



PARTICIPATIESAMENLEVING IS AN ILLUSION

On the shifting relationship between citizens and
civil servants

Abstract

With the question "How is the policy Samenleving Voorop changing the participation of citizens in Leusden society?" the paper discusses within the concept of citizenship how the relationship between civil servants and citizens is shifting. Citizenship is about contributing to society. Citizens create network communities. These network communities play a role in achieving new goals when the government is retreating and giving more space to citizens to set up initiatives and take up a greater role in society.

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... A large aggregate of men, healthy in mind and warm of heart, creates the kind of moral conscience which we call a nation. So long as this moral consciousness gives proof of its strength by the sacrifices which demand the abdication of the individual to the advantage of the community, it is legitimate and has the right to exist. If doubts arise regarding its frontiers, consult the populations in the areas under dispute. They undoubtedly have the right to a say in the matter.”

... Wait a while, Gentlemen; let the reign of the transcendent pass; bear the scorn of the powerful with patience. It may be that, after many fruitless experiments, people will revert to our more modest empirical solutions. At certain moments, the best way to be right in the future is to know how to resign one’s self to being out of fashion.”

(Renan, 1882, a challenge to his public)

The cover photo was taken on 15 September 2016 during the award ceremony for the Best Idea of Leusden. The municipality committed a budget to activate citizens to develop their own austerity measures based on the annual budget.

A total of about fifty projects were submitted. Ten made it to the final. Three won a personal prize.

In November the Alderman Dragt said that only two of the actual ideas would cut costs, the others would cost money to realize. The activity was considered a success because it mobilized a new target audience, but intrinsically no result with regards to the content.

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Foreword

Before you lies my research of the *Samenleving Voorop* a glimpse of Leusden society in 2016-2017. I had the honour to witness a wide selection of activities in Leusden and Achterveld – every citizen I encountered was more than willing to share their vision and experiences of their relationship with the municipality. I am infinitely grateful for the trust people gave me. Within the municipality the civil servants, council members and Executive received me too – sometimes wondering if they could help me, always keen to share their experiences. This too was invaluable in the insights I gained for my research.

The space and time of the thesis is too short to share all my experiences over 2016, if a project or activity is not mentioned this is certainly not because it wasn't important, on the contrary it either deserves more space or further research.

I would like to express my special thanks to two developments: firstly, to all the members of the initiative group *Van Onder Op* who tolerated my presence and especially my silences whilst observing their discussions. Secondly, to all the actors within Antares, who were very open in sharing their vision on the situation within the building. My friends and acquaintances in the neighbourhood who contributed through small and big conversations about my thoughts on my research question.

2016 was a personally tough year. The support of my fellow students and teachers kept me sharp and going. Thank you. Extra special today is that my parents are still with me to witness the completion of this research, this was not a given when I began.

Finally, but not least, without the support of my family this thesis would not have been possible. My husband and my daughters Mathilde and Eloïse whose support was invaluable as I combined my study and work which meant frequent absences in the evenings – following and undertaking many activities. Crazy hours at times and we visited events we may otherwise not have visited.

July 2017

Glossary

Dutch term		English term / definition
Aanschuifdiner	=	Join the diner / pull up a chair dinner
Beleidsbeïnvloeding	=	policy influencing participation
doe-democratie	=	Do-democracy / participatory democracy
Door Achterveld Voor Achterveld (DAVA)	=	Citizen initiative by citizens from Achterveld for citizens from Achterveld
Energie Akkoord	=	Energy Agreement
Energie Loket	=	Energy Counter
Leuker Leusden	=	Nicer Leusden (is an umbrella organisation for cultural activities)
Netwerkgemeenschap	=	Network community
Participatiesamenleving	=	Participation Society
Raadsinformatiebrief	=	Council information letter
Samenleving Voorop	=	Society Ahead
Sociaal Domein	=	Social and healthcare sector
Van Onder Op	=	From the bottom up – an initiative
Woningstichting Leusden	=	Social Housing Corporation
Zelf-redzaamheid	=	Self-sufficient participation

I. Introduction

Three women from Leusden-Zuid enter the room. I know them from the school playground. My daughters have been in the class with their children. I am curious, why have they come? They have come to share their discontent with the state of green maintenance.

Woman A: "It is a disgrace, it is unmanageable. We can't remove the weeds ourselves – it keeps coming back – in even a worst state."

Me: have you approached SIGHT to help sort out the area?

Woman B: "No, the public garden was recently newly laid out. Except, they didn't consider all the weeds coming back.

Me: Have you asked them to work with you on a day to clean?

Woman C: We do the weeding on Saturday or Sunday. They can't come on those days.

Me: Have you asked?

Woman A: No.

The conversation continues. They laugh, out of frustration?

One of the mother's states: "It can't be true that we have to weed so much?"

(conversation 14 September 2016 during information evening Green Maintenance, Municipality Hall)

Who has which role? What expectations do citizens have of the government and vice versa? This conversation highlights the ambiguity that exists on the role a citizen takes in society.

In 2009 I moved to Leusden, a nice municipality to live in, close to nature and with good facilities. As a resident and professional I have experienced Leusden and how the municipality tackles projects together with its citizens. Like many municipalities in the Netherlands, Leusden too started a transition to increase the self-reliance of its residents in two ways: to increase the responsibility of its citizens and to create more custom-made solutions in government projects. With my research I aim to contribute to the debate on citizen participation. I set out with the research question:

How is the policy Samenleving Voorop changing the participation of citizens in Leusden society?

This translated to specifically look at: How is the relationship between civil servants and citizens changing in relation to the concepts of citizenship and democracy?

As an anthropologist I look at the different perspectives: From the perspective of the civil servants who are in some ways 'letting go' of their function and from the perspective of the citizens who are gaining responsibility over their neighbourhoods and city.

In the past forty or so years a move is happening within the Netherlands, and across the globe. This change is referred to as the *participatiesamenleving*, or participation society. It is a concept where citizens (are expected to) take a more prominent role in society, in their community, to support friends and family and to co-create government plans. The term *participatiesamenleving* was first introduced by the King in 2013 (Koster 2014). Participation is not a new concept in the Netherlands. Already in the 1970s the first form of participation as we know it today existed (Ham 2012; Lenos 2006).

Participatiesamenleving indicates the new relationship between government and citizens. In 2013, the ministry of Home Affairs published a Cabinet paper to support and highlight the development of the *doe-democratie* (literally the 'do-democracy'). The *doe-democratie* refers to the level of participation of citizens in realizing things within society on their own accord without the interference of the government. This can be the maintenance of the parks, developing a playground etc. (BZK 2013: 12). Thus distinguishing itself from representative democracy where politicians are voted into power. Houwelingen *et al* (2014) refer to citizen participation as both the self-sufficient participation ('*zelf-redzaamheid*') and the policy influencing participation ('*beleidsbeïnvloeding*') (Houwelingen 2014:11). In both cases it is a second domain of collective decision-making with self-sufficient communities and co-production in networks (BZK 2013: 12).

In 2011, the local government implemented the policy *Samenleving Voorop* to give more power to the different stakeholders. Entailing a bigger role for the citizens and organisations in the society to realize plans and initiatives. In 2014, the new Executive made the policy *Samenleving Voorop* part of their coalition agreement, committed to be as accessible and open as possible to the citizens (Gemeente Leusden, 2014).

In this time of transition in society where there is a shift from government to citizens action and where individualism within communities is gaining ground. Hobsbawn (2009) defined the need for 'public decisions aimed at collective social improvement from which all human lives should gain'. This he argues is the basis of progressive policy. This is not based on a specific

ideology, but rather ‘a major shift away from the free market and towards public action’ (Hobsbawn 2009). In other words he calls for decisions for the greater good, rather than for the individual. For the Leusden council members a concern is their role in guarding that decisions are made for the greater good with the rise of participatory democracy. The risk always exists that one perspective is honoured.

In this thesis the meaning of citizenship, especially in contributing to society within communities, will be discussed. Citizenship is the individuals’ membership of a society. I will first discuss the concept of citizenship and how citizens get involved in society. The main case in my field work is about Antares, a building within one of the neighbourhoods in Leusden, which is in troubled waters and where in 2016 a community comes to live. A community is a group of people with a common interest in society. In chapter IV all the aspects of creating a network community are described. This highlights the role of citizens and gives insights into the transition in roles between citizens and civil servants.

The thesis is a mere glimpse of the Leusden society in 2016. Whilst I am able to give a good impression of the situation in Leusden, it does not cover everything that could possibly have been covered. I could only be at one place at any given time. At the same time, all that I witnessed is too much to mention specifically. Moreover, some aspects that I observed are not included in this thesis as they deserve to be worked out on their own. One such example is the initiative of *Van Onder Op* which through research and pilots argued that the transition in the healthcare and welfare sector calls for a better integration of the formal and informal care for people, especially the elderly. Furthermore, there are two topics worth further research. Firstly, the division of power between the Executive and the municipal council members in a town where there are no considerable problems in relation to the functioning of the dual system. Secondly, citizens motivation to become or not active citizens with regards to government participation.

Leusden

Leusden, a small city of about 30.000 inhabitants, in the centre of the Netherlands. The municipality of Leusden was formed in 1969.

Leusden has a surface area of 62,02 km² and comprises of 4 villages (Leusden, Leusden-Zuid, Achterveld, Stoutenburg) and a number of hamlets, including: Oud-Leusden, Snorrenhoef, Musschendorp and

Asschat. A large part of the surface area is nature area. The geography of Leusden is special as it lies partly on the Utrechtse Heuvelrug and partly in the Gelderse vallei. This diverse landscape is one of its assets.

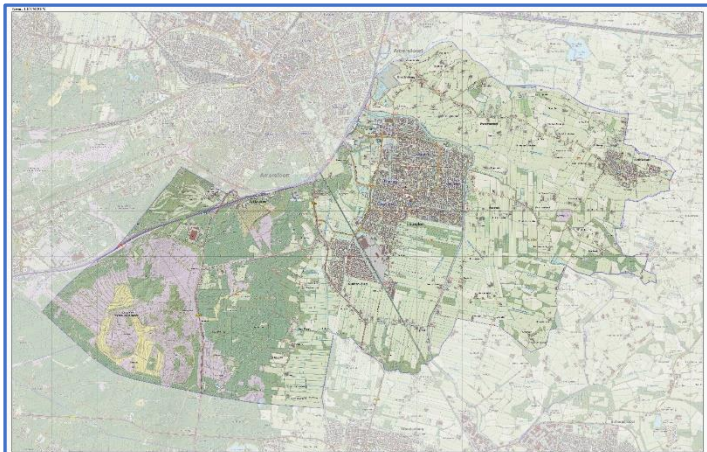
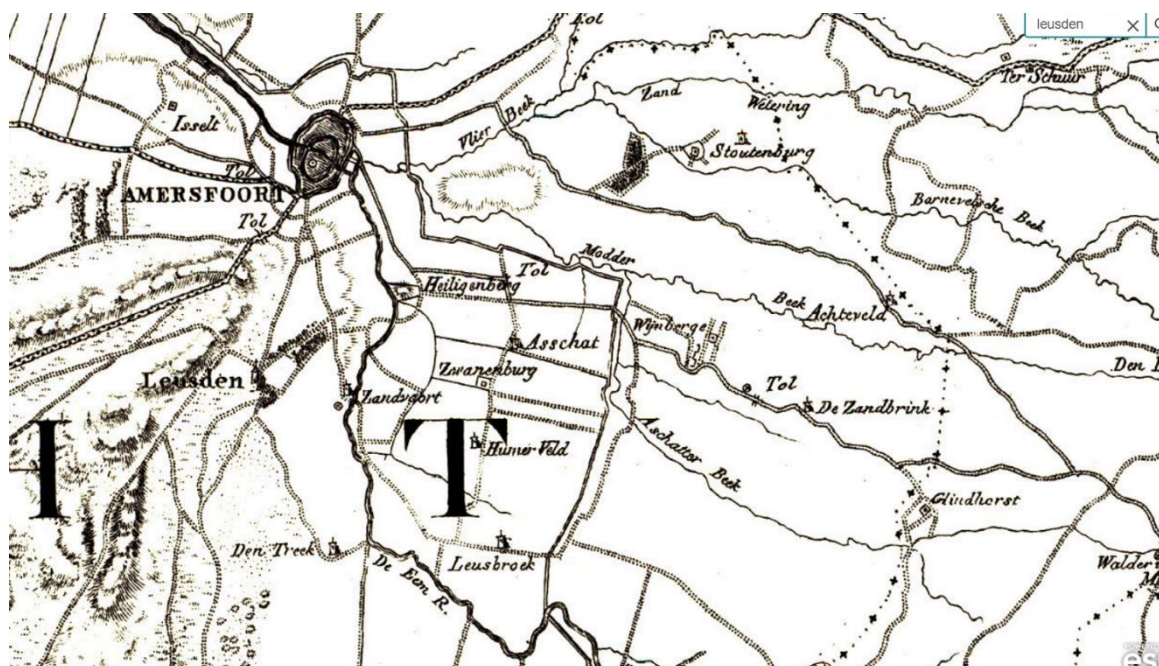


Figure 1: Leusden Municipality

The earliest map of the area of Leusden shows the origin of the municipality in 1815. From the nineteen seventies Leusden began to expand. The map of 2016 illustrates the rapid growth from the nineteen seventies onwards.

Fig. 2: The area of the municipality of Leusden in 1815.



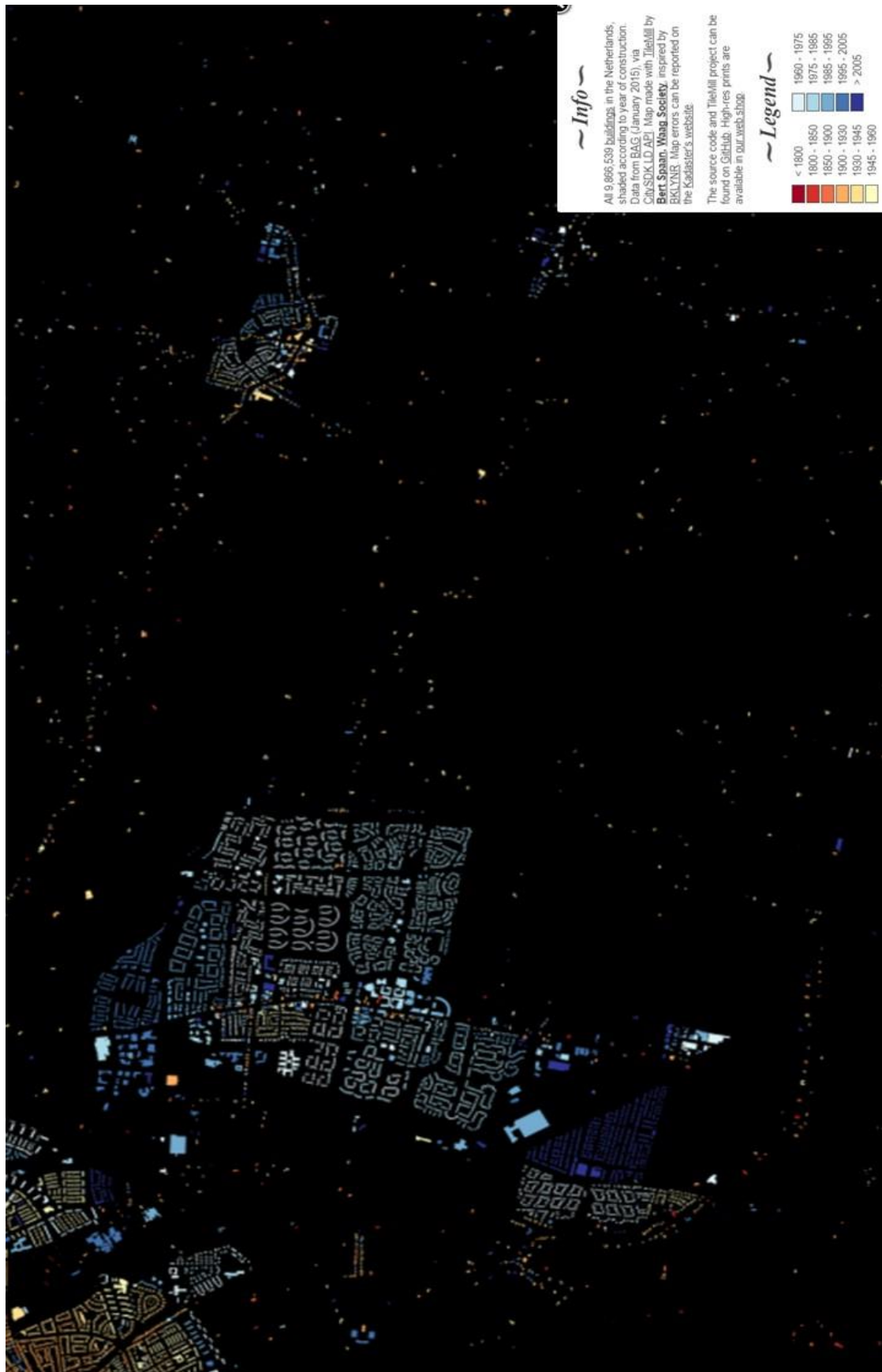


Figure 3: Growth of Leusden over the years, 2016

My perspectives as anthropologist – citizen – professional

In 2016 I had the honour to observe and participate in some of the network communities in Leusden. As a researcher I discovered places both unknown and known to me. I live in Leusden, and will continue to live in Leusden, there is no entering and exiting of the field. The field is my home.

As an inhabitant of Leusden, a participation consultant in my professional work and as an anthropologist, I was curious to take a closer look at the developments in the field of participation within my municipality. The challenge I faced was – how am I sitting here and may I share my thoughts? Was I there as anthropologist, citizen or professional? Mostly I chose to be the anthropologist, however this wasn't always easy. Sitting there as anthropologist meant contributing less to the discussion, and making more observations. I experienced what Sluka *et al* (2012) described as the importance of field work to anthropology and illustrate that participant observation 'hinges on the dynamic and contradictory synthesis of subjective insider and objective outsider' (Sluka *et al* 2012: 2). How to find the right balance was the challenge.

With my triple role I felt very conscious about myself within this field work setting. This has a reason and an origin. The origin can be traced back to 1999 when I was living on Loh Island in Vanuatu, a small and remote island in the South Pacific undertaking research in the life of women on the island. I was immersed in the community and undertook research as participant observer. Within a community of 100 individuals living in a well-defined, even 'confined' area. I participated in the community as school teacher and shared many moments with women. I felt comfortable with this position and was not very conscious of how my presence influenced the situation. I was also aware I was only temporarily within the community. How is this in Leusden?

The scale of participant observation or observation participation

I'm an active participant. And yet during my research period I sought to be the observer. Spradley categorised ethnographers in 5 types from nonparticipant to complete participant. In this categorisation I was a 'complete participant' as I am a member of the group that is studied (Spradley *In* DeWalt & DeWalt 2011: 24). At times it was difficult to distinguish between observer and participant, they lie very close especially when the issue being

discussed touched me personally. (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; De Walt & De Walt 2011)).

During my field work period, initiatives and projects developed where I could be observer, and at other times I was the 'active citizen'. This gave the opportunity to observe what was happening. Adler and Adler defined a gradual line of membership – from no membership role to full membership, a classification I recognized. Within this classification I either had an active or a full membership depending on the type of projects I engaged in. (Adler & Adler *in* DeWalt & DeWalt 2011: 25). During my period in the field I witnessed my own emotions that arose at times. Furthermore, because I was so aware of my position I was able to reflect on myself and on the scientific objectivity of my findings. This was highlighted by Benjamin Paul as an important element for ethnographers to be aware of (Benjamin Paul *in* DeWalt & DeWalt 2011:28).

During my field work period I was constantly aware of myself, my role and possible influence within processes. Although not key to my findings on the transition taking place within Leusden, it is key to my own transition. Parallel to my ethnography I invite the reader to discover my reflections during my research period. [The text in blue are the highlights.](#)

Methodology

Whilst balancing my different roles as anthropologist, active citizen and professional I built my field work up in a number of stages.

Consultation meetings, council meetings and activities

In my orientation period of the field I started to follow all the municipal council meetings every Thursday evening. From information sessions to official council meetings. An introduction to different issues at stake in Leusden, to the people working within the municipality as civil servants or council members, and indication of involved citizens.

The various news sources such as Leusderkrant.nl and LeusdenNu.nl, facebook and events attended by the aldermen coloured the picture.

Selection of activities

As an active citizen, initiatives from *De Groene Belevenis* caught my interest. The initiative *Van Onder Op* was publishing their first findings and caught my attention. Interested in my research they allowed me to shadow their initiative during 2016. This gave me an insight into how the municipality was seen by its active and critical citizens.

Schoon Maximaplein was an activity I set up which originated from the interest of my daughter to a crazy action during an event on sustainability focussed on making a plan to stimulate taking direct action.

Furthermore I attended many public events in relation to participation processes of government projects such as developing the *Omgevingsvisie*, the policy for the *sociaal domein* and the sustainability agenda.

Stakeholder interviews to hear the different perspectives

After half a year of observation I started a series of semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. These included local politicians, civil servants, citizens, representatives of organisations. The interviews focused on their involvement in society as a citizen, getting a

feel for their motivation, hearing their perspective on the transition and verifying my observations. For my case Antares I was able to interview almost all the stakeholders in the building.

During the interview period my activities within the community continued attending many different types of initiatives and projects.

Towards the end of my field work period I held a small unrepresentative survey during one public meeting in Antares to get a quick overview of why people were coming to the building and what *Samenleving Voorop* meant for them.

II. Antares: a micro network society in development

“Antares is like a small society, slowly it is growing” – Jasper van Zandwijk, director of the school ‘t Palet, shares his views on Antares during an interview in October 2016.

Former alderman Thijs Rolle stated in 2011 the opportunities for Antares: “A multi-functional centre is a beautiful concept, where the whole equals more than the sum of its parts. For companies the same can be stated: companies operating close to each other inspire each other and opportunities to cooperate are created. That is also the most important aim of a multi-functional centre. A lot happens in Leusden, but so often it happens separately, on islands. A multi-functional centre stimulates development of ideas and of cooperation. That is why such a centre is good for its collaborators, but especially for the neighbourhood. A dazzling multi-functional centre can enrich the whole neighbourhood.” (Gemeente Leusden, 2011:1)

In December 2015 *De Spullenmannen* were invited to organise more activities in Antares. Their first activity, a bingo night, had been a success with some 30 to 40 persons attending. The second bingo night, they spotted the kitchen. During the third bingo night they also served a three course menu. The location manager joined for dinner. He was enthusiastic and the next day he asked if *De Spullenmannen* would like to manage the Café. The location manager was keen to get more activities in the community centre. After two failed enterprises managing the café the *Woningstichting Leusden* was eager to see the café become profitable. The developments seen in and around Antares during 2016 illustrate a number of aspects relevant in the transition to increase participation of citizens in Leusden.

This chapter describes the historical development of Antares, necessary to highlight aspects such as network community, elements central to increase participation, and the obstacles encountered. In the chapters that follow more detail will be given of the situation during 2016.

2006 multi-functional centre: bringing the community together

In 2006 *Woningstichting Leusden*, the social housing association, the municipality and the schools association Leusden and Achterveld (VOILA) signed a contract to develop three multifunctional centres. Buildings combining schools, childcare, and other facilities such as

public library, café, community centre, meeting place and other facilities. Nationally the belief was that combining all these functions would be very powerful, and would grow automatically into one whole. Now, ten years on, the contract is disentangled. Each partner is now owner and responsible for the operation of one building. Only Antares is as multi-functional as once envisaged at the beginning of the century with all the different partners and users' within the building.

The experiences within Antares contributed to a new approach in the future development of the multi-functional centres in Leusden. Stakeholders are involved much earlier on to develop a joint vision for the use of the building.

Antares: a hub of activity in the middle of the neighbourhood

Antares is a multifunctional building in the neighbourhood of Leusden-Zuid and Tabaksteeg – “south of the PON-railway line” – owned and operated by the social housing company.



Figure 4: Different perspectives on the building Antares

Within the building are situated two schools, a pre-school centre, a day-care centre, an afterschool centre, a gym, a sports hall, a café and a public library. Furthermore various sports associations use the sports hall. The *Woningstichting Leusden* manages the rental of meeting rooms, is responsible for the website www.antaesleusden.nl, and is the central contact point.

Contrary to the statement of Rolle in 2011, already in 2006 early signs were seen of the difficulties ahead. All potential users expressed their wishes and requirements for their activities. The architect accommodated most. No discussion about joint vision, just adding all the requirements together. For the RAU Amsterdam, a famous architect, the building was to become a showpiece - a beautiful initiative creating one building for many facilities. In 2011 the newsletter of the school described the building, its colours and the ideas behind the concept of the architect. The architect reasoned that all parties should hold each other as community school, embrace each other. ('t Palet newsletter, February 2011)

The users in the building (such as parents and staff) had high expectations when the building opened in 2011. In 2016 the aim of the Ideal Child Centre (previously the integrated child centre (*Integraal Kind Centrum*)) was reiterated as a nice place where children from 0 to 13 years can play, learn and develop at the heart of Leusden-Zuid. Making continuous development for all children possible. The aim is not to create one organisation, but to cooperate extensively (IKC newsletter, 2016).

By the time the building was built and ready to open the financial crisis had hit the country and also Leusden. The issues that arose

where: 1. Nationally the ministry of housing called on all social housing corporations to stick to their core business: renting out houses. They should eliminate all additional activities with a high risk rating such as owning and operating multifunctional buildings. 2. No tenants were found for the office space. 3. The organisations were facing financial difficulties and as a result sticking to their core business too.

In 2011, when the building opened, I followed the developments up close as chairperson of the parents association for the day-care and after school centre. Undoubtedly my experience then, influences my critical view now. I had high hopes for the building. My children almost fulltime users of the child-centre whilst my husband and I would work. Sadly, as parents we noticed the troubles within each organisation, and more specifically the cooperation between the organisations. As a resident I am enthusiastic of the developments that are taking place, and cannot help but actively get involved in promoting the work of the café management and the after school centre. Conscious of being more participant than observer at those moments, but unable to resist to join in the momentum.

Different users in the building expressed these elements all contributed to a number of problems:

1. Focus of the organisations/users was on initial/start-up problems within the building, and not on developing a shared vision.
2. Space sharing appeared to be more difficult than expected: school rules differed according to the school, afterschool staff need to prepare before school is out, teachers need to prepare work for the next day whilst afterschool is in the area, the area of the library was tedious to transform into the beautiful stage for performances.
3. Cooperation between staff from different organisations was difficult. People liked each other, but respect and appreciation for each other's needs and work seemed far away.
4. The costs of the building were much higher than anticipated.
5. The café in the building was unsuccessful. Residents didn't use it. The full price for a cup of coffee in the neighbourhood café was felt as "too expensive" and the atmosphere was not cosy ("gezellig").
6. Antares replaced the community centre in Leusden-Zuid: *De Woelige Hoek*. *De Woelige Hoek* assumed arrangements were made with the municipality about the use of the café and a room. This turned out not to be the case. They felt the municipality hadn't kept its word. The frequent visitors to *De Woelige Hoek* were disappointed and decided they would not cross the water to visit Antares. Only in 2016 did they start to come to Café Antares.

7. People did not experience Antares as a community centre. A community centre being a place for a community's educational and/ or recreational activities. A non-representative poll held on 12th October 2016 during a consultation evening about various developments in Leusden-Zuid highlighted people used the building: for school, the library, to vote or municipal consultation evenings.

I also found that in settings where I was more citizen than researcher – such as at the training sessions of my daughter – I was sharing my knowledge with the other parents. They were interested in the information, and at the same time they wondered how I gained the information. Very quickly I realized that through all the conversations and meetings I participated in I gained huge amounts of information that other people were also interested in, but not necessarily knew. For example the developments in Antares gave me insights into the situation of De Spullenmannen. I felt compassion towards their efforts, understood why the staircase caused problems and why they were sometimes short-tempered at people using the staircase near their café. The parents felt less compassionate, they just felt they were being rude.

An overview of the actors within Antares

Antares comprises many different actors: the owner, the organisations, the users, the municipality. Illustration of the different actors involved in the Antares community, show a diversity in players with very different roles.

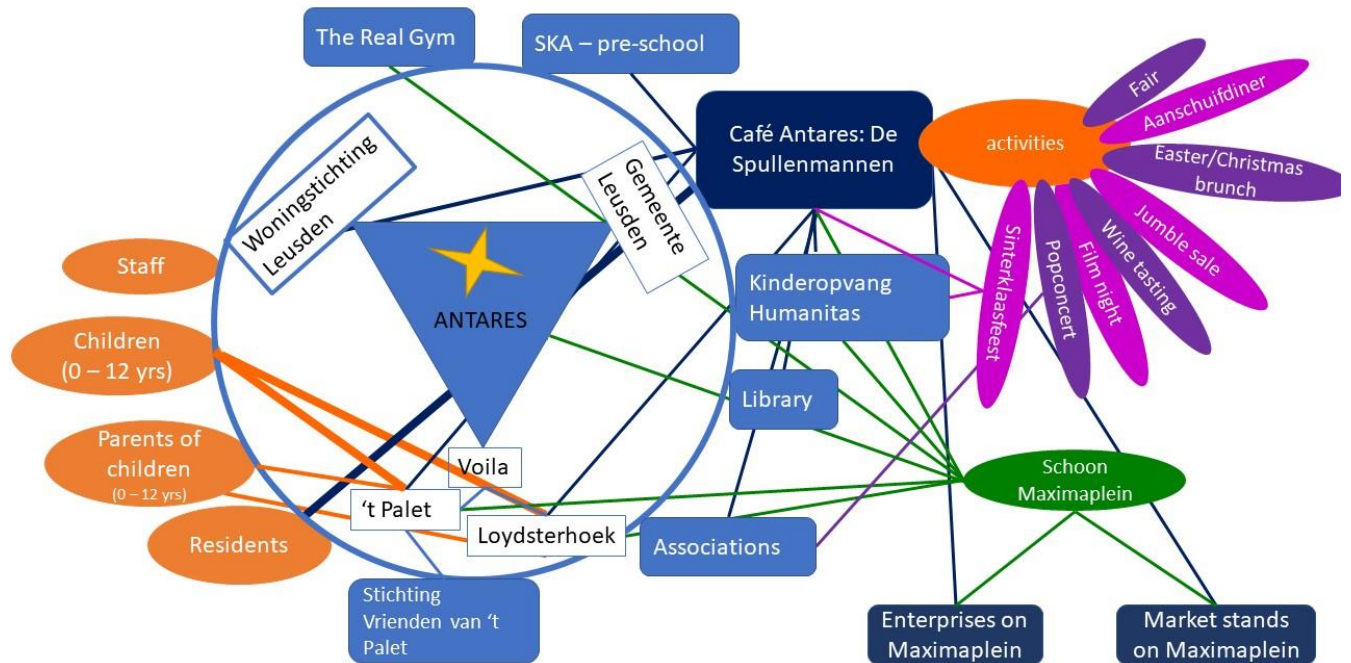


Figure 5: the illustration of the network community that exists around Antares. A complex maze. The illustration highlights the different players and their positions within the field. The thickness of lines illustrates a stronger relationship. The colours of the areas indicate different type of groups/organisations.

From disengagement to engagement in the community

When Antares opened, organisations felt disengaged with each other. There was no network community. A network community is social actors who are interconnected and who together set their programme based on goals and procedures. The social actors can be individuals, groups, organisations, associations or institutions. Castells (2013) describes the social actors as nodes with all the nodes connections for the network. In 2011 there was no network of social actors. Not within the organisations, nor for the individual users.

By the end of 2015, five years on and after many difficult years, three developments contributed to building the network around the community centre.

First, the three partners made a new agreement disentangling the contract. This tackled a number of the existing problems. For the *Woningstichting Leusden* the financial loss on Antares was about half a million euro's per year. This could not continue. The four problems:

1. The café cannot function as a “real” restaurant, the permit is too limited;
2. The open structure of the building, access to one part of the building means access to everywhere. This creates problems to rent out the sports hall when the building is otherwise closed;
3. Collective utilities such as electricity and gas. When schools exceed the budget spending for electricity and gas, the *Woningstichting Leusden* pays the bills;
4. Children are the biggest user group, this is great, but also limits the use of the rest of the building.

As a parent every year I am surprised and wonder: “why does Sinterklaas have to come three times to Antares?” Besides it being totally impractical for a parent with young children, making sure your child sees only one, or having to make up a story why Sinterklaas doesn't quite look the same “They are helpers”.

This example became for me a symbol of the lack of cooperation and community within Antares. Whilst researching other questions were raised: was it simply very practical reasons, such as making sure every child gets their moment with Sinterklaas, and ensuring it can be done in style of each and every organisation.

In 2017 the building will be refurbished. The *Woningstichting Leusden* indicated that the first challenge for the management of the café will be to optimize the exploitation so more rent can be paid. To realize this a number of conditions need to be met: more space to increase the activities and to grow, whilst not depriving the community of the social function the café now has. (Breda, 2017)

Second, the organisations (the schools, preschool, kindergarden and afterschool organisations) are guided in ways to work together. The aim is to focus on the interests of the children, the common ground between the organisations, rather than simply providing a shared space for eating lunch together. This has led to staff meeting each other, exchanging ideas and creating trust.

Third, *De Spullenmannen* initiated community activities and built their network. Most successful, open to all, is the “aanschuifdiner”. A concept where anyone can join for dinner and enjoy a three-course meal for a very affordable price. The “aanschuifdiner” is popular on Wednesday nights, at times up to 80 people join the dinner.



Figure 6: different evenings at the aanschuifdiner

This is not the only activity organised. Once a month an event is organised from a fair to Sinterklaas, from wine tasting to film night. There are activities for young and old. *De Spullenmannen* provide the community a social value. To name a few services they offer: A listening ear when someone is upset, a space to eat dinner when all of a sudden one is widowed, picking people up for dinner, delivering meals at home. This is very much cherished by the elderly in the neighbourhood. *De Spullenmannen* work as a social enterprise.

The big Sinterklaas party at Antares with games and music



Friday 2nd December, it's a sunny cold day when we gather to get ready for Sinterklaas party. The big square is transformed, the market stalls are set up differently, the square feels like a real village square. The square is alive. Everyone reacts positively.

Make-up and clothes are spread out, the volunteers who will become the *zwarte pieten* and *Sinterklaas* get ready. A gradual metamorphose takes place. The *zwarte pieten* are black black as charcoal.

Just before schools out we visit the kindergarten classes. We knock on the door, enter the room, surprise teacher and kids alike. The teacher asks: "*Sinterklaas*, you will certainly come again on Monday morning won't you?" *Sinterklaas*: "Yes, I will. But children do come and play this afternoon on the square by the Café."

The children are enthusiastic and they sing. With the children – over excited to be next to *Sinterklaas* - leave the school with *Sinterklaas* and his *Pieten*. Outside the *Pieten* distribute *pepernoten* and candy. The children follow *Sinterklaas* to the other side of the building and many join in with the games. It's so much fun! The games were set up by the BSO Supernova, who support the children. The children are keen to obtain their *Pietendiploma* and a hot chocolate. They beam!

As the afternoon goes on some children start to discover who the *Zwarte Pieten* are. And here and there I hear "hè you are Daan" and "hè you are Anouk!" And then, around four o'clock it starts to cool down, the sun is going under, *Sinterklaas* is getting tired, he hasn't had a break. *Sinterklaas* moves inside and sits down on his chair where children are baking their own *pepernoten*. Yummy.

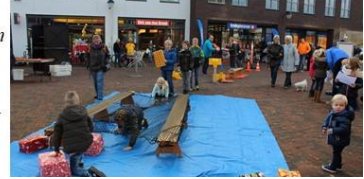


Figure 7: Sinterklaas in Antares.

Upheaval around Café Antares: "finally a successful Café"

In the summer of 2016 new dynamics develop in and around Antares. The different players all play their role. Antares is a micro society. The dynamics illustrate the meaning of *Samenleving Voorop* and are a vivid representation of citizenship.

The concept of citizenship relates to the creation of the network around Antares, with the development of relationships between the social actors, and illustrates how power and perspectives are involved. It also highlights the struggle all social actors face with the transition to a more participative society and implementing the policy *Samenleving Voorop*.

The future will tell if 2016 is the turning point for the building and an impulse for more activities and livelihood in the neighbourhood.

III. Citizenship: contributing to society

To take no part in the running of the community's affairs is to be either a beast or a god!

Aristotle

Citizenship: one's position in society

The Spartan song - 'We are what you were; we, will be what you are' - is, in its simplicity, the abridged hymn of every patrie. (Renan, 1882)

Patrie, the nation is formed by a people who have shared a common past and share a present consent. Renan describes in his speech "Qu'est-ce qu'une Nation?" at the Sorbonne how a nation is created.

"A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. ... To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more - these are the essential conditions for being a people. One loves in proportion to the sacrifices to which one has consented, and in proportion to the ills that one has suffered. One loves the house that one has built and that one has handed down."

Renan states "these are essential conditions for being a people". It is the people who form the nation, the relationship between the individual and the nation-state describes citizenship.

Citizenship is one of the five forms of socio-political identity. The identity is always based on a basic relationship to an individual (such as in a feudal, monarchical or tyrannical system), a group (national) or to the idea of the state (citizenship). (Heater, 2004: 1-2.) Citizenship is a relationship between people that goes beyond kinship, it links people within a community. The concept of citizenship is continuously evolving. There is not one definition about citizenship, over time it has evolved and depending on the perspective on society, the definition varies. However citizenship distinguishes itself from the other forms of identity

through the central notions of citizenship which are “autonomy, equality of status and citizenly participation in the affairs of the polity”. (Heater, 2004:2).

Without going into great detail here about citizenship, there are two aspects that are important to mention. Firstly, the elements which are considered part of citizenship today, and secondly, the two models of citizenship that exist today.

Elements of citizenship

Citizenship consists of three elements: firstly, the legal status, defined by civil, political and social rights; secondly, the political participation in society; and thirdly, the identity of the group. (Heater, 1999). These elements developed, and became important as the communities grew in size and new forms of organisation had to be developed. In modern democracies, developed over the past three to four hundred years, the main difference between states is formed by the composition of the populations.

Models of citizenship

Citizenship is often discussed based on two models. The civic-republican model and the liberal-individualist model.

The civic-republican model emphasises man’s political nature and the active participation in society, specifically government affairs. It is in-line with Renan’s description where citizenship is about democratic participation which originates in the past, and moves forward on the common concerns in the present.

The liberal-individualist model emphasises man’s economic nature. Citizens are sovereign and autonomous beings with duties to pay taxes, obey the law, engage in business, defend the nation if necessary. They are free to choose if they want to be politically active in a broader sense than for their family and kinship. (Oldfield, 1990).

Active versus non-active citizens: interpretation of citizenship

All citizens ‘who have assumed an identity as members of a greater polity’ (Kisielewski & Le Doux 2009: 155) need to be involved in one way or another through participation. Ghorashi (2010) and Kisielewski & Le Doux (2009) argue that participation is necessary in a

democratic constitutional state. It will create interconnectedness. This involvement can only come from within each and every individual and is not something the state can impose on any citizen (Ghorashi 2010: 21).

The question then arises whether or not all can be active in society. Koster (2014) describes two forms of 'active citizenship' arising in spaces of governance. On the one hand new forms where citizens were previously not involved, on the other hand placing initiatives into the newly created space. In both cases the state only expects a small group of people to become active and take a 'assume or maintain leading positions in citizen organizations' (Koster 2014). The 'active citizens' are key to the success of the participation society, and depicts them as 'political brokers who bridge the gap between the retreating state and its citizens'. They are both participant and mediator (between state and fellow citizens) in the participatory society (Koster 2014: 50).

Whether or not a selective group of 'active citizens' is considered sufficient is key in the current debate of the participation society and one that regularly came up within the municipal council. In Leusden throughout 2016 the question the municipal council kept asking itself was whether or not a participation process could be taken seriously or not. Was it representative? Was it really in the general interest? How can we reach new people? What to do if protest does arise at the end of the process? These questions were asked because it was often the same group of people walking around at council meetings.

Biezenkamp – two weeks before a decision a man contributes his thoughts

For the Biezenkamp a new plan was developed for the construction of the new buildings and the design. During the municipal council meeting 22nd September 2016 questions and statements of the council members are about the participation. Two weeks earlier a resident had commented on the plan. His conclusion was that the traffic solution was unsafe. The plan was developed by the municipality with a feedback group. The role of the feedback group was to together develop a plan. Within the feedback group sat shop owners, restaurant owners and residents. The council members question the civil servants on whether everyone was heard, how the cooperation was with the feedback group and how they informed the citizens who did not take part in the process.

During the Council meeting Mr. Vos states: “The municipality has fought hard to develop the plan with society. It’s a good example where from the start the council, businesses and society discussed together and with respect for each other’s argument obtained a joint plan. The CDA party is disappointed that not everyone could be part of the feedback group, but we are grateful that the feedback group has worked on a productive way and mutual respect to create a carried plan.” (Gemeente Leusden, 2016d)

The municipality is searching hard to find ways of involving a larger and wider group. Examples that arose were the *omgevingsvisie* and *sociaal domein* . With new creative tools and going to the people the council successfully reaches a wider group for government participation. At the same time research in The Netherlands has come up with a number of different categorisations of “active citizens”. In the next paragraph one type of categorisation is explained, this highlights how difficult it is to reach a big group of citizens in the context of participation in direct relation to government cq. politics.

Types of “active citizens”

On 28th October 2016 one of the five female council members stepped down. Up to that point, each party had a woman council member. The (now former) Mayor recollects how Mariëlle Mellink drew special attention to communications and Samenleving Voorop. Reminding the municipality of the importance of Samenleving Voorop on the one hand, and on the other hand of the lack of information council members often had. “Hearing about it in the (social) media”. A voice that will be missed. The women in the council seized the moment for a call to action: “More women in the council!”. The council members made this call as they are convinced that a better representation of society is necessary in the council to come to better decisions.

My field work consisted of a number of activities: I went to all the meetings of the council on Thursday evenings – and after about a month people started noticing me and asking which political party I was for, what I was doing and would I be interested to join their party. Young female politicians were lacking – young for both sexes, female in general. I declined. I want to stay objective. I do not want to be associated with one party or the other whilst doing my research.

This period has given me the opportunity to reflect on being a local politician.

Pleidooi voor meer vrouwen in raad

'Een afspiegeling van de samenleving'

Frits van Breda

LEUSDEN De raadsvergadering eindigde donderdagavond erg verrassend. De vergadering, onder voorzitterschap van burgemeester Annemieke Vermeulen, verloopt normaal gesproken altijd volgens strakke regels. Iedereen mag zijn zegje doen over het onderwerp dat geagendeerd is. Als dat nodig is kan men ook nog in 'tweede termijn' zijn of haar standpunt verduidelijken.

Dit keer werd bij hoge uitzondering gebroken met het strakke protocol. De dames die zitting hebben in de gemeenteraad en een drietal vrouwelijke fractievertegenwoordigers kregen de gelegenheid voor wat beschouwd kan worden als een vriendelijke demonstratie.

Bij het agendapunt 'afscheid werd van VVD raadslid Mariëlle Mellink vroeg de nestor van de raad, Riet Koetsenruiter (GroenLinks/PvdA), het woord. Samen met haar vrouwelijke collega's nam ze plaats achter de microfoon. Mariëlle werd uitgenodigd om er bij te komen staan. Ogenscheinlijk ging het om een gepaste afscheidsspeech vanwege het vertrek van een collega. De



zen in jou een powervrouw". Aan het eind van de reeks vriendelijke woorden aan het adres van het scheidende raadslid maakte het gezelschap dames gebruik van de gelegenheid om, buiten de orde om, een ander onderwerp naar voren te brengen. „Wij, politieke vrouwen doen een beroep op alle raadsfracties, en nu in het bijzonder die van de VVD, om meer vrouwen op de lijst te plaatsen bij de komende gemeenteraadsverkiezingen”, aldus de woordvoester.

De vrouwen in de raad voelen zich erg ondervertegenwoordigd. Na het vertrek van Mariëlle Mellink maken nog vier dames deel uit van de uit 21 personen bestaande raad. Tot geruststelling van de aanwezige heren werd wel duidelijk gemaakt dat de raadsvrouwen het wel leuk vinden om samen te werken met de mannen. „Maar we willen graag dat de raad een afspiegeling is van de samenleving”. Nadrukkelijk werd het vrouwelijk deel van de Leusdense bevolking opgeroepen om er voor te zorgen dat er over twee jaar meer dames in de raad zitting kunnen nemen.

Voor Mariëlle hadden de raadsvrouwen een symbolisch afscheidscadeautje meegenomen, een vogeltje uit Zimbabwe. „Kleurrijk en goed gebekt vlieg je vanuit het mooie bosrijke gebied naar Veenendaal.”

toespraak kreeg echter aan het eind een andere wending. Mariëlle Mellink kreeg door de 'politieke vrou-

wen', zoals het gezelschap dames zich noemde, alle lof toegezwaaid. Ze werd beschreven als een jon-

ge, ambitieuze vrouw die bevolgen, beleidsmatig doelgericht en met lef haar 'mannelijke stond'. „We verlie-

Figure 8: The female politicians are actively searching for more female candidates for the next elections

Houwelingen *et al* (2014), Tonkens *et al* (2015) and the WRR (2012) all look at the citizens and the different profile/characteristics of citizens. Through different perspectives they develop categories of citizens. The WRR looks at how the 'unreachable' citizens can be reached, and what is the commitment of citizens. Tonkens *et al* look at how citizens perceive the initiatives of fellow citizens. Houwelingen *et al* looks at the extent to which the citizens are active or not within their city.

As the question within Leusden is very much how to reach a wider audience, the analysis of Houwelingen *et al* (2014) is specifically interesting. Houwelingen *et al* (2014) look at two types of participation: *zelf-redzaamheid* focussing on initiatives by citizens; and *beleidsbeïnvloeding* focussing on the role of citizens within the development of policy on local, regional and national level. This participation includes referenda, voting, lobbying, consultation, stakeholder engagement where the government takes initiative. Citizens believe that the participation contributes to the development of better policies, and to better include wishes from citizens. Based on an analysis of participation in five cities, five categories of

citizens are defined. Houwelingen *et al* (2014) indicate the percentage of people reached in the five categories. The categories are:

- 'all round participation'. both politically and socially active (7%);
- 'politically active' with considerable contact with local government and politicians (6%);
- 'neighbourhood activist', often involved in neighbourhood committees and attending information session (14%);
- 'writer' sometimes writes a letter or email to the municipality (15%);
- 'non active' citizens who hardly take action, or none at all (50%).

The participation in Leusden when one identifies with the issue

In Leusden too, every individual seems to have their own interpretation of citizenship, and how to fulfil ones role. Whilst I have no exact figures for Leusden, In 2016 I observed and counted during meetings and encounters and I would estimate that the group of active citizens in “all round participation” in the municipality is about two to three hundred persons. Those people I encountered time and again on different themes. I noted that another group of people attended very specific meetings. This was when specific topics were covered, affecting them personally.

On a morning whilst I was out of the field I was contacted by someone from Opgeruimd Leusden, the umbrella organisation facilitating street clean-up actions. She contacted the municipality to see what role SIGHT could play in our action Schoon Maximaplein. Great, I thought. Involving SIGHT would be a win-win for both of us. But – she added – as community you then become responsible for the square. I fell silent. I was flabbergasted. I laughed. Was she serious? Should three citizens take the responsibility to clean a public square because we got assisted during one action? She too had been surprised and promised to verify this and get back to me. A week later she informed me that SIGHT would come and pick up the garbage, but would not help clean up the area. This was different to the square in a small neighbourhood. I was relieved. I had felt disgusted. This was what some people had tried to describe to me and why they were against the change in the green maintenance policy. It was a moment where my emotions definitely influenced my scientific objectivity.

In the autumn of 2016 preparations started for a citizen initiative: *Schoon Maximaplein*. For this activity, all the entrepreneurs around the Maximaplein, the organisations within Antares, the organisations of the healthcare centre were enthusiastic and helped to promote the activity and made prizes available for the competition. A total of 90 children with their parents took part on the day itself in March 2017. Of course factors such as sunny and dry weather contributed to the high turnout. At the same time it very much highlights the developments in Leusden-Zuid around Antares where a network community is coming alive. Furthermore the citizens' initiative was also supported by: *Opgeruimd Leusden*, *De Groene Belevenis* and SIGHT (contractor) in making material available and in removing the 150 kg of street litter that was collected.



Figure 9: The action *Schoon Maximaplein*. An initiative developed by myself with a much higher turn-out than expected.

This example of *Schoon Maximaplein* highlights the importance of individual efforts that are involved in participation. The involvement requires such a personal commitment, that without it no snowball effect can be created.

Van Onder Op protest action

In 2016 *Van Onder Op* – an initiative set up by Eric-Jan and Hans – comprising eight members aimed at developing a network structure bringing together the different players in the field of health and social care. The players comprise formal (paid and voluntary) organisations and informal organisations around an individual. Within the Netherlands a maze of people who offer support and care has grown around a patient. *Van Onder Op* is convinced that with a better structure, better support can be given with a more optimal use of the available financial resources. Research, pilot project and evaluation led to a report in September 2016. Making the findings available to the municipality – both to the aldermen, the council members and the civil servants has been a challenge. This resulted in the presentation of a manifesto in November 2016.

Why a manifesto? The initiators were worried, worried about the course of the policy development around the Sociaal Domein. They felt the position of the municipality meant there is a standstill, with the policy of *Samenleving Voorop* being misinterpreted. The municipality is waiting for society and the society is waiting for the municipality. The municipality refers to the core of the policy, namely as “We make space for initiatives that citizens and organisations take to increase their

involvement. We facilitate these initiatives, and support or stimulate where necessary. Specific in the field of *sociaal domein* they write “we aim for cooperation between the formal and informal care. Carers, volunteers and professional staff act together in the interest of the client”. (Leusderkrant p. 13. 7 December 2016)

Van Onder Op considers this as worrisome and decided “Action” was needed, to focus attention of the local politicians. Eric-Jan arranged for a few minutes to be made available during the council meeting on 24th November 2016. *Van Onder Op* seized the moment to present the Manifesto to the mayor. With a playful action – by posting the manifesto on the old council hall, Larikslaan 2 (welfare organisation), and presenting it during the council



■ „We zouden welzijn en zorg weer in hun samenhang moeten gaan zien”, aldus Van Onder Op.

Figure 10: *Van Onder Op* worked with a cartoonist to illustrate their materials.

meeting attention was caught. Council members from the five parties asked about how the input of *Van Onder Op* was used. At the same time the council members felt “yet again the *same* people contributing to the debate”.



Figure 11: 24 November 2016, the day of action by the initiative *Van Onder Op*. Illustrating the posting of the poster, the meetings before and during the day. The presentation during the council meeting.

Democracy: power to the people

Democracy originates from the Greek *dēmokratia*, from *dēmos* ‘the people’ and *-kratia* ‘power, rule’¹. In other words the power of the people. Over time this has translated into a system where the people can vote representatives into power. And after time, with new elections, can vote for representatives again. The political scientist Diamond describes democracy as consisting of four elements: 1. A political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections. 2. The active participation of the people, as

¹ Oxford dictionary <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/democracy>

citizens, in politics and civic life. 3. Protection of human rights of all citizens. 4. A rule of law, in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens. (Diamond, 2004).

Elements central to democracy are included, in their own way, within the two concepts of citizenship. Liberal-individualist gives the autonomy to choose one's activities, but includes paying taxes which enables the government to realize projects for the community. Civic-republicanism emphasises active participation.

Democracy is based on equality for all, this is in part realized by the division of governance and a division of powers (Kisielewski & Le Doux 2009: 158). A council member highlighted that the role of the municipal council is to act in the general interest. Furthermore, they should weigh the pros and cons of a situation before making a decision. Hearing all the sides of the story and seeing the different perspectives is always the challenge as a council member. It is important that, whatever the topic the council member wants to find out more about the different perspectives, as well as what is really the issue and is it a shared issue. Sometimes a group of people call for action, sometimes it's one person. That doesn't necessarily matter.

What matters is that both the "screamers" and the "quiet" people are heard. A council member is a representative of the people.

Tree planting day

In spring of 2016 a friend and fellow resident in the Tabaksteeg told me how she applied for an extra tree on the Maximaplein. Sadly, the response she received was negative. Why? Because there were plenty of trees around the new-built up area of the Maximaplein. The trees were still small but would grow in the years to come. She was disappointed but left it at that. Can't do anything about it. Wait for next year.

To my big surprise in April 2016 the municipal council was informed on the results. In the raadsinformatiebrief it states "On 16 March, on national tree day, eight trees were planted in Leusden. [...] The eight requests that were received have been realized." (Gem. Leusden, 2016b). I was so surprised. I knew of the experience of my friend, but decided not to question anyone on it at the time.

In January 2017 citizens were again invited to submit requests for a tree. A group of residents from the Tabaksteeg and Leusden-Zuid, including myself, decided to each individually request a tree around or on the Maximaplein. In March 2017 we were invited to take part in a walk around the area to find a suitable place to plant a tree. This is fantastic. The contact with the civil servant is very positive. We are very happy about it, and feel we can make a contribution to make our main square greener.



Figure 12: Description of an action near Antares: making the square nicer.

Representative democracy versus participatory democracy

In the Netherlands there are two types of democracy, the representative and the participative democracy. The representative democracy as part of the monarchy. All eligible citizens vote on citizens whom will represent them to pass laws. In the Netherlands, elections are held on four levels: on national for the parliament and the senate, on provincial and local level and on European level. Elections occur on a regular basis. There is a sense of duty to vote. In Leusden there is a high turnout, despite the nationwide decrease in the last decades.

The participation society describes a society where citizens take on more responsibility, this is not a new concept in Dutch society. After all citizens make society. After the Second World War, Dutch society can be analysed as having developed through three phases, and arguably the fourth phase has now begun. The phases illustrate the relationship between the government and citizens (Duyvendak 1999; Verloo 2011; Koster 2014). The first period (1945-1970) was the rise of the welfare state on the one hand and awareness of the role of the citizen on the other. During the second period ‘planning aimed at change’(1970-1985) the foundation of citizen participation is laid. Citizens are reacting to the top-down government style. Furthermore, citizens are becoming more vocal about their living environment, their wishes and desires are considered in the development of plans (Koster 2014; Reijndorp 1996; Verloo 2011). The third period is known as ‘interactive policy making’ (1985 to 2010). Citizens are given a greater responsibility for self-organising on individual level, a shift away from the responsibility of the (national) politician. The national government retreats and gives more responsibility to the citizens and local government for the development of the local environment (Koster 2014; Verloo 2011). This third period gradually flowed into the (current) fourth period, where even more responsibility is passed onto citizens. The current transition focuses more specifically on the self-supporting citizen. Referred to as the *doe-democratie*. It is about the role citizens take on as individuals. At the same time it is also about the way society is organised to encourage political and social participation. Society is formed by all the individual parts of a single group sharing cultural aspects such as language, norms and values. In Leusden the general view is that people want to do something in society, to get involved. It is just not always in the expected manner. But within Leusden many activities are taking place. Participation society is linked to the participatory democracy in that both emphasis the contribution each individual (can) play in society.

The participatory democracy creates space for citizens to become active within society. On the one hand in becoming self-supporting, taking care of themselves and not depending so

heavy on the welfare state. On the other hand it is increasing the (government) participation of citizens in decision-making process surrounding development of plans and policy.

In both the representative and the participatory democracy power exists. In Dutch power translates into two words *kracht* and *macht*. *Kracht* stands for strength, in the sense of creative power. *Macht* stands for power in the sense of control. *Kracht* is associated with *Burgerkracht* (citizens' power) and *maatschappelijke kracht* (social power). It is the strength the people have when all stakeholders meet and pool their knowledge. This is linked to the participatory democracy. Whereas *macht* is related to representative democracy and the political system and the role that comes with it. (LOS stadomland, 2016)

In Leusden, as elsewhere, tension is growing between representative and participatory democracy, especially in government participation. The tension arises as both the participating individual and the politician want their input to be taken seriously. Politicians have the legal position to decide on an item – they are the highest government body in the municipality. Citizens invest their own time to share ideas and thoughts. The ambiguity comes from the value attributed to the input.

The most important question for the politicians was: how democratic is the participation? And can citizens elevate themselves to really make choices in the public interest, rather than their own interest.

For citizens, by far the most important issue was what happens with the input.

Not another Tabaksteeg: Think Tank Achterveld

During the council meeting on 17th March an update is given of the Think Tank Achterveld . The Think Tank Achterveld is a feedback group composed of about fifteen residents with diverse backgrounds. Their task is to function a linchpin between municipality and citizens. The aim is to develop a plan to renew the main road connecting the linear villages Achterveld and Stoutenburg which meanders through the fields with speeds of 30 km/h, 50 km/h, 60 km/h and 80 km/h.

Achterveld is one of the four villages in the municipality of Leusden. Achterveld marks itself as being a village with a close knit community where everyone knows each other and everyone is ready to help each other. Many of the residents have lived there for generations and on the whole people who live in Achterveld feel very welcome. The municipality often

says “in Achterveld the participation society already exists, there people care for each other”. A friend originally from Achterveld once said “you really need to like it - one thing happens to you and the whole village knows about it and share their thoughts, I’m glad I moved out”.

The setting is described by the chairman of the Dorpsraad Achterveld. An external consultant is hired to lead the process to achieve plans that are acceptable for Achterveld. The questions raised by the council members are: why is an external consultant necessary if it is Samenleving Voorop? How will we be sure that everyone in the village is contacted. The council members are clearly worried about the number of participants in the process and the representability of a decision made based on the advice of the Think Tank Achterveld.

A few years earlier a nightmare scenario had occurred. Within the Tabaksteeg and Leusden-Zuid a traffic advisory group was set up, constituted of about 20 residents, chaired by an independent chairperson and civil servants

present to answer any technical questions. It had been an intense process – two months of regular meetings. When the advice was presented, to the other residents, council members and Executive the plan was not well received. Fierce opposition arose. Threats to the alderman, petition for a different option, meetings organised by political parties to hear “the other side”. It shook Leusden. Even today the council

As a resident and professional in the field of participation I was very curious at the time of the process in the Tabaksteeg. I was surprised and shocked, specially by the threats that were made to the alderman. Was that the type of community I lived in. In Utrecht this could happen, but not in Leusden. I was amazed. It is also within this process that I experienced the feeling if you as citizen speak out against the feeling of most people present in the room. It takes courage. It made me curious and more determined to make sure I hear everyone in processes I lead.

members refer to the Tabaksteeg as the type of participation which was unsuccessful because residents didn’t feel they were heard.

In September, a meeting of Dorpsraad Achterveld was held. Most members of the Dorpsraad also participate in the Think Tank Achterveld. A new process manager is introduced. The chairperson and (one) other resident met him. They were very positive. The aim of the process manager was to facilitate the cooperation between citizens and the local government. A man, in his sixties, asked slightly inquisitively “which method do you use?”. It is the Think Tank Achterveld that has the final say, not the civil servants or consultants who develop the plans internally. The man cites several examples which clearly illustrate his dissatisfaction with how processes have gone in the past. The chairman reiterates that the Executive gave the assignment to Think Tank Achterveld to translate the wishes and conditions to the municipal

project group who will develop the plan. Furthermore, the members of the Think Tank Achterveld have an important role in disseminate, cq. explain the proposed solution to the fellow citizens and involve them in the process. “*Achterveld Voorop!*” jokes the man. He appears to be a very lively man. Straightforward and satirical.

The chairman says “we have a powerful tool in our possession. Let’s use our role and cherish it”. He looks back at the process up to now. The first part of developing plans went really well. There was a lot of interaction between the Think Tank Achterveld and the municipal project group. This has shifted to more cooperation, the civil servant has become advisor. The skill is to keep the right balance between the role of the civil servant and of the Think Tank Achterveld.

Furthermore the chairman emphasises that everyone who wants to participate, should be given the opportunity to participate. He wants to stimulate people to speak up and contribute to the discussion.



Figure 13: 1 November 2016. Denk Tank Achterveld in discussion about the plans presented

Back to city-states?

The democratic system originated in the city-state of Athens in Ancient Greece, and was a way to organise the input of everyone through representations in a relatively small geographical area. Citizenship and the elements it encompasses, applies on national level, despite the term being used on all levels – national, provincial, and city level. Ford (2010) argues that “only nations have citizens”. On the other levels one speaks of “residents, property owners, or domiciliaries; corporations and communes have stakeholders; the global village has its cosmopolitans and its humanists who dream of a day beyond territorial divisions” (Ford 2010: 210).

Ford (2010) argues that “The city, with its small and more circumscribed public life and a set of experiences and concerns common to all, may be the most nourishing environment for civic virtue and meaningful political participation.” (Ford 2010, 224-225). This development can exist next to citizenship on national level.

In the world today agreements such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are made between nation-states. Not always effective in the ratification and implementation within each nation-state, Barber (2013) calls for mayors to take a more important position in the world, to contribute to solving some of today’s global problems.

Barber describes cities as multi-cultural, open, participatory and democratic. Giving cities three benefits: The local government approach is pragmatic aimed at solving problems, the mayor is often from the community, and is easily accessible to the people. This contributes to less distance between Executive and the citizens than on national level, giving people a higher degree of trust.

Ford (2010) and Barber (2013) argue that now is the time to give a greater role to cities, a devolution in power. The cities are more inclined to join forces and work together, whereas nation states more often face each other.

In Leusden the approach is definitely pragmatic. In February 2016 a hot item was the Emergency Refugee location. Whilst a lot of protest was arising within society, worried by the negative impact the asylum seekers would have on Leusden Society, three female citizens stood up and took action. They set up a Facebook group *Gastvrij Leusden* and within a very short period they had a group of volunteers willing to give the new arrivals a warm welcome with many activities. The official organisations: police, Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA), municipality, etc had no idea how to deal with these eager volunteers

full of initiatives. Many barriers were thrown up. The police for example objected to the participation due to privacy matters, COA had no idea how to cooperate with the volunteers. The (now former) Mayor described the dichotomy: giving space to the initiative whilst not integrating them into the system.

In the end the name *Gastvrij Leusden* was used both by the Facebook group and by the official organisation managing all the activities organised by volunteers with a close link to the municipality.

The Executive decided at the start of their term of office to be as accessible as possible. To be open to the citizens. Implementing a “consultation hour” on Wednesday evenings, receiving stakeholders in their office or visiting them on location, attending many public events and supporting the citizens’ initiatives.

Both the pragmatic approach and being very accessible leads to an increased level of trust. At the same time this co-exists with the thoughts of the citizens that *Samenleving Voorop* is simply a means of cutting costs.

In the next section I will focus on the government policy *Samenleving Voorop* which Leusden developed to increase the participation on all levels and gave tools to the civil servants to decide the role to take. The core elements are: open to ideas, “yes, if...” mentality and consider what position you take as a civil servant within the field of stakeholders.

Samenleving Voorop, increasing citizen participation in Leusden

There is no such thing as society. There is living tapestry of men and women and people and the beauty of that tapestry and the quality of our lives will depend upon how much each of us is prepared to take responsibility for ourselves and each of us prepared to turn round and help by our own efforts those who are unfortunate. Thatcher, 1987

In Leusden, with *Samenleving Voorop*, the local government aims to increase the citizens involvement and the responsibility they take on. Introduced in 2010-2011 *Samenleving Voorop* is aimed at “encouraging initiatives from citizens. We create space for example framework and legislation to make initiatives possible”.²

² <https://www.leusden.nl/bestuur-en-organisatie/samenleving-voorop.html> accessed 30 May 2017

An idea of the former Mayor Vermeulen who created this term and new way of working. The transition in the relationship between civil servants, council members and executive on the one hand and citizens, companies and organizations on the other hand was started from within the organization. First change one's attitude towards the citizens and then ensure citizens take on greater responsibility within society. Tools used included training courses, lunch sessions, developing videos etc. Emphasis was on experimenting and exploring possibilities, seeking to go beyond boundaries. Most importantly, mistakes were celebrated, as it was the best way to learn and change.

With café Antares *De Spullenmannen* encountered the "Yes, if..." mentality and the flexibility in finding solutions. When starting up, they were allowed to open despite not yet having final certification. In this way, civil servants facilitated the process. However, this was not because the work process changed, it was because both the *Woningstichting Leusden* and the executive council were desperate to get a successful manager into the building and to get activities started.

Once it was introduced to the public the former Mayor emphasised that *Samenleving Voorop* was NOT a policy to cut costs due to the economic crisis. Rather it was a way to use the knowledge and expertise within society to contribute to make Leusden society better. The Leusden municipal council and the executive value stakeholder involvement and believe in the need to make the transition, in small and cautious steps. However, the perception of the people in Leusden with regards to *Samenleving Voorop* differs. Their perspective is that it consists of austerity measures and that the municipality is pulling out of their role in society.

Some civil servants indicate *Samenleving Voorop* is new, whereas for others it's the way they have been working for years. Within the field of sustainability, already in the late 1990's great importance was given to citizen participation. Programmes such as *Samen doen* and *samenwerkingsprogramma 2005* involved citizens, one example from 2005 was the creation of the butterfly garden. Even in this sector the involvement of citizens changed over time. In 2005 citizens literally dropped their ideas at the municipality, expecting the civil servants to implement them. In 2008, the first shift was made with the introduction of the Regulation Sustainable Fund (*Regeling Duurzaam fonds*) where involvement of citizens was expected and the municipality was no longer just an agent implementing citizens requests. Now, citizens are given space to take the initiative forward themselves with only slight government involvement and access to resources.

The assumption amongst civil servants and politicians that citizens know the concept *Samenleving Voorop* is dangerous. For them it is the way they work. But citizens do not speak the same language. What is matter of fact for the civil servants, is for the citizens something new, something that maybe cannot be trusted and something where input is given, but the returns are not seen.

Slowly changes are seen. The new policy and attitude of the municipality made the development of the *Energie Akkoord* (energy agreement) possible. This led to the creation of an *Energie Loket* (Energy Counter) which is now run by volunteers who offer advice and support on energy matters.

Samenleving Voorop: what is it exactly?

To contribute or not to contribute, that is the question

During the first meeting I attended on 12th February 2016 organized by the initiative group Van Onder Op the attitude and actions of civil servants illustrated how they interpret the policy Samenleving Voorop. The seven civil servants who were present clearly kept a distance and did not participate in the discussions. They were observers. When invited to discuss amongst themselves the questions at hand, they instead had a discussion about whether or not they, as civil servants, should contribute to the session as a whole.

They decided – and shared this with the whole group – that they should not introduce their thoughts and ideas as this was a session of the citizens by the citizens. I asked briefly one of the civil servants present what she thought about it – did they not have any ideas? She said that the decision was made to keep quiet but it was clear, and she confirmed a few weeks later, that she would prefer to work together with the people and discuss the points made with them rather than just observe, thus to have a product created by everyone within a networked structure.



In the back: the civil servants deciding what to do: to contribute or not to contribute their ideas

Figure 14: 12 February 2016. Description of the first meeting of Van Onder Op I attended. In the background the civil servants deliberating on their input.

This event illustrates the first image I had of the interpretation of *Samenleving Voorop*. The society in front – or maybe ahead but of what or whom exactly? The municipality? The executive council? The term *Samenleving Voorop* is used everywhere in communications, in very many different contexts, and by many different people. To discover how *Samenleving Voorop* was experienced within the community a standard question in my research became: “What does *Samenleving Voorop* mean?”.

There was not one specific definition given. It seems that if I asked a thousand persons, a thousand definitions are given. Common factors within the descriptions given are: involves citizens, greater role, austerity measures, responsibility

I discovered that the ambiguity of the term, the multi-interpretable aspect gives every individual the opportunity to interpret themselves what role / position they may take in society, thus creating space to innovate and not creating a straightjacket of rules.

The figure illustrates a selection of responses to the questions: “What does *Samenleving Voorop* mean?”

Samenleving Voorop is ...



Figure 15: The ambiguity of the meaning of Samenleving Voorop also gives it its flexibility to be applied as appropriate.

The (now former) mayor Vermeulen described *Samenleving Voorop* as: the expectation of the civil servants to become part of the group in society relevant to their work. They are linked. They know the issues in their field. They are involved within society, and not just pushing papers. According to the initiatives or projects the civil servants choose which position to take within the group.

Involving citizens: policy development versus activities

In Leusden, the involvement of citizens can be seen in at least four ways: Firstly participation within projects initiated by the government such as the *Omgevingsvisie* or the Think Tank Achterveld; Secondly, participation where citizens take over a task previously done by the government; Thirdly, initiatives arising from the needs within society, defined by society; Fourthly, structures that have existed for years (such as associations) which are driven by volunteers.

All four types of citizen involvement contribute to society, and contribute to the democratic society and the role one takes as citizen in society. However, there is a struggle on different levels, within different groups.



Figure 16: Initiative versus expertise chart. Used by civil servants to determine their position within projects and initiatives.

Within the policy description of *Samenleving Voorop* a figure explains the four different roles the municipality may take within the different settings.

The type of engagement depends on the expertise or interest and where the initiative lies (Gem. Leusden 2012: 2).

LeusdenFit: creating a healthier youth

The initial idea of LeusdenFit came in 2016 from two mothers who were shocked by the quantity of candy and sugar-loaded drinks consumed during the *Avond4Daagse*. Now it is a community of professional organisations who are working together to realize a healthier lifestyle for the youth, the civil servant of the municipality together with a project leader feel they initiated the programme. Perspectives differ on who was the initiator: the mothers or the municipality who gathered stakeholders? The two different perspectives exist on the origin, causing friction and dissatisfaction. It's not a community based on volunteers, rather on paid representatives. The partners include a wide variety and in that sense they can each contribute their own expertise.

The idea for this initiative was good and fitted within the policy of healthy living. Thus, the municipality decided to give financial contribution, to make staff available and to ask one of the partners to become the paid project leader.

One civil servant said that *Samenleving Voorop* is a way of prioritizing themes for the municipality, LeusdenFit confirms.

Werkgroep Fairtrade Gemeente Leusden

Back in 2013-2014 one resident took the initiative to set up the *Werkgroep Fairtrade Gemeente Leusden*. The cooperation came about between different members of the community, including representatives of businesses and restaurants, the chairperson of the *Wereldwinkel Leusden*, a few residents and a civil servant. A requirement to become a Fairtrade Municipality is active participation of the municipality, both Executive and civil servants. In 2014 the three coalition partners decided to build the content of the coalition agreement on input from citizens and organisations. The *Werkgroep Fairtrade Gemeente Leusden* also contributed during the council meeting session about the coalition agreement. This placed Fairtrade on the agenda, an important step to fulfil the requirements and obtain

the certificate. Interviewing the civil servant involved, he remembers how he had to manage the involvement of the municipality. If he hadn't then the municipality would have taken over, as progress was considered too slow. At the same time he made it clear that he understood that we were doing this voluntarily and thus could not demand that we work even faster. As a working group we did not feel this as "protection" of the civil servant, rather we noticed how supportive the municipality was in taking steps to realize the certification of Fairtrade Gemeente.

Antares: whose responsibility is the building?

Woningstichting Leusden searches for "an entrepreneur who has a wide network and creativity to make it a more profitable operation". Furthermore they indicated to the municipality that despite the split of the contract and just being responsible for the operational costs of the building, the financial loss is too great. They cannot carry the load. A rescue plan was developed between the *Woningstichting Leusden* and the municipality. The municipality purchases the sports hall (€1,5 million), covers costs and makes €10,000 per year for three consecutive years available for neighbourhood initiatives. The municipality indicated that the creation of an association would be ideal. Within the community around Antares citizens were discontent that the assumption was made that citizens would get into action to create an initiative. At the same time including a budget for citizens' initiative showed that the municipality does not want the financial aspect to hamper initiatives, rather they wish to create an incentive for neighbourhood residents to stand up.

Antares is considered an example of *Samenleving Voorop*. It is not the local government who decides what happens within the building, rather through a gathering of ideas from society, the function of the centre is established. In the next chapter I discuss what is needed to create a community.

IV. Creating network communities: citizens contributing to society

“Power is everywhere” and “comes from everywhere” Foucault 1998:63

Society is made up of networks, it is the interconnectedness between people and between organisations. The church network, the network around a sport club, and the network of people contributing to initiatives in line with local policies. In Leusden there is a high involvement in activities in society: people make things happen in all the different areas whether it is in green maintenance of refugees, fair trade of art

Everyone has their own interest (and perspective)

THE MEN AND THE ELEPHANT.

I. *Indian parabel retold by John Godfrey Saxe (1872)*

IT was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

II.

The First approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me!—but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"

III.

The *Second*, feeling of the tusk,
Cried:"Ho!—what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 't is mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"

IV.

The *Third* approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:

"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

V.

The *Fourth* reached out his eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quoth he;
" 'T is clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"

VI.

The *Fifth*, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"

VII.

The *Sixth* no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a rope!"

VIII.

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

MORAL.

So, oft in theologic wars
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!

Figure 17: Poem. Illustrating how everyone has their own perspective.

The poem about the seven blind men illustrates the role of the anthropologist plays in looking at an issue from all perspectives by studying the vertical slice. The vertical slice method entails to study up – examining the more powerful, to study down – examining the powerless, and sideways – examining the relations with the collaborators, partners and others on the same level (Nader 1972, Stryker & González 2014). Thus the possibility exists to examine the community from different perspectives, to study the existing power relations and to identify the controlling processes (Jonhston *et al* 2014). The development in and around Antares call for the vertical slice approach as the dynamics within the building and neighbourhood asks to look at the different layers of power. Thus this gives the opportunity to create a complete picture of cause and effect.

Antares: many different perspectives

The past six years have illustrated how different people can have different perspectives and these perspectives originate from one's own interest. They are often coloured and do not consider the position of others involved which can result in conflicts, yet at the same time can be profitable.

De Spullenmannen are able to mobilize citizens because of the way they do business, the contacts they make, the relationships they build, the activities they create in the building.

At the same time the dynamics within the network is visible. Although individuals appreciate the position *De Spullenmannen* gained, at the same time one observes that there is still friction and boundary safeguarding happening. The “together” and shared vision in Antares is not yet felt through the building. A stakeholder stated “it takes time for our staff to get to know each other, but I can see it growing”.

In October 2016 the organisations within Antares organized a joint parent event with different topics concerning children between 0 and 13 years old. Disappointment all round. The attendance was low. Only parents of 't Palet turned up. Frustration is great. The organisations judge each other. Not enough was done to stimulate their parents to attend. But it's a coloured perspective. A number of parents have their children both at 't Palet and the after school centre. It's small, it may seem irrelevant but it can be crucial. It's these “negative” thoughts that influence the relationship and the cooperation between different social actors.

Speaking out

29th September 2016, Council meeting, Leusden – People gather in the council hall for the information meeting. Open to the public. A new set-up is chosen. More informal, citizens intermingled with council member's, not in the standard circle. People are unhappy about the green maintenance. The atmosphere feels dense.

Jan Overweg, alderman, opens the meeting aimed to give information of the policies and describes the position of the Executive.

Head of green maintenance department explains the working of the maintenance level. The choices within the policy green maintenance, the consequences and the possible options. The municipality sets the maintenance level, and doesn't tell the contractor what to do. The new approach led to a cost reduction of 250.000 euro's. A member of the public agitatedly interrupts to ask whether or not this includes the savings of not using the pesticide Round-Up. No, it does not.

"We also have to do something with *Samenleving Voorop*" what exactly is being undertaken with participation? The biggest challenge for the contractor is that their contract is linked to the satisfaction of the residents. Reduction of satisfaction, can lead to the end of the contract.

People are angry and dissatisfied. On all different areas:

The level of maintenance: A lady, about 40 years, speaks out "I have never felt the need to come to an evening organised by the municipality. The municipality is a bad neighbour. I'm angry. Leusden is no longer decent. I'm willing to pay more tax." She adds "I don't even mention the litter lying around. There is a huge difference in appearance between Leusden and Woudenberg."

Citizen satisfaction is measured through a survey sent out to 2000 persons. An elderly man asks "how are the people selected". Another man wants to know why his son, just 18 years old, received the survey, he is not the owner of the house. The man is especially annoyed as green maintenance really isn't a concern for his son, it is for him.

The way green maintenance is done: A lady in her sixties complains "The leaves and pulled out weeds are not collected, instead it is simply blown towards the gardens of residents."

A man is convinced that 90% of the citizens want to see a higher level of green maintenance. He is agitated. He is frustrated at dog owner's who say they don't cause trouble. And he states that the government doesn't involve their citizens in the choices they make.

People long for the good old days, back in 1999 and 2000 when Leusden won prizes for "greenest town". We can no longer be proud of our town. It's so sad.

Amidst these sounds of dissatisfaction. A lady, in her thirties, stands up and says she is satisfied. The maintenance level is OK, she isn't willing to pay more tax. Clapping, support is shown in the room. And later on she adds, she is satisfied with SIGHT, the participation is going well: together they are reorganising the square behind their house. Collectively.



Figure 18: 29 September 2016. Information council meeting. The picture illustrates the set-up of the room and of citizens at work on their square.

The woman in her thirties later on confessed that she was getting angry that only the negative voices were being heard during the meeting. She felt that it gave an unbalanced perspective of the situation. After all, once the participation started for her initiative it went really well. She organised the subsidies, a neighbour drew the design for their square, her husband took the measurements, her son, sensitive to the street litter wanted a garbage can in the plan. SIGHT, the contractor, maintained the contacts with the municipality for approval of the design. She indicates that in the end she regretted there was no contact at all between the citizens and the municipality. Her son was happy he received a trash pincher from the mayor!

In developing the new relationship between citizen and municipality there is a need to ensure the different perspectives are named and understood by each individual or group involved. Once it is understood, there is more acceptance and a more positive perspective.

Power is all around

Within every relationship there is a form of power present. Be it small or large, no matter, it is a precarious balance between domination and subordination. Within society, but also within communities, networks of social actors come to exist. Actors are individuals, organisations, institutions, groupings and other forms which represents human action. "A network is a set of interconnected nodes." (Castells 2013:19). It is a collection of actors who are interlinked asymmetrically. Asymmetrical because in every relationship there is a subordinate and dominant actor.

The network community is the organisational structure within the community where citizens, social organisations and government work together as partners and the hierarchical structure no longer exists (WRR 2012). In Leusden we see different forms of network communities based on a common element. The common element varies. It can be based on relationships within the neighbourhood, or activity communities based on a cultural, sports or health activity. Every neighbourhood has its own characteristics, the community acts in the interest of all. Citizens contributing their bit to society, creating the interconnections within society.

Alderman van Beurden emphasized: learn from others, but create your own initiative, as the reason to connect is different.

This chapter will give an insight into the diversity of communities that are formal and organised. Not covered here are the informal communities that may exist around a street where people look after each other and together maintain the common green area.

A common and shared goal

A network connects different social actors with a shared goal. They can be organised horizontally (less hierarchical) or vertically (based on hierarchy). Castells (2013) argues that both have existed equally – in the past it was more the vertical hierarchical organisation, now in increasing measure it is the network society. ‘Networks, he argues, have now become the more efficient structural form due to their flexibility, their scalability and their survivability’ (Coleman & Sajed 2013: 55). In creating a network society it is important that people feel committed and strive for a common goal. Both Leuker Leusden and Antares highlight that through cooperation they can add value and that the value is greater than the sum of all parts.

Leuker Leusden

In Leuker Leusden, four cultural organisations were driven to come together due to financial cuts in their budget by the local government as well as a shared goal: creating cultural events in Leusden. Rather than seeing every organisation get less, or no funding, the organisations gathered forces and rewrote the policy paper on culture. The role of the civil servant was on the one hand to monitor the process steps and on the other hand to work out the practical elements. The four representatives of the organisations set to work. They knew each other and were willing to put the interest of all before that of the individual organisations. This led to successfully creating a programme for cultural events. This group was the author of the cultural policy paper in Leusden. Over time, the representatives left, and with the arrival of new individuals the community had to re-orientate and rebalance to continue the cooperation that had started. The role of the first four individuals had been an important factor in successfully developing the policy paper and programme. After a year the balance was back.

Antares the children as linchpin

Is Antares an example of the new kind of community: the network community (*netwerkgemeenschap*) where citizens, social organisations and government work together as partners and the hierarchical structure no longer exists (WRR 2012)?

The process in and around Antares clearly shows that indeed “power is everywhere” and “comes from everywhere” (Foucault, 1998:63). Antares, the building and the community which exists around it, is becoming a network community. The historical background as described in Chapter II shows that it is not an easy road, but slowly the different actors are making their contribution to the community. They are looking to improve the use of the building. From about 2015 onwards the users came together through a common theme: the development of the young child. Staff are encouraged to learn and share information across the organisational silos. Sharing on content level means that the staff are more inclined to speak to each other. This works much better than a shared common room for breaks. The “together” is sometimes felt through the building.

The common goal is becoming common good. At the start, alderman van Beurden indicates the expectation was that the cooperation “would arise from its own inception”. That has certainly not happened.

The transformation comes through searching for ways to work together, to respect everyone’s qualities and to grow. Each actor is a node within the network around Antares. It is a network community with a common goal: “a place where children from 0 to 13 years old are stimulated to develop”.

At the same time the different positions and responsibilities they hold mean that not all social actors are on equal footing. It is a combination of a vertical hierarchical structure (*Woningstichting Leusden* is the owner of the building and ultimately decides on the rental prices) and of a horizontal structure (the community centre becomes more powerful when the organisations and people search for ways to work together, rather than just to compete).

The social actors, or nodes, together form the network. Each node contributes equally to the network. And at the same time each node has their own position in relation to each of the other nodes.

De Spullenmannen also contribute to the common goal with activities such as *Sinterklaas* and the Christmas fair, but also by participating in an action such as *Schoon Maximaplein*, bringing activities to the area, stimulating cooperation, and (in part) focusing on the younger citizens. The livelihood within the building and on Maximaplein is very important for *De Spullenmannen* as it generates business. To achieve this they seek cooperation with all the different users to realise projects in the neighbourhood. For example, for the *Schoon Maximaplein* action, *de Spullenmannen* contributed considerably in motivating the other entrepreneurs around the square to participate too. All partners see the value both socially and commercially for more activities in the building and on the square.

Balancing of asymmetrical relationships

“Power acts through the smallest elements As far as we go in the social network, we always find power as something which “runs through” it, that acts, that brings about effects.” (Foucault, 1998: 60). Furthermore within this dynamic system of a community the power gives “the relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favour the empowered actor’s will, interests, and values.” (Castells, 2013:10). This can be seen in the network community around Antares.

The power relations in Antares

Distress and excitement within Antares. In July 2016 the future of the work of *De Spullenmannen* within the café is unclear. The *Woningstichting Leusden* wants to have a higher income from the café and they indicate that *De Spullenmannen* are not paying the required rent. The *Woningstichting Leusden* is not convinced that *De Spullenmannen* will pay the rent. They are adamant “The café needs to be more commercial.”

The neighbourhood is up in arms. They use their position and they revolt against the domination of the *Woningstichting Leusden* by writing a petition calling for the *Woningstichting* to allow *De Spullenmannen* to continue their good work within Antares. This was a call of the people that could not be ignored by the *Woningstichting Leusden* or by the local council members or the alderman. Frequent visitors of the aanschuidiner took the initiative for a petition, within one week six hundred signatures were collected. One of the initiators is an astute lady in her eighties, a former politician and an active resident in Leusden. Following and commenting on everything that happens in the local council. Her

main theme is safeguarding nature in and around Leusden. Between 1968 and 2017 she witnessed four times discussions about expansion of housing development beyond a specific line (“rode contour”), making the growth of population possible. She is a fierce opponent of this growth, emphasising the importance of the natural environment. In 2016 the discussion arose again during the *omgevingsvisie*. As a resident of Leusden-Zuid, she is very involved in Café Antares. She is astonished that within one week so many signatures were collected. She reflects that the support that has been given is amazing. To see people so involved with Café Antares and the building. This is great. She frequently attends the Wednesday night dinner. Every time she meets people who have lived here for years, who she recognizes but who she has never spoken to. And now they speak. Yes, that’s great”.

The petition, the meeting between the residents and the *Woningstichting Leusden*, the involvement of the municipality mean that *De Spullenmannen* get an extension on their contract up to July 2017. The *Woningstichting Leusden* is surprised about the upheaval, “why didn’t they just call us up” is their reaction. The residents know that simply calling would not have had the same effect as the letter with a petition.

Castells further emphasises that “there is never absolute power, a zero degree of influence of those subjected to power vis-à-vis those in power positions”(Castells 2013:11). This can be very much seen in Antares in the relationship between the partners, and also in the relationship between the *Woningstichting Leusden* and *De Spullenmannen*.

The relationship between the three partners – *Woningstichting Leusden*, municipality, Voila – is very relevant: who is responsible for what and who can make demands. Alderman van Beurden was very clear that the *Woningstichting Leusden* has the financial responsibility for the building. The municipality will not intervene. At the same time the municipality has the responsibility for the sports hall, sufficient classrooms for the school and the permit for utilisation. In 2016, this led the three partners to negotiate and to agree to a rescue plan. After all everyone knows that a loss of € 600,000 per year is not sustainable.

“Power is relational, domination is institutional” (Castells 2013:15) is well illustrated through the case of Antares. The relationship between *Woningstichting Leusden* and *De Spullenmannen* is strained. As the owner of the building, the *Woningstichting Leusden* is in an important, dominant position. They expressed clearly that “the café has to be run more commercially, whilst at the same time keeping their social role within the community”. At the same time *De Spullenmannen* also gained a position of power through the support of the

residents and some of the users in the building. The way they act as social entrepreneurs, means they build relations in a natural way, with any customer or partner. They take time to chat with the customers and they show interest in their lives. At the same time they were not in a position to make any crucial decisions. They are subordinate to the Woningstichting Leusden, who ultimately decide on whether they may continue or not in Café Antares.

In the first half of 2016 I could see De Spullenmannen influencing what was happening in the community around Antares. I was triggered. It was an interesting case on the one hand. On the other hand I wanted to be involved too, I was enthousiastic. I realize that during my field work period I gradually slipped from observer to participant. Getting more involved. And in the increase in my involvement also creeps in, at times, a more subjective perspective on the situation a whole.

The domination – and in a sense fate – of *De Spullenmannen* lies in the hands of the *Woningstichting Leusden*. On several occasions in 2016 *De Spullenmannen* were surprised by a last minute announcement or a decision. Never did the decision arrive on time, or at the expected moment. Similarly, the *Woningstichting Leusden* never announced who the competitor was to manage the café. Whilst this was ongoing *De Spullenmannen* had a business to develop and they had to keep a friendly face with all the difficulties they felt within the context of what was happening with the building.

Community and social interest versus commercial interest

Castells refers to Habermans when describing the role civil society takes on in democracy and thus legitimising the exercise of power because he argues “Power as representation of the values and interests of citizens expressed by means of their debate in the public sphere”(Castells 2013:12). In a way this is what we see happen around Antares. The people, specifically those calling for action through a petition, more actively involved the local politicians and the aldermen in the discussion around the contract of *De Spullenmannen* being extended. They asked for an explanation and indicated that the way *Woningstichting Leusden* was acting was not right.

De Spullenmannen have as aim to organise activities accessible to all. They describe the features of the café as: “we work with social prices, to make it fun to have a drink, to eat out, even for those with little money.” Beside the cost, the social aspect is important. “On Wednesday nights we started off with three persons for the *aanschuifdiner*, now forty to eighty persons join.”. The customers are very diverse: elderly, young families, singles and

also those just coming by for a chat. But there is still a big target audience to reach: those just entering the Dirk supermarket and not coming in to have a drink.

In a way Café Antares is a social enterprise. “Social enterprises are revenue-generating businesses with a twist. Whether operated by a non-profit organization or by a for-profit company, a social enterprise has two goals: to achieve social, cultural, community economic and/or environmental outcomes; and, to earn revenue.”³

Whilst the uncertainty of the contract existed the citizens expected the politicians to value the social entrepreneurship of *De Spullenmannen*. By maintaining social prices, to serve a very wide public rather than using commercial prices, they are alleviating problems such as solitude. If, like the previous managers of the café, they maintained commercial prices then the majority of their customers could not afford to frequently stop by for a cup of coffee or a meal. It has become a kind of village living room.

Samenleving Voorop calls on citizens to take up initiatives to support each other, to become more self-reliant. Within the rescue plan for Antares is included a sum of €10.000 for citizen initiatives. When I first heard about at the end of 2016 the suggestion was made that the association of citizen initiative could even receive the money and then give *De Spullenmannen* the freehand to organise activities. Giving *De Spullenmannen* a fixed amount to finance their more social activities. That is of course one possibility, however increasing the citizen participation to an even greater group would probably be more valuable.

For the management of *Woningstichting Leusden* it is quite clear: the café has to become profitable. The social value of the work does not count.

³ <http://www.centreforsocialenterprise.com/what-is-social-enterprise/> Accessed 20 June 2017



Information meeting – Oct 2016



Jumble sale – January 2017



Heel Leusden Bakt – Nov 2016



Jumble sale – September 2016



Hobby fair – Nov 2016



Fluit concert – Apr 2016



School Christmas concert – Dec 2016



Christmas fair – Dec 2016

Figure 19: Different activities that have taken place in and around Antares during 2016

Customised communities

Ideally a network community is people working together on an equal footing in their own field of interest. It means that depending on the topic different roles are taken on. People become flexible and value each other's qualities. However, not everyone is yet able to do that as this requires moving differently in space and time, and considering different elements each time.

Communities that are created can also vary according to the neighbourhood or village. No one community is identical, therefore it is not wise to cut-and-paste the structure of a community.

Within Leusden municipality three communities are interesting to look at as they all vary in their approach, according to their situation.

Eurowoningen



Figure 20: The map of the neighbourhood Rozendaal highlight the structure with the different squares, the swimming pool and tennis court.



Around the 1970s the neighbourhood Rozendaal in Leusden, also known as *Eurowoningen*.

Right from the start an association was created, the *Groenstichting Rozendaal* which was set up by the municipality. All house owners are obliged to pay a yearly fee. This is the only obligation. A council member and resident in the neighbourhood level of involvement in activities is up to each and every resident which gives a lot of liberty.” The *Groenstichting Rozendaal* is entrusted with the maintenance and management of the facilities

within the whole neighbourhood, including a swimming pool and tennis court, as well as green maintenance. At street level, residents make decisions about the design of the square for example - more green or more playground. Each street has a representative in the executive.

Eurowoningen could be an example of how a network community is set up. *Eurowoningen* is successful for a number of reasons: the association existed from the beginning, all residents are property owners and due to the compulsory nature of the association the choice to live in a *Eurowoningen* means a commitment to the association and thus the neighbourhood. The measure of commitment can vary from just a financial contribution to member of the board. Thus there exists a shared interest when one choose to live in the *Eurowoningen*. This structure is very difficult to realize in an already existing neighbourhood, especially when it concerns raising funds to build a swimming pool or tennis court.

The strength of this association is that it deals with a broad range of issues. Initiatives which have a lot of support can be realized.

Eric-Jan Tuininga is an activist and initiator of many plans and groups and has been a resident in the *Eurowoningen* since 2005. When he settled in the neighbourhood he initiated the *Energie team Rozendaal*, aimed at researching how the houses could save more energy. Enquiry in the neighbourhood quickly assembled a team of 6 people (both old and young) willing to work with him to develop a plan for 475 houses. He applied for subsidies and was able to negotiate with suppliers on price. This initiative also led to the nomination and first prize in the National Climate Street party awards. A good example of cooperation between neighbours to support and encourage each other for an initiative.

Buurkracht Alandsbeek – the network for Alandsbeek

Buurkracht Alandsbeek is a network of volunteers within the neighbourhood. The network organises activities and has workgroups: the most active in 2016 was Workgroup Green. Other activities that started in 2016 were the *aanschuifdiner* in Atria and a sustainability workgroup. The motto of the



Invited by Jan de Bruijn to come and see the group at work, I hesitate only a little to visit. I am curious about what their motivation is to work on the green maintenance, at the same time I am conscious that I myself do not get active in green maintenance as resident of Leusden.

network is: “Alandsbeek for each other”. *Buurkracht* means neighbourhood strength and it works on a voluntary basis to improve the neighbourhood. There is no compulsory membership fee.

A past initiative was setting up a museum that showed the interior design of a nineteen seventies house.

Those who wish to support the association are asked for a contribution, this then also gives the right to take part in decision-making around activities.

Trimming away on a sunny day!

On a cold (ca. 2°C) and sunny Saturday afternoon in November residents in Allandsbeek gather to do a green maintenance activity. From afar their voices can be heard, working along a path by a small creek. Most of them are in their sixties and seventies, full of energy. Enthusiastically trimming away the branches of the bushes. Slowly more space and light is created around the footpath. Some working in silence, others chatting and laughing about what is happening in the neighbourhood and Leusden.

Whilst some are trimming continuously, Jannie ensures the heap of branches is cleared away. The perfect job for her as she tells she has no knowledge of green maintenance. Another resident explains that whilst trimming some plants, space is created for other plants to grow again. He also shares his knowledge about plants: Taxus is very simple, that just grows back even if you trim it right back. This as opposed to coniferous trees. The bay laurel can also be trimmed all the way down.

After an hours work it's time for a break. Trudy arrives by bike, she brings freshly brewed coffee and tea. What a joy everyone smiles and puts down the tools to gather at a picnic table a bit further on for a break. Jan comments: "it has to stay fun to do it".

What a lively bunch, the chitchat continues, two ladies discover they come from the same town in Friesland, trying to discover if they were at the same school at the same time. No they know each other from the primary school of their children. The people clearly enjoy meeting each other.

Florent, a Frenchman, a father, who came to live in Allandsbeek just two years ago, is enthusiastic about meeting new neighbours and being active in nature. Just before he dives back into the bushes having gotten instruction on what to trim he tells me he only decide to join the activity when it started – right in front of his door. "Of course, it is fun to do. But it needs to fit in with my programme at home".

On the other side of the footpath Jan, Frits and a third man are busy clearing the creek side.

Frits reminisces on how the policy of the council changed over time. In the seventies and eighties the municipality made a huge effort to become the greenest municipality in the Netherlands – they succeeded. Now it's out of control. Now plants such as the blackberry bush, princes feather's and other plants are overrunning the whole area. It's a disaster. He is in utter disbelief that the municipality council is letting this happen. Jan adds: "eventually the cost will be much more to remove it all."

With and without the working group Frits is active in this area, bordering just on his backyard he needs to make sure the weeds don't take over. The chatting about the change in green maintenance policy continues, they are very happy to do the work but are critical of the current policy. Another member describes his surprise at how the municipality simply leaves the engagement of citizens in maintaining the green over to the contractor and to the people. Convinced that most people need another incentive or encouragement to take part in the action. Even a council member living in the area did not take part in the session when it took place right in front of their door. Shouldn't they show the good example?

Satisfaction is a key motivator. Meeting new people. Other neighbours sharing their appreciation. Children running on the wall, playing on the footpath.



Figuur 21: The pictures highlight the residents of Allandsbeek working on green maintenance

The Green initiative highlights a number of things:

People are ready to help, it is only two hours, it is not compulsory and you know that the result is appreciated by many in the neighbourhood. It gives a good feeling when one creates light and space and also facilitates a play area for children.

The social aspect is also important, people meet each other. The break is vital - it's fun and it's a time to chat and meet.

People need to have time available, so it's mostly retired people who join.

The citizens accept the notion of “doing something ourselves” for green maintenance, yet at the same time they indicate that the contractor and the municipality should help to get more people active in the neighbourhood.

DAVA – Door Achterveld Voor Achterveld

“Keep moving together” says Alderman Jan Overweg during the official opening of the initiative Door Achterveld, Voor Achterveld, where citizens help each other.



In 2016 I witnessed the start-up of the initiative of *Door Achterveld Voor Achterveld*. Edwin Winterkamp, chairperson of the Dorpsraad Achterveld en Stoutenburg, and Lucas Koch, former GP and active citizen committed themselves in May 2016 to investigate the possibilities and options of creating something (not defined at that time) for the residents of Achterveld which would be realised by fellow residents.

The idea: facilitate *Achtervelders* to help each other. Within eight months an association was set up to facilitate the support. The help varies from a book exchange to a driver service, from eating meals together to an information point in the neighbourhood.

The idea had been on the agenda for the past five years. The item was described as: “what can we organise to solve help- and support questions within the community? With the government pulling out, more demands are made on informal carers. If they do not have the time or don't live close by is there someone nearby in the street/neighbourhood who wants to help? In

Achterveld the social cohesion is high, the willingness is there too. How do we make sure people know how to find each other and dare to ask?”

Edwin shared his vision: facilitating a way in which people can find each other via Facebook, a website or in person. The discussion arises on whose role or task it is to organise: the municipality or the citizens. Edwin was adamant: let’s not wait for the municipality to take action, we can do it ourselves. “Starting from our own strength.”.

The question from within the group was: “is there a need?” because old projects have died out in the past.

Edwin, and Lucas were both convinced that there was a need – a need to help people connect with each other for both small and big things. The speed within which DAVA was set up shows that there was a need, that people within the society supported it and that there was an interest to participate.

The plan of action was simple:

1. Organise a survey to see if people have good ideas and if they want to help
2. Check if the help is actually needed
3. Depending on response choose action
4. Organise a meeting to introduce the initiative and ask people to respond
5. Organise an event to let people who want to participate organise themselves
6. Invite people to become member of the executive committee
7. Check the start-up of the different working groups by attending the meeting
8. Celebration opening of the association/foundation of the initiative.

Able to slide along the scale of participant – observer. I was often more observer than participant. Specific exceptions existed. During the event of DAVA, I was participant in the process. I was facilitator of the evening. I helped the group as independent chairperson. It was an honour. I was critical of myself rather than maybe of what was happening between people. Where the people getting what they had to do and more importantly was the energy buzzing and coming to a result with workgroups being formed? That made my journey home very different. I was the outsider facilitating in Achterveld, where they are very capable themselves.

However, in June, the steps were not clear. A goal was set but no plan of the steps was set – each step arose out of the previous step. It gradually grew to what it is today. A network of volunteers helping fellow residents on a variety of activities.

Lucas describes himself as always having been a connector in the field of healthcare and social care. He is motivated to persevere. He usually takes the initiative and then gathers people around him to operationalise the initiative.

Setting up an initiative within eight months was quick and dirty. The conditions were right – it had been on the agenda for the past five years - and Achterveld is a village, with a strong belief they are self-supporting. *Achtervelders* are known to want to take their own responsibility and a strong network exists, mainly from around the Catholic church. In Achterveld everything “is around the corner”.

In the first months DAVA is very active suggesting that indeed there was a need and that it is a success solution.



Figure 21: DAVA is launched on 2nd February 2017. Some 60 persons attended, and the alderman Overweg had the honour to officially open the activities. After only eight months DAVA was realized.

Energetic start of DAVA

On 30th November there is a buzz at the Peerdenstal in Achterveld. Will there be enough energy to start DAVA?

Lucas is excited, he wonders: How many people will come? Is the space big enough? Will it be a success? What will be the outcome? The evening is a GO - NO GO moment in putting energy into the initiative: *Door Achterveld, Voor Achterveld* – DAVA. Too many people turning up is never really a problem, and extra measures have been taken to deal with that. Too few would give a clear answer to Lucas and Edwin. No need to continue.

It's seven thirty and people start arriving. Lucas greets the people and encourages them to sign in. The people entering know Lucas personally – not at all surprising as he was the GP in Achterveld for many years. One man remarked as he entered: “of course I have come, I promised you.” Slowly the room starts to fill in the half hour that follows. Everyone is willing to sign in and they mingle, the people present clearly know each other. And there is a sense of commitment amongst the people there. They are here to help out. To contribute to the community.

At eight o'clock precisely we start. Amongst those present is also the Alderman Jan Overweg. No specific role was given to him. The room is filled, seventy persons about fifty are “real” Achtervelders who want to contribute to realizing the activities. The rest are interested persons from other parts of Leusden, civil servants and from organisations. I'm curious to see how this initiative will unfold.

Edwin kicks off and introduces the evening and the set up. He gives the word to Lucas who continues by presenting the results of the survey. A simple survey consisting of a list of activities with “good idea/want to help” as options next to it revealed a lot.

Time to get to work. Chaos. Mingling of people. People split into groups. Some have specific themes they want to work on, others don't care.

Each table has a facilitator. Aim of the night is to answer the six Ws: What? Where? Who? Why? When? How?

After a good forty-five minutes it's almost time to stop and present their plan. From an exchange bookshelf to driver service to meals to handyman service. Everyone gets 2 minutes to present their plan. The groups are enthusiastic and see opportunities. Exchange and new ideas get shared across the room.

The energetic buzz is fantastic, it's addictive.

A call comes from the driver service table to set up an umbrella organisation as legal entity for the activities. Rumour in the room. Is that necessary? What are the benefits? What work does that entail? They insist. The man knows what is needed. He is always enthusiastic to start initiatives and people around him join to ensure the continuity of the activity.

And then, when all the presentations are given. The manager of De Moespot stands up. She makes an offer. She says that De Moespot maybe is the ideal location as home base for DAVA. A living room. She indicates that it would need to be rented as they are a foundation.

Lucas ends the evening by sharing his next steps: investigate forms for the organisation. Some groups have ideas to start with their idea.

The evening is closed with a lot of energy and optimism that DAVA is born.



Figure 22: 30 November 2016, the event in De Peerdenstal in Achterveld. The pictures show a filled room.

Challenge 1: Hearing all the different voices

The municipal council often questions whether the participation process that is undertaken reflects the voice of all citizens of Leusden. The challenge is to involve as many interested *Leusdenaren* as possible. Often the number of participants remains limited. Therefore it is legitimate to ask: How can a participation process be valid if only a small minority participated?

The value of representation, both of the municipal council and of citizens participating in the process is often considered as a deciding factor. Often a quick indication is the quantity of participants rather than the quality of input that counts. Civil servants I interviewed have said: “participation of citizens is often low and it's the same people. What value is their participation?” But with citizens this doubt in participation can also imply that their time investment is not always valued. They often seek confirmation that their participation is of value. The discussions taking place are far more important than the number of people who attend. Of course the ideal is that people from all walks of life participate.

To increase participation civil servants take up the challenge to keep experimenting with different forms of participation hoping to trigger other citizens to participate.

Developing the policy for Sociaal Domein

Different stakeholders were invited to participate in developing the new policy for the *sociaal domein*. Stakeholders included old people's homes, associations such as SMBL (representing elderly), Stimulans, and individuals. The exercise was not done with political parties, social organisations or companies to avoid their influence on the development of the vision. These groups may have specific political or commercial interests.



Figure 23: The sessions for sociaal domein. Van Onder op and representatives of organisations deciding what trends go where. It gave many different honey combs.

About 130 individuals participated, roughly 0,7% of the adult Leusden population. As the civil servant said it is not representative, but for us it is very informative and can indicate our focus area. The diversity of citizens who participated was broad, including: elderly, stakeholder representatives, school children . Civil servants went to specific target groups, or organised open evenings for the public. The aim of the municipality was to hear from as many different groups and thus gain perspectives in the wider society.

The civil servant is convinced that people can look to the future and share their thoughts and indicated that involving school children now will contribute to the care they will have for each other later on.

The twenty or so sessions held all consisted of a similar set up. The introduction of the sixteen future trends in the field of care and welfare in the Netherlands, which was followed by small groups considering what the group sees as the three most central trends.

I was able to attend four sessions: two open to the public, two with a more specific target audience: young parents and *Van Onder Op*.

In every session people took the time to discover the trends: what exactly do they entail; what do we think of them; are these really the trends? And questions arose too on how the input will be used, what will the value be of the input?

For about 15 minutes to half an hour, each group discussed which trend should be in the centre. Using tools in such a playful way generally requires time for people to accept and to go along with.

The members of the initiative *Van Onder Op* were sceptical of the process. Only when Jan and I attended two different sessions did the rest see that it may be valuable also to hold a session.

During the session of *Van Onder Op*, trends are discussed, the focus is on the macro level. Jan is much more concerned about the presentation to a bigger audience. Visions are difficult to simplify, so it will be tough presenting it in an understandable fashion for the greater public.

The session I joined with young mothers of children with a disability raised very different issues. Their concern was much more about the future of their child and how can they take part in society now that the mantra of government seems to be *participatiesamenleving*. One described how she would love her son to take part in the *orange parade* held in Leusden-Zuid on the eve of King's Day. However, the request to the schools to inform them is not

honoured. So even in the case of a small activity involving participation (which means so much for her child) it seems difficult for the schools to honour.

Protest against the new bus service

Mid 2016 it was announced that the bus services would change. The Connexxion concession would end, and the new contract went to Syntus. With the semi-privatisation of the public transport in the Netherlands new organisations are taking over the running of the public transport. The bus service is arranged by the provincial government, a step removed from the people. The municipality can indicate their wishes, but has no final say in the final choice.

When the new bus service was announced it appeared that two bus lines would fold into one as of 9 December 2016. This was by far the biggest change for Leusden, but not the only one.

People came into action. Council members questioned the alderman, organisations organised petitions, people started to express their dissatisfaction on social media. Looking to the municipality for answers. The answers didn't come. Syntus was convinced of their approach and analyses and the province kept their word about the contract.

In November, just before the introduction of the new lines, and after a survey revealed the expected problems, the Socialist Party (who are not part of the council), organised a protest on the day the member of the Provincial Executive was meeting with the alderman.

The citizens were invited to join. More than originally invited. Alderman van Beurden invited me along too – no problem. The meeting started again in the traditional way, with the bus company explaining their analysis. The citizens and representatives of organisations were angry. One citizen told another that he should be more constructive in the discussion. The meeting ended with an agreement on how to deal with the different stages of evaluation and to keep in close touch on the implementation on the new schedules. Consensus was reached because it was clear that routings could not be changed.

Although the meeting did not have the result everyone wanted, a valuable step was made in that it was clear that everyone had the same aim: good public transport for everyone.

The citizens of Leusden knew how to find the municipality and knew how to let their voice be heard. The Executive was stuck between its citizens including council members and the provincial government. The change was the responsibility of the provincial government, not of the local government. I observed a difference approach. It was clear that the local

government was more pragmatic and accessible in this matter, though they could not offer an solution to its citizens.

Omgevingsvisie: involving the council members

The regulations on environmental planning stipulate that, as of 2019 all the visions need to be developed in partnership with the different stakeholder groups, making a distinction between the involvement of the society, the civil servants and the politicians.

In other words the vision for Leusden 2030 is to be developed “together with the inhabitants, companies and organisations [...] the approach places the *Samenleving Voorop*” (Gemeente Leusden, 2016c)

With *Samenleving Voorop* and the new law in mind, the aim is to develop a new policy document driven by the people, with the government on the back seat.

During the municipality council meeting on 21st January 2016 the approach to develop the new environmental plan was presented. Civil servants asked: “council members how do you want to be involved in the process?” The discussion was about the role of the council members in the outcome of the process. Three types of involvement were possible: First, council indicates the framework and checks both on process and content. Second, council has its responsibility and controls the process. The content comes from the society. Third, the process is facilitated by the government, society manages itself. There is no control and no decision by the council. The options made distinction in the role and the extend of control the council members got on the process. The quantitative value of the input of the citizens versus the representative value was also discussed. Option two was chosen. After the Executive reiterated that in the end the municipality still weighs the input from society before making a proposal for the council. (Gemeente Leusden, 2016c)

In 2016-2017 the *omgevingsvisie* used many different ways to gather input and obtain feedback from the citizens. The diversity of tools made it very accessible for people: from giving feedback during meetings, via the website or face-to-face and one-on-one on central places in the villages. To increase the involvement of the council members were given tasks at every event.

There is a clear change in working with the citizens. In the past the municipality wrote the plans and society could give feedback, but was not really heard. Now it starts with input from

society and then the municipality writes the plans. Of course the people giving input can influence a perspective described in a plan. The challenge for the civil servants and consultants is whether they have really spoken to all of the different voices and perspectives.

Challenge 2: The awkward tango: shifting relations

There is a shift taking place. The civil servants are changing the way they work. Researching and experimenting the best ways to broaden the group of citizens involved in their projects. Similarly citizens are expected to participate more. The citizens are given space to develop their own ideas, to take up activities.

For the sustainability agenda an analysis was made of activities already taking place, what values can be deducted from those activities and motivations. Then the main aims of the agenda were set, with a number of activities still missing. The activities not emerging from society itself would be initiated by the municipality. The role of the municipality is in principle not to indicate activities to be taken up by citizens. At the same time the activities are of influence for the municipality to achieve their goals in sustainability. This is the relations Foucault described with the term he created: governmentality which looks at the relationship of power between the individuals and the government. The term governmentality is “The semantic linking of governing ("gouverner") and modes of thought ("mentalité") indicates that it is not possible to study the technologies of power without an analysis of the political rationality underpinning them” (Lemke 2001: 1). The term ‘governmentality’ ranges from ‘governing the self’ to ‘governing others’ ‘All in all, in his history of governmentality Foucault endeavours to show how the modern sovereign state and the modern autonomous individual co-determine each other's emergence’ (Lemke 2001: 2-3). By including the knowledge of power within the definition of ‘governmentality’, it indicates how the knowledge gives tools to the individuals to govern themselves. Koster (2014) sees the shift in the Netherlands of deregulating the welfare state as a form of governmentality – where ‘citizens are disciplined to behave in desirable ways’ (Koster 2014: 50). In the past decade with the rise of neo-liberalism and the decrease of the welfare state more cooperation was sought between the different actors (individuals, institutions, corporations and state) on different levels and with varying flexibility (Lemke 2001; Koster 2014).

Samenleving Voorop creates new spaces and invites the civil servants and the citizens to choose their position within projects: the challenge is to find a new way to work together to find the best result.

The citizens are still used to the old structures, the government with the role of "father", organising everything and taking care of everything (e.g. in the case of green maintenance). The vertical structure in the system with connections and politics. Both father and child need to grow to two equal partners. Participation society is now in its puberty. Experimenting and searching for their role, and within every project and initiative the search begins from scratch.

Van Onder Op: transition, working the new way

The initiative *Van Onder Op* originated in 2014 during the development of the activities in the coalition agreement. Eric-Jan and Hans both foresaw a potential gap in care for the elderly. The informal and formal care disconnected, thus potholes appearing in the care for individuals.

Van Onder Op is composed of experienced men and women of Leusden. Former directors in the health sector, initiators, former alderman, and a healthcare professional. They know how the system, the old system, works and they keep to the official structure: the municipal council is the highest organ in the municipality. On numerous occasions politicians were informed of the developments – especially at moments when the process seemed to linger within the official institutions.

Their initiative comprised of research, brought together stakeholders and developed what they thought are elements to integrate within the *sociaal domein* policy in 2016. Active participation of citizens on policy level. Giving clear ideas on the policy. For all parties involved building together, yet not feeling the connection. For *Van Onder Op* the most powerful step was every time activating the politicians, who in turn asked questions to the alderman. The alderman saying to *Van Onder Op* “go ahead, take action”. *Van Onder Op* saying “wait we need resources”. Like a cat and mouse game moving between giving and limiting space. *Van Onder Op* making use of old structures, the alderman stimulating the use of new structures. After a meeting where the citizens, civil servants and alderman seemed far apart. A civil servant confined in me “we are on one line, we want the same. Maybe we even want to take it a step further.” The awkward tango is happening.

V. Samenleving Voorop: a reflection

There is no such thing as the *participatiesamenleving*, just individuals who in one way or another participate in the society. Big or small, in being a carer or in creating activities, in investing two hours a month in green maintenance or once a month in picking up street litter, in helping out at a sport association or cooking for a neighbour. A citizen participates in society.

I set out to find an answer to the question:

How is the policy *Samenleving Voorop* changing the participation of citizens in Leusden society? Specifically researching whether or not the relationship between civil servants and citizens is changing within the context of citizenship and democracy.

In 2016 I gained new insights into the Leusden society. I had the opportunity to follow many initiatives by citizens and projects of civil servants. All aimed at activating people within the community and government projects. I chose to stay independent and not be linked to either the government or another specific organisation. This specifically made it possible to hear and see how the citizens were experiencing the policy *Samenleving Voorop*. And their role in society: their citizenship.

The civic-republican and liberal-individualist models of citizenship described in the literature merge in my research results in Leusden. On the one hand the expectation of active participation from the civic-republican model, highlighted in two examples: the green maintenance and the development of community centres run by volunteers. On the other hand the expectation that citizens are sovereign and autonomous beings from the liberal-individualist model highlighted in the *sociaal domein* with the assumption people are increasingly self-sufficient, looking after themselves and their close ones.

Renan said it is the individuals that form the nation-state. Similarly individuals form the *participatiesamenleving* in Leusden and Achterveld: it is the individuals who together make the community the way it is. This requires involvement, the building of new networks as old networks (like the church) become less important. It is the people who have power in society, the power to choose to organise an activity by investing time, knowledge and money. The power to develop a community. The policy *Samenleving Voorop* does not change that.

But what will the future hold? In 1882, Renan challenged his public to be patient whilst the “ordinary people” experiment and take action. “Wait a while, Gentlemen; let the reign of the transcendent pass; bear the scorn of the powerful with patience. It may be that, after many fruitless experiments, people will revert to our more modest empirical solutions.” Renan called on continuous involvement of all citizens in the state affairs.

In my research I found that people generally became active in the municipality when they experience a problem or when they are unhappy about a situation. If there is no problem, then why should one act seems to be the predominant feeling. Of course I saw exceptions, the citizen who speaks out positively during an otherwise grim session on green maintenance.

The neighbourhood network community is arising out of a need to increase the connections and self-reliance of citizens. Although not explicitly an austerity measure, in essence it is arising from a need in society. Not long ago the neighbourhood teams were shut down to reduce costs. Now communities are recreating networks within neighbourhoods. Paid positions at the neighbourhood centres are repackaged as an activity organised on voluntary basis. The biggest difference is that each neighbourhood creates their own style of community network. It is no longer one shoe fits all. The type of communities that arise depends on the residents. Clearly highlighted by the Eurowoningen, Buurkracht Allandsbeek and DAVA.

For Antares time will tell what will happen. The rescue plan implemented in 2017 suggests that an community hub will come to exist, but there are no guarantees that in the end, say in five years’ time, the *Woningstichting Leusden*, is still the owner of the building or not. That would confirm the challenge and prediction Renan made back in 1882.

Similarly, in my research I found that participatiesamenleving is an illusion when the government comes up with ideas. The government cannot impose citizens to develop initiatives or actively look for solutions. For example the sustainability agenda, where the missing projects are not actively filled in by citizens and the Best Idea of Leusden only had few entries.

After all it is the citizen who chooses to organise an activity or to spend his/her free time at a consultation meeting or in an advisory committee. The municipality can stimulate and help by bringing knowledge, hands and money. These elements can influence the success of a project, but are not crucial.

The policy *Samenleving Voorop* is primarily a tool for civil servants. It focuses on the role a civil servant takes towards citizens, it creates space to develop initiatives by pushing the boundaries of the rules and regulations, and it keeps the civil servants, council members and Executive alert to stay in contact with the citizens.

With *Samenleving Voorop* all civil servants are expected and, to greater or lesser extent, changed their approach and actively search for their own position within a project. This is effective and a very positive change in the relationship between citizens and civil servants. A challenge for the future is that civil servants also carry out orders given by citizens. To receive and deal with unasked advice or input on policies is still difficult. Much easier for civil servants is to specifically ask citizens for input at a specific time. The civil servant keeps control of the contributions. The initiative *Van Onder Op* highlights that distinction. Where a contribution in the sessions of *Sociaal Domein* was welcomed, but their Manifesto and their report fell into a void.

If individuals form society, why does the perspective exist that so few participate actively. To this question I have no answer, but my research shows that citizens are involved in society in their own way. If people feel affected and are triggered personally then they are more inclined to participate. The government policy *Samenleving Voorop* alone is not enough to increase the involvement. The challenge for the civil servants therefore is to investigate how the different individuals are triggered. To reduce the large group of citizens who still wonder “why should I get active?”. At present they prefer to relax in their spare time or are simply used to the government taking care of everything as part of the welfare state. Not so many years ago the garbage was collected, followed by another truck which cleaned the street. Now initiatives are set up to clean up the street litter, partly originating from the garbage bags being torn open by the cats and birds.

Finally, I want to reflect on my research position in the field. Always searching for the right balance in my three positions as professional, active citizen and objective researcher. During my research I evolved. As a resident and professional I witnessed the work the local government undertook, I was a critical citizen and got involved when projects touched me personally in an emotional or physical way. As a researcher I started off on the observer-participant side of the spectrum. I kept my distance, stayed objective. I was hesitant and tried not to get emotionally involved. Over time some projects touched me and my involvement grew, to the extent where I became subjective, most evidently in what was happening in

Antares. I saw the work *De Spullenmannen* undertook and felt very uneasy on how the *Woningstichting Leusden* was dealing with them.

It is easy to be critical of the municipality, the choices that are made, the implementation of the civil servants, the presence of the Executive in society, the way they are involved with citizens. The writing process is organic and in the past few months my focus came on those elements in participation that I feel most attracted to. These elements are contrary to the feeling many citizen shared with me about the civil servants, where distrust is an important element.

We find ourselves in a transition, every single one of us, where we move to a new situation in the tasks we undertake and where I hope every citizen sees their role in contributing to shape a sustainable society.

Recommendations

Firstly, a general recommendation to any person: in building your network community develop a common goal and identify the different perspectives and positions that exist. Everyone has the power to make or break the network community.

Secondly, two specific recommendations for the municipality challenging them to structurally increase citizen involvement in the next government period.

First, a combination of representative and participatory democracy can be made by increasing the involvement of citizens in the decision-making process. In March 2018, a new municipal council will start, this is the opportunity to set up a consultation structure with a large group of citizens who actively discuss with council members before a decision is taken. The discussion can take place online or face-to-face. The council members of each party actively take the pulse of the rank and file of the party.

Second, implement participatory budgeting. At the start of the next period of the municipal council make a substantial budget available for citizens to decide themselves how to spend the budget. The process is that the citizens start by deciding what to spend the budget on and then how. The citizens become responsible to implement the ideas they come up with. This gives a bigger responsibility to citizens when they develop ideas. Already in the Netherlands experiments are held with budgetary experimentation.

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