

AT HOME IN
EUROPE

EUROPE'S
WHITE
WORKING
CLASS
COMMUNITIES

AMSTERDAM



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This city report was prepared as part of a series of reports titled Europe's Working Class Communities. The series focuses on six cities in the European Union, and within them specific neighbourhoods: Aarhus (Trigeparken), Amsterdam (Tuindorp Buiksloot and Floradorp), Berlin (Marzahn-Hellersdorf), Lyon (8th arrondissement), Manchester (Higher Blackley) and Stockholm (southern Botkyrka).

The research and reports have been designed and prepared by At Home in Europe, part of the Open Society Initiative for Europe, Open Society Foundations and in cooperation with local/national based experts.

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At Home in Europe has final responsibility for the content of the report, including any errors or misrepresentations.

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Preface

Over the past 50 years states in western and northern Europe have undergone dramatic demographic, social and economic changes, including de-industrialisation, a shift to a service economy, growing inequality, challenges to the sustainability of social welfare, and increasing ethnic and cultural diversity. The challenges these changes create to sustaining social cohesion and ensuring integration are experienced at the local city-level.

Since 2007, the At Home in Europe Project of the Open Society Foundations has worked to support improved social inclusion, participation and advancing equality across 20 cities in 10 countries, in partnership with local policy makers, practitioners and civil society. The impetus for the engagement arose from Open Society Foundations' mandate to address and mitigate the concerns of vulnerable groups at a time when Europe's governments were beginning to accept that it's myriad of immigrant communities—particularly those with a Muslim background—were here to stay and an integral part of the social, political, and cultural landscape. As Europe's Muslims and other minorities became more visible and demographically larger, there has been a pursuit of policies to encourage integration but this has been set against a backdrop of growing anxiety about migration, the perceived erosion of national identity, and the perception that communities from the majority population of European countries have been ignored and consequently disenfranchised.

While there is rhetoric of integration as a 'two way' process, too often integration and social cohesion policies have failed to engage with the views and experiences of existing settled communities, focusing instead on what immigrants or their descendants must do to integrate. For many this failure to address the concerns or anxieties created by changes in the economic and social structures of their neighbourhoods reinforces a sense of being ignored, left behind and demonised. In some cases this has fed into resentment of mainstream political parties and the liberal political values they are seen to represent and increased the appeal of populist parties on mainly the right but also the left. Too often this has led to disengagement from political processes of any kind.

The Europe's White Working Class Communities project documents the experiences of 'white' communities in six cities across Europe (Aarhus, Amsterdam, Berlin, Lyon, Manchester, and Stockholm). Each report in the series focuses on a specific district or neighbourhoods within the city. In doing so it provides new groundbreaking research on the experiences of a section of the population whose lives are often caricatured and whose voices and views are rarely heard in public debates and discussion on integration, cohesion and social inclusion. Through a comparative lens, the project seeks to highlight parallels and differences in policies, practices and experiences across the different European cities.

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Executive summary

Amsterdam's population has been diverse for decades, but in recent years it has emerged as one of the first European cities where the numbers in the former majority community have fallen to below half of the total population. Among the very wide range of communities that make up the city's residents, people of Moroccan, Surinamese, Turkish and Antillean origin make up the largest subgroups. In an effort to recast terminology in a more neutral and inclusive frame, the authorities no longer use the traditional labels "*autochtoon*" for an ethnically Dutch resident and "*allochtoon*" for a person of foreign birth or descent. This report uses the term "person of Dutch heritage", in line with the Amsterdam Bureau for Research and Statistics.

Population and demographics: Social and income inequality have been on the rise in the Netherlands as a whole, based more on educational levels than social class or occupation. Amsterdam in particular has recognized a gap between the living situation of those in the city centre and those in the outer districts, and inequalities have been exacerbated by the recent recession. Amsterdam-North, a small submunicipality along the IJ waterfront, has above-average poverty levels compared with more central districts. This report focuses on the neighbourhoods of Tuindorp Buiksloot and Floradorp, both of which have populations that are primarily of Dutch heritage. Floradorp was selected as a focus area for the 2007 action plan to improve living standards in neighbourhoods across the country. In Amsterdam, a new, bottom-up approach to neighbourhood development and problem-solving was introduced in 2014, shifting the initiative away from government and on to residents, civil society and businesses. This is part of a larger move towards enhancing the role of non-governmental actors and supporting social cohesion. Amsterdam-North has a distinct local identity that contributes to a strong sense of belonging to the area among participants in the Open Society Foundations' research. Respondents described a feeling of community among "original residents" that was linked to family and neighbourhood. At the same time, participants reported a sense of discomfort and even resentment towards people of non-Dutch heritage in the area, and a perceived challenge to the existing way of life in the city. The more affluent and educated Dutch-heritage newcomers were also regarded as outsiders. Focus group discussants frequently made a point of differentiating between themselves and other communities, along various geographic, class or ethnic lines. Researchers have noted a growing trend towards defining Dutchness in cultural terms as a reaction to an increasingly diverse society, which was reflected in the focus groups.

Education: National educational policy has focused on improving the integration of disadvantaged students from migrant backgrounds, with less attention to low-income students of Dutch heritage. Students of Dutch heritage are particularly prone to drop out of school; in the two neighbourhoods studied, more than 25 percent of Dutch-heritage students leave school early. While some studies suggest that insufficient

information about completing basic qualifications may contribute to these high drop-out rates, some respondents noted that education is not a priority either in their family or for their profession. Indeed, focus group participants remarked upon tensions between parents and schools, and a recent report found that parents with lower levels of education themselves tended to have less contact and dialogue with schools. School administrators reported conflicts between schools and working-class parents.

Employment: While Amsterdam-North in general has experienced a rise in unemployment and dependence on benefits, Tuindorp Buiksloot and Floradorp have been less affected. Focus group participants nevertheless reported having difficulty making ends meet and living just above the minimum income level. Working poverty has indeed become an issue in the Netherlands, especially for those with lower educational levels, single parents and the self-employed, and Amsterdam-North has adopted an integrated approach that focuses on these groups. Interdisciplinary teams work with vulnerable people, helping them resolve difficulties in the various spheres of daily life.

Housing: The two neighbourhoods studied for this report have very stable housing patterns, with residents remaining in their homes for an average of 15 years. This is supported by rent control, and also, according to focus group participants, by the strong sense of community. As with most of the Netherlands, there is a substantial amount of social housing in Amsterdam-North; urban renewal initiatives have sought to keep residents in the neighbourhood as their incomes and prospects improve, but respondents were sceptical of efforts to invest in their areas. There were concerns about the shortage of affordable housing, which particularly affects younger people, who are priced out of the private housing market, yet are above the income level to qualify for social housing.

Health: Recent policy reforms have shifted the costs of treatment on to individuals, by increasing both monthly payments and deductibles; the Open Society Foundations' research suggests that these higher costs deter some people from seeking medical care. The system encourages family members to provide informal care, which a number of participants found to be a serious burden, with limited support from the authorities and confusing bureaucratic requirements. At the same time, other focus group participants expressed concern that the increasing diversity of the neighbourhood was undermining the strong networks that have traditionally looked out for one another.

Policing and security: As with most larger cities, Amsterdam has higher rates of crime and registers lower levels of perceived safety among residents. The strong sense of community in the neighbourhood contributes not only to a sense of collective security but also to a practice of resolving problems internally, without involving the police. When newer residents call the police, according to participants, it contributes people's sense of breaking with the established order. Nevertheless, there was generally a

positive perspective on the police officers working in the area. Loitering, littering and intimidation by younger people was a common theme in the focus groups; street coaches, an initiative to redirect nuisance behaviour, reportedly have done little to improve the situation. Similarly, a new centre for young people was not welcomed, because it is designed to attract youngsters from many neighbourhoods, when they prefer to remain among their own kind.

Civil and political participation: Against a background of declining trust in political institutions nationwide, focus group participants' attitudes ranged from indifference to anger and resentment. Most were not active politically themselves, and the few who had been active at the local level expressed dissatisfaction with the outcomes. Research has revealed growing support for populist parties in Amsterdam-North, a pattern confirmed by the Open Society Foundations' findings. Support for Geert Wilders' Freedom Party was particularly strong among younger participants. Focus group discussion often returned to an incident in Tuindorp Buiksloot at the end of 2012, when residents became outraged when the final decision after a series of consultative meetings with local authorities over the future of a community centre was seen as violating an earlier agreement.

Role of the media: Dutch television has developed programmes similar to those in other countries, focusing on under-educated, working-class families for shock and comedy. These shows are popular, and while academics have criticised them as caricatures, focus group participants did not express any particular concerns. Instead, representations of the local neighbourhoods were of more interest to the participants, particularly the media's focus on violent or disorderly episodes. The neighbourhood opera produced in Floradorp also attracted positive attention from the news media. Residents use social media such as Facebook to deepen their existing sense of community.

Conclusion: Major changes are under way in the Netherlands; shifts in policy that tend to limit benefits and move responsibilities to individuals, as well as demographic changes from immigration and an ageing population, which are transforming the country. In the neighbourhoods studied by the Open Society Foundations, residents of ethnic Dutch heritage have a strong and valuable sense of community, which provides important support but also creates a division between themselves and others, whether people of different ethnic backgrounds, economic status, or simply from another part of town. Changes in policy have left many in the area concerned about being too well off to qualify under more stringent benefits regimes, yet still unable to earn enough for real security. Efforts to create more opportunities for participation and interaction have not met with success, so further work in this area will need to find a way to leverage existing community feeling towards the larger society.

Methodology

The field research for this project was carried out in Amsterdam from February to July 2013. The empirical core consisted of focus group interviews with local residents of Amsterdam-North submunicipality, and more specifically the Tuindorp Buiksloot and Floradorp neighbourhoods. The fieldwork initially started in Tuindorp Buiksloot, but it turned out to be quite challenging to recruit a sufficient number of participants in this small neighbourhood. During the fieldwork phase, it was decided to extend the research to the nearby neighbourhood of Floradorp. These neighbourhoods are comparable on several socio-economic and demographic indicators, while at the same time different, area-specific urban policies have been in place in each neighbourhood. Comparative data from both neighbourhoods should result in particularly rich and interesting findings. The primary fieldwork consisted of 12 group discussions with a total of 66 participants, of which 19 were male and 47 were female. In terms of age, 41 participants were over 35 years old and 25 were under 35, with 21 participants under 25. The selection process used (self-defined) ethnic background, socio-economic status and history of residence in the neighbourhood as criteria for participation.

In addition to the focus groups among residents, 29 individual interviews were held with professionals at different organisations, who have specific, relevant knowledge of the researched communities through their activities. This group included youth workers, community workers, school principals, the police district officer, staff at social support and welfare organisations and the housing corporation, local politicians and civil servants of the submunicipality and the municipality. A full list of names of those individually interviewed can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of the report. Finally, policy documents, research reports and other relevant pieces of literature were reviewed in order to place the primary data in context.

At the start of the research process, a City Advisory Board was established, consisting of the following members: Hettie Politiek, Department of Social Development, Municipality of Amsterdam (*Dienst Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, DMO, Gemeente Amsterdam*); Nanko Horstmann, Combiwel, (a large welfare organisation in Amsterdam); Jeanette de Waard, Hope for North (*Hoop voor Noord*), a multicultural church in Amsterdam; and Ingrid van Zelm, Research Coordinator, Submunicipality Amsterdam-North (*Stadsdeel Amsterdam-Noord*). Their supportive attitude and constructive feedback have been very valuable to the development of the project and the report.

In December 2013, a roundtable meeting was organised to discuss the findings of this report with professionals in the field, representatives of municipal bodies, civil society organisations and academics. Feedback and suggestions offered at this roundtable meeting have been incorporated in the report.

1

INTRODUCTION

This report is based on a research study conducted as part of the Open Society Foundations' At Home in Europe project. At Home in Europe is a research and advocacy initiative of the Open Society Foundations, which work to advance the social inclusion of vulnerable communities in a changing Europe. The project explores the political, social, economic and cultural participation of marginalised majority and minority communities in Western Europe. It places a high priority on local community and city practices that mitigate discrimination and seek to ensure equal treatment for all. The project's underlying theme is to identify the barriers to full and equal treatment, better understand factors leading to marginalisation, identify and promote effective integration policies and practices in Europe, and undertake research-based advocacy in order to improve participation and opportunities through engagement with residents, civil society and policymakers. The current study forms part of a comparative policy-oriented set of studies focusing on six cities in Western Europe: Aarhus (Denmark), Amsterdam (The Netherlands), Berlin (Germany), Stockholm (Sweden), Lyon (France) and Manchester (United Kingdom). The focus of these studies is to report on the experiences of marginalised majority populations and communities living in these cities. The report forms part of a broader body of research on vulnerable communities in urban western European societies. In 2010, the project gave a voice to Muslim minority communities in 11 European cities in the report series "Muslims in Europe" of which *Muslims in Amsterdam*, conducted in Slotervaart, was one of two reports on the Netherlands. The current research project brings closer focus to the experiences, opinions and sentiments of urban residents of working-class background and belonging to the majority population in each of their countries of residence. "Majority population" in this study is defined as individuals who are citizens, who were born in the country and whose parents are also citizens and were born in the country. Members of this community are the primary subject of this report, which is based on an in-depth qualitative study, with extensive group discussions with residents as its main empirical base. With this study, the At Home in Europe project aims to make an important contribution on three levels. First, studies on vulnerable urban communities today predominantly focus on communities of minority (migrant) backgrounds, and little attention is paid to communities of a non-migrant background. Second, at the level of applied, policy-oriented research, topics such as social cohesion, identity, and political, economic and social participation are often examined in quantitative rather than qualitative studies. Third, through its internationally comparative approach, this research project highlights interesting parallels and differences in experiences, policies and practices across different European cities. It is hoped that its comprehensive, internationally comparative, sectoral and qualitative examination of experiences of research participants in key social domains will benefit residents, professionals, policymakers, politicians and researchers working to improve the participation of vulnerable urban communities. The research recognises the sensitivity associated with categorising people according to the terms referred to above ("marginalised" and "majority population").¹ It is important to note that

¹ In Dutch public and academic discourse, it is unusual and controversial to use the term "white" to designate a racial category. The term "white" is understood by the author as socially and historically constructed.

the denomination “marginalised” was not adopted as a predefined criterion for the recruitment of research participants. Instead, the point of departure was to conduct research in an urban area with high general levels of political, economic and social exclusion. Each participant’s demographic background was established through self-definition. The research was conducted among residents who defined themselves as belonging to the “ethnic” and “religious” majority of the Netherlands. This was (mostly) assessed during short telephone or live initial conversations discussing people’s willingness to participate in the study; sometimes it was assessed during the focus group discussions themselves.

1.1 | THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS: SUCCESSES AND LIMITATIONS

After the initial steps of making contact and gaining trust, people in both neighbourhoods were extremely open and constructive in their participation. The researchers were greatly helped in the recruitment process by three community workers: Jeanette de Waard of Hope for North and Marinus Klarenbeek and Sonja Elburg of the youth welfare organisation DOCK. In addition, the staff of the community centre de Driehoek (Tuinsdorp Buiksloot/Het Blauwe Zand) and the youth facility De Kluzzfabriek (Floradorp) hosted all the research focus group meetings and assisted in recruiting more participants. At the onset, the researchers had been warned that people in both neighbourhoods were tired of participating in research and had little faith in its effects. Yet particularly in Tuindorp Buiksloot, the Open Society Foundations encountered substantial willingness to participate in a research project that focused specifically on the subjective stories and experiences of the residents themselves. In light of recent developments in the community facilities in the neighbourhood (see chapter 10), many people felt they had an important story to share. The other side of the story is that it turned out to be quite a challenge to recruit a group of participants with the exact profile envisaged in the initial research plan. The criteria of the target group, people at risk of social, political, economic or cultural exclusion, turned out to be a difficult basis for selection, not least due to the stigma associated with non-participation and poverty. People with this kind of profile are difficult to reach, and are often reluctant to participate in any meeting that has a formal, organised and collective character. In contrast, other residents were eager to participate in the Open Society Foundations project almost by virtue of their social connectedness and participation. For instance, they had already been involved in community initiatives and were eager to share their experiences and frustrations about this with the researchers. On an economic level they were doing better than those who may be regarded as truly marginalised. As a result, the study can only draw limited conclusions relating to people at risk of exclusion. Furthermore, it was difficult to avoid the snowballing method in these close-knit communities, as many participants were persuaded to participate by their friends, family members or neighbours. The focus group approach

with its collective and public dimension was an obstacle for some people. In addition, quite a few residents felt they had nothing to say, or that participating in a research project would not do them or the community any good. There was also a gender bias in the overall group of participants. Male participants were particularly difficult to recruit in both neighbourhoods, as were persons between the ages of 25 and 45. In the end, the sample of participants was not as demographically balanced as initially anticipated. However, it should be borne in mind that the primary focus of a qualitative research project like this one is not on securing a representative and generalizable sample of the population; rather, the research seeks to map the rich, subjective and relevant experiences of as many different people as possible.

2

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

2.1 | A MAJORITY-MINORITY CITY

Amsterdam has been referred to by scholars as a majority-minority city, similar to cities like New York, Toronto and Sydney.² Some use the term “super-diversity”³ to describe the situation in cities like these. Slightly less than half of its population is of Dutch heritage, while the other half has roots in as many as 176 different countries. Unlike New York, Amsterdam has always had an ethnically defined majority population, but this situation has changed in the last decades. Within two generations, the majority community in Amsterdam has become a minority community.

TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF AMSTERDAM, 1 JANUARY 2014

Background	Absolute number
Persons of Dutch heritage	400,093
Persons of non-Western heritage	282,067
Western migrants	129,025
Total population	811,185

Source: Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam “Amsterdam in cijfers 2014”, Amsterdam, January 2014, <http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/feiten-en-cijfers/#>, accessed 20 May 2014

Furthermore, those referred to as *allochtonen* (people of non-Western heritage or Western migrants, see below) in the Dutch debate in fact make up a very heterogeneous group. Within this group, Moroccan, Surinamese, Turkish and Antillean Amsterdammers are the largest subgroups.

2.1.1 | AUTOCHTOON/ALLOCHTOON

While it is unusual and uncustomary in the Dutch context to use racial categories to designate various population groups (white, black), the *autochtoon/allochtoon* (autochthone/allochthone in English) dichotomy has become commonplace in both political and public debate.⁴ “*Allochtoon*” refers to those who are themselves foreign-born or those who descend from a foreign-born person, while “*autochtoon*” refers to those of Dutch birth or ancestry. Since 1999, the Central Office for Statistics

² Maurice Crul, Jens Schneider and Frans Lelie, *Super-diversity: a New Perspective on Integration*, VU University Press, Amsterdam, 2013.

³ Steven Vertovec, “Super-diversity and Its Implications”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30 (6) (2007), pp. 1024–1054.

⁴ Marleen van der Haar and Dvora Yanow, “Allochtoon als metafoor en categorie” (Allochtoon as metaphor and category), *Beleid en Maatschappij* 38 (2) (2011) (hereafter, Van der Haar and Yanow, “Allochtoon als metafoor en categorie”).

(*Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek*, CBS) has used the distinction between non-Western *allochtoon* and Western *allochtoon*. Non-Western *allochtonen* are also divided into generations: first-generation *allochtoon* residents are legally resident in the Netherlands who were themselves born in a foreign country and have at least one foreign-born parent, whereas second-generation signifies Netherlands-born persons with at least one foreign-born parent. The term *allochtoon* was introduced into the Netherlands by social scientists, originally because it was considered a neutral term that “could cover all the various groups of immigrants”.⁵ The term *autochtoon* gained prominence only in reaction to the emergence of the term *allochtoon*. Scholars have argued that the term *allochtoon* is not neutral, but is pejorative, carrying an element of exclusion. One major point is that one can never become *autochtoon* having been designated *allochtoon*.⁶ In an attempt to counter the problematic use of the terms in popular and political discourse, in a controversial resolution, the City Cabinet of Amsterdam decided on 12 February 2013 to abolish the terms from all its official publications, communications and research reports.⁷ The issue had been on the political agenda both in Amsterdam and nationally since 2012.⁸ The City Cabinet argued that the two terms emphasise a contradiction between two groups of residents, and reinforce exclusion, which is contrary to the Cabinet’s ambition to foster an undivided city in which these terms no longer matter. The decision was controversial.

2.1.2 | TERMINOLOGY IN THIS RESEARCH REPORT

The Open Society Foundations shares the concern about the potentially exclusionist impact of the terms *allochtoon* and *autochtoon*. The question is what terminology to use instead for the target group of this research project, people who self-identify as “ethnic Dutch”. In its recent research publications, the “Armoedemonitor 2012” (Poverty Monitor 2012),⁹ the Amsterdam Bureau for Research and Statistics used “persons of Dutch heritage” to refer to those who are still nationally referred to as *autochtonen*. This same designation will be used in the current report. That being said, when the research participants used the term pair *allochtoon/autochtoon* in ordinary language, this has not been corrected.

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- 5 Peter Geschiere, *The Perils of Belonging: Autochtony, citizenship, and exclusion in Africa and Europe*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 2009, p. 49.
 - 6 Van der Haar and Yanow, “Allochtoon als metafoer en categorie”.
 - 7 Researchers at the municipal research division expressed their concern at being unable to “adequately name actual developments on the labour market, in the sphere of health and education”. On several blogs, people labelled the change as mere symbolic politics.
 - 8 In situations when it is necessary to mention someone’s geographical background for research and policy purposes, the City Cabinet suggests using the terminology used in the American context, such as Surinamese Amsterdammer and so on.
 - 9 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, “Amsterdamse Armoedemonitor 2012” (Amsterdam Poverty Monitor 2012), June 2013, at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/pdf/2013_armoedemonitor_2012.pdf (accessed 20 May 2014) (hereafter, “Amsterdamse Armoedemonitor 2012”).

2.2 | A GREYING COUNTRY AND A SLOWLY GREYING CITY

Similar to surrounding European countries, the Netherlands is a greying society: the number of older people is increasing. Currently, 16 percent of Dutch residents are over 65 years old.¹⁰ Within this group, 25 percent is over 80 years old. Women constitute a larger part of the Dutch population over 65 (56 percent female compared with 44 percent male), and in the case of people over 80 years old, 65 percent are women. Among residents with a non-Dutch heritage, the number of people over 65 years old is much lower, at 4 percent of the population. The overwhelming majority of people aged over 65 and even over 80 years old still live at home (respectively 95 percent and 86 percent).¹¹ The city of Amsterdam is greying more slowly than the rest of the Netherlands. Of the current Amsterdam population, 11.3 percent is over 65 years of age.¹²

2.3 | SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVIDING LINES: EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCE AND INCOME INEQUALITY

A key development in Dutch society since the second world war is the increase in the number of persons with a high level of education.¹³ At present, around 30 percent of the Dutch population is highly educated. This development has contributed to the growth of inequality in Dutch society. While in the past social class and occupation were the key dividing lines in society, there is empirical evidence that educational difference today constitutes the most important dividing line that affects all the different social domains examined in this report. The position of less-educated people in employment and health is significantly less favourable than that of the highly educated. Researchers emphasise that social distance and segregation between lower- and higher-educated persons has increased: today, the two different groups interact little with each other in the spheres of work, education, and social, community

10 National Compass for Public Health (*Nationaal Kompas Volksgezondheid*), at www.nationaalkompas.nl (accessed 20 May 2014).

11 Joop Garssen and Carel Harmsen, *Ouderen wonen steeds langer zelfstandig* (Elderly people live independently for longer), CBS, The Hague/Heerlen, 2011, at <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/bevolking/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2011/2011-3434-wm.htm> (accessed 20 May 2014)

12 CBS (Statistics Netherlands) “Kerncijfers per gemeente” (Key figures per municipality), The Hague/ Heerlen, 2013, at <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/bevolking/publicaties/publicaties/archief/2013/2013-b55-pub.htm> (accessed 20 May 2014).

13 In the academic literature it is common to make a distinction between lower education (primary education) and secondary and higher education up to the levels of VMBO and MBO 1), middle education (HAVO, VWO, MBO 2,3,4) and higher education (HBO and WO). See Mark Elchardus, “Opleiding als nieuwe Scheidslijn” (Education as the new dividing line), in *Essaybundel: De Sociale Klasse Voorbij*, Kenniskamers, The Hague, 2011 (hereafter, Elchardus, “Opleiding als nieuwe Scheidslijn”, p. 41).

and private life.¹⁴ It has been demonstrated that levels of social discontent¹⁵ among citizens, an important phenomenon for this study, are closely related to differences in education. Distinct levels of political participation and political preferences can be identified for lower- and higher-educated groups. In Amsterdam, the municipality has expressed concern about the increasing inequality between groups with different socio-economic and educational status. The so-called living situation (*leefsituatie*) of higher-educated Amsterdammers, employed Amsterdammers and those with a higher income is significantly better than that of lower-educated, unemployed and lower-income groups. This gap has widened in the past few years. The municipality also registers a growing differentiation in standards of living across different parts of the city. In Amsterdam-North, the average living situation is unfavourable, and the gap between submunicipalities in the centre and the periphery has widened since 2008.¹⁶ Research indicates that education is the most important indicator on the living situation index, and comes before employment, income and age. Among lower-educated people, those with paid employment score better than those without paid employment. Elderly lower-educated persons score the lowest on the living situation index.¹⁷

Income inequality in the Netherlands has been increasing since the 1980s. Because of budget cuts in social security in response to the deep economic recession of the 1980s, the income position of the groups at the base of the income pyramid has deteriorated by 30 percent in the last 35 years, while the position of all other income groups has improved.¹⁸

14 Elchardus, "Opleiding als nieuwe Scheidslijn".

15 Social discontent manifests itself with a pessimistic perspective of the future of society, feelings of insecurity, anomie, distrust of social institutions and general social distrust.

16 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, "De Staat van de Stad VII" (The State of the City VII), September 2013, at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/pdf/2013_staatsvandestadVII_compleet (accessed 20 May 2014) (hereafter, "De Staat van de Stad VII"). "Living situation" refers to a general level of well-being, measured in the Leefsituatie-index, a figure that represents the quality of life in eight different social domains. The living situation index relates to individual resources such as income, employment and education, physical and social environment and facilities, and subjective factors like happiness, satisfaction and faith in the future.

17 "De Staat van de Stad VII", p. 19.

18 Wiemer Salverda, "Inkomen, herverdeling en huishoudvorming 1977-2011: 35 jaar ongelijkheidsgroei in Nederland" (Income, redistribution and household composition 1977-2011: 35 years of inequality growth in the Netherlands), *TPE digitaal* 7 (1) (2012), pp. 66–94. The results of this research study were remarkable because when measured by the GINI-coefficient or GINI-index (The GINI index measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption expenditure among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution, see <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI> (accessed 20 May 2014)), income inequality in the Netherlands was shown to be less dramatic.

2.4 | IMPACT OF THE CURRENT ECONOMIC RECESSION AND POVERTY

In Amsterdam as well as in the Netherlands as a whole, the impact of the current economic recession is increasingly felt. Poverty has increased nationally in the last few years. The report *Armoedesignalement 2013* (Poverty Survey 2013)¹⁹ registered that in 2012 9.4 percent of Dutch households lived on an income below what is defined as a low income, an increase of 1.2 percent since 2011.²⁰ The authors observed a sharp increase in poverty as a result of the economic recession. Poverty is particularly on the increase among people who are unemployed and receiving social security or unemployment benefits, as well as among the self-employed. In 2012, the percentage of poor self-employed workers had overtaken that of the poor working in paid employment.²¹ High-risk groups like the elderly, single-parent families and first-generation migrants were particularly hard hit. The number of people with payment arrears has fluctuated significantly in the last few years: from 11 percent in 2008 to 20 percent in 2011 and back to 15 percent in 2012.²² It has been suggested that this might indicate people becoming more careful about avoiding payment arrears as the economic crisis evolved.²³ By contrast, 7.9 percent of households are indicated as taking on debts, a sharp increase since the start of the crisis in 2008. A sharp increase in poverty can be seen as a result of the economic crisis, from 5.4 percent of the population in 2007 to 7.6 percent in 2012, the highest level of poverty that has been measured in Dutch society since 2000. A growing proportion of those who are poor are in fact what is referred to as working poor; furthermore, over 50 percent of the working poor are self-employed workers.²⁴ The risk of poverty is significantly greater for persons with a non-Dutch background than it is for persons of Dutch heritage. Economic vulnerability is typically greater in the larger urban centres of the country.²⁵ Measured by the number of households with a minimum income, Amsterdam is the poorest city in the Netherlands. Among Amsterdam residents, 17 percent live on a minimum income.²⁶ A relatively large proportion of those on a minimum income are elderly people.²⁷ In addition, young people and particularly those of a non-Western

19 The Netherlands Institute for Social Research and Statistics Netherlands, “*Armoedesignalement* (Poverty Survey) 2013”, The Hague, 2013 (hereafter, *Armoedesignalement 2013*), at <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/dossiers/jongeren/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2013/armoedesignalement-2013-sterke-groei-armoede-in-2012-pb.htm> (accessed at 20 May 2014).

20 In this survey, poverty is measured in two different ways: first, on the basis of low income as an indicator, that represents a fixed level of purchasing power across time; second, through the budget approach, which is more contextual, meaning that a person is poor when he or she does not, for a significant amount of time, have the means to acquire the basic needs of society. See *Armoedesignalement 2013*, p. 45.

21 *Armoedesignalement 2013*.

22 *Armoedesignalement 2013*.

23 *Armoedesignalement 2013*, p. 13.

24 *Armoedesignalement 2013*, p. 15.

25 Of all households with a minimum income, almost 25 percent lived in one of the larger cities in the Netherlands: “*Armoedesignalement 2013*”, p. 35.

26 “*Amsterdamse Armoedemonitor 2012*”. Minimum income is defined as 11 percent of the legal social minimum wage.

27 23 percent of elderly people in Amsterdam live on a minimum income.

background are at a much greater risk of growing up in poverty. For high-risk groups, it is increasingly difficult to escape poverty.

Unemployment figures for the Netherlands showed an increase in unemployment from 3.1 percent in the second quarter of 2012 to 4.1 percent in the same quarter in 2013.²⁸ There was a particularly strong increase in youth unemployment in the Netherlands between 2011 and 2013.²⁹ In Amsterdam, youth unemployment has been significantly higher than elsewhere in the country. In the first half of 2013, 12,000 young Amsterdammers (10.3 percent) were unemployed.³⁰ The groups with the highest level of unemployment were 15–22-year-olds,³¹ young people of a non-Western background and young people without basic educational qualifications. About 10 percent of all young people in Amsterdam are neither employed nor enrolled in education. This group is monitored and targeted by specific municipal policies. The Amsterdam Bureau for Research and Statistics predicts that youth unemployment will continue to increase because of the economic recession.³²

In the 2013 edition of the two-yearly monitor “De Staat van de Stad”, the Amsterdam Bureau for Research and Statistics predicted that as a result of cumulative austerity measures, new groups of vulnerable citizens might emerge, for example the elderly or (lower) middle-income groups. This group is currently still participating well in a number of social domains, but this is exactly the group that is hardest hit by developments like the sharp increase in rents. In addition, this group does not qualify for most of the allowances that are available for lower-income groups.³³

2.5 | AMSTERDAM-NORTH: POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Amsterdam-North is isolated from the rest of Amsterdam, as it is located on the other side of the IJ, which forms the Amsterdam waterfront. Parts of Amsterdam-North were constructed before the Second World War (including the neighbourhoods studied for this project), but most of the area was built after the war. When the district or submunicipality was first introduced as a layer of city government in Amsterdam

28 “Geregistreerde Werkeloosheid” (Registered Unemployment), CBS, at <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb> (accessed 26 May 2014).

29 “De Staat van de Stad VII”.

30 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam. See Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam “Factsheet Jeugdwerkloosheid 2012” (Factsheet Youth Unemployment), March 2013 (hereafter, “Factsheet Jeugdwerkloosheid 2012”), at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/assets/pdfs/2013_factsheet_jeugdwerkloosheid_amsterdam_2013.pdf (accessed 20 May 2014)

31 The working population is defined by Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam as “everyone between 15 and 65 years old that wants to work at a minimum 12 hours a week”. This includes both the employed and the unemployed. See Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam “Factsheet Jeugdwerkloosheid 2012”.

32 “Factsheet Jeugdwerkloosheid”.

33 “De Staat van de Stad VII”.

in 1981, Amsterdam-North became a submunicipality. Amsterdam-North as a whole had 88,434 inhabitants in 2013.³⁴ Amsterdam-North is relatively small in terms of the number of inhabitants; by comparison, New-West had 141,825 inhabitants on 1 January 2013.³⁵ North has quite a large number of residents of non-Western background (37.9 percent), the third largest after South-East (64 percent) and New-West (50 percent) (see also Table 2). The submunicipality is divided into 14 neighbourhoods.

TABLE 2. BACKGROUND OF RESIDENTS: AMSTERDAM-NORTH COMPARED WITH AMSTERDAM AS A WHOLE (%), 1 JANUARY 2013

	Total population	Persons of non-western heritage (percentage)
Amsterdam	799,442	34.9
Amsterdam-North	88,434	37.6

Source: Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam “Kerncijfers Amsterdam 2013” (Key Figures Amsterdam 2013), Amsterdam, at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/assets/pdfs/2013_kerncijfers_amsterdam.pdf (accessed at 21 May 2014), hereafter: “Kerncijfers Amsterdam 2013”.

The number of residents of a non-Western background has continued to increase in Amsterdam-North, from 27 percent in 2000 to 38 percent at the beginning of 2013.³⁶ However, for Amsterdam as a whole, this figure is stabilizing in the last few years (from 35.0% to 34.9% between 2012 and 2013).³⁷ Amsterdam-North is a spacious submunicipality, with the lowest population density of the city.³⁸ The submunicipality also has the highest number of people over 65 in the whole of Amsterdam, at 15.6 percent, of which 7.4 percent are over 75 years of age.³⁹ At the same time, it also has a large number of households with children.⁴⁰ The two neighbourhoods in this research

34 “De Staat van Noord” (The State of North), Amsterdam-North Submunicipality, 2013 (hereafter, “De Staat van Noord, 2013”), at <http://www.noord.amsterdam.nl/actueel/feiten-cijfers/staat-noord/> (accessed 20 May 2014).

35 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, Kerncijfers (Key Figures) 2013, p.22. at . http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/assets/pdfs/2013_kerncijfers_amsterdam.pdf (accessed 20 May 2014).

36 “De Staat van Noord” (The State of North), Amsterdam-North Submunicipality, 2013, p.8, at <http://www.noord.amsterdam.nl/actueel/feiten-cijfers/staat-noord/> (accessed at 21 May 2014) (hereafter, “De Staat van Noord, 2013”).

37 “Kerncijfers Amsterdam 2013”, p. 22 and “Kerncijfers Amsterdam 2012”, p. 24, at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/assets/pdfs/2012_kerncijfers_amsterdam.pdf (accessed 21 May 2014).

38 The exact figure of the population density per square kilometer in Amsterdam-North as per 1 January 2013 is 2,113, see “Kerncijfers Amsterdam 2013”, p. 22.

39 “De Staat van Noord, 2013”.

40 “Kerncijfers Amsterdam 2013”.

project have a large number of residents over 65 years old, at 16 percent in Floradorp (Bloemenbuurt-North) and 18 percent in Tuindorp Buiksloot.⁴¹

2.6 | DEVELOPMENTS AND CONCERNS: A DIVIDED CITY

The peripheral parts of Amsterdam (North, South-East, New-West) have higher percentages of people on a minimum income than the city as a whole (21 percent for North compared with 17 percent average for the city). Between 2009 and 2013, the unemployment rate in North increased from 5.3 percent to 14 percent.⁴² Due to the economic recession, the socio-economic position of Amsterdam-North has been worsening and the gap between the submunicipality and the rest of the city is widening.⁴³ Furthermore, a decrease in the physical liveability of neighbourhoods, dissatisfaction about the maintenance and cleanliness of neighbourhoods and a low subjective sense of safety were registered in 2013.⁴⁴

2.7 | GENTRIFICATION AND CREATIVITY IN AMSTERDAM-NORTH

At the same time, Amsterdam-North is undergoing important changes: the population is increasing, and employment has continued to grow in the past few years. In certain parts of North, large new housing estates are being developed (Elzenhagen Noord and Overhoeks) and a quarter of the overall housing stock is now owner-occupied.⁴⁵ New residents from other parts of the city are increasingly drawn to Amsterdam-North. In the last ten years, the construction of the North–South underground has been under way, which is due to be finished in 2017. It will create a fast public transport connection between the submunicipality and the rest of the city. The area of the immediate shore of the IJ, where the former shipyards were located, is now the site of an intense dynamic process of gentrification. The new Eye Film Museum is an important architectural landmark and sophisticated real-estate projects are being developed in the adjacent area where Royal Shell previously had its headquarters. The former shipyard area, referred to as the NDSM-Wharf, is now home to Amsterdam's most vital creative community, offering space for a host of ateliers and workshops and

41 Amsterdam-North Submunicipality, "Factsheet Tuindorp Buiksloot" in "De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, 2012" at <http://www.noord.amsterdam.nl/actueel/feiten-cijfers/staat-noordse-wijken/staat-noordse-wijken-1/staat-tuindorp-0/>, hereafter "De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, Factsheet Tuindorp Buiksloot, 2012", and "Factsheet Volewijck" in "De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, 2012", <http://www.noord.amsterdam.nl/actueel/feiten-cijfers/staat-noordse-wijken/staat-noordse-wijken-1/download-alle/> (accessed 21 May 2014), hereafter "De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, Factsheet Volewijck, 2012".

42 "De Staat van Noord, 2013", p.22.

43 "De Staat van Noord, 2013"; "De Staat van de Stad VII".

44 "De Staat van Noord, 2013".

45 "De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, 2012".

referred to as the creative hub of Amsterdam, similar to Brooklyn in New York. Larger international companies like MTV Networks have also selected Amsterdam-North as their base in the Netherlands. These developments are very quickly changing the face of the submunicipality as well as its population composition.

2.8 | NEIGHBOURHOODS OF THE RESEARCH: TUINDORP BUIKSLOOT AND FLORADORP

Both Tuindorp Buiksloot and Floradorp have their origins in housing policies that were introduced in the beginning of the 20th century. In 1901, a new housing law was introduced to provide decent housing for the working classes. In 1914, under the strong influence of the Social Democrats in the municipal government, the political ambition was to “uplift and civilise” the working classes through decent housing. The idea was that decent housing, with plenty of light, lots of fresh air and green surroundings, would improve the individual and social well-being of disadvantaged members of the working classes. With these ideals in mind, the “garden villages” (*Tuindorpen*) were erected, village-like neighbourhoods consisting of low-rise, single-family units with front and back gardens, which were affordable for the target group. Between 1918 and 1932 seven of these *Tuindorpen* were built in Amsterdam-North, among them Floradorp and Tuindorp Buiksloot.⁴⁶ These neighbourhoods were first and foremost intended to house harbour workers, although their population eventually became more diverse. Each evolved to have its own specific character and history, and has fostered strong local identities from the beginning. The garden villages have also been associated with the housing of people who were called socially inadmissible, anti-social or the “indecent underclasses” while in reality only the neighbourhood of Asterdorp in Amsterdam-North was intended specifically for this category. The stigma associated with living in Asterdorp is well documented,⁴⁷ but from the focus groups it became clear that this stigma also clings to the image of Tuindorp Buiksloot and Floradorp. In his autobiographical book on his childhood in Amsterdam-North, the writer Jan Donkers recalls: Our mothers never allowed us to go to the “Blauwe Zand” or the “Rimboe”, but it was never clear to me why; maybe because poverty in those areas was “less decent”, the Communist Party scored double figures, and youth criminality in those places, as I discovered later, had already taken exorbitant forms.⁴⁸

It is noteworthy that the garden cities in Amsterdam-North have all remained predominantly white and working-class throughout their existence, despite the large influx of residents with immigrant backgrounds and the gentrification elsewhere in Amsterdam-North.

46 Fred Feddes, *1000 years Amsterdam*, Thoth, Bussum, 2012.

47 Ali de Regt, “Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid: ontwikkelingen in Nederland, 1870-1940: een historisch-sociologische studie” (*Working-class families and civilisation labour: developments in The Netherlands, 1870-1940: a historical-sociological study*), dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 1984.

48 Jan Donkers, *Zo dicht bij Amsterdam* (So Close to Amsterdam), Atlas Contact, Amsterdam, 2013, p. 18.

2.9 | TUINDORP BUIKSLOOT

Tuindorp Buiksloot is a small neighbourhood, with a population of 1,900 in 2012.⁴⁹ It is characterised by a large percentage of residents of Dutch heritage, at 76 percent, although this represents a decrease from 83 percent in 2006. The percentage of residents of non-Western background increased from 10 percent in 2006 to 15 percent in 2011, while the number of Western migrants increased from 7 percent to 9 percent. As mentioned above, 18 percent of the inhabitants are older than 65.⁵⁰ The neighbourhood has a high percentage of social housing.⁵¹

TABLE 3. BACKGROUND OF RESIDENTS: TUINDORP BUIKSLOOT COMPARED WITH AMSTERDAM AS A WHOLE (%), 2012

	Tuindorp Buiksloot	Amsterdam
Native Dutch	76	49.5
Other	24	50.5
Total population	1,900	790,044

Sources: “De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, Factsheet Tuindorp Buiksloot”, p. 3 and “Kerncijfers Amsterdam, 2012”, p. 4.

49 “De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, Factsheet Tuindorp Buiksloot, 2012”.

50 “De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, Factsheet Tuindorp Buiksloot, 2012”.

51 “De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, Factsheet Tuindorp Buiksloot, 2012”.

FIGURE 1. MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF TUINDORP_BUIKSLOOT, 2012**Key:****Light red:** Submunicipality Amsterdam-North**Bright red:** Neighbourhood 63, Tuindorp Buiksloot

The majority of the population is lower-educated⁵² (64 percent, compared with 25 percent in Amsterdam as a whole). The average household income situation is average for Amsterdam-North, and the level of unemployment is a bit lower than in the rest of the submunicipality. There is a large number of vulnerable residents, people who are unable to work due to mental health problems, chronic illness or old age. In 2011, the situation of young people in Tuindorp Buiksloot had improved compared with previous years, in particular with regard to school drop-outs and crimes involving young people.⁵³ In the same year, six out of ten residents (59 percent) expressed their satisfaction with social cohesion in their neighbourhood, which is notably higher than the Amsterdam average.⁵⁴ By contrast, in 2012 people's perception of the liveability of Tuindorp Buiksloot had deteriorated.⁵⁵ On the indicators relating to the use of public space,⁵⁶ the satisfaction of Tuindorp Buiksloot residents clearly declined in the first half of 2012. These results suggest that people's subjective experiences of

52 The definition of lower-educated that is used in this research report follows that used by the Amsterdam Bureau for Research and Statistics to refer to persons who are educated at the most to the level of VMBO or MBO 1. Within this group of lower-educated persons a distinction is made between persons who have completed VMBO or MBO 1 education (lower-educated) and persons who have dropped out of a VMBO education or have only completed primary education. See "Laagopgeleiden op de arbeidsmarkt in de Metropoolregio Amsterdam, 2013" (Lower-educated persons on the labour market in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Region, 2013).

53 "De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, Factsheet Tuindorp Buiksloot, 2012".

54 "De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, Factsheet Tuindorp Buiksloot, 2012".

55 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, "Leefbaarheidsindex Amsterdamse Buurten" (Liveability Index Amsterdam Neighbourhoods), June 2013, at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/assets/pdfs/2012_leefbaarheidsindex%202010_2011_eersteviermaanden%202012.pdf (accessed at 21 May 2014).

56 Including mess on the streets, dog droppings, the maintenance of children's and youth facilities and so on.

social cohesion and liveability in the area really fluctuate. In popular speech, Tuindorp Buiksloot is called Het Blauwe Zand (blue sand), referring to the sand on which the neighbourhood was built that legend has it was blue. Here this term will be used interchangeably with the term Tuindorp Buiksloot in this report (for instance in the comments of participants).⁵⁷

2.10 | FLORADORP

Separate demographic data were more difficult to access for the second neighbourhood of the research project, Floradorp. The most specific data available are about Bloemenbuurt-North, a larger neighbourhood within Volewijck that includes Floradorp.

TABLE 4. BACKGROUND OF RESIDENTS: BLOEMENBUURT-NORTH AND AMSTERDAM AS A WHOLE (%), 2012

	Bloemenbuurt-North	Amsterdam
Of Dutch heritage	68	49.5
Other	32	50.5
Total population	2,371	790,044

Sources: “De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, Factsheet Volewijck” and “Kerncijfers Amsterdam, 2012”, p. 4.

Data from the housing corporation Ymere⁵⁸ suggest that in 2011 only 11 percent of the population was of non-Western background in Floradorp in particular. The amount of minimum-income households was slightly above the average for Amsterdam-North (23 percent). The number of single-parent families was relatively high, and among young people there were many school drop-outs. The proportion of people over 65 in Bloemenbuurt-North was 16 percent, which is well above the Amsterdam city average.⁵⁹ The proportion of minimum-income households in Bloemenbuurt-North was 23 percent.⁶⁰ Residents of Bloemenbuurt-North expressed an average level of

57 Formally, the area of Tuindorp Buiksloot is larger than the area that is referred to as Het Blauwe Zand. The former includes part of the Nieuwendammerdijk, a more affluent area.

58 Interview with staff member of the housing corporation Ymere, Amsterdam, 19 June 2013.

59 “De Staat van Noord, Volewijck, 2012”.

60 It should be emphasised that Volewijck includes the Van der Pekbuurt, a neighbourhood that is a focus area for urban regeneration policy because of its weak socio-economic position. As is observed in “De Staat van Noord, Volewijck, 2012”, within Volewijck problems tend to concentrate in the Van der Pekbuurt, with its high levels of unemployment and poverty and low levels of people's satisfaction with the liveability of their neighbourhood. The Van der Pekbuurt differs from Floradorp in the number of residents of a non-Western background (50 percent) and low numbers of elderly (8 percent). See also “De Staat van Noord, Volewijck, 2012”.

satisfaction with their neighbourhood, giving it a “report mark” of 6.9 out of 10.⁶¹ Like Tuindorp Buiksloot, Floradorp is known to be a typical Amsterdam working-class quarter.

FIGURE 2. MAP SHOWING VOLEWIJCK, 2012



Key:

Light red: Submunicipality Amsterdam-North

Bright red: Neighbourhood 60 Volewijck

61 “De Staat van Noord, Volewijck, 2012”.

3

POLICY CONTEXT

The City of Amsterdam is governed centrally by the City Council, composed of 45 members who are elected by Amsterdam citizens every four years. Elections for the City Council were held on 19 March 2014. The day-to-day administration of the city is run by the City Cabinet, which is composed of a mayor (currently Eberhard van der Laan) and a managing committee of aldermen and alderwomen, who are each responsible for a specific portfolio. The aldermen and-women form a coalition government. On 18 June 2014 a new city administration was installed, which is composed of the social liberal party D66, the socialist party SP and the conservative liberal party VVD. While the aldermen and alderwomen are elected from the City Council members, the Mayor is appointed for a six-year term by the Minister of the Interior. A professional apparatus of services and (project) agencies, each with specific mandates and areas of expertise, support the City Council. A key feature of the governance structure of Amsterdam is the submunicipalities. Many policy tasks are delegated to the level of the submunicipalities, a level of governance below that of the city. The submunicipalities have their own councils, the members of which are elected at the same time as those of the City Council. The number of submunicipalities was reduced from 15 to seven in 2010 as a result of governance structure reforms. Amsterdam-North was one of the two first submunicipalities (together with Osdorp) that were established in 1981, and it has consisted of the same geographical area from the beginning. Until the municipal elections of 19 March 2014, the daily administration of Amsterdam-North was run by elected chairman Rob Post (Social Democrats), and three elected aldermen or -women. With the 2014 elections, the Amsterdam governance structure has changed. The submunicipality is now headed by a governing committee (see below). Three elected members run the daily administration of this committee: Mayor Coby van Berkum (chair, Social Democrats), Saskia Groenewoud (D66, Liberal Democrats) and Erna Berends (Socialist Party).

3.1 | AREA-SPECIFIC URBAN POLICIES: THE FOCUS AREAS

As elsewhere in Western Europe, there has been growing interest in Dutch urban policy in the relationship between people's immediate environment (neighbourhood) and their socio-economic status and development. The focus is not on poverty as such but on processes of social exclusion that could lead to poverty, and the role of the neighbourhood in these processes. Researchers have identified six domains that are relevant to the relationship between the neighbourhood and socio-economic development:

1. positive and negative socialisation between adults about norms and values;
2. the (non) existence of networks in the neighbourhood that offer social support, information and social capital; positive and negative group influence (peer pressure) among young people and children;

3. exposure to violence and crime that could result in behavioural changes and social isolation;
4. quality and availability of public facilities such as schools, hospitals and so on;
5. isolation and distance of the neighbourhood from places of employment.⁶²

Problem neighbourhoods (*probleemwijken*) have negative scores on these six criteria. In addition, the stigmatisation following from the negative reputation of a neighbourhood may affect the psychological, material and social wellbeing of residents. Policy interventions in recent decades have increasingly aimed at achieving broad social change in neighbourhoods with complex problems in multiple domains, or problem neighbourhoods. The ultimate aim is the socio-economic improvement of the residents of these neighbourhoods, attempted through a range of interventions, from the physical intervention of gentrification to socio-cultural interventions, such as enhancing civic participation, and countering social nuisance, unemployment, crime and school drop-outs. Against this backdrop, in 2007 the Dutch government introduced an action plan to improve living standards in 40 Dutch neighbourhoods that were identified as focus areas on the basis of objective indices of deprivation.⁶³ The action plan covered five themes: housing, employment, learning, integration and safety. One of this report's research neighbourhoods, Floradorp, forms part of a larger area (Volewijk) that was targeted by this programme. Until 2012, each of the focus areas received an increased annual budget derived in part from the housing corporations and in part from the government.⁶⁴ When the national budget for the focus areas was cancelled in 2012, the City of Amsterdam decided to continue the interventions with its own funding, under the heading of the Neighbourhood Plan of Action (*Wijkaanpak*). As part of this, submunicipalities formulate a plan of action for particular neighbourhoods together with local partner organisations and residents. In Amsterdam-North, the neighbourhoods of Nieuwendam-North, Old North (Vogelbuurt/Van der Pekbuurt) and De Banne have been selected for the Plan of Action.⁶⁵

Until 2012, the National Budget for Urban Regeneration (*Investeringsbudget Stedelijke Vernieuwing*) was distributed equally across the city. For 2013 and 2014, the decision was made to prioritise the eight areas in Amsterdam that need it most, a selection that partly overlaps with the focus areas. In the submunicipality of Amsterdam-

62 W. van Gent, "De noodzaak van ontrafeling van problemen in stedelijk beleid: het 40 wijken programma" (The necessity of unravelling problems in urban policy: the 40 neighbourhoods program), in S. Musterd and W. Ostendorf, *Problemen in wijken of Probleemwijken?* (Problems in Neighbourhoods or Problem Neighbourhoods?), Van Gorcum, Amsterdam, 2009.

63 Referred to in policy documents as "*aandachtswijken*" or "*krachtwijken*", ("attention neighbourhoods" or "power neighbourhoods") as non-stigmatising terms.

64 *Werk aan de Wijk: een quasi-experimentele evaluatie van het krachtwijkenbeleid* (Working on the neighbourhood: a quasi-experimental evaluation of the focus neighbourhoods policy), Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, The Hague, 2013, hereafter: *Werk aan de Wijk: een quasi-experimentele evaluatie van het krachtwijkenbeleid*.

65 City of Amsterdam "Charter Amsterdamse Wijkaanpak 2008-2018" (Charter of the Amsterdam Neighbourhood Approach), at <http://www.amsterdam.nl/wonen-leefomgeving/buurt-bewoner/wijkaanpak> (accessed 21 May 2014).

North, these are IJplein/Vogelbuurt, Nieuwendam-North and Volewijk. For these neighbourhoods, an extra budget of €12.5 million was available in 2013 and 2014, intended to improve the neighbourhood liveability and socio-economic status of residents. Examples of projects funded from this budget include the 100-jobs plan (see chapter 6), extra neighbourhood safety teams, prevention of school drop-outs (see chapter 5), improvement of sports facilities and an economic investment initiative.⁶⁶

A 2013 report by the 'The Netherlands Institute for Social Research' (*Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau*, SCP) suggests that the national focus areas action plan has had little effect on social mobility, liveability and safety in the neighbourhoods concerned. The original 40 focus areas did not develop differently from comparable areas that have not been the subject of these specific policies. Interestingly, despite this lack of objective difference, the researchers did find that subjectively the residents of these areas were more satisfied with and optimistic about the situation of their neighbourhoods.⁶⁷ From this it may be concluded that the specific interventions of the action plan at least have an important impact at the level of subjective perceptions, because people had the impression that action was being taken to improve their neighbourhoods.

3.2 | A NEW POLICY APPROACH: AREA-FOCUSED WORKING (GEBIEDSGERICHT WERKEN)

From 2014, the City of Amsterdam is implementing a policy approach called area-focused working (*gebiedsgericht werken*), which takes broader social needs as its point of departure and approaches them from a broad, holistic and integrated perspective, instead of sectoral, institutional and fragmented.⁶⁸ The idea of the new approach is to respond to concrete demands that arise within an area rather than a predefined approach, and work in a network relationship with residents, entrepreneurs and other partners. Underlying this approach is the idea of a transition from civic participation, where the government is still the initiator and encourages citizens to participate, to government participation, where citizens, non-governmental organisations and businesses are the initiators and the government is invited to participate, but plays only a modest role. The aim is to create interdisciplinary, demand-oriented teams with good networks in the neighbourhood. Interventions can take place on different scales, ranging from the street and the neighbourhood to the municipality. At the moment

66 Submunicipality Amsterdam-North, "Projecten focuswijken in Noord" (Projects improving neighbourhoods in Amsterdam-North), 2013 at <http://www.noord.amsterdam.nl/wonen/wijken-noord/diversen/algemeen/introductie/> (accessed 21 May 2014).

67 *Werk aan de Wijk, Een quasi-experimentele evaluatie van het krachtwijkenbeleid*, The SCP report has created a fair amount of controversy. The emphasis in the evaluation was on physical interventions rather than social interventions. Critics argue that the effects of physical interventions such as building and renovation cannot be evaluated after a period of only four years.

68 Municipality of Amsterdam, "Gebiedsgericht werken: een kwestie van doen" (The area-specific approach: a matter of just doing it), no date. www.amsterdamopen.nl/info/attachment/id/106, accessed 21 May 2014. Other cities in the Netherlands have a longer history of working with this approach, e.g. Rotterdam.

the approach is still in an experimental phase in different submunicipalities, and there is not yet a formal, city-wide approach. Important in this approach, at least in the start-up phase, are the *frontliniewerkers*, (frontline workers) people in an intermediate position who are able to make the connection between the governmental world and the world of networked organizations and individuals that are active. The transition to area-focused working should be seen in tandem with the national transition to a participation society, or what in the Dutch context has been referred to as the “*doe-democratie*” (the “do-democracy”, similar to the British notion of the big society). According to a recent policy paper by the government, the idea builds on three points of departure: an increasing capacity within society to self-organise; a retreating government; and a greater need for social cohesion.⁶⁹ The policy paper recognises that it is also a response to the developments of decentralisation and budget cutbacks. These developments mark the search for new approaches to governance and new working relationships between the government, professional organisations and citizens, which will be of central importance for this research report. In the city of Amsterdam, these developments are being combined with important reforms in the structure of the municipal government.

3.3 | NEW REFORMS IN THE GOVERNING STRUCTURE OF AMSTERDAM

The policy in the Amsterdam governance structure has always been to decentralise unless centralisation would be more feasible. However, this approach has now changed. In February 2013, the law was amended to abolish the authority of municipalities to create submunicipalities.⁷⁰ The revised law that came into force in March 2014 only allows municipalities to create territorial governing committees, with a much more restricted mandate than the submunicipalities. In anticipation of that law, the City of Amsterdam in July 2013 adopted a proposal for a fundamental revision of the Amsterdam governance structures.⁷¹ In the new structure, the submunicipalities will be transformed into smaller territorial governing committees with a much weaker mandate than that of the current submunicipalities. The emphasis in the mandate of these new committees is on implementation rather than policymaking, and on tasks that have a specific local dimension. Elections for committee members will take place every four years; the competences that are envisaged for the committees include all issues that directly affect the liveability and the direct surroundings of

69 Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and “De Doe-democratie: Kabinetsnota ter stimulering van een vitale samenleving” (The do-democracy: cabinet policy paper to stimulate a vital society), The Hague, July 2013, at <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/publicaties/2013/07/09/kabinetsnota-doe-democratie.html> (accessed 21 May 2014).

70 Act Abolishing the Authority of Submunicipalities, Act of 7 February 2013, Stb. 2013, 76.

71 City of Amsterdam, “Concept Nota Eén Amsterdam: Eén Bestuurlijk Bestel” (Draft Policy Paper One Amsterdam: One System of Governance), 2013 at http://www.amsterdam.nl/publish/pages/517492/01_conceptnota_eeen_amsterdam_eeen_nieuw_bestuurlijk_stelsel_7_maart_2013.pdf (accessed 21 May 2014).

the neighbourhood, the maintenance and provision of facilities that are strictly local and the facilitation of citizens' initiatives. In social cohesion, civic participation, welfare (debt assistance) and youth, domains that are of particular relevance for this research, the committees will retain their current competences. In line with this, the City of Amsterdam has planned a significant recentralisation of tasks from the level of the submunicipalities to the central city. These reforms of the governing structure came into effect in March 2014. They have been the subject of heated debate on the political scene in Amsterdam. Proponents of the reforms argue that the submunicipalities represent an unnecessary layer of governance that is not conducive to democratic legitimacy. Opponents argue that the only rationale for the reforms is budgetary cuts, and that submunicipalities enhance local democratic decision-making. Compared with other submunicipalities, many citizens of Amsterdam-North (42 percent) wanted to keep the submunicipalities in their previous form.⁷² Whichever perspective may be right, the reforms undeniably mark important changes in the workings of local democracy. The most important change is an increased emphasis on new, unconventional arrangements, networks and partnerships to address policy challenges. This transition is reflected in several of the social domains that are addressed in this research report.

The reform of the Amsterdam governance structure offers opportunities for enhanced civic participation. A new policy position on the subject of civic participation has recently been formulated at the City level. This report, which presents the experiences and opinions of citizens on a range of matters relating to participation, could make an important contribution to this process. At the same time, it demonstrates that people's confidence in the workings of local democracy is at a low point. If not skilfully managed, drastic changes, increasing centralisation and uncertainty could aggravate this lack of confidence.

3.4 | DECENTRALISATION OF KEY TASKS FROM THE NATIONAL TO THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL

Another important development affecting city governance in Amsterdam is the decentralisation, from 2015 until 2017, of three important tasks in the social domain from the national government to the municipalities: young people, health care and employment. Large budget cuts will be implemented at the same time that competences in these three domains are decentralised. This decentralisation forms an important challenge for municipalities, as a solid governing infrastructure for these tasks is not yet in place. It forms one of the additional arguments for the city government to strengthen its centralised position vis-a-vis the submunicipalities.

72 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, "Burgermonitor 2011" (The Citizens' Monitor), August 2012, at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/assets/pdfs/2012_amsterdamse_burgermonitor_2011.pdf (accessed 21 May 2014). The *Burgermonitor* is a yearly research publication monitoring the relationship between Amsterdammers and their city, based on a representative survey amongst Amsterdammers.

The intention is to coordinate the implementation of these tasks with the future submunicipal committees, to ensure a tailor-made approach for the most vulnerable in society. All in all, the year 2014 is a year of transition: to a fundamentally new city governing structure, a new political landscape after the 2014 municipal elections, and new tasks for the city in the fields of young people, health care and employment. These changes, and the insecurity they create, shape the policy context of the Open Society Foundations' research project in important ways.

4

IDENTITY AND BELONGING

The focus of this chapter is on how participants in the Open Society Foundations' research project gave meaning to their identities, most specifically as residents of their neighbourhoods, but also as citizens of Amsterdam and as Dutch citizens. The chapter explores how participants described their own identities, and how they describe the community they are part of. It examines their sense of belonging and attachment to their neighbourhood, to the submunicipality and to the city. The chapter also examines the social cohesion and sense of community that are associated with these neighbourhoods, specifically in relation to demographic changes and the increasing diversity of the last decade.

4.1 | SENSE OF BELONGING TO THE CITY OF AMSTERDAM AND TO THE SUBMUNICIPALITY

The *Burgermonitor 2011* (The Citizens' Monitor 2011) found that eight out of ten Amsterdammers experienced a sense of belonging, of being connected to their city. The sense of belonging to the city was slightly higher than it was to the Netherlands, and stronger than the sense of belonging to the submunicipality or the neighbourhood. Respondents with better educations were found to have a stronger sense of city identity than less educated respondents.⁷³

Amsterdam-North as a submunicipality has a strong localised identity. Geographically separated from the rest of Amsterdam by the water (IJ), it is often considered by residents and outsiders as different and separate from Amsterdam.⁷⁴ This local sense of identity is reinforced by objective differences between Amsterdam-North and the more central parts of the city. As mentioned in chapter 2, employment and income deprivation in Amsterdam are concentrated disproportionately in the more peripheral parts of the city, including Amsterdam-North.⁷⁵ In addition, the peripheral areas rank significantly lower on several social indicators such as participation and liveability. The danger of a dichotomy between two districts—one central and wealthy and one peripheral and deprived—is a growing policy concern against the backdrop of the ongoing economic recession.

The great majority of participants in the Open Society Foundations' research expressed a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhood and a sense of attachment to place, reflected in a real appreciation of the way these neighbourhoods are designed. They praised the green surroundings and the large amount of space compared

73 "Burgermonitor 2011".

74 See, for example, M. Hurenkamp and E. Tonkens, *De onbeholpen samenleving: burgerschap aan het begin van de 21e eeuw* (The Helpless Society: Citizenship at the beginning of the 21st Century), Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2011.

75 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, "De Staat van de Stad Amsterdam VI" (The State of the City of Amsterdam VI), May 2011, at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/assets/pdfs/2011_staativandestadvi_compleet.pdf (accessed 20 May 2014) (hereafter, "De Staat van de Stad Amsterdam VI").

with the situation across the IJ on the other side of the water. The history of the two neighbourhoods is a strong source for the participants' sense of identity. Being from Amsterdam-North is described as something fundamentally different from being from elsewhere in the city. That said, many stressed connections with the rest of Amsterdam, for instance, the fact that the first arrivals in these neighbourhoods came from the very heart of Amsterdam, the Jordaan. However, some participants expressed a sense of not being included in Amsterdam as a city:

I do feel a connection with Amsterdam as a city, but I don't think the love is mutual. (Woman, 44)

Participants emphasised the strong sense of community among original residents of the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood was referred to as a family: children are always looked after by neighbours, people generally look after one another. Many people spoke of being rooted in the neighbourhood, of always wanting to return to the neighbourhood, and many young people expressed their desire to stay in the neighbourhood when leaving the parental home (especially in Tuindorp Buiksloot). In fact, many family ties exist in both neighbourhoods:

Returning to this neighbourhood felt like returning to my roots. My mother lives here too. We eat together every night. (Woman, 44)

Remarkably strong territorial boundaries are drawn around the neighbourhood, and people who live up on the Dijk or across the outer roads of the neighbourhood were described as "different from us". Sometimes this arose from class-related boundaries (people on the Dijk are considered to be of a higher socio-economic status), sometimes these were simply historical rivalries between very similar neighbourhoods dating back to the very early days. A sense of rivalry and difference between the two research areas also manifested itself, but this seems to be rather light-hearted and playful.

The prototypical resident of the neighbourhood was described as a hard-working, honest, direct and simple person, to be contrasted with yuppies or more cultural or artistic people across the IJ. The way of life in the neighbourhood was described as very sociable, very open: people get together for drinks in the front garden. At the same time, social control was not always framed positively:

We all know everything about each other, that also has its downsides. I know a lot about the people in the neighbourhood and the neighbours about me. When I have a fight with my man, I have it in front of everybody. And so the neighbour will overhear. But I am used to that. (Woman, 52)

4.2 | ETHNIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND THE DRAWING OF BOUNDARIES

The *Burgermonitor 2011* reported that elderly as well as less educated Amsterdammers have few social interactions with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Both higher- and lower-educated people of Dutch heritage were found to have relatively homogenous groups of family and friends. The *Burgermonitor* registered that half of all less-educated young people of Dutch heritage think negatively about Amsterdammers of Moroccan descent. The *Burgermonitor* examined social cohesion in the city and in the neighbourhoods. It defined social cohesion in terms of residents' opinions on social interactions and cohabitation of different residents in their neighbourhood. In 2011, slightly less than half of Amsterdam's inhabitants (47 percent) expressed experiencing a sense of social cohesion in their neighbourhood.⁷⁶

In the decade after 11 September 2001, and particularly after the murder of the Dutch film-maker Theo van Gogh by Mohammed B., a Dutch citizen of Moroccan descent in 2004, a lot of emphasis was placed on policy initiatives that stimulated dialogue and social cohesion between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Amsterdam.⁷⁷ Recent figures indicate that the overwhelming majority of Amsterdammers of non-Dutch heritage feel a strong sense of belonging to Amsterdam.⁷⁸ The governing coalition (2010–2014) moved away from the explicit emphasis on the integration of newcomers to speak about citizenship in more generic terms. Under the motto of “courtesy” (*hoffelijkheid*), former alderwoman, Andrée van Es, emphasised the importance of social manners in the interactions between Amsterdammers, and encouraged Amsterdammers to join together to make the city a better place.⁷⁹ In December 2010 the mayor of Amsterdam stressed: We are beyond thinking in terms of integration and minorities. Citizenship refers to a vision for the future and lets go of the notion of heritage. It underscores the irreversibility of immigration. In the future, we will no longer have a majority in the “*autochtoon*” meaning of the word.⁸⁰

In the focus group discussions, people's sense of identity as members of the majority population was only indirectly the subject of the conversations. Even though it was not an explicit topic of debate, it was present in many of the discussions, particularly those on multicultural society. Many participants lamented the changes that they see in their neighbourhood that also affect the way of life. In particular, the increasing ethnic diversity of Amsterdam-North as a whole and the two neighbourhoods specifically

76 “Burgermonitor 2011”

77 The programme “We Amsterdammers” (*Wij Amsterdammers*) of the City of Amsterdam was the most concrete manifestation of that policy. See www.amsterdam.nl/wijamsterdammers (accessed 21 May 2014).

78 City of Amsterdam, “Burgerschap en diversiteit: geen burgerschap zonder hoffelijkheid” (Citizenship and diversity: no citizenship without courtesy), Policy briefing, 12 May 2012 at http://www.amsterdam.nl/publish/pages/422208/dmo_burgdiv_factsheethoffelijkheid_ned_lr.pdf. (accessed at 21 May 2014) (hereafter, “Burgerschap en diversiteit”).

79 “Burgerschap en diversiteit”.

80 Speech by the mayor of Amsterdam, Eberhard van der Laan, 8 December 2010.

was regarded negatively. Participants gave examples of families of different ethnic backgrounds having been chased out of the neighbourhood:

In the old days when a migrant family moved here, they would be harassed until they would move. Migrant families are not really being accepted. (Woman, 47)

Many participants spoke about feelings of discomfort when confronted with large groups of Amsterdammers of non-Dutch heritage:

This is also a white neighbourhood, it is a tight-knit community. There is a handful of Turkish, a neger [derogatory term for a black person], Afghan and a few Moroccans. These are the only ones that live here. I really don't like to stand in between a group of Moroccans. (Man, 19)

The perception of several participants is that “people with headscarves” are taking over the social facilities (like the community centre on Saturdays) and this creates resentment. This sense of discomfort manifests itself strongly in employment, education, and health and welfare, and will be addressed more extensively in the following chapters on each of those themes.

X: It is nicely “Aryan” over here. You do not have any nonsense about people with a religion. For example, no headscarves on the streets that stare at you. I can lie in the garden in my bikini without being called a hooker. (Woman, 20)

Interviewer: What is it like in other neighbourhoods?

X: A lot more headscarves, a lot more black. Y: The Muslims are taking over. (Man, 22)

Particularly interesting is the idea that there is a way of life in the neighbourhood that newcomers should adjust to. Descriptions of this way of life entailed a wide variety of elements. Some had to do with progressive values relating to sexuality or alcohol use, and were particularly brought up to mark the inability of certain ethnically different newcomers to adjust. For example, many emphasised that socialising outdoors and sharing drinks is an important part of the local way of life. Other examples of the local way of life were more clearly introduced to mark the difference between insiders and newcomers from different class backgrounds. Yuppies were said to have a different way of dress, a different choice in schools (the elite schools outside the area) and transport (the *bakfietsen*, carrier tricycles). Most importantly, they were considered to be unable to adjust if they did not display the expected social manners, such as introducing oneself to neighbours, and greeting or having a chat in the street.

Newcomers with the same ethnic background but a different class background are initially regarded with suspicion, but mostly seem to be given the benefit of the doubt.

Some participants were of the opinion that their presence might potentially improve the neighbourhood. Others were less optimistic, but mostly blamed it on the way of life that these middle-class newcomers have. They are thought to be less able to commit themselves to the neighbourhood and to social cohesion because “they have no choice but to work day and night to pay their mortgages”. They also have different norms dealing with the police:

The neighbourhood is changing. The new people that moved here are from outside Amsterdam, they are used to something else and they quickly call the police.
(Man, 19)

4.3 | DISCUSSION

The persistent drawing of boundaries between different groups of people emerged very prominently in the data from the Open Society Foundations focus groups on identity and belonging. People were continually demarcating their own community by pointing out the differences between themselves and other communities. Commentators have suggested that segregation and dividing lines in Amsterdam-North between inhabitants of Dutch and of non-Dutch origin as well as between rich and poor are more prominent than in other parts of the city.⁸¹ The data in this study suggest that many participants see the increasing diversity of their neighbourhoods as a threat to social cohesion. This appears to support Robert Putnam’s theory that ethnic diversity stands in a negative relationship to social cohesion.⁸² Although academic research did not find a consistent confirmation of Putnam’s theory in the Netherlands,⁸³ this study suggests that at the level of perception, increased diversity is indeed seen as threatening social cohesion, community and the collective identity. Some other theoretical perspectives could be helpful in explaining these patterns. Ethnic competition theory⁸⁴ argues that in neighbourhoods with a lower than average socio-economic status there is more competition between different population groups. This is fed by a sense of deprivation and the belief that the other groups pose a threat to one’s job security.

In a 2013 advisory report, the Council for Social Development (*Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling*) emphasised that residents with a lower socio-economic status are more oriented towards the immediate neighbourhood and have a stronger

81 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam and Verweij Jonker Instituut, *Samenleven met Verschillen* (Living together with differences), Amsterdam, 2010, p. 30.

82 R. Putnam, “E pluribus unum: Diversity and community in the twenty first century the 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture.” *Scandinavian political studies* 30.2 (2007): 137–174.

83 Mérove Gijsberts, Tom van der Meer, and Jaco Dagevos. “Hunkering down in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods? The effects of ethnic diversity on dimensions of social cohesion.” *European Sociological Review* 28.4 (2012): 527–537.

84 M. Sherif, *Group Conflict and Co-operation: Their Social Psychology*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1967.

network within the neighbourhood.⁸⁵ They are also more sensitive to problems in the neighbourhood and as a reaction develop negative opinions about other population groups. In neighbourhoods with lower average socio-economic status, there is therefore more potential for polarisation and boundary-drawing between groups. Different studies demonstrate that there is little trust, more tension and an avoidance of interactions between residents in neighbourhoods with a mixed population. However, tensions are not a direct result of (religious or ethnic) diversity as such, but of a fear of addressing one another about undesired behaviour. A 2010 research report commissioned by the Amsterdam Municipality⁸⁶ suggested that harmonious cohabitation in a neighbourhood is, among other things, dependent on the degree to which there is a consensus on unwritten codes of conduct in the neighbourhood (about greeting, keeping the public space clean, the disciplining of children and so on). The lack of familiarity in mixed neighbourhoods is often proposed as a central reason for tensions. People in mixed neighbourhoods do not recognise each other and therefore do not dare to address others, in case this is undesired behaviour.⁸⁷ The inability to address neighbours about problems in turn creates a feeling of disempowerment. This is what makes mixed neighbourhoods more vulnerable than homogenous areas. The deepening of the economic crisis combined with budget cutbacks in neighbourhood community work serves to increase these tensions.⁸⁸ The two neighbourhoods of this research project were each identified in the 2010 report as neighbourhoods with a fair degree of tension or polarisation.⁸⁹

4.4 | THE CULTURALIZATION⁹⁰ OF DUTCH CITIZENSHIP AND IDENTITY

The ways in which participants in the study spoke about ethnically different newcomers reflects some of the concerns of working-class people of Dutch heritage about the multicultural society that have been documented elsewhere.⁹¹ It also

85 Council for Social Development, *Het Onbehagen Voorbij, een wenkend perspectief op onvrede en onmacht* (Beyond discontent, a beckoning perspective on discontent and disempowerment), Amsterdam, January 2013.

86 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, and Verweij Jonker Instituut, *Samenleven met Verschillen* (Living together with differences), Amsterdam, 2010.

87 R. van Wonderen and M. Cohen, "Handreiking Weerbare Buurten" (A Helping Hand for Resilient Neighbourhoods), City of Amsterdam, 2013 (hereafter, Van Wonderen and Cohen, "Handreiking Weerbare Buurten").

88 Van Wonderen and Cohen, "Handreiking Weerbare Buurten".

89 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, and Verweij Jonker Instituut, *Verslag van de bijeenkomst Samenleven met Verschillen* (Report of the meeting on Living Together with Differences), Amsterdam, April 2012. In Amsterdam-North as a whole, 37 percent of residents expressed experiencing tension about differences of values connected with maintaining the neighbourhood. In general, in the whole of North a high level of tension exists between different population groups in the neighbourhoods: "De Staat van Noord 2013", p. 61.

90 Within sociology, the concept of culturalization refers to the growing importance that is attached to cultural heritage, the 'canon', and to emotions linked to culture and the nation such as loyalty, feeling at home, and belonging. See: <http://www.culturalization.nl/> (accessed 21 May 2014)

91 M. de Gruijter, M., E. Smits van Waesberghe and H. Boutellier, "Een Vreemde in Eigen Land" (A stranger in one's own country) Aksant, Amsterdam, 2011 (hereafter, De Gruijter et al., "Een Vreemde in Eigen Land").

reflects the general shift in the Dutch discourse on integration of ethnic minorities. In the last decade, the integration of ethnic minorities has become highly political. For instance: The Dutch have shown a renewed concern with redefining the national imagined community in a way that provides a clear national identity and strengthens national cohesion.⁹²

Integration policies have taken a more assimilationist direction that stresses good citizenship: immigrants are expected to adapt to Dutch norms and values. The emphasis is increasingly placed on culture and a fear of the loss of Dutch culture.⁹³ This development was set in motion around the time of the political rise of Pim Fortuyn in 2002. Scholars suggest that it was Fortuyn who “made the alleged failure of integration of minorities a symbol for the broader dissatisfaction with the Dutch government and democracy”.⁹⁴ Since then, the tendency to define Dutchness in cultural terms has grown. Part of what is seen as Dutch culture by the majority population consists of secular progressive values concerning gender, family and sexuality. These are precisely the values that people regard as under threat by an increasingly diverse society and particularly by the arrival in their neighbourhoods of people from Muslim backgrounds. In a 2011 research study, De Gruijter, Van Waesberghe and Boutellier focused specifically on feelings of discontent about multicultural society among citizens of Dutch heritage.⁹⁵ They interviewed residents of Dutch heritage in neighbourhoods with similar profiles as those in this research, with the difference that the ethnic composition of the neighbourhoods in their study was changing more rapidly. They found that many respondents attributed negative changes they perceived in their neighbourhood to the arrival of people of a non-Dutch background, even if in reality no negative incidents had taken place. Most respondents felt that persons of non-Dutch heritage should adjust to Dutch culture (particularly in bringing up children, eating habits and sexual morals). They also frequently expressed nostalgia for the sense of community they remembered from the past.

4.4.1 | INCREASING CLASS DISTINCTIONS

The ways in which participants described differences between longstanding residents and newcomers with different socio-economic status reflect a sense of class distinctions. As Bovens and Wille argue, in Dutch society the gap between higher- and lower-educated citizens is widening, and this has consequences for participation in

92 P. Scholten and R. Holzacker, “Bonding, bridging and ethnic minorities in the Netherlands: changing discourses in a changing nation”, *Nations and Nationalism* 15 (1) (2009), pp. 81–100 (hereafter, Scholten and Holzacker, “Bonding, bridging and ethnic minorities in the Netherlands”).

93 J.W. Duyvendak, *The Politics of Home: Belonging and Nostalgia in Europe and the United States*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2011.

94 Scholten and Holzacker, “Bonding, bridging and ethnic minorities in the Netherlands”.

95 See De Gruijter et al., “Een Vreemde in Eigen Land”. They made a distinction between social trust and institutional trust and argued that both levels of trust were under pressure for discontented citizens.

society.⁹⁶ The authors point to persistent differences in political trust, willingness to vote, and in norms, values, opinions and political activism between lower- and higher-educated citizens.⁹⁷

4.5 | CONCLUSION

There has traditionally been a strong sense of community in both neighbourhoods. It is associated with a certain way of life, significant social interaction and social control, and is historically rooted (culturalization). Participants experience a remarkably strong attachment to their immediate neighbourhoods, and a much weaker attachment to the rest of the submunicipality and, particularly, the city. For many, the city symbolises something that they are not part of, and they mostly refer to it to contrast it with their own sense of localised neighbourhood identity. There are also clear downsides of this sense of community. First, the localised identity is both ethnicity- and class-based, and strong boundaries are drawn between one's own community and other communities on the basis of ethnic or class differences. It can therefore manifest itself in ways that exclude newcomers. Examples of these mechanisms of exclusion (particularly of non-Western newcomers) were given in several focus groups. Second, the community identity as hard-working, *volks*, anti-establishment and with a certain lifestyle can have a restrictive impact on those who choose a different path for themselves. Especially in the case of young people, there seems to be considerable peer pressure to behave in a certain way, and this might have spillover effects into education and employment. Moreover, the strong sense of local community is increasingly under threat, not only as a result of demographic changes, but also because of the economic recession. Up until the present, both neighbourhoods remain overwhelmingly white working-class, but this is changing gradually. Participants were ambivalent about these demographic changes. Newcomers to the neighbourhood are generally regarded with suspicion and their acceptance is conditional upon their fitting into the local way of life". Newcomers from the ethnic-majority background but a different class background seem to be more easily accepted than newcomers of a different ethnic background. A widely shared sentiment was that social cohesion is under threat due to the increasing diversity in these neighbourhoods. This fear of a loss of culture, combined with a genuine feeling of lacking any influence at the political level (see chapter 10) creates a fundamental sense of not being heard and not being understood, and feeds into what is documented as social discontent.⁹⁸

96 M. Bovens and A. Wille, "Diplomademocratie", *Over de spanning tussen meritocratie en democratie*, Bert Bakker, Amsterdam, 2011 (hereafter, Bovens and Wille, "Diplomademocratie").

97 Bovens and Wille, "Diplomademocratie".

98 De Gruijter et al., "Een Vreemde in Eigen Land".

BEST PRACTICE: ILOVENOORD.NL

Ilovenoord.nl⁹⁹ is one of the biggest on- and offline grassroots communities in Amsterdam. The blog focuses on the positive and fun aspects of living in Amsterdam-North, and thereby contributes to a redefinition of the (often negative) identity of the submunicipality. The blog was created and is updated by a mixed group of voluntary editors, all inhabitants of Amsterdam-North and of various ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. The blog is said to have a positive impact on community building across different population groups in Amsterdam-North.

99 See <http://www.ilovenoord.nl> (accessed October 2013).

5

EDUCATION

This chapter addresses the experiences of participants in the educational system, including basic, secondary and higher education. Education has been demonstrated to be a decisive factor influencing participation, not only in the labour market, but also in many other social domains.¹⁰⁰ This chapter presents stories of school careers and experiences that participants shared in the focus groups. The participants' levels of education and the choices they made for their secondary and higher education are examined. It looks at the impact of ethnic or socio-economic segregation on the school choices and experiences of members of the researched community. Furthermore, the chapter examines the role of parents in encouraging and supporting their children throughout their school careers. An important point of attention is the interaction between learners, parents and school staff. On the basis of both focus group discussions and interviews with professionals, the chapter assesses the mutual relationships as experienced by each of these actors.

5.1 | SCHOOLS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOODS OF THE RESEARCH

There is no primary school in Tuindorp Buiksloot itself and the closest is the nearby Capelle school. Around 50 percent of the students at this school live in Tuindorp Buiksloot.¹⁰¹ The school has a history of negative evaluations by the Inspectorate for Education,¹⁰² but there have been improvements since the arrival of a new director. In the immediate surroundings of Tuindorp Buiksloot there are several secondary and higher education schools in close proximity to each other: Waterlant College (VMBO and MBO), Clusius College (VMBO), Damstede (Havo/VWO), Bredero Beroepscollege (VMBO) and the Regionaal Opleidings Centrum (ROC) Amsterdam (vocational training). The direct surroundings of the local primary school, the Capelle, are cause for concern. Disorder caused by students of the secondary schools and the ROC creates an immediate school environment in which parents and also children feel unsafe.¹⁰³ Three primary schools with a total of 659 students are located in Volewijck, of which Floradorp is a part. A large number of pupils are designated as "weight" pupils which in the education policy context means that pupils with two lower-educated parents (40 percent compared with 27 percent for Amsterdam as a

100 "De Staat van de Stad Amsterdam VI".

101 Interview with school director at the primary school, July 2013.

102 Dutch Inspectorate for Education, "Onderwijsinspectie, Rapport Periodiek Kwaliteitsonderzoek Basisschool F.C. Capelle" (Periodical report of quality assessment of F.C. Capelle elementary school), April 2004, at <http://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl> (accessed 26 May 2014). In this report, the school was found to be of insufficient quality on several indicators. However, in the report for 2010 the Inspectorate concluded that the school had improved in almost all areas and was now delivering sufficient quality: "Rapport van Bevindingen" (Report of findings), 2010, at <http://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl> (accessed 26 May 2014).

103 Interview with school director at De Capelle primary school, Amsterdam, 8 July 2013.

whole).¹⁰⁴The Cito exam,¹⁰⁵ an independent assessment of final-year primary-school pupils in the Netherlands, gives an indication of the average achievements in a school. In Amsterdam-North, the average Cito score is lower than the Amsterdam average (531.5 in North, compared with 534 in Amsterdam in 2013),¹⁰⁶ but the score is higher than the Amsterdam average in both neighbourhoods of the Open Society Foundations' research. In Amsterdam-North the number of pupils who go on to lower levels of secondary and higher education is higher than in the city as a whole.

THE DUTCH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The Dutch educational system is highly stratified. At the age of 12, after primary education, students can choose between three educational tracks, each at a different level. They can go to pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), which lasts four years and prepares for upper-secondary vocational education (MBO). The second track is senior general secondary education (HAVO), which lasts five years and prepares for higher vocational education (HBO, professional bachelors). The third track is pre-university education (VWO), which lasts six years and prepares for studies at university (academic bachelors' and masters').

Source: T. Traag and R.K.W. van der Velden, "Early School-leaving in the Netherlands: The Role of Student, Family and School Factors for Early School-leaving in Lower Secondary Education", Research Centre for Education and the Labour Market, Maastricht, 2008, at http://www.roa.nl/pdf_publications/2008/ROA_RM_2008_3.pdf (accessed at 21 May 2014) (hereafter, Traag and Van der Velden, "Early School-leaving in the Netherlands").

5.2 | THE IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES ON EDUCATION

The focus of educational policy has long been on disadvantaged pupils with a migrant background, while the school attendance of pupils of Dutch heritage from lower economic-status groups has largely been neglected. In the last ten years, researchers raised concern about the school participation of the latter group, both nationally and locally in Amsterdam-North. Nationally, reports in 2003 (by the Netherlands Institute

¹⁰⁴ "De Staat van Noord, Volewijck, 2011".

¹⁰⁵ Cito stands for 'Centraal Instituut voor Toetsontwikkeling' (Central Institute for Test Development). The Cito-test is intended to assess the educational level of primary school pupils in their final year, in order to decide what level of higher education is most appropriate for them.

¹⁰⁶ Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, "De Staat van de Jeugd" (The State of Youth), 2013 at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/assets/pdfs/2013_staatvandejeugd.pdf (accessed 21 May 2014).

for Social Research)¹⁰⁷ and in 2011 (by the Kohnstamm Institute)¹⁰⁸ indicated that the gap in school achievement between students with Dutch heritage from better-off and disadvantaged backgrounds is widening. By contrast, the gap between advantaged learners with Dutch heritage and disadvantaged learners of a migrant background is narrowing. Studies indicate that the early selection mechanism and the stratified, tracked system enhance social inequalities in the educational system.¹⁰⁹ At an early age, children's social environment (*leefmilieu*) weighs heavily on their educational choices and destinies, while at a later age these choices are made more independently from parents and others in the immediate social environment. The important choice of secondary education is made at the young age of 12 years. Research also suggests that a strongly differentiated or tracked schooling system like the Dutch system results in larger socio-economic differences. Inequalities of social environment are prominent in the system.¹¹⁰ This study reflects the potentially negative outcomes of these processes: learners end up at levels that are unsuitable for them, achieve below their capacities, become demotivated or drop out. A starting qualification (*startkwalificatie*, minimally a HAVO, VWO diploma or MBO 2 diploma)¹¹¹ counts as the minimal qualification for the labour market. In Amsterdam, 35 percent of young people without starter qualification are employed, but this group has a higher risk of unemployment than those with a starter qualification.¹¹² Remarkably, the percentage of young people who are unemployed with a starter qualification has been increasing, at 52 percent in 2012 compared with 43 percent in 2010.¹¹³ This may reflect the fact that the basic qualification is less of a guarantee against unemployment than it was in earlier times.¹¹⁴

107 R. Vogels and R. Bronneman-Helmers, "Autochtone achterstandsleerlingen: een vergeten groep" (Autochthonous disadvantaged learners: a forgotten group), The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, Amsterdam, 2003, at http://www.scp.nl/Publicaties/Alle_publicaties/Publicaties_2003/Autochtone_achterstandsleerlingen (accessed 21 May 2014).

108 J. Roeleveld, G. Driessen, G. Ledoux, J. Cuppen and J. Meijer *Doelgroepopleerlingen in het basisonderwijs* (Target group learners in primary education), Kohnstamm Institute, Amsterdam, 2011.

109 H. van de Werfhorst and J.J.B. Mijs, "Achievement Inequality and the Institutional Structure of Educational Systems: A Comparative Perspective", *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010), pp. 407–428 (hereafter, Van de Werfhorst and Mijs, "Achievement Inequality").

110 Van de Werfhorst and Mijs, "Achievement Inequality".

111 MBO-level: upper-secondary vocational education.

112 "De Staat van de Jeugd 2013" p. 139.

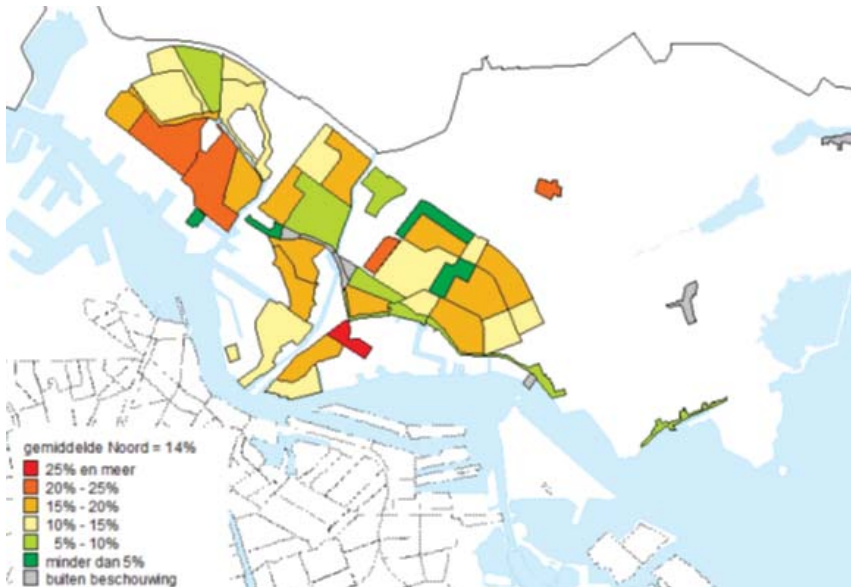
113 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, "Factsheet Jeugdwerkloosheid, 2012" Amsterdam, March 2013 at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/assets/pdfs/2013_rapport_jeugdwerkloosheid_2012.pdf (accessed 21 May 2014).

114 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, "Voortijdig schoolverlaters AmsterdamNoord" (Early school drop-outs in Amsterdam-North), Amsterdam, 2011 at www.noord.amsterdam.nl/publish/pages/.../11111_vsv_noord_def.pdf (accessed 21 May 2014) (hereafter, "Voortijdig schoolverlaters Amsterdam-Noord").

5.3 | EARLY SCHOOL-LEAVING IN AMSTERDAM-NORTH

Compared with the rest of Amsterdam, the early school-leaving¹¹⁵ rate is disproportionately high in Amsterdam-North, specifically in the Open Society Foundations' research locations. A 2011 report registered a drop-out rate of 20 percent in North compared with 15 percent, the Amsterdam average.¹¹⁶ For people with Dutch heritage, the discrepancy between North and the rest of the city was even starker: 18 percent in North compared with 6 percent for the Amsterdam average. In North, 44 percent of school drop-outs are of Dutch heritage, compared with 26 percent for the Amsterdam average. In the two neighbourhoods where the Open Society Foundations conducted the research, more than 25 percent of students of Dutch heritage drop out of school, and this figure has persistently been this high until 2012.¹¹⁷ The two neighbourhoods of the research each scored 15–20 percent in 2012.

FIGURE 3. EARLY SCHOOL-LEAVING IN THE DIFFERENT NEIGHBOURHOODS OF AMSTERDAM-NORTH, 31 JULY 2012



Source: “De Staat van Noord 2013”, p. 34.

115 “School dropouts” refer to those who leave lower-secondary education (VMBO) without a diploma. The second group, “early school-leavers”, refers to those who leave full time education before obtaining a starter qualification (HAVO, VWO or MBO level 2). See Traag and Van der Velden, “Early School-leaving in the Netherlands”; “De Staat van de Stad VI”.

116 Amsterdam Department for Research and Statistics, *Voortijdig schoolverlaters*.

117 Amsterdam Department for Research and Statistics, *Voortijdig schoolverlaters*.

5.4 | SCHOOL CHOICES AND CAREERS OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

The picture of school choices and the levels of education completed by research participants were muddled. Some participants argued that for the sectors in which many of them are employed, no formal education is necessary, and the incentive to pursue further education from their peer group or family is low.

I did get my diploma, but for my job as a roof tiler, it is not necessary. (Man, 18)

What is the use of a VMBO diploma? Not a (fuck)! (Man, 22)

Several participants pointed out that parents do not convey the importance of education to their children. On the other hand, there were also examples of parents explicitly encouraging their children to continue their learning, and supporting them in their schoolwork.

My parents have told me that I should get on to the labour market at a young age. (Man, 18)

Either you go to school and you finish it, or you quit school and you get a job. Being unemployed is not accepted in our home. (Woman, 20)

In some cases, pressure from a peer group or the social environment (the street, the city) contributed to participants' failure in school, despite support and encouragement from their parents. By contrast, some young participants also believed that it was their own determination to finish their education and obtain a degree that helped them. In general, a large proportion of participants either did not pursue higher education, dropped out before obtaining a starter qualification, or dropped from higher to lower levels of education during the course of their school careers. Many respondents recounted stories of skipping school. Two female participants dropped out of school because of a teenage pregnancy, but both expressed the desire to go back to school as soon as family circumstances would allow it. Some participants and school professionals reported a lack of motivation among students, and believed that students were achieving less than they could. They indicated that children were encouraged to secure employment rather than pursue their school career further. Many children end up working in the same sectors as their parents or other members of the family.

This quote from a 15-year-old girl exemplifies the multiple factors that may lead to a frustrated school career:

In my case there were many problems at primary school, I've learned very little in the last year. When my mother voiced her complaints about this, things escalated,

and my mother had a court case against the school. I have learned very little. That is why I messed up my Cito exam,¹¹⁸ and now I am enrolled in a school below my capacities. (Girl, 14)

Another example: Interviewer: How did your school career go?

Participant: Downhill! I started at VWO, with gymnasium (sixth form college) potential. But that did not turn out. I transferred to HAVO, afterwards VMBO-t, kader¹¹⁹ and eventually basic. That is when I got my diploma. Interviewer: And why was that?

Participant: I am not a stupid guy, but there are many other things that appealed to me more than school. (Man, 25)

A director of a vocational college interviewed for this research pointed to a lack of support and aspiration as the reasons for children ending up in levels of schooling below their capacities: It should be much easier for these children to escape the social environment that they are in. But they are not getting encouraged at home ... Parents do not give that extra bit of support. Yes, their children have to go to school, but if a child that is capable of doing HAVO only gets a VMBO basic diploma, they are fine with it.¹²⁰

A submunicipal adviser on youth policy interviewed for this report¹²¹ identified three key factors that account for the high rate of early school-leavers in the neighbourhoods of this research. First, there is a large prevalence of mild mental disability (LVB) among this student population. Second, a disproportionately high percentage of the population are youth welfare clients (*geïndiceerde jeugdzorg*). Third, intergenerational mechanisms reproduce a lack of incentive, low levels of education and lower socio-economic status along family lines.

An alternative explanation offered by the adviser interviewed is the high work ethic in these communities, pushing young people to join the labour force as early as possible, because work is valued more than schooling. It is significant in this context that a large number of early school-leavers (40 percent) in these communities are employed.

118 The CITO exam is an independent assessment of final-year primary-school pupils in the Netherlands.

119 VWO, HAVO, VMBO-t, VMBO-kader and VMBO-basic are different levels of education in the Netherlands, on a scale from middle to lower education.

120 Interview with director of the Clusius College, Amsterdam, 3 July 2013.

121 Interview with director of the Clusius College, Amsterdam, 3 July 2013.

BEST PRACTICE: ACTION PLAN STICK TO THE LESSON (ACTIEPLAN BLIJF BIJ DE LES)

The submunicipality has developed a specific policy intervention to prevent and counter the high school drop-out rates, the *Action Plan Staying attentive (Actieplan Blijf bij de Les)*. The plan was developed during extensive consultation with stakeholders and experts from the educational and youth care sectors. The interventions focus on positively engaging parents in the school, developing social skills among learners and developing their ambitions and motivations. Concrete interventions are coaching, summer schools, experimental workshops and chore teams where young people help neighbours with chores. Part of the action plan explicitly targets parents, through roundtable discussions with parents, home visits and pedagogical support.

This has already had some success: in 2012, the Amsterdam North drop-out rate had decreased to 14 percent from 17 percent in 2011.¹²²

One of the school professionals interviewed emphasised that the problem of early school-leaving is exacerbated by a lack of communication between secondary schools and colleges about further professional education¹²³ (such as ROC Amsterdam). After finishing their final year at a VMBO school, which offers a mixture of vocational and general education, students do not yet have a basic qualification. When they do not pursue further professional education, they are considered early school-leavers. Secondary-school directors are not given sufficient information about students' curricula at the ROC, and so are not able to pass on valuable knowledge about individual students' situations to the ROC.

5.5 | SEGREGATION ALONG ETHNIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC LINES

A lot of the public debate on segregation in schooling between different groups in the Netherlands has focused on segregation along ethnic or religious lines. However, segregation along class-based or socio-economic lines is becoming increasingly prominent, particularly in Amsterdam-North. A research report by the Council for Social Development found differences between higher- and lower-educated parents in the factors influencing the choice of school.¹²⁴ It found that higher-educated parents in Amsterdam-North based their school choice primarily on their class-based identification

122 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, "Voortijdig schoolverlaters Amsterdam-Noord"; and Amsterdam-North Submunicipality "Actieprogramma Blijf bij de Les" (Action programme Stick to the Lesson), Amsterdam, July 2012, at <http://www.noord.amsterdam.nl/wonen/onderwijs-jeugd/jeugdbeleid/'blijf-les!> (accessed 21 May 2014).

123 Regional Centre for Further Education, ROC in Dutch.

124 D. Zeldenrijk, "Je voelt het gewoon: Een Onderzoek naar Schoolkeuze en segregatie in Amsterdam-Noord" (You just feel it: a study of school choice and segregation in Amsterdam-North), Council for Social Development, The Hague, 2010 (hereafter, Zeldenrijk, "Je voelt het gewoon").

with other parents in the school, in what is called class closure. By contrast, lower-educated parents focused more on the ethnic dimension, preferring predominantly “white schools” over “black schools”.¹²⁵ The author writes: The research report demonstrated that the implications of these differences in school choices are that social distance between children from higher- and lower educated parents is growing.¹²⁶

Both dimensions—lower educated parents’ focus on the ethnic dimension and the class distinctions in actual school choices between lower- and higher-educated residents—were reflected in the focus group discussions. A small number of participants, both pupils and parents, explicitly expressed a preference for an ethnically homogenous school. This sentiment was particularly strong in a group of young participants in Tuindorp Buiksloot:

X: I am glad that I did not go to [a secondary school in the area]. I would have gone off the rails over there, a whole different culture is reigning there. (Man, 22)

Y: It’s really not our kind of people. I would rather be drinking with X than do something with a foreigner. Even though I am half foreign myself. (Man, 19)¹²⁷

5.6 | THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND PARENTS

A 2011 report by the SCP¹²⁸ signalled tensions in relations between parents and schools in the Netherlands. Schoolteachers and headteachers interviewed by the SCP expressed the view that many parents “automatically side with their children”, and that “parents and their children form a united front against the teacher ... whereas in the eyes of the teachers, parents and teachers should be working together in the interests of the child”.¹²⁹ Teachers and school heads felt they did not always have the full backing of parents if action was taken against pupils or sanctions were imposed. The SCP study found differences in the contacts that lower-compared with higher-educated parents had with schools. At primary-school level, lower-educated parents experience more difficulties in engaging in dialogue with the school personnel than higher-educated parents, and lower-educated parents with children in vocational education were less likely to take the initiative of seeking contact with the school. Contacts between schools

125 In the Netherlands the term “black” school means that this is a school where more than 70 percent of the pupils are of non-Western migrant origin, while the term “white” refers to a school where more than 70 percent of pupils are of Dutch origin: see EPASI, Country Report: The Netherlands, Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality, Brussels, November 2008, at <http://www.epasi.eu/CountryReportNL.pdf> (accessed 21 May 2014).

126 Zeldenrijk, “Je voelt het gewoon”.

127 This participant was half Indonesian, half Dutch. People from Indonesia are considered Western migrants in the Dutch formal classification system.

128 The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, “Samen Scholen” (Schooling Together), Netherlands Institute for Social Research, The Hague, 2013, at http://www.scp.nl/Publicaties/Alle_publicaties/Publicaties_2013/Samen_scholen (accessed at 21 May 2014) (hereafter “Samen Scholen”).

129 “Samen Scholen”.

and parents decreases as children grow older, and at MBO level parents feel they have little information about their children's schooling. Teachers for their part suggested that lower-educated parents were harder to reach through the conventional communication channels, and in some cases home visits were a solution. The SCP noted a need for better communication between schools and parents to improve the cooperation between the two parties over the development of the children.

Several focus group participants related negative interactions between themselves and school staff or between their parents and school staff. A girl who dropped out for medical reasons and pregnancy told of having been stigmatised and unfairly treated, given up on. Parents spoke of difficult interactions with school staff and a sense of not being heard, not being understood. Parents were also quite critical about the quality of the schools, and shared examples of taking their children out of school in protest. The local primary school has had a negative reputation for a long time, but participants showed appreciation of the way it is currently functioning and being managed.

The interviews with practising professionals confirmed the tense and complex relationships between school staff and parents. The director of the vocational college stressed that parents from these communities expressed their dissatisfaction and their criticism in an aggressive manner. He related a very strong sense among parents of being treated unfairly, and of communicating through protest. He also pointed out that parents wanted their children to go through school, but under their own conditions rather than those of the school.

According to the professional at the vocational college, schools in this area deal with a large number of children with special needs (like ADHD). Some parents expressed a sense of children being picked on or treated badly because of their behaviour or their special needs.

The leerplichtambtenaar [compulsory education inspector] had really had it with her [daughter], very negative. In that case there is no room for our own story. That is very frustrating. (Woman, 50)

Learners related remarkably negative experiences with the ROCs:

I would never recommend enrolling in the ROC. The teachers that work there are not capable of teaching, they do not understand the learning material themselves. It is chaotic, there are no fire escapes, you name it. (Woman, 21)

5.7 | CONCLUSION

Despite recent policy efforts and improvements, there is still a high rate of early school-leavers in the communities studied in the Open Society Foundations' research. Different factors are likely to play here. The factors that are commonly put forward

as explanations—a large percentage of students with learning disabilities and/or mental health problems—seem to be only part of the problem. The other part, emerging from this research, includes attitudes to work and education among both students and their parents. The communities like to pride themselves on their strong work ethic, but the effect of this might be that work is valued over education. Young people are not encouraged to get the most out of their education, but instead are urged and pressured by peers to get into the labour market as quickly as possible. The impression from the Open Society Foundations' research is that people end up at educational levels that are below their capacities, particularly in secondary and higher education. Another important factor is the troubled interaction between schools and parents. Fed by a strong sense of being treated unfairly—which is possibly caused by problems in other social domains—parents are often defensive and over-assertive in their contacts with school staff. A lot of energy seems to get lost in this process.

BEST PRACTICE: ALL EDUCATORS

The action programme “All Educators” (*Allemaal Opvoeders*), based on the notion of a pedagogical civic society, is a very interesting new departure.¹³⁰ Pilot projects have started to implement this programme in a number of Dutch municipalities. It entails creating a community-based approach to pedagogy and education aimed at facilitating and stimulating bottom-up social networks and support structures around the upbringing of children. It begins with the idea of an equal relationship between educational professionals and parents, a joint responsibility for pedagogical development based on a sense of partnership. Professional organisations can facilitate this partnership by creating an environment conducive to dialogue and engagement. In some cases it is necessary to re-educate professionals to acquire this new role.

EXECUTION AGENDA ACTIVE PARENTS (UITVOERINGSAGENDA ACTIEVE OUDERS), AMSTERDAM MUNICIPALITY

This is a plan of action by the Amsterdam Municipality to give a new impetus to parental involvement in schools, better inform parents and encourage partnerships between parents and schools. The plan runs from 2012 to 2014 and involves informing parents about school choices, connecting parents with one another and developing modes of cooperation between schools and parents. The idea is to create new partnerships around the development of the child.

See www.actieveoudersamsterdam.nl

130 M. van Dijk and M. Gemmeke, *De Kracht van de Pedagogische Civil Society* (The power of the pedagogical civil society), Nederlands Youth Institute, Utrecht, 2010.

6

EMPLOYMENT

This chapter examines participants' experiences in the labour market, focusing specifically on vulnerability. It looks at the level of unemployment in these communities and the insecurities participants face in the labour market, for instance as self-employed manual labourers. A central theme is the impact of the economic crisis on the researched communities. It also looks at the poverty in these neighbourhoods among the unemployed as well as the working poor. It examines signs of increasing poverty and people's coping strategies when faced with poverty. Finally, the chapter describes participants' experiences with anti-poverty measures, social security and debt assistance.

6.1 | IMPACT OF THE CURRENT ECONOMIC RECESSION ON LOWER-EDUCATED PEOPLE

Compared with the rest of the country, the economy of Amsterdam has been buoyant in the past few years. Research indicates that since 2000 economic growth has been greater than in the rest of the country. Even in the context of the recession of the last two years, economic growth in Amsterdam was above the average for the country. Despite this fact, the city has not been able to avoid the negative effects of the recession. These effects have come with a delay and are only now beginning to be felt strongly in employment.¹³¹ A 2013 report emphasised that individuals with a poor education have been disproportionately affected by the recession, because of the high number of flexible contracts in that segment of the market. The report found that unemployment is greater among the less well educated, but the situation is not as bleak as during the economic crisis in the 1980s. The high unemployment rates among those with lower education are in part caused by a mismatch between their profiles and the demands of employers with regards to work experience, motivation, qualifications and attitude.¹³²

Furthermore, the authors drew attention to a worrying development they refer to as “displacement” or “suppression”: 50 percent of the jobs that require lower or no education are taken by people with a higher level of education. This trend has increased in the last ten years, particularly since the recession. Competition in the lower segments of the labour market also comes from students and migrant workers from Central and Eastern Europe,¹³³ although other research demonstrates that the effect of migrant workers' presence on displacement is low.¹³⁴ Displacement is

131 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, “Laagopgeleiden op de arbeidsmarkt in de metropoolregio Amsterdam” (Lower-educated on the labour market in the metropolitan region of Amsterdam), Amsterdam, April 2013 at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/assets/pdfs/2013_laagopgeleiden_arbeidsmarkt_mra.pdf (accessed 21 May 2014) (hereafter, “Laagopgeleiden op de arbeidsmarkt”).

132 “Laagopgeleiden op de arbeidsmarkt”.

133 And to a lesser extent southern Europe, due to the increasing economic difficulties in this region.

134 G. Engbersen, “A Van full of Poles”, in R. Black, G. Engbersen, M. Okolski and C. Pantiru (eds), *A Continent Moving West? EU Enlargement and Labour Migration from Central and Eastern Europe*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2010, p. 133.

expected to continue during the economic crisis, as will the negative effects of the increasing trend towards flexibility in the labour market.

6.2 | SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS

Self-employed workers with or without personnel (ZZP-ers in Dutch, ZZP literally stands for independents without personnel) form a growing group that is beyond the reach of conventional social support structures. Self-employed people who are between jobs for a long time or who experience a general decrease in opportunities are not included in formal unemployment figures. They are often unable to access traditional social security support because they are either uninsured against unemployment or they own property (such as a house). In 2009, municipalities, employers and employees agreed on a joint approach to reduce the negative effects of the recession regionally. This also included some support for ZZP-ers having economic difficulties because of the recession.¹³⁵ During the first phase of the recession the number of applicants for this type of support increased by more than 30 percent. At the same time, the Council for Work and Employment (*Raad voor Werk en Inkomen*, RWI) has reported that self-employed workers apply for assistance when it is already too late, when the extent of debts is such that the company can no longer be sustained.¹³⁶ A growing number of self-employed workers have joined a “bread fund”, a civic initiative to collectively pay and provide for each other’s social protection in case of illness or other factors leading to unemployment.

6.3 | EMPLOYMENT IN AMSTERDAM-NORTH AND THE NEIGHBOURHOODS OF THE RESEARCH

In the submunicipality of Amsterdam-North the primary source of employment has historically been the industrial sector and particularly the shipbuilding industry. However, employment in these sectors has been on the decrease since the closure of the shipyards in the 1980s. Currently, business services and healthcare are the largest sources of employment. Most residents of North are employed outside the

135 National legislation “Besluit Bijstandverlening Zelfstandigen 2004, geldend op 25-02-2014” (Decision on the Social Security Assistance for Self-Employed 2004, valid on 25 February 2014) at http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR00151711/geldigheidsdatum_21-05-2014 (accessed 21 May 2014).

136 The Council for Work and Employment indicates that there are still a lot of questions about the implementation and the effects of the support mechanism on independent workers: see “Ondersteuning van zzp’ers door gemeenten. Situatie begin 2010” (Support of self-employed by municipalities, situation at the beginning of 2010), The Hague, 2010 (hereafter, Council for Work and Employment, “Ondersteuning van zzp’ers door gemeenten”).

submunicipality.¹³⁷ In North as in other parts of the city, there has been a big increase in the number of self-employed and people on flexible contracts.¹³⁸

Since 2012 a sharp increase in the number of unemployed has been registered in North. The number of people on social benefits has been on the rise since 2009. Appeals to debt assistance and the Food Bank have equally increased in the last years: in 2013, 300 households in North were dependent on it,¹³⁹ and indeed 45 percent of residents in Amsterdam-North expressed having trouble making ends meet.¹⁴⁰

The picture is more optimistic for the two neighbourhoods of the research project. In Tuindorp Buiksloot, 64 percent of the working population is lower-educated. That is well above the average for the submunicipality of Amsterdam-North (42 percent) and for Amsterdam as a whole (25 percent). The unemployment rate was 4.1 percent in 2012, (compared with the Amsterdam average of 4.9 percent). However, among young people (15–27 years old) 4.1 percent were unemployed and looking for work, which is well above the Amsterdam average for young people of 1.7 percent. One out of five households (or 20 percent) in Tuindorp Buiksloot lived on a minimum income,¹⁴¹ a figure that is average for North, while in Floradorp the figure was 23 percent. In comparison, in some of the more impoverished neighbourhoods in North like the Kleine Wereld, the figure was 29.5 percent in 2010, and in the focus area of Old North, 28 percent. In some parts of Nieuwendam-North, 8.5 percent were unemployed.¹⁴² Based on the statistics, one could conclude that both neighbourhoods are doing relatively well in socio-economic terms.

At the same time, the most recent statistics indicate a slight increase in the number of minimum-income households and the number of young people living on a minimum income in Tuindorp Buiksloot. In addition, the Open Society Foundations' research suggests an increasing economic insecurity that does not seem to be reflected in the official statistics. It was noteworthy that many participants in the research stressed the strong work ethic in their communities. Many participants work as manual labourers and were raised with the importance of earning a living with hard manual work. At the same time, they find themselves working in sectors that are particularly vulnerable to the economic crisis. In addition, they are often working as blue-collar freelance entrepreneurs (the ZZP-ers), which might increase their vulnerability. The most recent

137 Amsterdam-North Submunicipality, "Factsheet werkgelegenheid Noord 1974–2009" (Factsheet Employment North 1974–2009); at <http://www.noord.amsterdam.nl/actueel/feiten-cijfers/werk-noord> (accessed 21 May 2014) "De Staat van Noord 2013".

138 "De Staat van Noord 2013".

139 Amsterdam-North Submunicipality, "Kansen voor alle Noorderlingen" (Opportunities for all residents of North), 2013–2015: 3 (hereafter, Amsterdam-North District, "Kansen voor alle Noorderlingen").

140 "De Staat van de Stad VII".

141 Minimum income is 110 percent of the legal social minimum income.

142 Amsterdam-North Submunicipality, "De Staat van de Noordse wijken" 2012".

statistics for Tuindorp Buiksloot indicate that 54 percent of the working population in this neighbourhood is self-employed.¹⁴³

Participants' experiences on the labour market presented a confused picture. On the one hand, quite a large number of participants seem to still have a job.¹⁴⁴

Most men are currently employed, it was worse in the 1980s when many people were dismissed and dependent on income support. It is going relatively well at this moment. (Woman, 50+)

On the other hand, many related either personal accounts or stories of family members being dismissed. In addition, a significant group among the participants were people (mostly women) who were excluded from the labour market on medical grounds and were actively involved in voluntary work. Participants also emphasised the vulnerability of young people on the labour market, who cannot get fixed-term contracts. Focus group participants expressed particular concern about the situation for persons over 50:

It is very difficult at the moment, so many firms are going bankrupt. There are so many men over 55 that will not find jobs, because they are too expensive. (Woman, 56)

You can hardly find work, that is publicly known. When you're over 50, you only have a 2.5 per cent chance of finding a job. You're too expensive. (Woman, in her 50s)

Some manual labourers in the building sector complain of unfair competition from eastern European migrants, as in the following exchange:

X: People hire Polish roofers that put a roof on the house within two days. That is certainly big competition.

Y: As a matter of fact they should just get lost.

Z: There are now new regulations that they should get paid the same. At the firm where I work, they do not hire Poles. (Man, 18; Woman, 20; Man 18)

Apart from a few comments, however, this was not a major topic of discussion.

¹⁴³ Council for Work and Employment, "Ondersteuning van zzp'ers door gemeenten"; separate statistics for Floradorp are not available.

¹⁴⁴ When recruiting for the focus group discussions, people were not systematically asked what their occupation was. However, in the introductory rounds of each focus group people almost always stated their occupational status (employed, unemployed, retired, enrolled in education and so on).

6.4 | POVERTY ON A NATIONAL LEVEL

Vulnerability to poverty is not restricted to the unemployed. Since the mid-1990s there has been an increase in the Netherlands in the numbers of working poor, a phenomenon associated with the minimal welfare provisions of the United States. Studies indicate that around 5 percent of the working population has an income below the poverty line, while in Amsterdam this figure is 6.3 percent.¹⁴⁵ The national figure represents an increase of about 50 percent in the last 15 years. Compared with other European countries, the Netherlands scores poorly. Women, people with lower education, part-time workers and single-parent households are all at an increased risk of working poverty.¹⁴⁶ Research indicates that working poverty is particularly prevalent in single-parent households or households with only one income. Self-employed persons have a much greater risk of working poverty than people on the payroll, at 13 percent compared with 3 percent nationally.¹⁴⁷

Poverty nationally is likely to increase as a result of continuing unemployment and the loss of purchasing power.¹⁴⁸ It is exacerbated by government policies of both general austerity and in relation to specific measures such as child-related benefits. The emphasis in government policies is on getting people back to work, or contributing to the community through voluntary work. Only those declared fully unfit for work can continue receiving social security over the longer term. Participation today, according to the policy adviser at the Service for Work and Income (*Dienst Werk en Inkomen*, DWI) who was interviewed, means “being able to live independently”, that is, without support, to be self-reliant.

In 2011, a report found that the impact of the austerity measures of the preceding government (Rutte I, 2010–2012) would be the highest among low-income households that are dependent on income support, households with multidimensional problems and working parents on minimum incomes.¹⁴⁹ Austerity measures are threatening the economic livelihood of different vulnerable groups in the labour population. The budgetary cuts in child care and care for the elderly make it more difficult, particularly for single mothers but also for others, to participate in a satisfactory way in the labour market. Households on income support with additional health expenses are considered even more vulnerable to austerity measures in social security and health (see also chapter 8). The working poor for their part will be hard-hit by austerity measures in child care and health insurance and the new barriers to local income

145 “Armoedesignalement 2013”; Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, “Werkende minima in Amsterdam”, (Working persons on minimum wage in Amsterdam) 2012, at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/pdf/2012_werkende%20minima%20in%20amsterdam.pdf (accessed 21 May 2014).

146 “Werkende minima in Amsterdam”.

147 “Armoedesignalement 2013”.

148 “Armoedesignalement 2011”.

149 Nicis Institute and Ecorys Netherlands, *Stapelingseffecten van de bezuinigingen in het sociale domein* (Cumulative effects of cutbacks in the social domain), , Rotterdam and The Hague, 2011, at http://www.ecorys.nl/contents/uploads/factsheets/44_1.pdf (accessed 21 May 2014).

support mechanisms.¹⁵⁰ Because of budgetary cutbacks to unemployment benefits, new groups of citizens may be condemned to social security.¹⁵¹ People in the older segments of the working population (55+) are specifically at a high risk of poverty when they lose their jobs in the current circumstances.

6.5 | POVERTY IN AMSTERDAM-NORTH AND THE NEIGHBOURHOODS OF THE RESEARCH

In 2012, North was the submunicipality with the second-largest number of minimum-income households,¹⁵² the biggest growth of this group between 2008 and 2011.¹⁵³ One in five (20 percent) of households in North lives on a minimum income, and the percentage increased from 19.5 percent in 2008 to 20.5 percent in 2011. This is a more rapid increase than in the more central parts of Amsterdam. Living on a minimum income is persistent in North: 74 percent of minimum households have been in that situation for three consecutive years or longer. With poverty pressing in several social domains, the submunicipality has decided on an integrated approach tailored to specific needs in certain neighbourhoods, with a special focus on single parents, children and the (potential) working poor. The senior policy adviser at DWI stressed that Amsterdam-North is considered a leader in terms of an integrated approach to poverty measures and social security facilities. At the same time, much policy attention and investment goes into those neighbourhoods that have been singled out as focus neighbourhoods. Even though registered unemployment may be relatively low, many participants described the impact of the economic crisis on themselves or their family members. They experienced increasing difficulties in making ends meet. Several participants described their own financial situation as “just above the minimum”, which is why they do not qualify for compensatory measures in the sphere of tax cuts, subsidies for schooling and so on.

We are just above the income norm, so we are excluded from everything. Even though it is very difficult to make ends meet. I have to pay €1,600 for my daughter's education. We are really being punished the most. (Woman, 37)

They described examples of people they know who have misled welfare authorities and were—in their eyes—illegitimately receiving social benefits. Often, persons with a non-Western background featured in these examples, for instance:

150 The income norm to qualify for these mechanisms will be lowered to 110 percent of the minimum wage, resulting in a threshold for those just above this norm.

151 J. Omlo and M. Ham, Interview with P. Schnabel, “Armoede treft vooral de middenklasse” (Poverty mostly hits the middle classes), *Sociale Vraagstukken*, 20 March 2013, at <http://www.socialevraagstukken.nl/site/interview/paul-schnabel-armoede-treft-middenklasse> (accessed 25 April 2013).

152 Amsterdam-North Submunicipality, “Factsheet werkgelegenheid Noord 1974-2009”, “Staat van Noord 2013”.

153 Amsterdam-North Submunicipality, “Kansen voor alle Noorderlingen”, Amsterdam, May 2013, at www.noord.amsterdam.nl/publish/pages/483424/5949-a_bijlage_o.pdf (accessed 21 May 2014).

People in the Moroccan groups know better how to get things organised for themselves. We Dutch people are really stupid. (Woman, 52)

If I want to start a little shop, I get no help, but if my allochtoon neighbour wants it, it is organised within a second. (Woman, 42)

If we would have been “good-for-nothings” [nietsnutten], we would have been a priority (for the government). Because a neighbourhood that needs attention is where they will invest. So because we are raised with the idea that you should work for your money, we end up getting less? (Man, 22)

Despite the social security austerity measures, the overall perception among participants was still that it is more lucrative to get social security rather than work for those at the bottom of the labour market. The quotes also suggest a sense of being penalised for working hard, of falling outside the scope of those who are prioritised for support because of their hard work.

Participants’ narratives indicated a significant increase in people in need of debt assistance and anti-poverty help.¹⁵⁴ For some, it was an unfortunate life event that caused them to be reduced to poverty, for others it was the impact of the economic crisis. This is in line with information from the interview with staff from the social services provider Doras,¹⁵⁵ who emphasised that the demand for debt assistance has almost doubled in the last few years.

X: I know many people are in poverty in this neighbourhood. Not only Dutch people, but also allochtonen people. For example, they are on social benefits, they have too many children and they make debts. (Woman, 88)

Y: That always makes me very angry. People should not make debts! Let us start working on that. (Woman, 70)

The professional at Doras stressed the success of the new approach of the social services which lets people work collectively (in group meetings) on reducing their debts. In contrast, participants in the focus groups emphasised the element of shame: they felt reluctant to share their financial problems with official authorities or professional organisations, and they had little trust in the efficiency of the service:

You are being forced to share your situation with other people, if not then you don’t get help. I have been involved [in the debt assistance programme of the social services provider] for five years now, and my debts have only increased. I have followed courses, but they were of no help. I have really had it with [the social services provider]. (Man, 50)

¹⁵⁴ “Schuldhelpverlening” (debt assistance) is a national and local policy programme that aims to help people deal with their debts and get out of debt. The assistance consists primarily of training and guidance, as well as providing specific arrangements or temporary loans for paying off debts. Anti-poverty measures are special forms of social security for persons or households living below the poverty line.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Mr. Liebrechts, DORAS, 4 June 2013.

Many people speak badly of [the social services provider], your debt situation only gets worse, I have heard that too from friends. It takes almost two years before you get any help. I don't understand why we send money abroad, development aid, EU, Greece and so on. While at the same time so many people are in need. (Woman, 50)

People who are entitled to support cannot always find their way through the bureaucratic maze, and it often takes too long to get the social protection that one is entitled to. This focus group participant clearly expressed the impact that her financial problems have had on her social participation:

I ended up at DWI, the whole Dutch bureaucracy is very complex ... I never expected getting so little [in terms of benefits]. It is impossible to live on it ... It is really very difficult, your world becomes very small. Everything has become much more expensive. I can hardly invite my children for dinners. I am getting isolated, my friends no longer come over, my life has changed considerably. It is unimaginable. (Woman, around 55)

Participants also spoke of more people becoming dependent on food parcels. Some indicated preferring the anonymity of the Food Bank over help from the official authorities, for the reasons mentioned above. At the same time, the contents of the parcel are not considered to be that good:

It is all crap at the Food Bank, everything is mouldy and beyond the expiration date. You have to queue up outside on the pavement, that is not nice in your own neighbourhood, that makes you feel ashamed. (Woman, 61)

6.6 | CONCLUSION

The participants in the Open Society Foundations' research are not at the very bottom of the economic scale, the absolute economic minimum. At the same time, it is accurate to label their economic position as vulnerable. Because most of them live on an income that is above the minimum, they have less access to support measures, which feeds into social discontent. This research has identified a combination of increased insecurity on the labour market and increased manifestations of poverty. Many participants belong to categories that are at a higher risk of working poverty: single parents, part-time workers and older workers with health problems. An important group that requires attention are the self-employed. The economic recession is putting a strain on their entrepreneurship. At the same time, they do not have access to the social security that others have. They often only ask for help when it is too late. There is a widespread pattern of increasing debt problems in the neighbourhoods of this research, which forms a fundamental obstacle to healthy social participation. The cumulative effects of austerity measures are increasing the risk of

poverty in these communities; the government's emphasis on getting back to work is too one-dimensional. Many participants conduct valuable voluntary work for their communities, and it is important that voluntary work is re-valued, especially in the light of the participatory welfare state. This subject will be addressed in later chapters.

BEST PRACTICE: ACTING TOGETHER IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD (SAMEN DOEN IN DE WIJK)

This project (set up in 2011) consists of interdisciplinary neighbourhood teams that bring together a number of professionals from different institutions and organisations (DWI, welfare organisations, specialised care providers). The intention is to work in the neighbourhoods and very close to the ground. The purpose is to assist vulnerable persons and households to find solutions in employment, income, health, education and so on. In Amsterdam-North, the project is running in Vogelbuurt/Ijplein and Nieuwendam-North. At the roundtable it was suggested that even though the first evaluations of the project are positive, the project could be improved by placing the client more at the centre of the approach.

BEST PRACTICE: THE BREAD FUND (BROODFONDS)

The Bread Fund is a sick pay disability insurance scheme for self-employed workers, which they set up and run by themselves. It offers an alternative to corporate sick pay insurance, that many self-employed workers find too costly. The Bread Fund operates on the basis of solidarity and trust. It works like a circle of donors: if anyone gets sick, he or she will periodically receive a sum of money from all the other participants. This sum is meant to cover the minimum costs of living. At the moment eight Bread Funds are active in the Netherlands.

See: [www.http://www.summer-foundation.org/en/Initiatives/BroodFondsMakers](http://www.summer-foundation.org/en/Initiatives/BroodFondsMakers)

BEST PRACTICE: THE ROTTERDAM CASE (DE ROTTERDAMSE ZAAK)

The Rotterdam Municipality established the Rotterdam Case after research had demonstrated that a large number of entrepreneurs in the city of Rotterdam are living in poverty. It is a project run by students of the Hogeschool Rotterdam to help entrepreneurs who are living off a minimum wage and are experiencing financial problems. In cooperation with partner organisations, The Rotterdam Case offers advice and assistance with financial administration. The students conduct these services as part of an internship, so that no costs are involved for clients. See www.derotterdamsezaak.nl

7

HOUSING

This chapter examines participants' experiences with housing. It highlights people's points of satisfaction and dissatisfaction over housing and looks at their evaluation of the neighbourhood they are living in. A topic of interest is the policy of mixing, creating a diverse neighbourhood in socio-economic as well as cultural terms, through renovation and transforming social rent housing into owner-occupied housing, as well as the specific placement policies of the housing corporations. People's housing tracks are explored, in particular the housing wishes of the younger generation. The chapter also looks at the role of housing corporations, for example in rents and maintenance of houses, and people's experiences in their interactions with the housing corporations.

7.1 | LOCAL CONTEXT: HOUSING IN BOTH NEIGHBOURHOODS

Both the Floradorp and Tuindorp Buiksloot neighbourhoods were developed between the first and second world wars (see chapter 4). Both neighbourhoods were built to house the working classes and have consisted primarily of low-rent social housing. However, this uniformity is currently changing. For a long time, Tuindorp Buiksloot was the only neighbourhood in Amsterdam consisting of 100 percent corporation-owned social housing. Since 2000, this picture has changed somewhat with a few owner-occupied houses (10 percent) and privately rented houses (6 percent) in the area.¹⁵⁶ Tuindorp Buiksloot is a neighbourhood with 931 houses, of which most are occupied by families of Dutch heritage (85 percent). Of these, 800 were built in the 1930s, the remainder in the 1980s and 1990s. The houses are small, with 90 percent less than 70 square metres. In recent years, the housing corporation (Ymere) which has a monopoly in the neighbourhood has started selling houses in one area, the west side of the Waddenweg.

The neighbourhood is known for very limited housing mobility: people on average tend to stay for 15 years in their houses, the second longest term in the whole of Amsterdam.¹⁵⁷ Rent increases are controlled for existing tenants, keeping costs down: 36 percent of all housing has a rent below €412 a month. In some cases residents are able to buy their houses, but their monthly costs are likely to increase significantly. The general idea is that owner-occupied housing increases people's commitment to the neighbourhood. However, in the case of Tuindorp Buiksloot, residents argue that it is not ownership but the sense of community that stimulates commitment. Instead, participants perceive newcomers, who are the few residents who own their houses, as much less committed to the neighbourhood. In Volewijck, of which Floradorp constitutes a part, 88 percent of housing is social rent and 62 percent has a rent below

156 Johan van der Toll, "Tuindorp Buiksloot: Buurt zonder eigenaren" (Tuindorp Buiksloot: Neighbourhood without Owners) in Nul 20, nr. 12, January 2004, at <http://www.nul20.nl/issue12/postcode> (accessed 10 December 2013).

157 "De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, 2012, Factsheet Tuindorp Buiksloot".

€412 per month. The majority of houses are less than 60 square metres. The number of larger houses in the neighbourhood is only very slowly increasing. The houses are lower in value than the average for Amsterdam.

It is noteworthy that the overwhelming majority of participants expressed great enthusiasm for their neighbourhood and their own housing. The village-like character, the architecture of the houses (all single-family units, no high rises) and the front and back gardens are key factors that contribute to people's positive evaluations.

7.2 | HOUSING POLICIES IN THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands has a great deal of social housing: 35 percent of all dwellings are owned by housing associations. The Dutch social housing sector is the largest in Europe. Almost all social housing is owned by housing corporations and is often concentrated in the cities.¹⁵⁸ Unlike other European countries, only a minor percentage of Dutch social housing is high-rise; about 50 percent of Dutch social housing consists of nuclear-family houses with a small garden. Because of the character of social housing in the Netherlands, residents are not stigmatised as they might be in other countries. At the same time, there has been an increase in socio-geographic segregation similar to other European countries. Recently, the tenants' association for Amsterdam has expressed concern that social tenants are increasingly being criticised for being profiteers as a consequence of the financial crisis.¹⁵⁹

The Netherlands also has a tradition of area-based urban regeneration policies. Housing corporations are among the most powerful actors in urban renewal, with their large housing portfolios and strong financial position. There is a general consensus that they have responsibility for social cohesion and liveability. Urban renewal has not only aimed at achieving better housing, healthier environments and stronger cities, but also at improving the social position of individuals, the focus areas programmes referred to in previous chapters. There is also a consensus in housing policy that large concentrations of deprivation are unacceptable, and corporations should aim to increase the social mix of urban areas, particularly against the backdrop of increased social polarisation and socio-geographic segregation. One of the main interventions to this end is to diversify the housing stock to upgrade the neighbourhood and attract middle-class residents to an area. More recently, the focus has shifted to keeping people within the area who are moving up the social ladder, the social climbers from within the original communities. Urban renewal policies have not been without controversy. Recently, there has been a debate about the replacement effect of these policies in a broader spatial context. Demolition of social housing might

158 K. Scanlon and C. Whitehead, *Social housing in Europe II: a review of policies and outcomes*, London School of Economics, London, 2008 (hereafter, Scanlon and Whitehead, *Social housing in Europe II*).

159 See press release, 15 August 2013, at www.huurdersvereniging-amsterdam.nl (accessed 21 May 2014).

lead to the exodus of deprived communities to other areas.¹⁶⁰ Upgrading in one place goes hand in hand with (perceived) deterioration in another. Scholars recommend that more attention should be paid to areas adjacent to renewal areas and the effects they experience.¹⁶¹

In the case of the Open Society Foundations focus groups, these sentiments were reflected in the complaint that very little is invested in their areas compared with the focus areas or the wealthier parts of the submunicipality.¹⁶²

In the Red Cross neighbourhood, where all the occupier-owned houses are, the municipality is always present to clean and check the green facilities. But here, nothing ever happens, residents have to do it themselves. (Woman, 61)

Policy changes under the current government (Rutte II) have triggered political and social debate about the state and future of social housing in the Netherlands. In January 2011, in response to European state aid regulations,¹⁶³ the European norm on income restriction for social housing was applied uniformly in the Netherlands. As a result, 90 percent of social housing should now be allotted to households with a maximum income of €34,229 per year. Only 10 percent of social housing can be allotted to higher-income households.¹⁶⁴ This regulation has led to concerns about so called *schrijnende* (painful) cases: households with an income slightly above the threshold, that cannot afford owner-occupied housing or the more upmarket rental housing. Tenant interest groups suggest that the income norm is set too low, resulting in many of these painful cases.¹⁶⁵

Housing corporations are being faced with significant budgetary cuts.¹⁶⁶ Some of the current government policies for the housing sector are that housing corporations should refocus on their primary tasks of building and maintaining social housing, instead of developing commercial projects. Recently a lot of political attention has been paid to the introduction of the *verhuurdersheffing* (rental corporation taxation), which obliges housing corporations to transfer a significant amount of their income to the

160 A. Slob, G. Bolt and R. Van Kempen, *Na de sloop: waterbedeffecten van gebiedsgericht stedelijk beleid* (After the Demolition: Waterbed Effects of Area Urban Policy), Nicis Institute, The Hague, 2008.

161 Scanlon and Whitehead, *Social housing in Europe II*.

162 Residents of Floradorp express the same kind of sentiments despite the fact that Floradorp is formally part of a focus neighbourhood (Volewijk).

163 As a consequence of the position of the Dutch government with regard to the European policy on European State Aid Regulations for Housing Corporations.

164 As of 1 January 2012. Bureau Severijn, "Analyse van de effecten van de regeling staatssteun" (Analysis of the effects of the regulation on state aid), Denekamp, January 2012.

165 The representative of the organisation Amsterdams Steunpunt Wonen (Amsterdam Housing Advice) who was interviewed for the report suggested that the European regulatory framework does allow for a higher income norm than the one implemented by the Dutch government.

166 One author criticised the role of housing corporations, saying that their hybrid position as non-profit organisations with a social aim that operate like businesses raises legitimacy questions (F. Wassenberg, *Key players in urban renewal in the Netherlands*, Chapter 12 in Scanlon and Whitehead, *Social housing in Europe II*).

state. Criticism of these policies has been expressed by the housing corporations. For example, the former director of Ymere, Roel Steenbeek, warned that these policies will increase segregation in neighbourhoods. He argued that unlike housing corporations, commercial parties will not invest in deprived areas, so that these areas will become homogenous in housing stock and population.¹⁶⁷

Some participants recognised the role of the housing corporation in projects for social cohesion, particularly in Floradorp. In Tuindorp Buiksloot, the housing corporation was not considered very visible. Some complained about a lack of response from the corporation over maintenance, for instance the fact that many houses still have leaded water pipes. Some argued that only when something breaks, or the situation escalates, does the corporation take action; as a consequence they feel that bad behaviour gets rewarded. The perception is that the corporation treats social tenants differently from private tenants:

The lower rents, they do not go out of their way for them, they do not get top service. If you are renting privately, they tend to do more for you. (Woman, around 50)

7.3 | HOUSING POLICIES IN AMSTERDAM AND IN THE NEIGHBOURHOODS OF THE RESEARCH

Amsterdam is a city of social housing; around 47 percent of housing is social housing.¹⁶⁸ The aim of housing policies in Amsterdam has historically been to avoid a city that is divided socio-economically. Similar to the national policies, this was aimed at developing diverse neighbourhoods through diversified housing stock.¹⁶⁹ Despite these intentions, Amsterdam today is faced with the double challenge of a housing shortage and socio-spatial segregation. Several publications have pointed to a trend of increasing socio-economic segregation within Amsterdam, and the trend of central

167 E. Konig and O. Vermeer, *Baas Ymere: kabinetsplannen dodelijk voor huursektor NRC* (Ymere Boss: Cabinet plans fatal for NRC sector), 8 June 2013, at <http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2013/06/08/baas-ymere-kabinetsplannen-dodelijk-voor-huursektor> (accessed 10 December 2013).

168 In the regulation housing corporations are offered 10 percent of free space that they can use to freely allot housing regardless of the income threshold. This facility is especially intended for the housing of lower middle-income households. The activities of housing corporations in the middle segment of the market is stimulated by this 10 percent norm. Research has found that few municipalities have concrete policies for the housing of middle-income groups. See Arcadis Nederland, "Tussen wal en schip" (Between two stools), 2012, at http://nicis.platform31.nl/Wat_doen_wij/Verspreiding/Docbank/Wonen/Woningmarkt/Vraag_en_aanbod/Gemeenten_geven_middeninkomens_weinig_prioriteit, (accessed 21 May 2014).

169 Early in 2013, city alderman Eric Wiebes of the Liberal Party argued in *Parool* that in order to compete internationally, Amsterdam should attract innovative, talented and entrepreneurial newcomers. But this influx of talent, he said, is held back by the large quantity of social housing in the city, which makes it more difficult for newcomers to find accommodation. In addition, because of the shortage in good-quality housing, the upwardly mobile are leaving the city and those with lower socio-economic positions are staying put. In his view, the city is at risk of losing middle-class people because of the shortage of middle-class housing.

parts of Amsterdam becoming affluent and white and the periphery becoming poor and black has already been registered in a number of analyses.¹⁷⁰

A main cause for concern for different stakeholders is the increasing shortage of affordable housing.¹⁷¹ The housing situation is particularly difficult for young starters in the housing market and households in the lower-middle segment of the market¹⁷² Housing corporations have expressed concern about the stagnation in the flow in the social housing sector and the incentive for middle classes to leave the city.¹⁷³ Opposition parties and tenants' interest groups for their part signal the shortage of affordable housing for people and lower middle-class households, paying rents of €400–600 per month.¹⁷⁴

This was also an important theme in the Open Society Foundations' research. A key issue emerging across all groups was the younger generation's difficulty in finding affordable housing in the area. In people's perception, young families and young people of working-class backgrounds no longer have the opportunity to live in the neighbourhood, even though many of them would like to. Part of the reason is that owner-occupied housing is too expensive for these groups, the other part is the obstacles involved in qualifying for social housing. On the one hand, their income is slightly above the EU norm for social housing. The upwardly mobile might therefore be deterred from staying in the neighbourhood, because they cannot access social housing nor afford to buy a house. At the moment it is very difficult for people with insecure incomes (for instance, independent professionals) to get a mortgage. Another problem is the long waiting list for social housing and the fact that older residents tend to stay in their houses for an exceptionally long period, causing stagnation in the social housing sector.

As a result, many young adults are still living with their parents in small houses. Participants would like to see their children settle down in their own houses in the neighbourhood, as in their view this would increase social cohesion (see also chapter 4).

Tenants' interest groups are also worried about the increase in social rent (*huurharmonisatie*) as a consequence of the tax obligation (*verhuurdersheffing*)

170 "De Staat van de Stad VII".

171 See "Verder bouwen aan de Stad" (Constructing the city further), *Nul* 20, 54, January 2011 at <http://www.nul20.nl/issue54> (accessed 10 December 2013). Policy agreements at the city level – Bouwen aan de Stad I and Bouwen aan de Stad II (Constructing the City I and Constructing the City II) – both policy agreements between the Amsterdam Municipality, the Amsterdam Federation of Housing Corporations and the Tenants Association, have been met with protests, particularly in the submunicipalities of North and New-West, both of which contain a great deal of social housing. See <http://www.afwc.nl/publicaties/convenanten.html> (accessed 21 May 2014).

172 Interview with Margriet van Koomen, Amsterdams Steunpunt Wonen (Amsterdam Housing Centre), December 2013.

173 *Rapportage Woonruimteverdeling 2012* (Report on the distribution of housing, 2012), Stadsregio Amsterdam, 2013.

174 "Huurexplosie bezoekers Buikslotermeerplein, 116 euro per maand" (Rental explosion predicted for visitors Buikslotermeer square, 116 Euro per month, Socialist Party, 13 June 2013, at huurexplosie-bezoekers-buikslotermeerplein-116-euro-per-maand (accessed 10 December 2013) (hereafter, "Huurexplosie bezoekers Buikslotermeerplein").

mentioned above. Social rents are said to have increased 4–6.5 percent in Amsterdam-North.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, the expectation is that maintenance, renovation and so on will suffer from the budget cutbacks.¹⁷⁶

These concerns were shared by focus group participants, as is clear in the following quotes:

The rents are enormously on the rise here. Persons on income support will no longer be able to live here. (Woman, 61)

Our children are no longer able to live here. Besides that, the quality and maintenance of the houses is not good. For example, we still have lead water pipes, which is not good from a health perspective .. but everyone's pointing fingers: the housing corporation does not fix it, but neither do the waterworks. (Man, around 75)

The current housing stock in neighbourhoods like those of this research is a mixture between affordable social rent and expensive private rent and owner-occupied housing. The risk is that persons with lower-middle incomes fall between two chairs, and persons with lower (working-class) incomes cannot afford houses in the neighbourhood. These developments are exacerbated by the new regulations for state aid.¹⁷⁷ A possible consequence is that the income gap between old and new residents becomes wider. Many participants in the Open Society Foundations' research spoke of the changes in their neighbourhood as a result of increasing numbers of newcomers (even though statistics show the influx is still low in both neighbourhoods). Newcomers are mostly people with a higher socio-economic status who have bought the few houses that the housing corporations have sold commercially in recent years. Participants emphasised the cultural differences between newcomers and themselves (see also chapters 4 and 8).

Another issue was the great differences in rent between houses of similar sizes, depending on the amount of time the resident has lived there. For some, this was clearly a source of frustration. Several people also complained about students being housed in their neighbourhood. Discussions about housing also covered the general public space of the neighbourhood and people's views and experiences living in that public space. On this subject, the main feeling was that the municipality is less visible and self-organisation is increasingly becoming the norm.

At first there was no problem here with garbage, but now that the bin on the dyke has been removed you do see a lot more garbage on the street. That idea of

175 "Huurexplosie bezoekers Buikslotermeerplein".

176 See www.actiehuuralarm.nl, www.woonbond.nl (accessed 21 May 2014).

177 Tijdelijke regeling diensten van algemeen economisch belang toegelaten instellingen volkshuisvesting, (Temporary Regulation of Services of general economic interest for institutions of authorised public housing), at http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0028918/geldigheidsdatum_16-12-2013 (accessed 16 December 2013).

adopting a bin,¹⁷⁸ who would do that? It is like you're taking away someone else's job! It used to be a paid job and now we are supposed to solve it. When public bins are no longer being maintained, it's going to be a mess. (Woman, in her fifties).

7.4 | CONCLUSION

The policy of the housing corporation to create a social mix in neighbourhoods is very slowly changing the face of both neighbourhoods. These changes are met with ambivalence by old residents, a qualification that can be applied to the Open Society Foundations' research participants. The most visible change is an increasing diversity along the lines of class. Newcomers in owner-occupied houses are accepted if they adjust to the local way of life, but their different degrees of commitment to the neighbourhood are seen as a threat to social cohesion. In addition, one consequence of policies of differentiation is that the amount of affordable social housing in the neighbourhoods is decreasing. In addition, because of the norm on income restriction, social housing is no longer available for those in the lower-middle income segment of the market. Residents of the areas of our research expressed concern about the lack of available housing for their children. Participants relate this to the decrease in social cohesion and of familiarity among neighbours, qualities that are required in the context of the participatory society (see chapters 8 and 10).

As in other social domains, there is a sense of being treated unequally. The perception is that housing corporations and the government are prioritising renovation and maintenance projects in other neighbourhoods, particularly in the focus areas. In addition, people believe tenants in the private sector are treated better. At the same time, most participants are fond of their homes and gardens and express a remarkably strong attachment to the neighbourhood as a place.

BEST PRACTICE: NEIGHBOURHOOD MAINTENANCE CORPORATION VAN DER PEK (BUURTBEHEERBEDRIJF VAN DER PEK)

The Buurtbeheerbedrijf Van der Pek is a cooperative effort between the housing corporation, the submunicipality and BSN Werkervaringsbedrijf (an organisation that facilitates reintegration into the labour market for people who are a long distance away from the labour market). The focus of the Buurtbeheerbedrijf is improving liveability in deprived neighbourhoods through projects to maintain the neighbourhood, providing information to residents and improving communication between residents and other stakeholders. One concrete project that the Buurtbeheerbedrijf has set up was the cleaning up of neighbourhood gardens by groups of volunteers.

178 Referring to a new initiative of the municipality whereby residents "adopt" and take responsibility for a bin.



HEALTH

This chapter examines people's experiences with health care. A key theme is the reforms in the health-care sector and their impact on these communities. The chapter examines participants' experiences with the reforms for those in need of longer-term care and the increasing importance of informal care and volunteer aid by family members and neighbours. It addresses the increase in costs for health care and the question of people evading basic health care for financial reasons. Attention is paid to people's experiences of interactions with medical professionals, and questions of feeling misunderstood or even singled out. In prevention, one of the chief topics is the relationship between lifestyle habits and health problems.

8.1 | CONTEXT OF HEALTH-CARE POLICY

In response to the presence of an ageing population, cost-efficiency measures have been introduced in the health sector by various governments. Three different spheres of operation can be distinguished in the health sector: prevention, treatment and care.¹⁷⁹

The sphere of prevention is mostly occupied by the Municipal Health Services (*Gemeentelijke Gezondheids Dienst*). Their primary tasks are in the field of public advice, information and vaccination. As health risks are increasingly seen as related to lifestyle and eating habits, the debate is focused on how much the government should be actively involved in people's personal lifestyle choices.

Care is about caring for people in need due to mental or physical disabilities. The main legal document regulating care is the Exceptional Medical Expenses Act of 1967. All three spheres of the health sector are the target of reforms, cutbacks, austerity measures and economies (see the recent plans of State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sports Martin Van Rijn, April 2013).¹⁸⁰

8.2 | PREVENTION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND HEALTH RISKS

The relationships between lower socio-economic status, low educational levels, unemployment, poverty and poor health have been broadly documented.¹⁸¹ This is

179 M. Trappenburg, "De Drie Rijken van de Zorg" (The three domains of health), in J. Duyvendak, C. Bouw, K. Gerxhani and O. Velthuis (eds), *Sociale kaart van Nederland: over maatschappelijke instituties* (The Social Map of the Netherlands: about social institutions) Boom Onderwijs, 2007.

180 See for example Parliamentary Bill "Reform long-term care", The Hague, 25 April 2013, at <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2013/04/25/kamerbrief-hervorming-langdurige-zorg-naar-een-waardevolle-toekomst.html> (accessed 21 May 2014).

181 European Public Health Alliance, "Briefing paper on health inequalities, 2010, at <http://www.eph.org/4318> (accessed 10 December 2013).

confirmed on a local level in Amsterdam: Amsterdammers with higher educations and incomes have better health.¹⁸² There is also a relationship between financial stress and health risks. Furthermore, alcohol dependence is closely related to socio-economic disadvantage. A 2010 report on substance abuse and sexual behaviour among less educated young people found that people in this group were more often involved in risky behaviour than higher-educated young people.¹⁸³ They smoked cigarettes more often, used soft drugs (cannabis) and drank larger amounts of alcohol than higher-educated young people, and the discrepancy continues into later phases of life. Of all students who participated in the research, VMBO-b students¹⁸⁴ had by far the highest score on each of the indicators. The report indicated that current preventive interventions were insufficient, and recommended that the social environment of children and especially parents should be actively involved in the interventions. The report's recommendations included improving the assertiveness of young people, so that they become more resistant to peer pressure, which is the strongest factor for substance abuse. Other important factors are the amount of parental supervision (or lack thereof), hyperactivity and behavioural problems.¹⁸⁵ Low-income groups also tended to be poorly nourished, which results in longer-term health consequences for adults. Levels of obesity varied greatly between lower and higher socio-economic groups.¹⁸⁶ In Amsterdam, levels of childhood obesity are significantly higher than elsewhere in the country, and the municipality launched an action plan in the spring of 2013. Research demonstrates the link between deprivation and obesity, with obesity significantly higher in poorer neighbourhoods. The submunicipalities of North, New-West and South-East are top of the list.¹⁸⁷

One important point in the field of prevention that emerged from the focus group discussions was the central role of alcohol in daily life in both neighbourhoods. Peer pressure and social conformity play an important role in people's drinking habits. We all work and on Friday night we want to toast. Yes, alcohol is the thing here in the neighbourhood. In the weekends we always drink and in the summer holidays we drink daily. (Woman, 20). In the following exchange the downside of this behaviour was expressed:

X: They stand at the Lido [the local grocery store], it starts with a Coca-Cola and it ends up with a lot of booze. (Woman, 52)

182 "De Staat van de Stad VII".

183 National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, *Middelengebruik en seksueel gedrag van jongeren met een laag opleidingsniveau* (Substance abuse and sexual behaviour of lower educated young persons), The Hague, 2010 (hereafter, National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, *Middelengebruik en seksueel gedrag*).

184 VMBO-b refers to the lowest level of pre-vocational secondary education.

185 National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, *Middelengebruik en seksueel gedrag*.

186 M. Devaux, F. Sassi, J. Church, M. Cecchini and F. Borgonovi, "Exploring the Relationship between Education and Obesity", *OECD Journal: Economic Studies*, 1 (2011), at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/19952856> (accessed 21 May 2014).

187 "De Staat van de Stad VII", p. 8.

Z: It's not young people, but men over 21. It is not a pleasant group, they sniff drugs, there's a lot of verbal aggression. (Woman, 45)

Drinking is seen as an important part of the neighbourhood's way of life:

People here like parties, drinks, gezelligheid [cosiness]. (Woman, 52)

No references were made to the adverse health consequences of drinking. When these were discussed, it was always at the level of social nuisance and neighbourhood liveability.

8.3 | TREATMENT: DANGER OF DICHOTOMY IN PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

In treatment, the trend is towards increasing free market policies, austerity measures and higher costs. For all regular short-term treatment, there is a system of obligatory health insurance, with private health insurance companies providing a combination of mandatory universal coverage and competing private health plans. These companies are obliged to provide a basic package of covered treatments. In 2012 the health insurance deductible amount was increased to €350 annually, meaning that the first €350 of all basic care is paid out of the patient's own pocket.¹⁸⁸ People with lower incomes receive an allowance as compensation for the increased deductible, at €115 maximum per person per year.¹⁸⁹ While the basic package has been restricted, the deductible and the monthly premiums have increased. Advocacy groups are expressing concern that the weakest in society will suffer the most from these measures. They warn that these measures particularly target people with chronic illnesses or the disabled on social security.¹⁹⁰ Recently, a survey held among general practitioners across the Netherlands revealed a trend of citizens avoiding primary health care because of financial obstacles.¹⁹¹ It was suggested that people are avoiding necessary health care because they cannot afford to pay their own portion of the treatment costs, let alone pay for care that is not part of the insurance. An investigation by the Socialist Party into this issue indicated that 80 percent of participating general

188 With the exception of the general practitioner, antenatal and post-natal care. See <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/zorgverzekering/eigen-risico> (accessed 10 September 2013).

189 An argument in favour of shifting the risk onto individuals (apart from cost efficiency) is that it might deter people from seeking expensive medical aid when this is not strictly necessary (L. Boon, *Kamermeerderheid voor verhoging eigen risico NRC Handelsblad*, 27 September 2011). Left-wing parties are arguing for a solidarity principle in health care (which means that everyone should contribute equally to public goods like health care, regardless of a person's actual health care needs).

190 Socialist Party, "Gevolgen eigen risico en andere bijdragen in de zorg" (consequences of own risk and other contributions in health care), Verslag van een enquête (Report on a survey), May 2013.

191 "Enquête over zorgmijden" (Survey on health-care evasion), Landelijke Huisartsen Vereniging (National Association for General Practitioners), June 2013, at <http://nos.nl/artikel/514680-patienten-mijden-zorg-door-crisis.html> (accessed 12 September 2013).

practitioners have observed negative consequences as a result of the increased costs, and 40 percent even noted health damage.¹⁹² Other research suggests that people with lower incomes who evaluate their own health as poor expect more obstacles from the financial measures in their access to health care.¹⁹³

The Open Society Foundations' research found evidence of people avoiding basic medical care, mainly because of the cost. Participants spoke of necessary medication that is not covered by insurance and that becomes more and more difficult to pay for. They also expressed a fear of going to the doctor when it is unknown what their share of the costs will be.

Dentist and physiotherapist, I don't do that anymore, it has become too expensive.
(Man, 50)

I think twice when I go to the doctor. I am really afraid of the invoice, you don't have a clue what you need to pay for and how much. I received an invitation for a breast examination, but I do not dare to go. (Woman, 50)

I for instance do not have a supplementary dental insurance, even though I've been needing a new set of teeth for years. (Woman, 61)

One participant described the cumulative effect of health costs on her well-being.

I have had an enormous amount of extra expenses because of my illness (rheumatoid arthritis): a raised bed, thresholds taken out of my house and so on. And the 70 percent coverage I get now is really a lot less than 100 percent, especially since I can no longer work overtime. (Woman, 45)

Participants mentioned the extra medical insurance costs of children who are over 18, unemployed and still living at home, or foster children for whom very little is subsidised.

Parents have to pay for their children's health insurance when they're 18, if children do not have a job, which is hard to find these days. So that is an enormous extra cost. (Man, 50)

Chapter 6 on employment highlights the link between financial and medical or health problems. During the focus group discussions, some participants confirmed this, as they described how they got into financial trouble because of medical expenses:

192 R. Leijten, "Eigen risico bedreiging volksgezondheid" (Own risk is threatening public health), 30 May 2013, at http://www.sp.nl/zorg/nieuwsberichten/14474/130530-leijten_eigen_risico_bedeiging_volksgezondheid.html (accessed 10 December 2013).

193 M. Reitsma-van Rooijen, A.E.M. Brabers and J.D. de Jong, *Veel zorggebruikers verwachten belemmeringen voor noodzakelijk zorggebruik bij een verplicht eigen risico van 350 Euro* (Many health-care users expect obstacles to necessary health care in case of mandatory own risk of 350 Euro), NIVEL, Utrecht, 2012.

I am now enrolled in a debt relief programme, also because medical expenses and insurance are simply obligatory. So you try to economise on additional health-care costs. (Woman, 61)

8.3.1 | INTERACTIONS WITH MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

The research also examined people's experiences with medical professionals. Some participants reported a sense of being cold-shouldered by medical professionals.

The doctors here do not take me seriously. People with money are taken seriously. (Woman, 45) I also feel that I am not taken seriously by people in the medical sector. You are easily dismissed: "Can't your family have a look?" No, of course not, why would I be calling the doctor? (Man, 50)

It happened to me once that I came to the Accident and Emergency Service with my daughter, and she was not being helped for a very long time, while all staff members were drinking coffee. That really upsets me. (Woman, 45)

At the same time, there are positive examples of doctors helping out in times of financial stress: I do have a very sweet general practitioner, he helps me out a little, he gave me an injection for free once. (Woman, 45) People also expressed finding it difficult to disclose all their private information in return for (longer-term) care.

8.4 | CARE: DE-INSTITUTIONALISATION, VOLUNTEERING AND THREATS TO EQUALITY

The care sector is undergoing important policy reforms. The most important trend is the de-institutionalisation of care: increasingly, care is moving from institutional settings like nursing homes to the private context of the home. In addition, one of the large-scale reforms ahead is the decentralisation of care from the national level to the municipal level. This is regulated by the Law on Civic Support, 2006. De-institutionalisation goes hand in hand with the de-professionalisation of care. Local family and neighbourhood networks increasingly play a role in the provision of care. The idea is that trained professionals are not strictly necessary to provide routine forms of care. In addition, there is increasing privatisation in the provision of home care.

In the Netherlands, costs for longer-term care are financed by social insurance funded from taxation. These costs have increased dramatically in the last few years and

are regarded as unmanageable.¹⁹⁴ As a response, important reforms and austerity measures are being introduced. Critics argue that the austerity measures will threaten the equality principle. Not everyone with the same symptoms will get the same care. Instead it will become dependent on a number of variables like income, wealth and personal networks. The decentralisation of care from the national to the municipal level is said to increase that inequality. In the world of care, just like the world of welfare, there is a growing role and responsibility for the citizen. The trend in nursing homes is to increase mandatory volunteering by family members, and home care is also becoming the responsibility of volunteers. Critics see difficulties with this emphasis on volunteering. There are obvious limits to people's preparedness to volunteer their time, particularly in anonymous city neighbourhoods. The issue of overworked, often female voluntary carers is a cause for concern.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, voluntarily helping each other depends on strong local networks and feelings of solidarity, without a guarantee of return. Critics question whether this solidarity and involvement can be implemented top-down.¹⁹⁶ Critics also argue that the government incorrectly labels all forms of longer-term care as not real care.¹⁹⁷

Most participants in the Open Society Foundations' research wanted to stay at home as long as possible and seemed to have a very negative impression of nursing homes. At the same time, there are concerns about how home care should be organised for the increasing number of elderly residents who are in need of long-term, specialised care. An interesting question is how the communities studied here will fare under the reformed health-care framework, with its increasing stress on informal care. On the one hand, people affirmed that because of the social cohesion and social control in their neighbourhood, people automatically look after one another.

I experienced a few years ago when I fell ill, that the neighbours came to help. There is social control where we live, especially when you get older ... People check whether I open the curtains in the mornings. If not, they come to ask if I'm ok.
(Woman, 70)

Many focus group participants expressed concerns that the increasing anonymity of the neighbourhood and the growing complexity of the health-care sector are obstacles:

194 "Sterke Stijging Uitgaven AWBZ" (Strong increase costs AWBZ), Webmagazine, CBS, 28 July 2010, at <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/overheid-politiek/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2010/2010-3169-wm.htm> (accessed 25 February 2014). The AWBZ is the Exceptional Medical Expenses Act.

195 The City of Amsterdam has decided to reserve extra structural and incidental budgets for the support of informal caregivers for 2014–2015. Recent research by the Municipal Health Services found that one in five informal care-givers feels overburdened. *Extra geld voor mantelzorgers* (Extra funding for informal care givers), *Parool*, 14 December 2013.

196 E. Tonkens and J.W. Duyendak, *Wie wil zich nou laten wassen door de buurman?* (Who wants to be washed by the neighbour?), *Trouw*, 13 May 2013 (hereafter, Tonkens and Duyendak, "Wie wil zich nou laten wassen door de buurman?").

197 Tonkens and Duyendak, "Wie wil zich nou laten wassen door de buurman?".

There are many elderly people here in the village that need help. They do not know how to organise it, so they do not get help. (Woman, 88)

When you get older, your network falls apart. And many elderly people are not used to asking for help. You don't want to bother the neighbours with that. (Woman, 88)

Loneliness increases with age. Among people between the ages of 75 and 84 years old, almost 50 percent report feeling lonely.¹⁹⁸ People with a disability and people with health problems are at a higher risk of loneliness. This is also the case for people with a lower economic status: 55 percent of people with financial problems feel lonely. People with paid employment have less risk of loneliness than those without employment. In Amsterdam, research confirmed that education and (ethnic) origin are key factors influencing social isolation. Citizens of Dutch heritage with lower education rank highest on indicators of social isolation, with almost 25 percent feeling isolated to some extent.¹⁹⁹ Young people reported a much lower sense of loneliness than older people.²⁰⁰ The extent of social isolation among the elderly is all the more relevant in the light of the reforms in the care sector. Under the new arrangements, elderly people in need of care will become increasingly dependent on their social networks and in particular on help in their immediate surroundings. In the focus groups, concern was expressed about elderly persons in the neighbourhood who do not have the required social network. In a 2013 report, the SCP emphasised the importance of resources for people's healthy ageing, of which the important ones are a high level of education, a high(er) income, a strong social network and a sense of control over one's own life.²⁰¹

In addition, people are worried about the increased emphasis on voluntary care and on neighbours caring for each other, in the face of a decrease in social cohesion in their neighbourhood, or "yuppification".

These new neighbours, they have to work very hard to pay the rent. The entire social process falls apart with that, people no longer have time for their neighbours. (Woman, 61)

A significant proportion of the research participants were providing informal care (*mantelzorg*) for a family member. It is clear that for some this responsibility is heavy because it comes in addition to the challenges that people already face. Several female

198 National Public Health Compass, "Cijfers over Eenzaamheid, 2012" (Figures on loneliness), at <http://www.nationaalkompas.nl/gezondheidsdeterminanten/omgeving/leefomgeving/eenzaamheid/cijfers-over-eeenzaamheid-2012> (accessed 25 February 2014).

199 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, "Burgermonitor 2011".

200 P. Hilhorst and J. van der Lans, *Sociaal-doe-het-zelven* (Social Do-it-Yourself), Atlas Contact, Amsterdam, 2013 (hereafter, P. Hilhorst and J. Van der Lans, *Sociaal-doe-het-zelven*).

201 J. Iedema, C. Campen and M. Broese van Groenou, *Met Zorg Ouder Worden: Zorgtrajecten van ouderen in tien jaar* (Getting older with care, health trajectories of elderly in ten years), Netherlands Institute for Social Research, The Hague, 2013.

care-givers gave the impression of being overburdened by the informal care to (most often) one of their parents. In one case, the participant in question was chronically ill herself. Participants also complained of the meagre budgets and support facilities provided for informal care, the complex bureaucracy surrounding home care and the frustration of dealing with all organisations involved.

My parents are in need of care. My mother only receives one nappy [change] per day, that is terrible, incontinence and dementia. It is very sad and if you want to arrange things, it takes a whole lot of effort, you only get things done when you get really angry ... My mother lives in the neighbourhood, she really needs care three times a day. And we [my sister and I] cover most of it ourselves. You have to talk to a whole range of different parties to get things arranged. (Woman, 51)

The people that need that care are enormously vulnerable, they cannot stand up for themselves. We open our mouths, but they themselves cannot do that. (Woman, 51)

Here again, the perception exists that those who need help do not get it and those who do not, do. Some participants voiced complaints about the objectivity and fairness of the Bureau Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning (Bureau for the implementation of the law on civic support).

8.5 | CONCLUSION

The impact of reforms in the health sector is certainly felt in the community. The cumulative effect of austerity measures results in people avoiding essential basic care, such as dental care or physiotherapy. These developments may impede equal access to good-quality health care across different socio-economic groups. People already have the perception that they are treated differently from patients with money. Many participants are involved in forms of informal care, especially because family members tend to live nearby. The challenging aspects of informal care all play themselves out in the daily lives of participants. Providing informal care is difficult for those who have health problems of their own, or who have financial problems. In these cases, the responsibility of informal care-giving weighs heavily on people. The complex bureaucracy involved in informal care support is experienced as an additional burden in this already strained situation. Furthermore, there are concerns about the feasibility of informal care in the face of decreasing social cohesion. In terms of prevention of health problems, the culture of excessive alcohol consumption that is transmitted from generation to generation calls for special attention.

BEST PRACTICE: NEIGHBOURHOOD CARE NETHERLANDS (BUURTZORG NEDERLAND)

Buurtzorg Nederland is an innovative concept for longer-term care at home. Care is being provided by a team of district nurses in Buurtzorg teams. The aim is to combine medical skills and know-how with specific knowledge of the neighbourhood concerned. The locally operating Buurtzorg teams are supported by a national support organisation. The teams function in a network that also involves primary care-givers such as the general practitioner, other health-care organisations and like-minded organisations. A key aim is to find solutions in the immediate environment of the person in need of care, and to maximise that person's independence and quality of life.

See www.buurtzorgnederland.com

9

POLICING AND SECURITY

This chapter looks at residents' experiences with policing and security. It investigates their sense of safety and encounters with violence and crime. It will examine which important concerns arise from the group interviews and the interviews with professionals (police officer, policy adviser) about policing and security in the neighbourhoods of this study. It examines residents' accounts of their interactions with the police. Crime figures for these neighbourhoods and the balance between an objective and subjective sense of safety also receive attention. Because the theme of social cohesion is often linked to the theme of safety and security in both academic and policy literature, the chapter returns to the question of social cohesion in both neighbourhoods, a subject that was also addressed in chapter 4.

9.1 | SENSE OF SAFETY IN AMSTERDAM AND THE NEIGHBOURHOODS OF THE RESEARCH

The city of Amsterdam, together with the other three main cities of the Netherlands (Rotterdam, The Hague and Eindhoven) ranks low in both objective and subjective safety. In 2012, around 29 percent of respondents to the annual Amsterdam monitor on security indicated that they sometimes or often felt unsafe in their neighbourhood.²⁰² Another report by the Amsterdam municipality suggested that trouble caused by youth groups is the primary risk factor for tensions in neighbourhoods. This risk is even greater regarding the disproportionate number of youth with mental disabilities. Another prime source of tension is the noise made by younger children who are not supervised by their parents.²⁰³ In the same report it was suggested that a minimum or basic sense of safety in a neighbourhood is required for residents to be prepared to contribute to the neighbourhood and initiate joint activities with other neighbours. In neighbourhoods where this basic sense of safety is absent, a temporary integrated approach at different levels might be necessary (see also joint approach by the submunicipality of Amsterdam-North and the different status of neighbourhoods). The visible presence of professionals who are easily approachable is an important way to improve people's basic sense of safety.²⁰⁴

The level of objective safety in Amsterdam-North is slightly below the Amsterdam average. For example, burglary increased in the period between 2008 and 2013. At the same time, some other types of crimes such as vandalism, violence, road accidents and drug-related problems decreased. In 2012, an improvement in the objective safety in Tuindorp Buiksloot relative to that of Amsterdam was registered.²⁰⁵ At the same time, both neighbourhoods score relatively highly in the youth criminality figures. Levels of

202 Amsterdam Municipality, "Factsheet Veiligheidsmonitor Amsterdam-Amstelland 2008–2012", (Factsheet Safety Monitor Region Amsterdam-Amstelland 2008–2012), February 2013; at www.os.amsterdam.nl/pdf/2013_factsheet_veiligheidsmonitor.pdf (accessed 21 May 2014) "De Staat van Noord 2013".

203 Van Wonderen and Cohen, "Handreiking Weerbare Buurten".

204 Van Wonderen and Cohen, "Handreiking Weerbare Buurten".

205 "De Staat van Noord 2013".

public satisfaction with the police in the neighbourhood is lower in Amsterdam-North in comparison with other parts of the city over the years 2008–2012, although it should be noted that satisfaction with the police did increase in 2011–2012.

Alongside serious crime a key concern is what may be called antisocial behaviour or social annoyances (drugs- or alcohol-related annoyances, street harassment, trouble caused by youth groups). Amsterdam as a whole scores relatively highly for such activities. In 2012, Amsterdam-North scored below the average for Amsterdam in terms of annoyances experienced. The statistics indicate an improvement compared with the previous years. People's subjective sense of safety is also an important indicator. Interestingly, the figure for a subjective sense of feeling unsafe is much higher for residents of Amsterdam-North than for Amsterdam as a whole: 34 percent of residents of Amsterdam-North sometimes or often feel unsafe in their neighbourhood. It is noteworthy that in Amsterdam-North the sense of safety is subject to dramatic fluctuations. Of the two neighbourhoods in the Open Society Foundations' research, the sense of feeling unsafe is much stronger in Volewijck (Floradorp) than in Tuindorp Buiksloot.²⁰⁶ The picture arising from the statistics is that of a discrepancy between the objective and subjective sense of safety in Amsterdam-North.²⁰⁷

An examination of the statistics at the neighbourhood level in Floradorp, which is part of the broader Volewijck neighbourhood, shows that people's sense of insecurity in 2012 was above the average for the submunicipality of Amsterdam-North.²⁰⁸ On the other hand, Tuindorp Buiksloot was well below the average in 2012. In both neighbourhoods the figure has fluctuated significantly in the last four years.²⁰⁹ From the focus group discussions, a complex interrelationship emerges between people's sense of social cohesion and questions of safety and security in the neighbourhoods of Tuindorp Buiksloot and Floradorp. All groups emphasised that the sense of community and cohesion is very high in both neighbourhoods (see also chapter 4). People often linked this sense of community to their sense of safety. As one participant from Tuindorp Buiksloot stated:

As soon as I cross the bridge [into our neighbourhood], I feel safe. This is our place, our neighbourhood. (Man, 18)

We know the neighbourhood very well, I feel super safe here, if a lunatic were to follow me I could easily knock on a door. (Woman, age unknown)

Parents emphasised that their children can easily play on the streets, as all neighbours watch over them. The impression is that the village-like character of both

206 "De Staat van Noord 2013", p. 61.

207 "De Staat van de Noordse Wijken, 2012".

208 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, "Basisset 'Onveiligheid in de eigen woonbuurt naar buurtcombinaties', Buurtcombinaties 2008–2012" (Basic dataset "Insecurity in one's own neighbourhood by neighbourhood combinations 2008–2012").

209 Van Wonderen and Cohen, "Handreiking Weerbare Buurten".

neighbourhoods enhances people's sense of safety. People did describe a decrease in social cohesion due to the influx of new residents, but overall the sense of cohesion and community is still strong.

9.2 | A COLLECTIVE NORM OF NOT REPORTING TO THE POLICE

At the same time, the strong sense of community might also have a negative impact on questions of safety and security. It became clear from the research that in both communities there is a strong norm against reporting to the police. This should be understood in the context of a historically based antipathy towards the police in both neighbourhoods. In this view, social annoyances in particular are issues to be addressed between residents and among themselves, and should not be resolved by reporting to the police. Reporting social annoyances to the police, many respondents stressed, is considered betrayal.

X: When we were young we were taught never to call the police. That makes you a traitor. You just approach your neighbour in case of trouble. It is also based on a mistrust of authorities. (Woman, 56)

Y: There is mistrust of authorities, but going to the police in my eyes is overstepping the mark. I find that extreme. (Woman, 57)

A further complexity is that this norm pertains to old residents alone. New residents, who are often from middle-class backgrounds, are seen as violating the norm and as constantly reporting to the police, thereby contributing to the boundaries between different groups of residents. Increased diversity in terms of class or ethnic backgrounds was seen as a challenge to social cohesion (see also chapter 4).

It does not fit the neighbourhood. Involving the police is something you just don't do. You are not raised like that, there is so much social control. You are really considered a traitor when you report. I believe that new residents would report more easily. (Man, 33)

Since she has a double house, she reports to the police. In short, since she lives upmarket. (Man, 18)

Perhaps unexpectedly, in both neighbourhoods most adult residents described their interactions with the police positively. In particular, most people emphasised the good reputation of the district police officer. At the same time, some argued that in their view the police could be more visible and take more action in certain situations:

For example, a young family was located in the neighbourhood, entirely surrounded by care professionals. They are creating an enormous amount of disorder. An entire terrace on the pavement, aggression towards neighbours. And it takes three to four years before a family like that is being relocated. (Woman, 56)

In the past, there was a prohibition on drinking outdoors, but it has been lifted on police advice. Some residents in Floradorp were angry about what they see as limited punishment by courts for theft and robbery. This seems to be in contradiction to the strong norm against involving the police too early. These are signals that that norm is indeed no longer as consensual as it might have been in the past.

Police officers for their part argue that their inaction is the result of the norm against reporting to the police. Without reports and figures, they cannot take action. Some respondents complained of being treated with little respect when dealing with the police, although most emphasised that this did not apply to the district officers. For instance, a female respondent had to go to the immigration police when she lost her passport, and recounted feeling “treated like a criminal”.

9.3 | ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR BY YOUTH GROUPS

Across all focus groups, a large number of participants referred to extreme social annoyance from youth groups in their neighbourhood. Stories of interactions with the police overwhelmingly concerned this issue. In both neighbourhoods, respondents gave a picture of groups of (predominantly male) youngsters hanging around on the streets, consuming alcohol, making noise and occasionally harassing passers-by. In Floradorp, there is a large group of people of various ages (not all young) who assemble every Friday in front of the local grocery store to drink and hang out. While several residents clearly considered this problematic, there was an ambivalence in people's responses to it and the solutions they put forward. In both neighbourhoods, socialising and drinking alcohol in public spaces is a tradition handed down from generation to generation. The sentiment that “we did just like that in our day”, in combination with the norm against reporting to the police, results in a tacit acceptance of youth nuisance by many residents.

X: My father used to hang here too [near the playground]. He's already lived here for 55 years. (Man, 19)

Y: My dad says: “Son, you just stay there [the hanging spot] and have a good time. They [the police] cannot touch you.” (Man, 19)

Z: I eat at home, I sleep and I work. The rest of the time, I'm outdoors with my friends. My parents have problems. I grew up with that. (Man, age unknown)

Additionally, in Tuindorp Buiksloot many expressed their understanding of the situation that the young people are in since the youth centre was burned down (see chapter 10) and said that young people “have no place of their own and are condemned to hang around in the streets”. This relates to the complaint that all the facilities are closing down. Particularly in Tuindorp Buiksloot, parents of young people emphasised that the behaviour of their children is basically innocent.

At the same time, residents related feelings of discomfort or at worst intimidation from these groups. Some residents of Floradorp no longer want to send their children on an errand to the grocery store.

X: It's not young men, it's men above 21. It is not a nice group, they are sniffing drugs, there is a lot of verbal aggression ... You would rather not send your child past it ... At times, it gets very crowded. I live two streets away from it, but people are regularly beaten up there. The police do not really have the authority to do anything. We don't really know the district officer. (Woman, 52)

Y: For an outsider it is really frightening, you cannot easily pass by. (Woman, 51)

Floradorp residents also referred to well-known neighbours involved in robberies and vandalism. In Tuindorp Buiksloot, parents complained about the playground being littered with broken glass every morning, and of nightly noise. For some, it is a reason to move out of the neighbourhood, despite a strong sense of being rooted there.

9.4 | STREET COACHES

Street coaches (*Straat coaches*), private security officers, were first introduced in Amsterdam in the submunicipality of Slotervaart in 2006.²¹⁰ The purpose of street coaches is to exert social control in areas where social nuisance is so high that residents themselves can no longer control the situation.²¹¹ Part of the philosophy is that street coaches are not police officers and that they adopt a more sociable approach, factors that should in theory enhance young people's confidence in them. In Tuindorp Buiksloot, young people as well as their parents complain that street coaches have had a counterproductive effect, as they are regarded as contributing to instead of tempering nuisances. The picture arising from the interviews was of a complete lack of confidence in the street coaches. This supports recent findings in a report by Vasco Lub, which argued that there is too little insight in how the behaviour and role of street coaches are evaluated by the young people with whom they are working. None of the

210 Open Society Foundations, “Muslims in Amsterdam”, Budapest, 2010 at http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/a-muslims-amsterdam-report-en-20101123_o.pdf (accessed 23 May 2014)

211 V. Lub, *Schoon, Heel en Werkzaam: een wetenschappelijke beoordeling van interventies op het terrein van buurtleeftbaarheid* (Clean, Whole and Workable: a scientific evaluation of interventions in the sphere of neighbourhood liveability), Boom Lemma, Amsterdam, 2013, p. 101 (hereafter, Lub, *Schoon, Heel en Werkzaam*).

evaluations of street coaches have been based on conversations with either youngsters or residents. The research in this report in that sense fills a vacuum. Moreover, Lub found no clear evidence of the street coaches having a positive impact on the number of nuisance reports filed about young people.²¹²

Interactions with street coaches, were described in much more problematic terms than the interaction with police. Young residents in particular expressed very strong resentment of these professionals. They argued that the street coaches are themselves provocative, trying to draw out youth misbehaviour to elicit police intervention. They complained of being treated without any respect by them.

The submunicipality thought they could solve the problem with street coaches. It has a counterproductive effect. The street coaches interfered too much with residents ... I've spent an evening undercover with the youth. I believe their behaviour is very innocent. (Woman, 44)

We don't need anything like that [street coaches] ... Mostly when people ask us to leave, we do that. It also depends on the manner in which they ask us. (Man, 18)

Interviewer: What about street coaches?

X: The biggest trash in Amsterdam! (Man, 19)

Y: They only provoke you. (Man, 19)

Z: We speak a certain language among each other, our slang, and they think they can address us in that language. But we have known each other for a long time! (Man, 21)

X: They provoke you, start debating with you and before you know it, you're surrounded by ten police officers. And they are not allowed to touch you, but they do it anyway.

The question is what alternatives can be developed to tackle an obvious problem with youth annoyance in both neighbourhoods. One possibility is the provision of contemporary, self-organised youth facilities in the neighbourhood, using the example of the Kluzzfabriek in Floradorp, where young people can fix and repair old bikes. The question of young people loitering will also be addressed in chapter 10.

9.5 | OLD-SCHOOL COMPARED WITH NEW-SCHOOL YOUTH WORK

The young people in the focus groups made no secret of the fact that they would not be visiting the newly established talent centre (*talentencentrum*) just behind the offices

²¹² Lub, *Schoon, Heel en Werkzaam*, p. 101.

of the submunicipality. There was a wide consensus among young and old residents and even some professionals that the centre was doomed to failure. First of all, young participants from both neighbourhoods remarked that they would not visit a centre that is frequented by youth from various neighbourhoods in North. They made it clear they want to hang out in their own neighbourhood, among their own kind, thereby drawing strong boundaries between themselves and, particularly, youngsters of non-Western backgrounds. In addition, when asked what form youth work should take in their opinion, they expressed a strong preference for simply “chilling”, “hanging around”, “having fun”, “sharing a drink”. They emphasised that they are not interested in a youth facility that focuses on the development of their talents. At the same time, the alderwoman interviewed made it abundantly clear that old youth work is in the past and that it is no longer the task of the government to subsidise hanging around without any purpose. This seems to create a stalemate, as both sides of the argument presented their positions as non-negotiable.

REGULATING THE NEW YEAR'S FIRES IN FLORADORP

The respondents generally evaluated the approach to regulating the notorious New Year's fires in Floradorp²¹³ in a positive way. On a grass field in the neighbourhood, (mostly male) members of the community start collecting used Christmas trees each year on 27 December. The large pile of trees is set on fire on New Year's Eve, as part of neighbourhood celebrations. In the past, the fires have been the site of dramatic clashes between residents and the police. In response to incidents and concerns about safety the submunicipal council had decided to forbid the New Year's fires in 2003. This led to such strong protest from the community that the decision was reversed in 2004. Since then, a series of measures have been taken to ensure that the event takes place without problems. Among other things, the pile of Christmas trees that is set on fire has to remain within predefined limits and a local team of volunteers is deployed to maintain order. The regulation of the New Year's fires can rightly be called a best practice. For the community, it is of vital importance that the tradition can be maintained, as is clear in the quote from this female participant:

The fire of the Christmas trees is very important for the neighbourhood ... It is really to close the year, and even though there is fighting involved, it does create a feeling of connectedness. Everybody's working together ... It used to be very grim, with the riot police, but now it is going well. For the youngsters it is very important.
(Woman, 45)

9.6 | CONCLUSION

On the surface, it seems as if people experience a good sense of safety and security in the tight-knit communities of both neighbourhoods. At the same time, there are cracks in it, for several reasons. There is a collective norm of not involving the police in case of trouble (particularly problems between groups of youngsters and residents, but also conflicts between neighbours). The downside is that some problems are too complex to be solved among residents, and some residents may feel more comfortable with professional (police) intervention. Particularly in Floradorp, it appears that the sense of safety taken for granted is something of the past. In the present, many people feel intimidated by the large groups of adults who drink on the pavement and the increase in robberies throughout the neighbourhood. The social norm to tolerate this can become an obstacle to finding solutions. In Tuindorp Buiksloot, the problem of the groups of young people hanging around is creating tension in the neighbourhood and resulting in a decreasing subjective sense of safety. This is the first research report to map out the subjective experiences of youngsters and residents with street coaches in Amsterdam. These experiences are overwhelmingly negative, and need to be taken into account when assessing the efficiency of this solution.

BEST PRACTICE: SMS ALERT MOLENWIJK

In the neighbourhood of Molenwijk in Amsterdam-North, residents established a working group of residents who were concerned about the liveability and safety in their neighbourhood. One of its initiatives is the SMS alert, which is used to signal and report social disorder and vandalism. The idea is that the person who witnesses such behaviour sends out an SMS alert to a network of neighbour participants and often also the police. The effects of this civic initiative have been evaluated positively and the initiative has been awarded several times. See www.henkveen.nl

10

PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP

This chapter consists of two parts: the first addresses political participation by focus group members and the second looks at their civic participation and the theme of active citizenship.

10.1 | POLITICAL ATTITUDES

Media reports suggest that in the last ten years the Netherlands has shifted being labelled as a “high-trust country” to a “low-trust country”, that is, a country where people have a low level of trust in political institutions.²¹⁴ A closer analysis of this demonstrates that while a fundamental trust in the workings of democracy is still very strong in the Netherlands, trust in specific ruling governments has fluctuated significantly in this period, and trust in political parties is generally low.²¹⁵ In 2002, around the time of the political emergence and assassination of Pim Fortuyn, political trust was at a particularly low point, but previous high levels of trust returned around the height of the economic crisis in 2009.²¹⁶ Research does point out that in recent years an increasing number of people feel that politicians promise more than they can deliver.²¹⁷

Of all socio-demographic variables, education is the main factor explaining differences in levels of trust in politics and satisfaction with the way society is run. Importantly, there are significant differences in the level of trust between high levels of education compared with those who have low levels. Secular people with poor educations manifest the lowest levels of political trust.²¹⁸ The most dissatisfied citizens also have the strongest preference for the more populist parties like the Freedom Party (PVV) and Trots op Nederland²¹⁹ (in its more successful days), or they do not vote at all. A quarterly monitor published by the SCP indicates that at the moment Dutch citizens are generally pessimistic about the state of the economy and politics. Political trust in the current government has decreased rapidly.²²⁰

214 M. Bovens and A. Wille, “Politiek vertrouwen in Nederland: tijdelijke dip of definitieve daling?” (Political trust in the Netherlands: temporary dip or definite decline?), *Democratie Doorgelicht: Het functioneren van de Nederlandse Democratie*, 2011, p. 21-44 (Democracy Vetted: The functioning of Dutch democracy) (hereafter, Bovens and Wille, “Politiek vertrouwen in Nederland”).

215 The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, “De Sociale Staat van Nederland”, The Hague, 2008 (hereafter, “De Sociale Staat van Nederland” 2008).

216 Bovens and Wille, “Politiek vertrouwen in Nederland”.

217 “De Sociale Staat van Nederland, 2008.

218 Bovens and Wille, “Politiek vertrouwen in Nederland”; “De Sociale Staat van Nederland”.

219 “Trots op Nederland” (Proud of the Netherlands) is a political party established by former liberal MP Rita Verdonk in 2008.

220 Statistics Netherlands and Netherlands Institute for Social Research, “Continu onderzoek Burgerperspectieven 2013/12” (Continuous Research on Citizens’ Perspectives), The Hague, 2013.

10.2 | KNOWLEDGE OF AND INTEREST IN LOCAL POLITICS

Research has shown that the mayor of Amsterdam is well known (by 79 percent of respondents) but the rest of the City Cabinet much less so (21 percent), and that higher-educated Amsterdammers are better informed about local politics. The politicians of the submunicipality are less familiar: of all Amsterdammers, only 25 percent could name their local mayor. The former mayor of Amsterdam-North, Rob Post, is quite well known by 36 percent of residents of Amsterdam-North. Interestingly, this does not result in a greater general interest in local politics: Amsterdam-North is the submunicipality with the lowest figure for people's interest in local politics (less than 50 percent). Here, citizens of Dutch heritage with lower education show a particular lack of interest.²²¹

From the focus group discussions on political participation, a pattern emerged of a community that is divided between political indifference and political anger and resentment. The indifference was particularly pronounced. Many participants argued that voting or trying to influence politics would not make any difference, and having a say would not have any influence on politicians' plans. Several young people suggested that politics was not a topic of discussion in their families.

They do what they want. There is no point. My vote will end up in the bin.
(Woman, 24)

A clear lack of trust in political institutions at all levels was expressed across all focus groups. As for people's knowledge of local politicians, it was noteworthy that city politicians were less known than submunicipal politicians.

Apart from the dominant group of politically passive participants, there was also a number of participants who had been politically active, and a number of examples were given where participants had taken action at the submunicipal level (attending consultation meetings, writing emails or letters to the submunicipality, engaging in residents' initiatives). These participants were not all positive about their experiences with political participation. Two women who had participated in a civic action at the submunicipal offices expressed their frustration at the lack of results of that action and the limited interest shown by politicians. Some had experiences of receiving a prompt response from the authorities, but many complained of not getting a response at all. Interactions with representatives of the submunicipality were not always evaluated positively. Sometimes, "they just send a person that does not even know this area".

The submunicipality office, the people that work there do not live in North, they do not know how things work in North. They would say: we have a beautiful youth centre at the ROC! When you are familiar with North you know, these young people will not go there. We do not socialise with the Rimboe [jungle], not with Nieuwendam, not with different cultures. (Woman, 47)

10.3 | THE POLITICALLY ANGRY AND VOTING PATTERNS FOR THE PVV

In their study on feelings of social discontent among persons of Dutch origin in four neighbourhoods in the Netherlands, De Gruijter et al. found that many respondents were looking towards populist politicians, in particular Geert Wilders, Rita Verdonk and (the legacy of) Fortuyn for solutions to their concerns about the state of Dutch society.²²² Many of the sentiments these authors registered were also reflected in this study. In addition, the PVV vote has persistently been high in the district of Amsterdam-North. The garden villages of Amsterdam-North have manifested a particularly high percentage of populist votes in the last decade, the highest being 30.1 percent in Tuindorp Oostzaan in 2010. It is therefore important to consider the voting patterns for the anti-immigration PVV of Wilders in the neighbourhoods of this research.

TABLE 4. VOTES FOR THE PVV IN THE NETHERLANDS, AMSTERDAM, AND THE NEIGHBOURHOODS OF THE RESEARCH (%), 2009, 2012 AND 2014

	Nationally	Amsterdam	Tuindorp Buikslot ²²³	Volewijk ²²⁴
European elections 2009	17.0	12.8	28.6	29.1
Parliamentary elections 2012	10.8	6.1	19.9	15.4
European elections 2014	13.2 ²²⁵	8.0	21.6	19.3

Source: For 2009: Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, “Verkiezingen 2009 Europees Parlement, Definitieve Uitslag”, (Elections 2009, European Parliament, Final Results), at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/pdf/2009_europeesparlement_definitieve_uitslag.pdf (accessed 23 May 2014); for 2012: Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, “Verkiezingen Tweede Kamer 2012, Definitieve uitslag” (Parliamentary Elections 2012, Final results), at www.os.amsterdam.nl/pdf/2012_tweedekamer_definitieve_uitslag_1.pdf (accessed 23 May 2014), hereafter “Verkiezingen Tweede Kamer 2012” for 2014: Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, “Verkiezingen 2014 Europees Parlement, Definitieve Uitslag” (Elections 2014, European Parliament, Final Results), at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/pdf/2014_ep_definitieve%20uitslag.pdf (accessed 29 May 2014). The report by Research and Statistics only provides the absolute number of votes per political party, the calculations into percentages were made by the author of this report.

222 De Gruijter et al., “Een Vreemde in Eigen Land”.

223 This figure includes the areas of Buiksloterdijk and Nieuwendammerdijk. “Verkiezingen Tweede Kamer 2012”

224 This figure is for the whole of Volewijk and Buiksloterham. “Verkiezingen Tweede Kamer 2012” (Parliamentary Elections 2012).

225 This national figure is derived from NOS news, Meeste stemmen D66, CDA het grootst (Most votes for D66 (Liberal Democrats), CDA (Christian Democrats) the largest), at <http://nos.nl/artikel/652748-cda-5-zetels-d66-en-pvv-4.html> (accessed 29 May 2014).

In the two neighbourhoods that were the focus of this research, votes for the PVV were higher than the Amsterdam average. In Tuindorp Buiksloot the percentage of votes for the PVV was high in 2012 at 19.9 percent. However, this was a decrease from the 26.7 percent who voted for the PVV in 2010.²²⁶ In Volewijck, which includes the Floradorp neighbourhood, the vote for the PVV was 15.4 percent. Again this was a fall in the proportion of the votes compared with 29.1 percent in 2009. That said, the two communities covered by this research are historically known for and appear to also take a certain pride in an anti-establishment attitude, but have also always casted a high number of votes for the Social Democrats.²²⁷

In the focus group discussions, the third group that was identified were the politically angry. Remarkably, political resentment and a preference for the PVV were particularly strong among a group of young participants in Tuindorp Buiksloot, while the younger participants in Floradorp were largely apolitical. The sympathy for Wilders' party was largely linked to anger about an increasingly multicultural society (see also chapter 4). At the same time, the politically dissatisfied also indicated that their anger was based on a sentiment of disempowerment, because politics could not be influenced at all. Political resentment was often linked either to the topic of the multicultural society, or to developments in social welfare reform. In relation to the latter, the sentiment that "everything is simply taken away from us" was strong throughout all groups (see below).

I am not very much charmed by Geert Wilders. But I am in favour of Pim Fortuyn. It is just that there are no longer 16 million Dutch people in the Netherlands, all those double passports, and people do not really choose for the Netherlands. Pim Fortuyn stood up for all Dutch people, Dutch people first and then the rest.
(Woman, 51)

The borders are open, see what they have done! They've stolen tons! I have to repay €500 of medical allowances, and they are stealing millions and do not have to repay anything. I find it a disgrace that these things are happening here. People that built this country are being punished. (Woman, 51)

10.4 | ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

In the new citizenship model, citizens must first strive to be self-sufficient and take ownership of the challenges in their lives. Welfare benefits are no longer an entitlement

226 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, "Verkiezingen 2010 Tweede Kamer, Definitieve Uitslag" (Parliamentary Elections 2010, Final Results) at www.os.amsterdam.nl/pdf/2010_tweedekamer_definitieve_uitslag.pdf (accessed 23 May 2014).

227 See for instance the publication *Jubileum Tuindorp Buiksloot (Jubilee Tuindorp Buiksloot)*, Amsterdam Housing Corporation, 2001. In 1934, 79 percent of residents in Tuindorp Buiksloot voted for the Communists and Social Democrats and the leader of the Nationalist Socialist Movement (National-Socialistische Beweging, NSB) Anton Mussert was famously kicked out of the neighbourhood in 1937.

and policies are designed to encourage greater civic responsibility. Emphasis is on the initiative and the power of citizens. Citizens, some scholars argue, are reframed by the big society discourse into “individual welfare agents”.²²⁸ In the Netherlands, these reforms were initiated with the 2007 Social Support Act. Although the big society philosophy covers a variety of social domains such as employment and health, the emphasis in this chapter is on active citizenship in social cohesion, safety and the liveability of communities. Active citizenship entails encouraging citizens to take voluntary action for their communities and the vulnerable in those communities. Research has shown that younger and less educated people are less involved in initiatives to improve their neighbourhood.²²⁹ If people already have a low interest in local politics, they are also less motivated to engage in active citizenship.

The genuine sentiment in both neighbourhoods is a feeling of loss over the breakdown of old-style welfare-state facilities, as they, as well as meeting places that have long been essential to the community, are closed down for financial reasons without a decent alternative being offered. The perception is that their neighbourhoods are specifically targeted by these policies. Other, adjacent neighbourhoods (the focus areas, see Chapter 7) are perceived as still receiving many of the benefits and investments that their own communities once received, and to which they are entitled. One female participant labelled Tuindorp Buiksloot a “white-spot area” to underscore this point. A male participant expressed his frustration:

Other neighbourhoods get everything, we don't get a [XX]. At the shopping mall, a football ground is developed, in the Van der Pek neighbourhood [an adjacent focus area] as well. They have everything, we don't. (Man, 19)

Many participants in Tuindorp Buiksloot referred to the affair of the Noorderling playground and the community centre on the playground (see text box). Several participants had been involved in the process of developing a new set-up for this facility, but felt the submunicipality dealt a tremendous blow to it.

228 I. Verhoeven and E. Tonkens, “Talking Active Citizenship: Framing Welfare State Reform in England and the Netherlands”, *Social Policy and Society*, 12 (3) (July 2013), pp. 415–426.

229 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, *De Burgermonitor* (The Citizens' Monitor), 2011.

THE NOORDERLING PLAYGROUND, OCTOBER–DECEMBER 2012

On 30 October 2012, a group of residents of Het Blauwe Zand participated in a meeting with the submunicipality policy advisers and staff members of the organisation SPIN (Foundation Playgrounds in North), which was supervising and organising several playgrounds in Amsterdam-North. The subject of the meeting was the planned cutbacks in supervision at the Noorderling playground, which is in the corner of Het Blauwe Zand, adjacent to the Nieuwendammerdijk. The playground also contained a small community centre. Because of budget cutbacks, the playground would no longer be managed and run by SPIN from 1 January 2013. The aim of the meeting was to examine what residents would like to see happening to the playground after that date.

Residents at the meeting expressed their strong regret at the termination of SPIN's activities. They argued that the playground and SPIN's supervision plays an essential role in the liveability of the neighbourhood. It simultaneously offered a safe place to play for young children and a social control mechanism for the young people who are known to hang around the playground in the evenings. The young people were noisy, dropping litter and behaving annoyingly. Residents wanted the supervision of the playground to continue. The solution the submunicipality proposed was to set up a social enterprise initiative through which residents acquire ownership and responsibility for the daily management of the playground. Residents argued that the youth trouble was an obstacle for them to become active in playground management. The submunicipality promised to look for solutions for this. One of the solutions would be to engage the young people in the social enterprise of the playground; this could potentially improve relations between the youngsters and residents. The residents present at the meeting felt motivated to further elaborate on these ideas. During a subsequent meeting with the responsible alderman (Willem Paquay), it was agreed that the residents would draft a project plan for the future use of the Noorderling. If this project plan were feasible, residents would be given another year to elaborate their initiative further. Three weeks after that meeting, the submunicipality informed the residents that the building on the playground was rented out to a commercial tenant, a Ghanaian church community. When that news spread in the neighbourhood, enraged residents set the building on the playground on fire and it was burnt to the ground in December 2012. Civil servants at the submunicipality acknowledged in interviews that the affair was highly painful and caused by a lack of communication between different departments at the submunicipality.

This affair was recounted over and over again in many focus group discussions. It is clear that the course of events has given rise to many emotions in the neighbourhood and a sense of being unfairly treated. It has certainly adversely affected people's trust in the local authorities.

W: I think they [the submunicipality] do not realise what kind of neighbourhood this is. (Man, 21)

X: Communication between the submunicipality and young people sucks. (Man, 21)

Y: We sat around the table six months ago to make a plan for the playground, but nothing happened. (Girl, 14)

Z: We have very little confidence left. (Man, 17)

The affair was described as a real blow to the already fragile state of citizen initiative and trust in the submunicipality that is so much needed in the new, participatory welfare state. Interestingly, in Floradorp a similar process of closing down a youth facility was described with much less frustration. In this case, young residents recounted how they were involved in meetings with submunicipal representatives and were able to have a say about the facilities that would be retained in their neighbourhood. This resulted in the Kluzzfabriek, a youth facility in line with the new welfare philosophy, which so far seems to be a success.

BEST PRACTICE: THE KLUZZFABRIEK

The Kluzzfabriek is a workshop for young residents of Floradorp that developed out of a civic initiative of four persons from the community. After the community centre called the Dijk in Floradorp was closed due to changes in welfare policies, these young Floradorp residents wanted to ensure that the neighbourhood would continue to have its own youth facility. Young people come to the workshop to repair old bicycles as well as socialise together. Professionals from the youth welfare organisation DOCK are present to support the process.²³⁰

The case of the Driehoek community centre in Tuindorp Buiksloot is also illustrative, showing the complexities of the transition from the old to the new welfare philosophy. Many participants showed their concern for the preservation of the centre for the community. The challenges of the transition are clear, as one woman stated:

In my opinion, they say too easily that residents should take responsibility. It is not just a matter of administering a building, but also of paying rent. In short, the full commercial deal. They want volunteers, but they have to pay a lot of money! (Woman, 58)

²³⁰ During the roundtable meeting some criticism was made on the inclusion of the Kluzzfabriek as a best practice. According to one speaker, the youth involved are not unanimously happy with the development of the facility and the way in which this process was managed by the submunicipality.

And how much can you ask of people? You've got your mother and father in the nursing home, your children, your job, and you are supposed to be doing something for your neighbourhood. (Man, 68)

BEST PRACTICE: DRIEHOEK COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Driehoek on the Waddenweg in Tuindorp Buiksloot has functioned as a community centre for 70 years. Due to reforms in the welfare sector and budget cutbacks, it was decided that the community centre would stop functioning in its old form on 1 January 2014. In the transition from old-school to new-school welfare policies, the opportunity arose for a continuation of the centre in a new form: as a social civic enterprise (*wijkonderneming*).

Convinced by the importance of a meeting place in the neighbourhood for social cohesion and participation, a group of concerned residents started developing an initiative to continue the centre in April 2013. A group of committed volunteers from the neighbourhood secured funding from Trust in the City, a project of the City of Amsterdam to support local neighbourhood initiatives. In the course of 2013, the working group developed its business plan with the aid of a professional from a civic organisation Samen Wonen Samen Leven (Residing together, Living together, at www.sw-sl.nl). On 6 January 2014, ownership of Driehoek was officially transferred to the working group and Driehoek was opened as a social civic enterprise. Key volunteers have subsequently received support from the submunicipality of Amsterdam North on how to develop a business plan and how to run a community centre.

The centre is visited by 350 people per week and runs activities in the area of health, learning, physical exercise, musical and cultural activities for adults and children, social activities for elderly and organises a flea market. Concrete activities include a health service point with a district nurse once a week who answers questions from elderly people, as well as regular handicraft workshops for children.

Since it was taken over by volunteers, the centre has grown in terms of activities and organisations that make use of the centre. The centre is able to attract an increasingly diverse group of residents to its activities. The property belongs to the city of Amsterdam and there are currently 65 volunteers from the neighbourhood.

Source: personal communication with Mrs J. de Waard, October 2013 and January 2014.

10.5 | THE CHALLENGE OF CREATING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Especially in Tuindorp Buiksloot, the creation of inclusive community facilities in which all residents feel at home is a challenge. The neighbourhood is tight-knit and close but at the same time, long-standing rifts run through the community, particularly between a number of large and prominent families. It became clear during the focus group sessions that certain community facilities are traditionally associated with certain families in the neighbourhood. The result of this is that members of other (rival) families do not feel welcome there. In a small community such as this, such rivalries create a serious obstacle to the development of vital, self-organising facilities. The question is how to tackle this challenge and restore trust between different members of the community.

10.6 | CONCLUSION

10.6.1 | POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political trust is at a low point in these communities. Participants' political positions could be divided into three groups. The politically indifferent are the largest group; their interest in and knowledge of both local and national politics are very low. The second group includes people who were very interested in politics but have become disappointed. The politically disappointed have been active in politics (sometimes strongly identifying with the active and often left-wing political history of the neighbourhoods) but have recently had some bad experiences with local politics. The last group, the politically angry, are mostly concerned with national politics. Out of a sense of deprivation, disempowerment and social discontent (fed by the recession and a general suspicion of a multicultural society), these participants are drawn to parties to the right of the political spectrum, either the PVV or the successors of Pim Fortuyn. Although there is still a line against openly expressing preference for the PVV, there are indications that the party can find a lot of sympathy in both neighbourhoods.

10.6.2 | CIVIC PARTICIPATION

People in both neighbourhoods are feeling the impact of the important changes in the welfare sector. The key challenge is to redefine working relations between the three stakeholders involved: citizens, the government and professionals. In this search for a new joint venture, there are many start-up problems. Citizens have a strong sense of being entitled to old-school welfare facilities and their sudden closure is felt as a real loss across the community. Patience and appropriate guidance is needed to make the shift to self-organisation. Lack of communication or misguided communication

between the local government and citizens is detrimental to the already low level of trust in these new forms of cooperation. In Tuindorp Buiksloot, the Noorderling events were a strong illustration of the hiccoughs in this process. The local government needs to be very careful in its approach in the process towards self-organisation of the Driehoek community centre, as a second traumatic event will be the knock-out blow for people's interest in civic participation. Another key challenge is to establish inclusive community facilities. Some of the old-school welfare arrangements resulted in a culture with certain families calling the shots while other people do not feel welcome.



ROLE OF THE MEDIA

It is important to state that the theme of the media as such generated surprisingly little discussion in the focus groups. Therefore, the field research included questions on media in several of the focus groups rather than devoting an entire focus group to the subject, in the hope that this would generate richer findings. In addition, the theme of the reputation of the neighbourhood in the broader Amsterdam or Dutch context was addressed in almost every focus group. Some of the participants themselves linked this topic to the theme of media reporting. However, the results remain limited.

11.1 | REPRESENTATION OF WHITE WORKING-CLASS COMMUNITIES IN THE MEDIA AND POPULAR DISCOURSE

British academic literature has paid much attention to the subject of media representation of white working-class communities. Authors have examined the rise in public discourse of the term “chav” to designate white working-class people and its relation to youth culture and consumer capitalism.²³¹ Comedy programmes like *“Little Britain”* reproduced stereotypical images of socially marginalised communities. That the label “chav” has derogatory connotations is clear: “chav” is now used as a term of disgust and contempt for white working-class people in the UK.²³² The term has become commonplace in news, online and popular discourses.²³³ There is a similar type of development in the Netherlands, although not as pronounced as in the UK. Recent years have seen the rise of what commentators have described as *aso-tv* (anti-socials television) in Dutch television programming.²³⁴ This trend started with the programme about the Tokkies (2003), an Amsterdam family which made news headlines in 2003 after a series of neighbour conflicts in Sloterveer (a neighbourhood comparable with Floradorp and Tuinsdorp Buiksloot). The members of the family became nationally known and the name “Tokkie” was gradually taken up in public debate to refer to people who are considered socially maladjusted. In 2005, the Dutch broadcaster SBS started the controversial programme *“Probleemwijken”* (Problem neighbourhoods). The programme caused much controversy, partly because serious riots broke out in one of the participating neighbourhoods after the programme was broadcast. The purpose of the broadcaster was to “show the other side of the Netherlands”, to show people with “very different norms and values from the average

231 K. Hayward and M. Yar, “The ‘chav’ phenomenon: Consumption, media and the construction of a new underclass”, *Crime, Media, Culture* 2 (1) (2006), pp. 9–28.

232 I. Tyler, “‘Chav Mum Chav Scum’ Class disgust in contemporary Britain”, *Feminist media studies* 8 (1) (2008), pp. 17–34.

233 S. Lockyer, “Dynamics of social class contempt in contemporary British television comedy”, *Social Semiotics* 20 (2) (2010), pp. 121–138.

234 E. Scholten, “Aso-tv? Een nieuw SBS 6 programma wil ons het morele relativisme in probleemwijken laten zien” (New SBS-TV program wants to show us the moral relativism in problem neighbourhoods), *Trouw*, 28 February 2005, at <http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4324/Nieuws/archief/article/detail/1736969/2005/02/28/Aso-tv-Een-nieuw-SBS-6-programma-wil-ons-het-moreel-relativisme-in-probleemwijken-laten-zien.dhtml> (accessed 26 May 2014) (hereafter, Scholten, “Aso-tv?”)

Dutch person”.²³⁵ In 2010, the broadcaster RTL 5 aired the reality programme “*Oh Oh Cherso*”, which has a format very similar to the American programme “*Jersey Shore*”, and caricatured less well educated urban youngsters. The programme became hugely successful. As the philosopher S. Jensen observed: “both on television and the internet, there is a fixation on the ‘own’, ‘white’, lower educated ‘underclass’”. She argues that these programmes display a very homogenous, one-dimensional picture of the lower classes, but also emphasises that participants in these programmes “exploit” caricatures of themselves for financial gain.²³⁶ The increase in Dutch media content that focuses on class differences seems to contradict sociologists’ observations that class has become “a meaningless category within Dutch society”.²³⁷

11.2 | PROBLEMATISING YOUNG PEOPLE IN NEWS MEDIA REPORTING

The portrayal of young people in the media is particularly relevant for this research project because the role and image of youth groups in the neighbourhoods was a prominent topic in many of the focus groups. In Dutch public discourse “there is a growing discourse of feelings of being unsafe”, particularly in connection with the presence of young people in public spaces.²³⁸ E.M. Martineau has studied the increasing focus on the topic of *hangjongeren* (literally, hanging-around youth) in Dutch media. He suggests that they are predominantly represented in negative terms, as being “at fault”, leading to the creation of an image of “dangerous youth”.²³⁹ While youth hanging around in general is a hot topic in Dutch media reporting, there is a particular preoccupation with youth groups of (predominantly) Moroccan descent. Reporting on the nuisance allegedly caused by these youngsters by far outweighs reports on nuisance committed by youngsters of majority-Dutch heritage.²⁴⁰

235 Scholten, “Aso-tv?”.

236 S. Jensen, *We zijn verslingerd aan witte aapjes kijken*, (We are addicted to watching white monkeys), *NRC Next*, July 2011.

237 G. van Eijk, “Klassenverschillen in Nederland: percepties, ontkenning en moraliteit” (Class differences in the Netherlands: perceptions, denial and morality), *Sociologie* 7 (2011), p. 3.

238 E.M. Martineau, “Too Much Tolerance: Hang-around Youth, Public Space, and the Problem of Freedom in the Netherlands”, Dissertation, City University of New York, 2006 (hereafter, Martineau, “Too Much Tolerance”).

239 Martineau, “Too Much Tolerance”.

240 M. Koemans, “White trash versus Marokkaanse straatterroristen” (White trash versus Moroccan street terrorists), *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 52 (2) (2010), pp. 201–217. Koemans compared Dutch and British discourses on nuisance and ethnicity and concluded that while in the UK nuisance is predominantly linked to autochthonous Brits, in the Netherlands it is the youngsters of white working class (allochthonous) backgrounds who are mostly singled-out.

11.3 | MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF THE NEIGHBOURHOODS OF THE RESEARCH

Of the two neighbourhoods in this research project, Floradorp has a particularly noteworthy history when it comes to media coverage and media representation. For this report, a scan of all newspaper content about Floradorp and Tuindorp Buiksloot in the last 15 years was conducted. This confirmed expectations that Tuindorp Buiksloot receives significantly less media attention than Floradorp, although Floradorp featured a fair amount. The dominant types of events causing media coverage of Floradorp were negative, troublesome events: crime-related incidents, violence between residents and the police, and riots. The primary subjects of local and national news reporting on Floradorp were the annual New Year's fires. It is important to emphasise that these fires have changed a lot in the last ten years. On New Year's Eve 2002, the event escalated when the pile of Christmas trees set on fire in the neighbourhood reached unprecedented heights. The submunicipality, believing that safety could no longer be guaranteed, decided to ban the fire in subsequent years, which resulted in even greater unrest in the neighbourhood. Around New Year's Eve 2003, Floradorp was the scene of riots and patrolling anti-riot squads. The image of a rebellious neighbourhood that does not accept police authority was particularly strong in newspaper articles around that time. After that, the submunicipality decided to allow the fire, but only in a highly regulated manner. In the last few years, Floradorp still featured in the yearly news coverage of New Year's Eve, but in more positive terms: "Floradorp is no longer a 'mess' (*puinzooi*) on New Year's Eve".²⁴¹ Apart from the New Year's fires, crime-related incidents dominate newspaper coverage of Floradorp in the last ten years: problems with street coaches,²⁴² a crime-prone youth gang from the Floraweg and harassment of police officers carrying out their duties.²⁴³

The reputation of Floradorp as a "jungle", which Martineau suggests is used in both negative (stigmatising) and positive (pride-instilling) contexts,²⁴⁴ was confirmed by several Floradorp participants. As one male participant described:

Floradorp is also known as a hard and rebellious neighbourhood, it is also called "the Jungle" (de Rimboe). We still use that. There is also a song: "Oef, oef, oef, af, af, af, we are the boys of the Jungle staff, long hair, leather jackets, let that cop go to hell". (Man, 50)

The topic of media reporting was also briefly addressed in a group of young residents of Floradorp. They suggested that outsiders have an image of Floradorp as an anti-social neighbourhood, and that this image has developed historically. They added that their neighbourhood is viewed and talked about as lower-educated and even "crazy"

241 *Metro*, 3 January 2012.

242 *Parool*, 17 June 2010.

243 *NRC Next*, 29 July 2011.

244 Martineau, "Too Much Tolerance".

(“Noord is Gestoord”, North is crazy), in reference to a social media forum created by Floradorp youth). These participants also talked about the New Year’s fires that escalated, and linked them to the negative image of their neighbourhood.

Interestingly, the last media reports on Floradorp in 2012 were dominated by the opera that was staged and performed by local residents in June 2012 (see also “Best practice” below). These headlines have a very different tone: “An opera that brings the neighbourhood together”,²⁴⁵ “Floradorp trades Hazes [Dutch folk singer] for Mozart and Puccini”.²⁴⁶ A press release from the municipality read: “Volksopera uplifts residents of Floradorp”. The director of the opera, René van het Erve, commented:

*Residents of Floradorp are not at all the one-dimensional type that the outside world believes them to be ... an unruly Amsterdam neighbourhood that shows its other face. This opera allowed residents to present their neighbourhood in a positive light.*²⁴⁷

In a report on the opera the participants wrote:

*It is important to establish that Floradorpers are genuinely proud that their neighbourhood has been positively portrayed in the news for a change. And that Floradorp is being put on the map anew.*²⁴⁸

The opera was discussed in one of the discussions in Floradorp. A female participant suggested:

The image forming is very negative, even though it is also a very nice neighbourhood. I hope a positive image has been sketched [through the Opera]. The Buurtkamer [neighbourhood living room] and the Noorderparkkamer [a cultural venue in the nearby park] are wonderful places. (Woman, 45)

It is clear that this participant hoped that the media reporting on the opera in Floradorp would have a positive impact on the overall reputation of the neighbourhood. As has been noted, Tuindorp Buiksloot is much less visible as a neighbourhood in popular writing and local and national media reporting. In the scan of national newspaper reports, less than a dozen reports were found. In some of the reports, it was singled out as the neighbourhood in Amsterdam with the highest

245 NRC, 1 June 2012.

246 Parool, 2 June 2012.

247 Amsterdam-North Submunicipality, “Volksopera Floradorp tilt de bewoners op” (People’s Opera of Floradorp uplifts residents), press release, 13 March 2013 (hereafter, “Volksopera Floradorp tilt de bewoners op”).

248 René van ’t Erve, *Verslag Uitvoeringen Volksopera Floradorp* (Report on the People’s Opera of Floradorp) at <http://volksopera.nl/onewebmedia/Verslag%20uitvoeringen%20Volksopera%20Floradorp%202%20-def-primo.pdf> (accessed 25 May 2014).

number of “authentic Amsterdammers”.²⁴⁹ In 2007 Tuindorp Buiksloot was covered in the context of the murder of a local shopkeeper on the Waddenweg.²⁵⁰ In 2012, the main topic was the nuisance caused by youth groups from the nearby schools and local youngsters. Tuindorp Buiksloot was also covered over its Christmas decorations and strong sense of community.²⁵¹ Last, media reports have looked at voting patterns in Tuindorp Buiksloot. In 1994, when the Netherlands witnessed a surge in popularity of the extreme-right party Centre Democrats (Centrumdemocraten), the party won 20 percent of votes in each of the research neighbourhoods.²⁵² In June 2010, the local broadcaster AT5 broadcast an item on the PVV vote in Tuindorp Buiksloot. One resident clearly confirmed the existence of a negative image of the neighbourhood’s history:

We are still known for being an aso-neighbourhood [a neighbourhood for anti-social behaviour]. In fact we are poor devils without education. (Woman, 88)

At the same time, several residents rebutted that image by suggesting that it is other people who are truly anti-social. One female participant in Tuindorp Buiksloot addressed the question of (in her view) biased media reporting:

In the past, people here were known to be recipients of relief. Now, we are still known as anti-socials. The image formed in the media is not good. Every time we are on AT5 [a local broadcaster] as a neighbourhood, they show the same people. (Woman, 47)

The young people suggested that their neighbourhood is known as a racist, nationalist neighbourhood. They also pointed out that many people are prejudiced about the neighbourhood without even visiting. They suggested that in the public’s eyes their neighbourhood is often confused with Floradorp.

11.4 | MEDIA USAGE IN AMSTERDAM

The *Burgermonitor 2011*²⁵³ mapped out the media behaviour of residents in Amsterdam and found that television and internet are the primary sources of (news) information. The public service channels and RTL 4 are the preferred national television channels for most viewers. The local channel AT 5 is also fairly popular, with 63 percent of all Amsterdammers watching regularly. Among less-educated people, this percentage is higher, at 77 percent, although it is rapidly decreasing among younger people. As for

249 Of all residents of Tuindorp Buiksloot, 80 percent was of Dutch heritage and born and raised in Amsterdam: *Telegraaf*, January 2002 and October 2007.

250 *Reformatorisch dagblad*, February 2007.

251 *Parool*, December 2004.

252 This stood in contrast to the historically antifascist reputation of both neighbourhoods.

253 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, *Burgermonitor* (The Citizens’ Monitor), 2011.

newspapers, free newspapers like *Metro* and *Spits* are gaining popularity; 6 percent of Amsterdammers have subscribed to *De Telegraaf* and 17 percent to *Het Parool*. Among less educated people, newspaper reading is less common than among the better educated. In Amsterdam-North, free door-to-door local newspapers have a large audience (63 percent) compared with other submunicipalities.²⁵⁴

Most (93 percent) residents of Amsterdam-North have internet access. More than half of all Amsterdammers with internet access (52 percent) are members of Facebook, a figure that has increased from 35 percent in 2010. For young residents the figure is 74 percent.²⁵⁵ Compared with other submunicipalities, the use of social media is slightly lower in Amsterdam-North, South-East and New-West. Facebook is used actively for grassroots neighbourhood initiatives. Scholars have emphasised the potential contribution of social media use in the creation of social capital and the enhancement of civic and political participation.²⁵⁶ The research community has found interesting the way in which Facebook is used to engage persons in resident-directed neighbourhood initiatives. A few female residents of Tuindorp Buiksloot have established a Facebook website for the community that is also being used actively to distribute information about the Driehoek community centre. The issue of participants' own media usage only arose in a few conversations. In the quote below, for example, the impact of media reporting on people's feelings of social discontent is clear. The participant here is referring to the incident in December 2012 when an amateur linesman (*grensrechter*) from the city of Almere was kicked to death by a group of young players from an amateur soccer club in Amsterdam. The majority of the perpetrators were Amsterdammers of northern African descent.²⁵⁷

H: I think it is scum, those boys that kill people, like that linesman. And it just keeps going on. Sometimes I tell my husband that I will terminate my subscription to that paper ...

Interviewer: What paper?

H: I read The Telegraaf, I am sure it's full of fiction [een fabelblaadje], but it makes you sick. You never read something fun anymore. (Woman, 60)

X: Foreign people get everything done. That is why you develop hate for those people ... And when you watch the news, you only hear bad stuff about Moroccans and Turks. They get everything done. And the Dutch that work hard... (Woman, age unknown)

254 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, *Burgermonitor* 2011.

255 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, *Monitor Sociale Media*, (Monitor Social Media) 2012.

256 H. Gil de Zúñiga, N. Jung and S. Valenzuela, "Social Media Use for News and Individuals' Social Capital, Civic Engagement and Political Participation", *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication* 17 (3) (2012), pp. 319–336.

257 W. Algra, "Schopten 'jongens' of 'Marokkanen' de grensrechter dood?" (Did boys or Moroccans kick the linesman to death?), *Trouw*, 7 December 2012, at <http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4492/Nederland/article/detail/3359760/2012/12/07/Schopten-jongens-of-Marokkanen-de-grensrechter-dood.dhtml> (accessed 24 May 2014).

The incident with the linesman was referred to in several other conversations, although not in the context of media reporting. It reflects the ways in which people's sense of discontent with the changing, multicultural society is fed not only by direct personal experiences, but also by events that are making headlines in the national media. The quote above also illustrates a sentiment about communities with a non-Western background that resonated in several focus groups. This sentiment is about the perception that members of non-Western communities are getting everything while their own community is left out. This idea seems to be fed by a lack of direct knowledge of and contact with members of non-Western communities, combined with the experience of life getting more difficult as a result of the economic crisis.

11.5 | CONCLUSION

Both neighbourhoods of the research have always had to cope with a negative public reputation. In the public eye, the neighbourhoods are still perceived as the places where anti-social people live. Media reporting on Floradorp in particular has been predominantly negative and concerned with riots, crime and violence. To a certain extent, residents themselves have cultivated the reputation of being rebellious and anti-establishment. At the same time, participants regretted what is, in their eyes, biased reporting on their neighbourhood, particularly by the local broadcaster AT5. Initiatives that lead to more positive media coverage, such as the opera in Floradorp, are very much welcomed. The research confirmed the idea that social media and in particular Facebook can play a key role in positively engaging people in neighbourhood initiatives and thereby enhance civic participation.

As in the UK, there has been a surge in entertainment programmes in the Netherlands that portray lower-educated people of Dutch heritage in a stereotypical and potentially stigmatising manner. The impact of these programmes on people's sense of self-identification is an interesting topic for further research.

BEST PRACTICE: THE OPERA IN FLORADORP

In June 2012, an opera was staged at the same location in Floradorp where the yearly New Year's fire takes place (see chapter 9). Leading stars in the opera were residents of the neighbourhood, who sang Dutch-language adaptations of world-known opera works. The opera was a civic initiative of a Floradorp resident and documentary maker, René van 't Erve. The initiative was supported by a grant from the housing corporation and the submunicipality, and through crowd funding, inter alia from upwardly mobile ex-residents and the aid of many volunteers. An audience of 2,400 watched the performance. The opera was generally evaluated as very successful and as a contribution to social cohesion in the neighbourhood.²⁵⁸

258 "Volksopera Floradorp tilt de bewoners op".

12

CONCLUSION

This research project has focused on the social participation of Amsterdammers of Dutch heritage with a low socio-economic status. The research found a community that is experiencing new insecurities in times of change: the dramatic reforms of the Dutch welfare state, the economic recession and the changes in the demographic composition of Amsterdam. Each of the eight empirical chapters (Chapters 4-11) has concluded with summing up the main findings in that particular domain. In the current chapter, based on the findings in each of the domain, a more holistic picture will be sketched of the current state of play in the communities of the research. Chapter 13 offers key messages for each of the eight domains.

The research indicates that despite laudable efforts to foster a sense of cohesion and of an inclusive Amsterdam identity, polarising tendencies are still widespread. While ten years ago incidents connected with Muslims were the reason, today it is the impact of the economic recession and the subsequent austerity measures. This magnifies already existing dividing lines between Amsterdammers of Dutch origin and those of non-Dutch origin. It also gives rise to new dividing lines on the basis of income, class and geographic location. Research for this report suggests that in communities of lower-class Amsterdammers of Dutch heritage, the sense of insecurity caused by rapid social changes is acute, and translates itself into more emphasis on differences between groups and a focus on separate, distinct (ethnic and class-based) identities. Rising unemployment, in combination with budget cuts and austerity measures in social security, leads to an increasing vulnerability to poverty.

In addition to work and income, people feel worried about the future of many of the arrangements of the welfare state. In several crucial social domains, reforms in combination with drastic cutbacks are creating insecurity. For example, the drastic reforms and austerity measures in the health sector are beginning to create uncertainty, not only among workers in the health sector fearing for their jobs, but also among ordinary citizens, in particular the elderly and those with long-term illnesses. It is uncertain what the impact will be of the decentralisation of responsibilities for youth and welfare to the municipal level. These are all changes that particularly affect vulnerable citizens with a lower socio-economic status. Uncertainty about the future of the Amsterdam governance structure is another relevant factor, one that might negatively affect people's confidence in local politics. In the middle of all these changes, the fear of not knowing what will be next is likely to increase not just among ordinary citizens but also among politicians and policymakers.

Commentators have warned that the rigid austerity approach of the Dutch government has a counterproductive effect and might trigger recourse to right-wing populism.²⁵⁹ In this context it is relevant that the most recent opinion polls suggest a significant increase in votes for the PVV, Socialist Party and D66 (the Liberal Democrats), while the national governing parties VVD (conservative liberals) and PvdA (Social

259 S. Wren Lewis, "The centre cannot hold", *Mainly Macro* (blog), 12 August 2013, at <http://mainlymacro.blogspot.nl/2013/08/the-centre-cannot-hold.html> (accessed 25 May 2014).

Democrats) would face big losses if national elections were held today.²⁶⁰ An illustration of growing populist tendencies and sense of moral panic is the issue of migrant workers from Bulgaria and Romania.²⁶¹ In the run-up to the opening of the borders for workers from these countries in 2014, politicians, commentators and the press created panic in the autumn of 2013, despite assurances from researchers that labour migration from eastern Europe was already past its peak.²⁶² In the March 2014 municipal elections, D66 booked a significant victory in Amsterdam in which it doubled its number of seats in the municipal council (from 7 in 2010 to 14 in 2014). The Socialist Party also doubled its seats from 3 in 2010 to 6 in 2014. The three governing parties in Amsterdam (social democrats, conservative liberals and Groen Links, the green party) suffered significant losses).²⁶³

The reform of the welfare state is an ongoing, step-by-step process and its implications are only beginning to emerge in the social domains examined in this study. All in all, a new type of society is being created, a society in which people's individual capacities to live fulfilling lives becomes of central importance. Self-organisation is the new mantra. Whether in the sphere of health, employment or welfare, people are increasingly expected to manage their own needs, either individually or collectively with neighbours and family members. Governmental support facilities that have long been taken for granted are no longer available. In combination with a cumulative package of severe austerity measures, a new degree of self-reliance (*zelfredzaamheid*) is required of each and every citizen.

The self-reliance standard that the municipal health services uses to determine a person's need for social support could be used metaphorically for society at large, down to the neighbourhoods and communities. Those who are self-reliant participate in all spheres of life through self-organisation and civic initiative. And only those who are not, those at the bottom of the social scale, become the target group for the welfare and social support facilities that remain. However, scholars have warned that the capacity to be self-reliant is unequally distributed among different groups of people.²⁶⁴ Groups with a socio-economic middle position in society have a much stronger capacity to be self-reliant than those at the bottom. This is why, according to

260 IPSOS, "Politieke Barometer" (Political Barometer), at <http://www.ipsos-nederland.nl/content.asp?targetid=621> (accessed 26 May 2014).

261 "Ascher voorziet problemen met Roemenen en Bulgaren" (Ascher foresees problems with Romanians and Bulgarians), RTL News, 9 September 2013, at <http://www.rtlnieuws.nl/economie/home/asscher-voorziet-problemen-met-roemenen-en-bulgaren> (accessed 26 May 2014).

262 N. Troost, *Vijf redenen waarom we bang zijn voor Bulgaren (en dat niet hoeven te zijn)*, (Five reasons why we are afraid of Bulgarians (and we don't have to be)), *De Volkskrant*, 11 December 2013, at <http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2686/Binnenland/article/detail/3560260/2013/12/11/Vijf-redenen-waarom-we-bang-zijn-voor-Bulgaren-en-dat-niet-hoeven-te-zijn.dhtml> (accessed 26 May 2014).

263 Research and Statistics, City of Amsterdam, Verkiezingen 2014, Gemeenteraad Amsterdam, Definitieve Uitslag, (Elections 2014, Municipal Council Amsterdam, Final results) at http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/pdf/2014_gemeenteraad_definitieve%20uitslag_2.pdf (accessed 24 May 2014).

264 G. Engbersen, interviewed in *Sociale Vraagstukken*, 2013, <http://www.socialevraagstukken.nl/site/interview/nieuwe-armoede-het-optimisme-en-de-scepsis-van-godfried-engbersen/> (accessed 24 May 2014).

critics, certain vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected by the new emphasis on self-reliance. In a similar vein, the psychologist A. Baart argues that vulnerability has become a “non-item”.²⁶⁵ If the vulnerability of particular groups is ignored, he warns, and their capacities to self-organise are overestimated, these groups may be punished. The sociologist G. Engbersen argues that a more differentiated policy is required which does justice to these differences.²⁶⁶ It has already been demonstrated in Amsterdam that the differences between social groups are significant and are only increasing under the impact of the economic recession and austerity measures.²⁶⁷

On a fictional self-sufficiency standard or matrix, the communities that are the focus of this research would score just above that bottom group. They can just about get by. This applies to individual members as much as the communities and the neighbourhoods. Comparatively, the neighbourhoods are in a better state than most of the neighbourhoods that are designated as focus areas. They are therefore more or less expected to subsist on their own strengths. But the vulnerability of both individuals and neighbourhoods is increasing specifically in employment, where the situation is getting worse; it is impossible to separate economic and financial problems from other areas in life. The holistic approach in this report demonstrates how vulnerability in one domain is linked with vulnerability in other domains. Participants in the Open Society Foundations’ research reported experiencing more severe economic worries, and this has a negative impact on their access to health care and their political participation. But solutions and interventions are still provided in the form of what Hilhorst and Van der Lans refer to as “partial problems”.²⁶⁸

What is more, citizens are confronted with contradictory messages. On the one hand, they need to function as independently as possible. On the other hand, they experience the government’s role in informal care, social security and debt assistance and its interactions in the context of self-organisation as patronising, unnecessarily complex, bureaucratic and sometimes even stigmatising.

The communities that participated in this research are characterised by feelings of loss, of being treated unfairly and of falling between two chairs, which are fed by comparisons with others, particularly with communities that are seen to be better off for a range of reasons. Despite their objective socio-economic position, the inhabitants of the focus areas are perceived to be in a better situation, because of the extra investments that still flow to their neighbourhoods despite the general austerity trend. At the other end of the spectrum are fellow citizens in higher socio-economic positions, who are considered to be treated favourably—for example by the housing

265 A. Baart, “Kwetsbaarheid mag meer aandacht krijgen” (Vulnerability deserves more attention), in *Sociale Vraagstukken*, 24 May 2013 at <http://www.socialevraagstukken.nl/site/2013/05/24/kwetsbaarheid-mag-meer-aandacht-krijgen/> (accessed 24 May 2014).

266 Engbersen, Interviewed in *Sociale Vraagstukken*.

267 “De Staat van de Stad VII”.

268 Hilhorst and Van der Lans, *Sociaal-doe-het-zelven*.

corporation, health services or the police—by virtue of their economic status. These feelings are amplified by the fact that, the gap between the lower and higher educated is growing, and class distinctions have acquired a new relevance in Dutch society and in Amsterdam in particular. In Amsterdam, this also clearly manifests itself geographically. All of the above results in general social discontent and intolerant attitudes towards others in the “super diverse” city of Amsterdam.

This study pays particular attention to young people, whether in the context of education or nuisance and annoyance on the streets, and this attention participatory legitimate. Unlike their parents, they will be living most of their lives in this new participatory society. It is of vital importance that they acquire the social capital needed to get by in these new circumstances.

13

KEY MESSAGES

13.1 | IDENTITY AND BELONGING

1. FOSTER A SENSE OF BELONGING TO THE CITY AND TO AMSTERDAM-NORTH IN ALL SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS

Although the city has a track record of communication strategies to foster an inclusive sense of identity in Amsterdammers of different backgrounds, the Open Society Foundations' research suggests that more needs to be done. Most important, policies that aim to foster social cohesion should pay close attention to inclusion along the lines of class, and in particular the sense of belonging of citizens of Dutch heritage with lower socio-economic class positions. Their sense of belonging to the city of Amsterdam needs to be enhanced.

2. INCLUDE AMSTERDAMMERS OF ALL BACKGROUNDS IN THE UPWARD DEVELOPMENT OF AMSTERDAM-NORTH

Within Amsterdam-North specifically, a key challenge is to ensure that residents of various backgrounds feel included in and benefit from the process of gentrification of the submunicipality, which is happening mostly in the areas that directly border the IJ. This research signals that residents of Tuindorp Buiksloot and Floradorp feel excluded from these developments.

3. CAPITALISE ON THE STRONG SENSE OF NEIGHBOURHOOD IDENTITY

At the same time, the submunicipality should build on the strong sense of identity with the neighbourhood by engaging residents in improving local facilities and public spaces and ensuring they meet the needs of local residents. For this engagement to be effective, the impact on local facilities and public spaces should be real and visible. This greater ownership ought to include newcomers and help residents move towards an identity that is more inclusive.

4. TARGET THE CHALLENGES IN OTHER DOMAINS

It should also be recognised that the prerequisite for a more inclusive sense of belonging is to address the root causes of insecurity identified in the report, such as unemployment, political indifference or anger, dropping out of school, geographical segregation and segregation in schools. Communication strategies on their own are of little effect when the challenges in these other domains are not effectively targeted.

13.2 | EDUCATION

It is clear that the individual intellectual capacities of students are only one of several factors that contribute to successful school careers. Another is their broader social environment in particular the home environment and peer (friends) groups. The message of Open Society Foundations for education addresses that broader social environment.

1. IMPROVE THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE SCHOOL, PARENTS, STUDENTS AND NEIGHBOURS

It is vital to improve the interactions between schools, students, their parents and the community. The Actieve Ouders programme is a good starting point, but should be extended. Taking a broad definition of the learning environment as a point of departure, cooperation should be encouraged between different players involved in the development of children and young people. In the first place, a plan should be developed to improve not only the frequency but also the quality of parents' involvement in schools, which need to reach out to parents at an early stage and develop their trust in the school as a partner instead of a hostile institution. Second, neighbours and communities around schools should be engaged in school activities. An important part of this new partnership is about improved communication, for example about the structure of the Dutch educational system and the choices and possibilities for students. Schools can improve communication through newsletters or information in parents' rooms (*ouderkamers*) in schools. Volunteering parents may be given a role as ambassadors of the school and become a link between the school and other parents.

2. ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO OBTAIN A STARTER QUALIFICATION

In the neighbourhoods of the research, initiatives are to encourage students to improve their educational achievements. A key element of this is motivation, which for this community, with its focus on work, must be related to employment, that is, seeing education as a path to new and potentially more sustainable employment options. One topic on which communication needs to improve is the importance of a starter qualification. Young persons and their parents in these communities need to receive comprehensible and easily accessible information on the values of a starter qualification which highlights the added value of continuing education for individual financial and economic gain as well as the negative consequences of dropping out of school for one's employment and career perspectives. Festive moments like graduation ceremonies need to be made use of to inform both parents and students of the options for continuing education after graduation.

Intervention during secondary-school careers might help to prevent students dropping out at later stages. One possibility would be to encourage peer-to-peer coaching between young people. People with a successful school record could function as role models and coaches for young people in their own communities. Some schools already have positive experiences with this.

3. PAY SPECIFIC ATTENTION TO SCHOOL CAREERS AT THE MBO/ROC LEVEL (VOCATIONAL TRAINING)

The increasing number of drop-outs at MBO/ROC level calls for attention. Directors of secondary schools are often badly informed about students' progress at the ROC, and are not able to pass on valuable knowledge about individuals to the ROC. Improved communication between these institutions might contribute to students having successful school careers. A concrete way to enhance this link is to match VMBO students with MBO students in buddy projects. Then also, every student should be accompanied by a supporting adult during the recruitment interviews at the ROC. If parents are unable to attend, a person selected by the student as a coach could replace them. The importance of finalising MBO education should be emphasised during the recruitment process. The ROC's could also make themselves more visible in the neighbourhood, for example during information evenings at community centres.

13.3 | EMPLOYMENT

1. HELP TO INCREASE THE ECONOMIC RESILIENCE OF VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

This study has shed a light on how macro-level economics are played out in the everyday lives of people at the local level. The cumulative effects of increasing unemployment and austerity measures result in economic insecurity and a greater risk of poverty. The aim of policies should be to attempt to increase the resilience of those who are particularly vulnerable to these macro-economic forces.

2. STRENGTHEN THE ECONOMIC VITALITY OF SELF-EMPLOYED PROFESSIONALS

Self-employed lower-educated professionals should be supported in their businesses in order to help strengthen their economic resilience and vitality. Research demonstrates that people who are self-employed often look for assistance when it is already too late and their business can no longer survive. These situations should be prevented as much as possible by informing and supporting the self-employed during financial difficulties. For example, information meetings about the support facility of the municipality for self-employed workers (*Besluit Bijstandsverlening Zelfstandigen*

(*Decree on Social Security for Self-Employed*) or about Bread Funds could be held at the community centre.

3. ORGANISE NETWORK MEETINGS FOR LOWER-EDUCATED SELF-EMPLOYED PROFESSIONALS

The submunicipality is already involved in organising network meetings for the self-employed, but these should be promoted more broadly and target lower-educated professionals as well. A branch of the VEBAN organisation in Amsterdam-North²⁶⁹ functions as a network organisation. These networks should not only support self-employed workers when their business is successful, but also in the case of economic and financial problems. VEBAN could make a concrete contribution in this area by:

- facilitating the mentoring of self-employed persons by successful entrepreneurs;
- developing approaches that help to minimise the taboo around financial problems among entrepreneurs;
- providing information and education about the financial aspects of being self-employed.

4. SIMPLIFY THE REGULATIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR SOCIAL SECURITY

This report notes a need for simplification, increased transparency and rationalization of the instruments and procedures that are in place for social security. People experience difficulty finding their way through the bureaucracy. Simplifying regulations would involve not only local or city-based policies but also national policies. Accessible information about financial affairs should be offered at the level of the neighbourhood, for example by organising monthly consulting hours by the Tax and Administration Office in the community centre. These services could be combined with providing information on health care or education.²⁷⁰

5. BE SENSITIVE TO THE SHAME RELATED TO FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

Privacy concerns over financial information should be dealt with more cautiously in the communities of this research, where receiving social support, being dependent on food parcels and having to deal with debts cause shame. People find it difficult to share all their financial worries with outsiders. For some of the participants in the Open Society Foundations' research, working on personal debt reduction in groups is

²⁶⁹ See www.veban.nl (accessed 24 May 2014).

²⁷⁰ At the roundtable meeting it was suggested that decentralisation from the national to the local level of certain tasks of the Tax and Customs Administration would help to speed up the decision-making process and make it more efficient. A concrete idea is that professionals from local welfare organisations would be mandated to take certain decisions in the name of the Tax and Customs Administration, which could then be verified through random sample tests.

considered problematic.²⁷¹ Debt assistance services should therefore be more tailor-made and differentiated, so that these sensitivities can be taken on board. This could be taken up as part of an area-specific policy (see Chapter 3) for the neighbourhoods of this research.

6. ENCOURAGE GRASSROOTS ACTIVATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED

Despite the strong focus on the importance of paid work in current policies on unemployment, other modes of social participation should be re-valued for their contribution to society. This is particularly important in light of the reforms in health care and welfare, as these sectors become increasingly dependent on voluntary work. Developments such as setting up community or neighbourhood trusts may result in less open-ended forms of voluntary work and in the longer term also contribute to employment opportunities. Government regulations should encourage these kinds of civic initiatives. Currently, some regulations, such as the restriction on certain kinds of voluntary work while on social benefits, discourage this.

13.4 | HOUSING

In housing, the main concern that has been identified is the lack of affordable housing for younger members of the community. Housing policies for social mixing are intended to retain socially mobile members of the community in the neighbourhood by making more upmarket rented housing or owner-occupied housing available. But for many young people from the community, these two options are too expensive. As a result, the gap between long-standing residents and newcomers in terms of socio-economic background is wide. This in turn affects people's sense of community and social cohesion.

1. PROVIDE ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR (LOWER) MIDDLE-CLASS TENANTS

In order to ensure a more balanced population and potentially more social cohesion, houses that open up on the market should be targeting (lower) middle-class tenants. To keep the social fabric of the neighbourhood intact, it is important to retain socially upward members of the younger generation in the community.²⁷² Housing policies in the areas of research for this report should make affordable housing available both

²⁷¹ Professionals at the roundtable meeting emphasised that this problem is experienced by certain groups of clients in particular, such as entrepreneurs, and that taboo and shame are not registered as much in other parts of the city.

²⁷² City of Amsterdam, "Amsterdam West: Topstad! Maar hoe? (Amsterdam West Top City! But how?)", Adviesraad Diversiteit en Integratie, Advisory Board on Diversity and Integration, April 2009, at <http://dare.uva.nl/document/176147> (accessed 24 May 2014). In this report the Advisory Board describes a so-called DNA strategy which refers to a policy strategy of social mixing in urban neighbourhoods and has as its specific aim to prevent the exodus of members of poorer communities after gentrification of urban areas.

for upwardly mobile members of existing communities as well as for newcomers at the bottom of the middle-class market.²⁷³ The current income norm for social rent at €34,678 (€39,202 for households with children) per year may function as an obstacle for precisely these groups.²⁷⁴

2. PROVIDE BETTER COMMUNICATION ON THE POSSIBILITIES FOR YOUNG STARTERS ON THE HOUSING MARKET

The municipality does have some specific housing policies for young working people (*jongerencontracten* (youth contracts) between 18 and 24 years old), but these specific policies need to become better known among the target population. Young people should also be encouraged to register for social housing at the age of 18. Decentralised services such as the Wijksteunpunt Wonen (neighbourhood service point for housing) could provide consultation hours in the local community centre, to inform residents about these issues and about the rights of tenants in general. In Floradorp, the tenants' association already plays an active role informing tenants about their rights.

3. DEVELOP A HOLISTIC AND AREA-SPECIFIC APPROACH TO HOUSING IN WHICH PARTNERS COOPERATE CLOSELY

Professionals consulted at the Open Society Foundations' roundtable meeting believed a holistic, integrated and proactive approach to the development of neighbourhoods is often lacking. In addition to cooperation at the level of implementation, housing corporations and the (sub)municipality should be cooperating more closely at the policymaking level.

4. FOCUS ON LOCAL PRESSURE POINTS IN NEIGHBOURHOODS

Instead of applying a uniform housing policy to an entire area, it is more effective to target specific pressure points for development, a street, a block of houses, where particular problems occur. This requires a flexible, demand-based and grassroots policy. This could be implemented as part of the new area-based policy (see Chapter 3).

5. HOUSING CORPORATIONS SHOULD MAINTAIN THEIR ROLE OF ENHANCING SOCIAL COHESION IN NEIGHBOURHOODS

The responsibility of housing corporations for social cohesion and liveability should be recognised and maintained. The current role of the housing corporation in both neighbourhoods is positively valued, as it often serves as the first resort for

273 At the roundtable meeting the housing corporation Ymere said that it is trying to provide more housing for this particular group but is restricted in its policies by the general housing shortage.

274 The professional at the Amsterdam Steunpunt Wonen (Service Point for Housing) who was consulted for this report suggested that the problem could be solved by raising the income norm to €39,202 per year for all groups, not only for families with children.

neighbourhood problems (although in Tuindorp Bluiksloot more visibility of the corporation would be welcomed). It is important that housing corporations and the municipality examine ways to retain this function.

6. RECOGNISE THE IMPACT OF AREA-SPECIFIC RENOVATION AND GENTRIFICATION ON ADJACENT AREAS

The research suggests that more attention should be paid to areas adjacent to renewal areas and the effects they experience.²⁷⁵ In addition, the Open Society Foundations' research found that these residents perceive these selective policies as unfair. This should be taken seriously and might be countered by providing better information on the reasoning behind urban development policies.

7. EXAMINE THE POSSIBILITY OF SELF-MANAGEMENT BY TENANTS

In the context of budget cuts and rent increases, it is important to explore the possibilities of self-management by tenants. This is the more interesting because of the large number of skilled manual professionals in the neighbourhoods of the research. Models of reducing rents in exchange for self-management of particular tasks that are already common in a number of European countries could serve as examples.

13.5 | HEALTH

1. INCREASE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE BY BETTER ADAPTED, TAILOR-MADE INSURANCE PACKAGES

In the current circumstances the principle of equal access to health care is under threat. Financial difficulties form an obstacle to complete and adequate health care for members of the communities that are the focus of this research. Insurance packages should be better adjusted to the needs and financial resources of the individual clients. Welfare organisations and general practitioners could play a role in ensuring that people obtain adequate and affordable packages, and that they are better informed about their financial consequences.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ Scanlon and Whitehead, *Social housing in Europe II*.

²⁷⁶ The current government intended to introduce income-dependent health insurance, but this plan has been withdrawn. Lower-income groups are currently compensated through other provisions, such as the *zorgtoeslag*, (health care allowance), a contribution to/ subsidy of the costs of health insurance.

2. INCREASE THE SUPPORT FOR INFORMAL CARE-GIVERS

More attention should be paid to the challenges faced by informal care-givers. Research indicates that this is a group at great risk of becoming overstrained, and preventive interventions are needed. It is important to monitor the support needs of informal carers and supply that support where necessary. In concrete terms, a visit should be paid to families where home care is being provided to persons with a long-term illness, which could be done either by professionals (such as the *ouderenadviseur* (*elderly advisor*) or by trained volunteers. The needs and requirements for support of the informal care-giver should be identified during the visit, including arrangements for when informal carers are unable to provide care. In addition, more positive and mutually beneficial interactions between informal and formal care-givers should be encouraged. Informal carers would also benefit from exchanging experiences with other informal carers.²⁷⁷ The new online platform Project C²⁷⁸ that will be established in 2014 provides a good opportunity for this.

3. PROVIDE EASILY ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION AND EDUCATION ON HEALTH ISSUES

On the basis of the research it has been concluded that an information campaign on health care is needed in these communities, and should be provided in a local, familiar place like the community centre. Specific topics to be covered in an information campaign are:

- addiction problems;
- financial aspects of health care and insurance;
- consequences of health-care reforms for the elderly.

There are opportunities for civil society organisations to play a role in these information campaigns, perhaps in combination with anti-poverty initiatives such as the Food Bank, which temporarily provides food parcels to people living below the poverty line. Schools could also contribute by integrating questions of health and insurance into their curricula, which is already happening in a number of places. Existing examples, such as at the Clusius College, can serve as best practices.²⁷⁹ A model of generic support and advice on issues of food, health and health-care costs could achieve a range of social benefits, including a general increase in resilience of the residents of both neighbourhoods.

²⁷⁷ See <http://www.liquidjournalism.nl/page/13/project-c.html> (accessed 24 May 2014).

²⁷⁸ Project C is an initiative developed by two media professionals, Leonie van Noort and Eelco Wagenaar, for an online video- and audio platform on which informal caregivers share experiences with each other. It aims at the same time to be a platform for sharing stories and a research tool into the experiences of informal caregivers.

²⁷⁹ The director of the Clusius College described how in his school the subject was integrated in the economics curriculum, and an app was created that helps students to select appropriate health insurance.

13.6 | POLICING AND SECURITY

1. IMPROVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN POLICE, STREET COACHES AND THE SUBMUNICIPALITY

This research has pointed out that communications between the three key stakeholders, residents, police and the submunicipality, needs to be improved. Safety and security in the two neighbourhoods are plagued by misunderstandings between these parties. Each seems to have different ideas and expectations about how social annoyances in the neighbourhood should be solved.

2. INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE DIVISION OF ROLES BETWEEN THE THREE STAKEHOLDERS

Residents should be informed on a regular basis about the different tasks and responsibilities of the three stakeholders. This information should be provided in a low-key, accessible manner, preferably in a neutral environment like the community centre. In particular, there is a lot of misunderstanding and discontent in both neighbourhoods about the role of street coaches, so it is important that the role of street coaches should be clarified through information campaigns.

3. FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE IN THE AMOUNT OF POLICE PRESENCE

Residents appreciate the personal and engaged approach of the district officer. More of this type of interaction would be beneficial, as it might increase the willingness of people to engage the police when needed. Police engagement should not be restricted to those moments when things truly escalate. At the same time residents in these neighbourhoods are known to be suspicious of too much police presence. The right balance between visibility and respect for the community's autonomy needs to be found.

4. CONSTANTLY EVALUATE THE ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

It is crucial to constantly evaluate the roles of different stakeholders and ensure that they complement each other in an effective way. The contribution of the street coaches in particular needs to be evaluated critically on the basis of input from all segments of the community. Effective models that are used internationally and best practices from elsewhere should be examined and used as examples.

5. DEVELOP EARLY SIGNALLING OF TENSIONS THROUGH SOFT INFORMATION

Tensions in both neighbourhoods could be prevented or reduced by means of early signalling by monitoring risk factors and using information from other sources than crime statistics.²⁸⁰ In neighbourhoods where few incidents are reported, in-depth information based on conversations with residents is crucial to assess the situation.

6. FACILITATE AND STIMULATE SELF-ORGANISATION BY YOUNG PEOPLE

Approaches to young people in both neighbourhoods should centre on stimulating and facilitating their own initiatives and their motivation to organise themselves. This research has demonstrated that young residents are interested in organising activities in and for their own neighbourhoods. Professionals and active residents need to develop creative ways to engage the youngsters in projects for the neighbourhood. Schools can also be a partner. Crucially, youngsters need a sense of ownership over these projects. For example, they could be invited to make a design for the renovation of a part of the park, and subsequently be engaged in executing it.

7. INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICIES LIKE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TALENT CENTRES

The submunicipality should recognise the young people's hesitations about the newly created talent centre StationNoord. It should open a dialogue with them in these neighbourhoods to find out what the basis of these hesitations is. The youngsters in these neighbourhoods need to be better involved in the development of youth policies in Amsterdam-North. This is also a crucial way to stimulate them to participate as active citizens during their adult lives.

13.7 | PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP

1. INCREASE THE VISIBILITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICIANS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOODS

The research for this report indicates that people feel a big distance from the local government, and this is negatively affecting political trust. People believe local policymakers do not know what is happening on the ground. It would help if local government officials were familiar with and speak the language of the neighbourhoods they are working in. The local government should strive to be representative of the communities it is working for. More active presence in the neighbourhood, for

²⁸⁰ Van Wonderen and Cohen, "Handreiking Weerbare Buurten".

example through the Broker for civic initiatives (*Makelaar bewonersinitiatieven*), could give the submunicipality a face on the ground.²⁸¹

2. IMPROVE THE CLARITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTACTS BETWEEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RESIDENTS

In direct contacts between the submunicipality and residents, it is important that residents have the feeling of being heard, understood and taken seriously. Swift, intelligible and effective communication from the submunicipality will contribute to this.

3. EDUCATE CHILDREN AND ADULTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

Primary and secondary schools have a role to play in educating children about the workings and the importance of our democratic system, especially when this is not a subject of conversation in families. Civic initiatives to enhance people's awareness of political developments (such as campaigns around the time of the local elections) should be supported. Outside election time, it is important that the local government develops participatory measures that involve local residents in decision-making.

4. PROVIDE MORE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT IN THE TRANSITION FROM OLD-STYLE WELFARE TO SELF-ORGANISATION

The process of self-organisation in the welfare sector needs to be differentiated and tailor-made to local circumstances. Citizens in the neighbourhoods of the research are used to a government that provides and manages many aspects of life. The consequence is that facilities and services provided by the government are commonly seen as entitlements. At the same time, the government is withdrawing from this role at a high speed, creating a sense of insecurity and the perception of a vacuum, a loss for citizens. The government should develop a model for tailor-made support and financial backing for those neighbourhoods with little social and cultural capital to self-organise. Some neighbourhoods and communities are in need of more intense support in this transitional phase to the participatory society than others, and the policy framework needs to be flexible enough to accommodate such differences.

5. SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRONG LOCAL NETWORKS IN NEIGHBOURHOODS

Local networks in neighbourhoods should include residents, professionals and entrepreneurs who come together on the basis of a common interest or a common

²⁸¹ The Brokers for civic initiatives are staff members of the submunicipality who motivate and support residents in initiating projects for their neighbourhood.

theme. These networks can develop collective approaches to neighbourhood initiatives. Within the networks, people should experience and learn to appreciate the benefits of a joint effort and the bundling of various skills and talents.

6. APPOINT A TEMPORARY COACH WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

In the transition phase to self-organisation, a temporary coach could be appointed who will give a boost to the development of these types of networks in the neighbourhood. Ideally, the neighbourhood community will have an important say in the appointment of the coach. The role of the coach is explicitly to provide temporary support and guidance, with the intention that citizens will eventually acquire full ownership over the networks and projects.

7. DEVELOP TRUST AND BE OPEN TO UNCONVENTIONAL CIVIC INITIATIVES

What is needed for the reformed welfare state to function is what one professional called ‘a new place, based on a new kind of trust’.²⁸² Government and citizens need to learn how to work together on the basis of trust. Instead of emphasising shortcomings (the deficit approach), it is crucial to focus on citizens’ potential and capabilities. The government should also be open to the new, often unconventional ways in which communities develop and organise themselves. These new ways might go against the traditional, more separated modes of welfare organisation. But this might precisely be the strength of new, grassroots civic initiatives. Already existing or newly emerging initiatives need to be explicitly recognised for their value. Such recognition could give an important boost to the self-confidence of the initiators, and it will also increase local familiarity with the projects.

13.8 | ROLE OF THE MEDIA

1. STIMULATE THE ORGANISATION OF EVENTS THAT GENERATE POSITIVE MEDIA ATTENTION

It is important to recognise the impact of events like the Floradorp opera, not only in boosting a positive self-image for the community but also in contributing to more balanced media reporting about the community. These kinds of events should be encouraged and supported.

²⁸² Interview with Rob van Eupen, Dienst Werk en Inkomen, 24 June 2013.

2. RECOGNISE THE POTENTIAL OF INCLUSIVE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CIVIC INITIATIVES

The importance of social media in engaging and empowering local communities cannot be underestimated. The report notes the positive example of the Ilovenoor.nl community blog as well as the Tuindorp Buiksloot Facebook community. These forums will acquire more and more importance in the participatory society, because of their capacity to bring people together. By generating their own media content, users of these forums contribute to and bring more balance into the information available about the neighbourhoods of our research. At the same time, it should be recognised that there are groups in these communities without access to online media. Initiators of online communities should therefore devise strategies to allow their communities to be as inclusive as possible. The organisation of real-life events (for example, the events organised by Ilovenoord.nl) are a good way to achieve this.

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Act Abolishing the Authority of Submunicipalities, Act of 7 February 2013, Stb. 2013, 76.

Temporary Regulation of Services of general economic interest for institutions of authorised public housing, 16 December 2013.

Decision on the Social Security Assistance for Self-Employed 2004, valid on 25 February 2014.

Annex 2. List of stakeholder interviews

I. Andringa	Strategic adviser on education, Amsterdam-North submunicipality	04 June 2013
L. van der Par	Playground coordinator, previously Tuindorp Buiksloot, now Bloemenbuurt/Floradorp	25 April 2013
C. van Berkum	Mayor of Amsterdam-North submunicipality	2 July 2013
T. Borger	Project leader at Amsterdam municipality	8 May 2013
S. Elburg	Youth Worker for Stichting DOCK, Floradorp	31 May 2013
J. Bos	City councillor New-West, previously councillor submunicipality Amsterdam-North	6 March 2013
H. De Bruijn	Youth worker for Amsterdam-North submunicipality and council	2 May 2013
R. van Eupen	Senior adviser, DWI, Amsterdam municipality	24 June 2013
J. van Geel	Former policy adviser on participation for Tuindorp Buiksloot, submunicipality Amsterdam-North	25 April 2013
I. van Hemert	Policy adviser on participation for Floradorp neighbourhood, Amsterdam-North submunicipality	04 June 2013
N. Horstmann	Manager Combiwel welfare organisation Amsterdam-North and New-West	26 April 2013
M. Klarenbeek	Youth worker for Stichting DOCK, Tuindorp Buiksloot	17 May 2013
M. Koomen	Amsterdam Service Point for Housing	7 December 2013
S. Kuckulus	Current policy adviser on participation for Tuindorp Buiksloot, submunicipality Amsterdam-North	25 April 2013

P. Liebrechts	Senior staff member at DORAS, Social service provision, Amsterdam-North	04 June 2013
N. Madrid	EVA and Adam participation centre, Amsterdam-North (a network organisation that helps people reintegrate into the labour market)	2 October 2013
A. Meppelink	Police officer responsible for Tuindorp Buiksloot	16 May 2013
J. Offerman	Policy adviser on policing, safety and security at Amsterdam-North submunicipality	17 May 2013
T. Pauws	Community worker, Combiwel, welfare organisation Amsterdam-North	21 March 2013
H. Politiek	Program manager for the Wijkaanpak at the Amsterdam municipality	23 April 2013
S. Rietveld	Principal, De Capelle primary school, Amsterdam-North	8 July 2013
P. Roelofs	Principal, Clusius College for vocational training, Amsterdam-North	3 July 2013
J. Siersma	Active citizen, previous chair of Solid, Amsterdam-North	3 May 2013
F. Skraoui, Mr J. van Oppijnen	Ymere, housing corporation, responsible for Tuindorp Buiksloot	22 April 2013
B. van Veen	Former director of Solid, former welfare organisation Amsterdam-North	14 February 2013
I. Viskil and I. van der Zelm	Policy adviser and research coordinator submunicipality Amsterdam-North	11 March 2013
D. Visser	Community worker, Combiwel, welfare organisation in Amsterdam-North	5 March 2013
J. de Waard	Community worker in Hope for North	22 April 2013
M. van Zijl and H. Meuldijk	Housing Corporation Ymere, responsible for Floradorp	19 June 2013



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