely needed. And this map of course needs to be combined with a toolbox: action points and guidelines on how to deal with such cases. A communication suggestion will be provided in the shape of a website design, as well as an outline of a time path which accommodates the transition towards a facilitating government.
4.1.2 - For the citizens

Several complications make it hard for citizens to participate.

For one, the guidelines are just too complicated. Even if you are an active, highly educated, well meaning citizen, it is near to impossible to achieve your goals through the district council or the municipality. That will be solved when the framework website is in place.

Another issue lies in the relative lack of knowledge citizens have of the possibilities for participation in their own neighbourhood. Most citizens think the municipality will take care of most things, and it would be difficult to intervene yourself. By spreading good practice and inspiring initiatives, the people will become more aware of their own potential.

For starters, the citizen initiative catalogue attached in Appendix II as well as the website’s main page will offer a first peek into what has already been realised and/or been put on the agenda by Noord residents. Further insight into the possibilities and variations of citizen initiatives will be provided through a series of design examples, as shown in the next chapter. These will serve as examples for both the municipality/district and the citizens.

4.2 - Framework

The framework consists of a map of existing and suggested locations for citizen initiatives, as well as a toolbox for the latter. This toolbox proposes a step-by-step action plan in the shape of a website, which can be set up by local government, and gradually be taken over by the people. The action plan is inspired by (among others) the Collective Action Toolkit (frog, 2012).

4.2.1 - Location overview

A map of the borough will provide an overview of all the locations of citizen initiatives in Amsterdam Noord which have been developed, are being developed and are intended to be developed. Also, locations where the district council wishes to have developed into citizen initiatives are proposed, so as to show interested citizens where their potential project could take place. This map is shown on the front page of the web site, and can be used to get quick information about initiatives and locations (next page).
4.2.2 - Step plan

The website can further provide guidance through the process that is a citizen initiative. These steps are not necessarily meant to be followed literally as a path, but are intended to be used as handholds. Citizens can pick and choose when they need support and how they need it. In principle, the website should offer all the information required to develop a citizen initiative, from inspirational projects and contact with likeminded citizens to development rules and municipal subsidies.
The proposed step plan would look as follows:

The **goal** page is intended for citizens to get their thoughts straight. What do they want to achieve, why do they want this specific initiative, for whom are they doing this, and where could their solution be developed? A map of all public spaces in Amsterdam Noord will offer guidance to find a suitable location for their initiative.

The **group** page encourages citizens to form a team for their initiative. By asking themselves the right questions, people can decide how they want to structure their group, and gather the appropriate people to support the project (inspired by IDEO, n.d.).
Residents surrounding the Noorderpark initiated crowdfunding for a self-built pavilion/bar. Locals started an initiative to place wind turbines in Noord, inspiring new policies. Creative incubator in a space too polluted to use officially. This provides new functions for the area. Allotment garden built to strengthen social cohesion & contact between various local groups.

Go around asking locals for their opinion and input for your initiative. These questions can start your conversation.

- What do you think of our initiative?
- Would you like to support our initiative?
- Would you be willing to come and help work on our initiative?
- Would you like to support our initiative through the contribution money, materials and/or knowledge?
- Do you know of any others who might be interested to support our initiative?
- What would you do if you had unlimited funding?
- What would you do if there were no rules?
- What would you do if you had any details we should pay attention to?
- Would you be willing to come and help work on our initiative?
- Would you change anything major about our initiative?
- Do you have any knowledge you would be willing to contribute money, materials and/or knowledge?
- Do you know of any others who might be interested to support our initiative?
- Are all facilities available to you?
- Do you have any complaints about your neighbourhood?
- Is the public space we want to develop important to you? Would you have any ideas?
- Are all facilities available to you?
- Do you have any complaints about your neighbourhood?
- Is the public space we want to develop important to you? Would you have any ideas?

The input page urges citizens to go and talk to the other parties involved. Instead of just pushing their own agenda, citizens are encouraged to communicate with their neighbours, the local bakery, and the mosque around the corner, so as to gather support and input for their project (inspired by IDEO, n.d.).

Imagine the possibilities! Be creative, dare to dream, and get inspired by some examples of existing initiatives.

- Organize a brainstorm session!
  - How could you solve the problem?
  - What would you do if you had unlimited funding?
  - What would you do if there were no rules?

IDEAS?
Organize a brainstorm session!
- How could you solve the problem?
- What would you do if you had unlimited funding?
- What would you do if there were no rules?

INPIRE?
Have similar projects been realized or thought up in the past?
- Do you think our initiative is a good idea?
- Would you change anything major about our initiative?
- Do you have any details we should pay attention to?

DESIGN?
Gather your ideas in a more realistic plan!
- How can you achieve great things through little effort?
- Which new things are needed?
- What would you do if there were no rules?

VOTE?
Can your group agree on your designs?
- Discuss the details until you agree on the major decisions.
- Vote on any remaining disagreements.

The imagine page delivers a number of things. For starters, it supports the creation of new ideas, and the concretization of the initiative (inspired by Building Change Trust, n.d.). The latter is supported by the presence of existing initiatives - the same ones shown before on the main page - which provide both inspiration and contact information from other initiatives in Amsterdam Noord, and potentially elsewhere as well.
The project elaboration and extended contact information appear when you mouse-over.

On the *organize* page, everything one might need for the realisation of a citizen initiative is gathered neatly. The development rules (both spatial and textual), the location permits, the destination plan, and the municipal permissions can all be arranged through this page. In order for this to work, the rules need to be simplified, as shown on the adjacent page. All of the pre-approved locations also (green on the home page) need to have ready-to-go development envelopes. An example of these is shown in chapter 5.
10 o’clock curfew

No entrance blocking

Respect monuments & historical relevance

Ongoing routes need to remain accessible

Respect visibility from routes and homes

>25% open space

Infrastructures are communicated & developed by authorities

No additions taller than the tallest surrounding

No digging below ground water level

Existing events need to have room to continue

Access for all

No entry fees
Finally, the *make* page offers solutions for the concrete struggles a citizen initiative can run into. Suggestions for fund gathering, materials and permit acquisition are given. It is proposed the district council supplies subsidies, either through materials, small funds or physical building assistance.

### 4.2.3 - Time path

Of course, a website like the one proposed here is a final product, which requires a lot of preparation and changes such as policy adjustments and rule easing. Both the external communication and the internal organisation structure require a major overhaul so as to transition from an arranging government to a facilitating one. To offer a helping hand, a time path for the implementation of the spatial participatiesamenleving policies is suggested below.

#### 4.2.4 - Evaluation Criteria

To determine the success of the applied policies, and of the individual citizen initiatives, municipalities could evaluate the developments through a set of criteria. An example of a form is shown on the following page, inspired by Spaceshaper (CABE, 2007) and Stadstat (GA-BOS, 2015). Such evaluations could supply input for further development of the policies.
**CITIZEN INITIATIVE EVALUATION**  *Purmerplein, Tuindorp Nieuwendam*

### Neighbourhood monitor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BEFORE</th>
<th>AFTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour nuisance rating (2016):</td>
<td>7.2 / 10</td>
<td>..... / 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood rating (2016):</td>
<td>7.7 / 10</td>
<td>..... / 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House rating (2016):</td>
<td>7.6 / 10</td>
<td>..... / 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House maintenance rating (2016):</td>
<td>7.0 / 10</td>
<td>..... / 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Number of users per hour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BEFORE</th>
<th>AFTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning 10:00 - 11:00:</td>
<td>4 users</td>
<td>..... users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon 13:00-14:00:</td>
<td>5 users</td>
<td>..... users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening 19:00-20:00:</td>
<td>2 users</td>
<td>..... users</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Safety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BEFORE</th>
<th>AFTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objective safety rating (2012):</td>
<td>50 / 100</td>
<td>..... / 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective safety rating (2012):</td>
<td>69 / 100</td>
<td>..... / 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Attractiveness monitor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BEFORE</th>
<th>AFTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment (2013):</td>
<td>7.2 / 10</td>
<td>..... / 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenery (2013):</td>
<td>7.4 / 10</td>
<td>..... / 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness street (2013):</td>
<td>6.1 / 10</td>
<td>..... / 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness greenery (2013):</td>
<td>6.6 / 10</td>
<td>..... / 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness playgrounds (2013):</td>
<td>5.9 / 10</td>
<td>..... / 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degradation (2013):</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>..... %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance street (2013):</td>
<td>5.7 / 10</td>
<td>..... / 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance greenery (2013):</td>
<td>6.7 / 10</td>
<td>..... / 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance playgrounds (2013):</td>
<td>5.9 / 10</td>
<td>..... / 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollution nuisance (2013):</td>
<td>6.6 / 10</td>
<td>..... / 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BEFORE</th>
<th>AFTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content with district council (2013):</td>
<td>38 %</td>
<td>..... %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content with municipality (2013):</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>..... %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Equality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BEFORE</th>
<th>AFTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have complaints been filed?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>..... complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which groups are involved?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>..........................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many residents are involved?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>..... %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Further comments:

**Recommendation: Best practice / Re-evaluate in .... / Redevelop**

---

Graduation Report - Lynn van Calmthout - 4105559 - June 24th, 2016
5 - Illustration

The framework described in the previous chapter contains a series of spatial rules for each recommended location, which is presented in the shape of a development envelope. This document is similar to an architectural building envelope, as shown to the side.

This development envelope is explicitly meant to be an easily understandable and not-too-restrictive document, which allows citizens to work on their initiative development quickly and realistically. All pre-approved locations eventually will need such an envelope.

Starting from the development envelope, the possibilities for the initiatives citizens craft are endless. To provide the people and the authorities an idea of the implications of the envelope, several variant designs will be elaborated on in this chapter. A brief description of the Garden Village of Nieuwendam - the location for these design examples - will introduce this paragraph of the research.

5.1 - The Garden Village of Nieuwendam

The Garden Village of Nieuwendam ensemble was designed to form an extension of Amsterdam in the 1920’s, after a large part of Amsterdam Noord was appropriated to belong to the city. It consists of small workers homes and a central square, which forms the center of the neighbourhood. The lay-out of Nieuwendam is very symmetrical, except for the parts where it meets the dyke. All of the central axes are emphasized by a combination of greenery and large roads.
The Purmerplein is the central square of the Nieuwendam garden village. It lies on a central axis, surrounded by shops and roads. As important as the square is in the lay-out of the borough, it remains largely unused. Disregarding the occasional dog owner and the circus that lands here once a year, the presence of people on the square is an exception.

The images below show a map and some impressions of the Purmerplein.
5.2 - Purmerplein development envelope

The development envelope delivers rules based on infrastructural integrity, preventing flow blockage, keeping entrances accessible, and preserving classical elements in the urban fabric. No matter what else happens, in the way of problem analysis, which groups are present or what the ideas are, the development envelope protects the common good. The development envelope for Purmerplein is shown below.
5.3 - Analysis Purmerplein

5.3.1 - Spatial analysis (based on Van Calmthout, 2012)

The buildings surrounding Purmerplein are higher than the rest of the environment. Most of the buildings are stamps, designed intricately.

The square is the commercial heart of the area, housing among others a bakery, a butcher and
a greengrocer. Two larger shoppings centers are at a five minute bike ride away.

The square is surrounded by roads which are often used by cars to get to the A10 Ring road quickly.
Most of the homes in Nieuwendam are rental, and the largest part of those are social housing. Almost all buildings are single-family (CBS, n.d.).

The people of Nieuwendam are mostly over 45, Dutch, and often live alone. A significant part of the population receives either a pension or welfare support (CBS, n.d.).

5.3.2 - Spatial inclusion

The aforementioned lack of visitors to the square is directly related to the lack of spatial inclusion the square carries out. Spatial inclusion entails the feeling a place is safe and meant for you to use. Thus, several factors have to be taken into account when trying to achieve a more welcoming, attractive and usable square, which is available and moldable for the different groups of inhabitants using it.

Because the participatiesamenleving is meant to engage all citizens equally, spatial inclusion is a key element in the development of public space through citizen initiatives. Participatiesamenleving-related goals like empowerment, coöperation, transparency and equality are all easily understood as part of spatial inclusion.

In basis, spatial inclusion requires the space to become less public, and more communal - although some would call this the culmination of public space - image on the next page (compare Harteveld, 2014, p.68; and Deutsche, 2012, p.1). Authorities will shy away from this transition, fearing to create exclusion. However, a space for everyone and everything isn’t a usable space at all. And a used space - even if it is less public than usual - is always preferable to an empty one.

5.3.3 - Problem analysis

The issues discussed are illustrated on the following page.

First of all, accessability is a key factor in order to achieve an increase in the usage of the square.
Limited access

Inflexible & Unfunctional

Recognizable identity

Unwelcoming

Room for events

Hardly used
This includes the availability of safe crossing spots, as well as access for disabled groups and young children. And last but not least, accessibility needs to be visible, welcoming everybody to come and enter the Purmerplein.

Another important factor lies in the matter of control. When the municipality takes care of everything, citizens do not feel responsible for their own environment. Therefore, making ownership more obvious and/or more citizen-oriented can help inhabitants connect to a place. Visual control is another relevant instance, providing safety and belonging to the square and the people surrounding it. Also, control has to do with flexibility: to what extent are things changeable?

The final factor in achieving spatial inclusion is multifunctionality. By housing a variety of functions, different groups will come and use those. Combining this with the aforementioned flexibility, the Purmerplein can become a place where people from all groups in society come and meet each other through their shared activities.

5.4 - Design directions for the Purmerplein

The following two pages show the starting points stemming from the problem analysis. These can be seen as a basis for the development of citizen initiatives, Because they are spatially and socially sound.
5.4.1 - Flexible furniture

One of the most important focal points for the development of a citizen initiative which takes into account the common good, is multifunctionality. By developing a space into a place which can be used not just by one group, but by multiple groups simultaneously, the space becomes more public and more useful. One way to achieve this, is by applying interventions which allow for more than one application. These could be recommended by the authorities.

A possible solution to accommodate as many groups as possible lies in the use of flexible furniture. By allowing pieces of sports equipment, chairs and tables, and edges to be a bit more than their ordinary form, they can become more interesting and support a variety of uses. A few examples which are incorporated into the design are shown below.

The basketball net / soccer goal combination allows for two different sports to be performed on the same field. Of course, official field sizes are not present on the Purmerplein, but this combination makes sure there are more sports to be played than just soccer.
By working stools and tables into the squares pavement, furniture is always at hand, while allowing for an empty square when needed. A screw-thread system allows for easy use, and the smooth finishing on the top prevents the table-top from becoming too dirty. A variety of specific designs is possible, including a chess-board version and even a barbecue version.

Another example is the incorporation of PV-cells into public furniture, such as pergolas.

5.4.2 - Activities for all

An analysis of public space activities related to age groups could provide a starting point to suggest functions - those which accommodate most groups, are most likely to be developed.
5.4.3 - Purmerplein design variants

Showing the range of possibilities for the Purmerplein initiatives, the aforementioned common activities were gathered into three public space functions, plus a mixed scenario. The described starting points have all been incorporated into all four designs.

The first variant is centered around **greener**y as a theme. In this scenario, people can sow their favorite flowers, grow their own crops, share self-grown herbs with their neighbours, but also enjoy the open field, playing soccer, sitting and relaxing.

The second variant supports all kinds of **recreational use**, including playing, sports, resting, and water recreation.
Additional benefits for all of these scenarios include added unpaved areas for the collection of rain water. Also, yearly events such as the circus can still take place, because the requested open space has been honored.

The third variant is focused on producing all sorts of goods. The production of energy, art and food, but also the reparation of appliances, bicycles, the sharing and trading of second hand stuff, and the building of children’s creations are possibilities in this scenario.

The mixed scenario welcomes all kinds of different activities at once, housing production, sports, open space, room for terraces and repairments simultaneously.
5.4.4 - Purmerplein district council involvement

Because the district council benefits from the citizen initiatives in the public space, they could provide support to the project. This could be done in multiple ways, including subsidies, material provision, slackened permits, and infrastructural development. The latter would be especially useful in the case of Purmerplein, since accessibility and safety are hot topics there.

Plus, the ‘right to infrastructure’ (Corsín Jiménez, 2014, p.358) could be interpreted as part the already discussed common good. As such, the Dutch government tradition dictates the responsibility to remain in the hands of local government.

Thus, the district council could issue a project to improve the infrastructure around Purmerplein to be focused more on pedestrians, and less on cars. The implementation of speed bumps could be a good example, as shown below. The materials are chosen to mirror the materials present, while emphasizing the pedestrian priority.
5.4.5 - Purmerplein-to-be

Thus, the authorities provides a safe context, while the citizens take care of the rest, filling out the Purmerplein the way they like it, together. And afterwards, of course, using it together.

An impression of a dreamed future for the square is shown below, to serve as inspiration and to clarify how the different parts of the design suggestions could come together.
6 - Reflection

What have I learned over the last year? How did I do? A short reflection of the graduation project will offer insight into these questions.

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 its 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 an extensive 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 and Mentor Team

The graduation project was 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.

Complex Cities is a broad urbanism lab, in which almost anything is allowed. However, due to my extensive research into the area of Amsterdam Noord, I do feel I have achieved a certain level of complexity in my project which befits the lab title. I have worked throughout different scales, on different layers and within different contexts.

The focus on planning which comes from the Complex Cities lab has suited me well, allowing me to think abstractly and execute thorough literature research. However, due to the eternal need for more context, sharper definitions and stronger theories, the lab has not been able to protect me from the tendency to focus on literary research rather than research by design. I should have been more aware of that pitfall, since it was quite predictable.

The graduation project falls under TU Delft Urbanism, and the responsible mentor team consists of the following people. They have been instrumental in finding the right balance between design and research, and have made me rethink the position of urbanists in our current society.

![Mentors](pictures courtesy of TU Delft and Harteveld, n.d.).

**6.4 - Ethics**

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

First of all, I am a politically opiniated person. Because the graduation project discusses several political topics, it was important to take care not to judge based on prejudice. I would say I have been able to avoid judging politically. Instead of deciding whether or not this policy is a good direction to move in, I have attempted to provide concrete handles for policy makers and communities to benefit from said policies. After all this time studying the participatiesamenleving, I have come to appreciate the opportunities it entails.

Another thing to avoid was 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, the evidence-based analysis made for Amsterdam Noord was vital.

**6.5 - Results**

It took me a while to decide how all the different products and ideas in my project could
contribute to a coherent final result. Now that my research has reached its conclusion, I am quite happy with the results, as I have achieved most of the goals I set out for myself. It may have taken me a little longer, but I am extremely content with my project in the end.

I do not think my research provides concrete answers to the issues current policy directions bring. I have delivered spatial, technical, policy-related and process-steering products, without delivering a blueprint design. It is my belief that was the right decision, as blue print design is rapidly becoming outdated.

It will be interesting to see how the participatiesamenleving policies develop over the upcoming years. And it is important that urbanists find their place in this changed context of circumstances. I hope I have been able to contribute to that.

Based on this project, future research should focus on the involvement of citizens in the creation of policies, as well as explore the key factors in a successful citizen initiative. Spatial design will always be important in both those contexts, though I think the scale level will be different than it has been before.
7 - Conclusions

This graduation thesis analyses the spatial implications of the participatiesamenleving, and presents a framework design supporting citizen as well as local policymakers to reap the benefits of government participation in their spatial environment.

A series of interviews, conferences and literature studies showed the participatiesamenleving to be a policy direction which was introduced to the Netherlands in 2012. Inspired by existing energies in society, the Dutch government proposed to take on more of a participatory role, facilitating projects instead of initiating them. Citizens were asked to take more responsibilities for their own life and environment, thus allowing for a reduction of government tasks and welfare facilities. This shift in responsibilities was accompanied by a governmental decentralization.

Concrete policies for the participatiesamenleving have been limited as of yet - and those that do exist lack consideration of transitory measures. Spatial policies have been largely overlooked. The national government has stopped producing large scale blueprint development plans or even visions, focusing instead on short-term interventions (the Room For The River project is of course the big exception). Due to this shift, local government has no choice but to take over responsibility for the larger projects, leaving the human scale in their districts unattended.

Citizens have noticed this, and see the opportunities this provides for heightened democracy, improved connections between people and government, policies about humans instead of euros, and allowing citizens to intervene in their own environment. Thus, the people take matters into their own hands. Many recent local projects can be understood as spatial interpretations of the participatiesamenleving: citizens take over garbage collection, propose major infrastructural interventions, and initiate new schools. For this research, the chosen focus was on the development of public space through citizen initiatives. A common issue in such initiatives appears to be the protection of the common interest, as a democratic factor remains lacking - as seen before in case studies of British Big Society policies.

The thesis argues protection is needed for those less capable who are impacted by such citizen initiatives, and extra efforts need to be made to support poorer as well as diverse (and crowded) areas. Private investments tend to have positive impact on neighbourhoods which have capital to spend, but a lack of funds in less well-off areas nips any opportunity for development in the bud. Local government needs to focus extra attention on those areas, not just wait for but actually stimulate initiatives there.

Amsterdam Noord is one location where a difference between the haves and the have-nots has long been present, causing spatial fragmentation and segregation. The municipality and the district council focus most of their energy on the development of large scale projects (such as the Noord-Zuid-lijn). As citizen initiatives start sprouting in Noord, former public services are taken over by residents and public spaces are (temporarily) developed to serve the purposes of those surrounding them. Many Northern citizen initiatives however never make it into reality, blocked by endless bureaucracy and a lack of time from the district council’s side. The Amsterdam Noord District Council has acted ambiguously in their policies, failing to find a middle ground between letting go and overseeing.

Since both local and national government have expressed a desire to allow for more citizen driven projects, a change in policy is necessary to transition towards a facilitating government. A set of proposed transparent, uniform rules for public space development throughout Amsterdam Noord offers some protection of the common interest. Specific locations are pre-approved beforehand, and are accompanied by a more localized development envelope which combines all the information needed to start a citizen initiative for these public spaces.

As example of this change in policy can be accompanied by an improvement in communication, a proposed website design shows government participation as a pick-and-choose toolbox for active residents to shape their own process. The steps in which this platform offers guidance
are: defining a common goal - building a team - collecting input - imagining the possibilities - organizing permissions - developing the project. These steps were inspired by a range of collaborative toolboxes.

The website design is structured as a transitory structure, which can be set up and hosted by local government, and eventually takes on more of a forum function. Citizens can use the site to learn about each others projects, discuss and find contact information. As such, an overview of good practices and learning points develops over time.

An example of the possible outcomes of such projects was elaborated through a design for the Purmerplein, a public square in the old Garden Village of Nieuwendam on the Eastern side of Amsterdam Noord. The designs show ways in which citizens can develop public space to provide something for everyone, all the while taking care to ensure safety and public access. Four different designs show a variety of possible focal points, while sharing similar values and starting points (including equality, safety, accessibility, room for events, and sustainability).

The designs are embedded within a more technical proposal for a municipal intervention, in which a set of large speedbumps provides improved access, pedestrian safety and clarity to the square. This kind of intervention is proposed for the municipality to keep safety and infrastructural integrity in its own hands, while showing goodwill and support for the citizen initiatives: a significantly smaller investment with an impressive yield.

By showing existing examples as well as possible outcomes of the participatiesamenleving policies proposed, both citizens and municipalities can be guided and convinced to benefit from the possibilities of this policy direction. Municipalities are encouraged to develop these policies further to fit their specific situation, responding to the local experiences. A set of criteria helps decide which policies are effective, so as to simplify this reflection.

Urbanists can guide both citizens and local governments by mediating, helping to analyze and showcase good examples, and providing technical solutions to realize citizen initiatives. Because the people can do a lot, but technical knowledge remains relevant.

**7.1 - Recommendations for Further Research and Implementation**

The research project would benefit from more systematic and broader feedback from local policy makers. For example, through presenting the proposal to the district council of Amsterdam Noord and getting some feedback, the set of policies could become more specific, realistic and useful to real world solutions. Implementation of the project needs to incorporate such feedback.

It should be kept in mind that the exemplary designs shown before are based on possible outcomes. They are not based on the current inhabitants around the design location, but rather on the activities which could benefit the most people in a randomized environment. For the specific case of Purmerplein, a design suggestion made by the people and/or through citizen participation would be very interesting, seen as the observations made about the problematic state of the square are very real indeed.

A more extensive research into the structure of succesful citizen initiatives could yield more information as well as detailed pointers to support upcoming new initiators. The project should be sensitive to this, for it could lead to small adjustments in the presented framework. Thus, policy makers could get a clearer, more trustworthy image of the benefits of such a framework. This research has not been conclusive about whether or not poorer neighbourhoods benefit as positively from private investment as wealthy areas do. This needs to be researched further.

"It’s important to know where form ends and politics begin; architecture should be useful for the community, not only a tool for political conflict." -Richard Sennett
8- Literature


Graduation Report - Lynn van Calmthout - 4105559 - June 24th, 2016 65


VVD, n.d.. Dit is de VVD. [online] VVD. Available at: <http://www.vvd.nl/partij/1/over-vvd/17/dit-is-de-vvd> [Accessed February 7, 2016].


Appendix I - Theory Paper

Responsibility to the People!
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).](image)

![Illustration 1b. Libertarian paternalism: Offering citizens a default service, with the option to alter features as desired (author, 2015).](image)

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 drastic 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 overha ul (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 an 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.
Literature


*Localism Act 2011.* (c.5-6). London: HMSO.


*Theory Paper - Lynn van Calmthout - 4105559 - AR3U022 - June 9, 2015*


Appendix II - Citizen initiative catalogue

CITIZENS RUN COMMUNITY CENTER
When the community center budget was cut, local residents took over, providing steady jobs for unemployed residents. Citizen initiative with municipal subsidies.

PARENTS START NEW SCHOOL
A group of parents has started a new school, because they felt not all types of education were represented in Noord. Citizen initiative connected to institution.

CITIZENS FILL VACANT PUBLIC SPACE
A group of locals wanted to provide a new type of public space for the area. The borough appointed a location, where the citizens planted 20,000 sunflowers in a maze shape. Paid for by donations and own investments. Citizen initiative.

TEMPORARY LAND DEVELOPMENT
Creative incubator meant to fill an space which is too polluted to use officially. This provides new functions for the area. Citizen initiative for municipal problem.

CITIZEN PROPOSES PUBLIC SPACE
An active citizen proposed to create new meeting spaces on piers, in order to promote social cohesion. Not realised (yet). Citizen initiative.
An active citizen proposed to create new meeting spaces on piers, in order to promote social cohesion. Not realised (yet).

A group of parents has started a new school, because they felt not all types of education were represented in Noord.

Citizen initiative for municipal problem.

Creative incubator meant to fill a space which is too polluted to use officially. This provides new functions for the area.

When the community center budget was cut, local residents took over, providing steady investments.

A group of locals wanted to provide a new shape. Paid for by donations and own investments.

Residents surrounding the Noorderpark have initiated crowdfunding in order for them to build a pavilion/bar. Citizen initiative.

Locals have decided to take the sustainability of the borough into their own hands, and started an initiative to place windturbines.

Noord residents see the ferry getting busier every year. They invited several designers to sketch a possible bicycle bridge over the IJ.

This allotment garden was established specifically to strengthen social cohesion and contact between various local groups. The harvest is shared by locals, restaurants and the food bank.

Citizen initiative with municipal subsidies.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.

Citizen initiative inspires borough action.