City Makers as the frontrunners of a new democracy

An anthropological analysis of the role of active citizens in democratic renewal

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Master Thesis Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship

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*Picture on the front page is my own, 'City Makers Summit advertisement in front of Pakhuis de Zwijger'

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1   Introduction

Over the past years, active citizens have been applauded as the solution to the economic crisis and the incapacities of the traditional political system. The frequently used example of this is the speech of Dutch king Willem-Alexander in September 2013 in which he declared that the Netherlands is moving from the traditional welfare state to a 'participation society' (Rijksoverheid 2013). In this participation society every citizen is asked to take more responsibility over her or his own life and living environment in order to relief the deficiencies the government is dealing with. From 2015 onwards this discourse of active citizenship has become noticeable on both sides of the political spectrum, either framing the participation society as a way to enhance the freedom of citizens (right), increase social cohesion or activate citizens to become more responsible (left) (Movisie 2015).

In academia various scholars have criticized the shift of societal responsibility unto citizens. For example, Martijn Koster calls the participation society the creation of "new spaces of governance in which citizens are disciplined to look after themselves" (2014, 49), Ido de Haan pointed out the impossible implementation of bottom-up initiatives through top-down policies (2014, 271), and Evelien Tonkens questioned the inconsistency of giving citizens more responsibility without an increase in rights that should accompany it (2014, 1,5). The notion of the participation society as a legitimate form of democratic governance is already on its retour. Purely as a top-down strategy the participation society gains little support from scholars as well as citizens.

While these critiques question the success of a top-down implementation of active citizenship, probably everyone of the above academics would agree with me that in our current society citizen participation would remain very marginal without the top down support and facilitation by the government. The critiques on the top-down enforcement of active citizenship therefore lead to the conclusion that top-down participation society alone is not a proper democratic strategy or at least it is not enough to create a democratic organization of governance. As action researcher Albert Jan Kruiter claims: in order to have a functional democratic society people need to define citizenship through real democratic experiences that are not imposed om them by the government under the guise of 'social responsibility' (2010, 375).

Luckily there is also another definition of a participation society formulated not by politicians, but one constructed from the bottom-up. From this perspective the participation society is not a solution for austerity measures but a way to work more sustainably and counter the shortcomings of our representative democracy. Voting turnouts and the number of citizens who are member of political parties has been steadily declining, eroding the trust and representativeness of elected bodies and political parties in the Netherlands (Leyenaar and Oldersma 2007, 94). Bottom-up initiatives can be seen as a form of active citizenship that can reactivate the disappointed and disconnected citizen.

Such active citizenship is defined as "citizens who are doing their own thing for the public domain and take up issues that go beyond their self interest" (van de Wijdeven et al. 2013, 3). As a self organized movement scholars have been promoting active citizens as an important alternative player or 'social innovator' to shape the public realm next to the state and the market (e.g. Bollier 2012, Rotmans 2009, de Moor 2013 and Iaione 2016). Sociologist Eric Olin Wright, for example, poses social empowerment as a necessary alternative to the capitalist state in order to realize basic moral principles such as equality, democracy and sustainability (2012, 3). Or theorist Michel Bauwens who argues that a decentralized community generated form of governance over services and public goods will be the answer to the repeating crises of our capitalist society is the key towards a more sustainable future (2007, 30). These kinds of perspectives put great confidence in citizens to direct society into a more sustainable and democratic direction.

1.1 Research population: City Makers

"Cities are changing. Together citizens are looking for new answers for those problems the local government is unable to solve. These are cities in transition.

We bring together the people who make the city. We call them City Makers. A title of respect"
 (Stedenintransitie.nl)

The City Makers mentioned in the quote above are such a movement of self-organized active citizens. As a platform for innovation Pakhuis de Zwijger in Amsterdam has grouped these kind of active citizens into a new category or name 'City Makers'. This name City Makers applies to all kind of people who are active in their own living environment either by starting a social initiative or by applying new and sustainable working methods. In the joined research report 'City Makers in the Netherlands' written by Kennisland, Pakhuis de Zwijger and DRIFT the identity of City Makers is defined as follows:

> "From the moment that initiatives have impact on their surroundings and the initiators perceive their initiative as more than a hobby, we can call these citizen-professionals City Makers. This City Makers movement includes creatives, social entrepreneurs, civil servants, social professionals, active residents, and everything in between. (…) City Makers share the ambition to contribute to a system change towards other values and practices: sustainable, circular, smarter, connected, integral." (2016, 9-10)

According to this definition City Makers are not just taking up responsibility for issues in their own living environment, but by doing this they also contribute to 'a system change towards other values and practices'. It shows how both in academic discourse and in societal trends such as the City Makers movement active citizens are posed as the actors to bring about a new organization of society.

For already ten years Pakhuis de Zwijger made itself into a platform for these active citizens of Amsterdam to meet, exchange ideas and organize themselves. Gradually the network of active citizens and innovators grew and turned into an international movement of 'City Makers'. These City Makers take up a central role in the public programs that Pakhuis de Zwijger organizes in which the topics vary from city agriculture and design to health care and democracy. The overarching theme is the 'city in transition', which entails the kind of solutions that City Makers come up with in the face of current urban problems. These bottom-up solutions are framed as alternative solutions compared to business as usual and thereby create a new mode of 'making the city' (citiesintransition.nl). Especially during my field work period from February until June 2016 the City Makers movement was interesting to observe, because it got a boost by its activities in the Dutch presidency of the EU. It is because of this that there were more opportunities for City Makers to come together.

1.2 Research aim and theoretical framework

This thesis studies how a city in transition works in practice. Studying the people who challenge existing systems and structures so they work better for themselves and their communities. The aim of this thesis is to research and give insight in the role of active citizens in democratic renewal by an ethnographic study of the City Makers of Pakhuis de Zwijger. I will do this by collecting the voices of City Makers on the transition they are said to trigger. In my interaction with City Makers I question how these active citizens define their own role in society and what democratic changes they desire. Their practices can provide us with new methods and insights on how to change society from the bottom-up. Perhaps even inspire other people to take matters into their own hands. But mainly, by connecting everyday practices in the neighborhood with notions of active citizenship and democratic legitimacy, this thesis tries to provide insight in the potential of community activities to transform our democracies.

The main research question of this thesis is:

"How do City Makers, related to Pakhuis de Zwijger, contribute to democratic renewal?"

To answer this question, three chapters will reflect on the gathered data to answer the following sub questions:

1. Who are City Makers and how do their practices relate to active citizenship?
2. Are City Makers a legitimate representative of the general interest?
3. How do City Makers perceive their relationship with the (local) government and what new political relations do they put forward?

The focus on City Makers means that the scope of this research is limited to active citizens as 'makers' of public services. This means I do not discuss citizens who are otherwise active or politically engaged such as citizen-led political parties, lobby groups or protest movements. A focus on active citizenship in the everyday context of the city and the neighborhood might broaden our understanding of less obvious forms of political

engagement that may play an increasingly important role in societies in which traditional forms of political engagement are declining.

Also the 'sharing economy' is often connected to City Makers and a bottom-up transition to a more democratic and sustainable society (Bauwens 2005; Benkler 2006). Sharing economy, or collaborative economy, is understood as a form of economic exchange in which access to goods and services is shared through renting, swapping or trading often by means of information technologies (Hamari et al. 2015, 2048). Although these practices give citizens more control over the consumption of services, I do not include them within the scope of this thesis, because they do not necessarily provide citizens with more influence over the governance and production of these services.

The theoretical aim of this thesis to add to the scientific understanding of the connection between active citizenship and processes of democratic renewal. Many scholars have positioned active citizens to play a pivotal role to bring about a different democratic order (currently see: Wright 2012, Rotmans 2009, Kruiter 2010, Bollier 2012, de Moor 2013). However, relatively little is known about the way active citizens bring about different democratic relations *in practice*. I will therefore focus on *how* active citizens bring about new democratic relations that are needed for democratic renewal by an ethnographic study on City Makers, a group of active citizens. Thereby, contextualizing and connecting already existing scholarship (e.g. commons, transition theory, new public policy) on the usefulness of civic empowerment for reorganizing society to be more democratic and sustainable.

Furthermore, by analyzing City Makers not from the logic of representative democracy, but from within the discourse of participatory or associational democracy, their practices can offer new insight in a more flexible notion of political engagement beyond practices of voting, participation or consultation [inspraak]. Hereby, connecting theory and practice on what it means to act as a citizen. The aim is to increase knowledge on the concept of active citizenship as well as the notion of democratic legitimacy. Also, including practices such as city making in our understanding of political action might help to open up thinking about new modes of democratic governance.

The arguments in this thesis are based on the following framework and understanding of the concepts of active citizenship, democratic renewal, transitions and commons.

(Active) citizenship

Academics has already largely moved beyond the 'traditional' understanding of citizenship as a subject of the nation-state owing to processes of globalization and an increased understanding of non-national conditions of interdependence and social action. Consequently, Ulrich Beck poses social scientists the challenge not to take the nation-state as the normative framework for analyzing society, since society is not necessarily defined by the nation-state (2003, 454). Supported by democratic theory of individual autonomy and freedom, state-centered citizenship as the precondition for a political voice and subjectivity therefore has made room for new more flexible understandings of citizenship (Abizadeh 2008, 39) based, for example, on biopolitics (Fassin 2001) or suffering (Ticktin 2011). For my understanding of citizenship in this thesis, I am indebted to Rhiannon Firth's formulation of citizenship as a multidimensional concept in her book *Utopian Politics* (2011). According to Firth, citizenship refers to the relationship between the individual and their political community, encompassing issues of participation, rights, obligations, identity and the appropriate arena for politics, while operating on multiple levels ranging from personal to societal (2011, 1).

This flexible notion of citizenship allows for political action and participation to include personal and everyday activities. This is helpful since most City Makers I talked to did not consider their activities to be connected to their duties as citizens. A concept of citizenship that is flexible enough to include actions and experiments in everyday life therefore helps to understand the subtle way in which city making practices can shape the power relations within society.

In international discourse these citizens are often referred to as DIY citizenship. As Ratto and Boler describe in their book *Do It Yourself Citizenship: critical making and social media*, "DIY citizenship draws attention to nondiscursive activity and 'direct action' as socially interventionist" (2016, 7). The focus is thus on 'doing' as a form of political action. There is a hereby a blurring between public and private. This blurring will play an important role throughout this thesis. Confirming once again that the personal is political[1].

Democratic renewal

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[1] See e.g. Carol Hanish 1969

In his introduction to defining democratic renewal, professor of local democracy, Lawrence Pratchett sets out three definitions of democratic renewal. First, it can be defined as a practical solution to a perceived problem such as electoral apathy by for instance improving the electoral process to enhance opportunities for participation (Prachett 1999, 4). The second definition has to do with drawing upon existing institutions to counter a failure of democratic culture or practice, focusing on rekindling democratic awareness and understanding within communities (Prachett 1999, 7). The third interpretation of democratic renewal is a new mode of democracy that "improves the effectiveness of existing practices but also draws upon different components of direct, consultative, deliberative and representative democracy to create a new democratic order" (Prachett 1999, 9). According to this third definition, a successful combination of the different components can make for a new mode of democracy that is more participative, more open and more responsive.

Although all three types of democratic renewal can be found within society simultaneously, the third definition of democratic renewal fits best for analyzing the City Makers movement. These are non-state activities that constitute themselves as legitimate democratic practices within the realm of existing democratic institutions. As I will argue in chapter four, the activities of City Makers promote certain democratic values and practices that would reorganize existing modes of decision-making to become 'more democratic'. Again and again these practices are framed both by scholars and by citizens to work towards a new and better mode of democracy.

Of course the ideal mode of democracy does not exist, or inevitably has to deal with shortcomings in our complex and non-ideal world. Political scientist Robert Dahl however argues that a model of ideal democracy can help to classify actual democracies (2006, 6). According to Dahl ideal democracy in the sense of rule by 'the people' would require the following features: effective participation in political processes, equality in voting, gaining enlightened understanding about policies and their consequences, final control of the demos over the agenda, the inclusion of every member of the demos to participate in the ways just described, and a system of fundamental rights that underline this political process (2006, 9-10). It is to everyone to judge whether the proposed modes of democratic renewal are indeed 'better modes' of democracy in light of these features of ideal democracy.

Several forms of democracy have been formulated that take the activities of citizens as central stage in order to work towards the above features of an ideal democracy. A fitting example is 'associative democracy' as formulated by sociologist Paul Hirst. Hirst proposed to create government by consent throughout society by organizing bottom-up social activities into self-governing associations, which take up the role of voicing their members' interests (2002, 409). This self-organization of citizens could then be combined by the existing hierarchical and representative forms of governments. In such an associative democracy, the active citizen who acts for the general interest of society thus becomes a counterbalance to the influence of the government.

However, the terms that I heard most in the City Makers movement are a participatory democracy or do-democracy. In a 'participatory democracy' citizens are actively involved in decision-making by combining elements of direct democracy with a representative democracy. In a participatory democracy "citizens have the power to decide on policy proposals and politicians assume the role of policy implementation" (Aragones and Sanchez-Pages 2008, 1). This increased participation of citizens could be achieved by multiple practices such as citizen assemblies, online participation, participatory budgeting or other forms of deliberative democracy in which increased communication between citizens and government play a central role. Moreover, in the Netherlands, especially by the government, a more participatory democracy is often coined as a 'do-democracy' (doe-democratie). In a do-democracy social initiatives are said to take up an equal position next to the government and the market to co-decide on public issues (Roorda et al. 2015, 11).

Central to these forms of democracy is that it takes citizens as central actors in democratic renewal towards more effective and inclusive forms of governance. It within these notions of associative and participatory democracy that I position democratic renewal.

Transition theory and Commons

The practices of City Makers are regularly framed in the popular as well as the academic thought as part of both transition theory and the commons. Both these lines of thought are about changing governing structures from the bottom-up.

'Transition studies' looks at societal transformation as a long-term process of change in which "a societal system moves from one dynamic state of equilibrium to another"

(Avelino and Rotmans 2009, 544). Such a move only occurs when there is a coevolution between different dynamics on micro and macro level of society. These different levels of society are the so-called 'regimes', 'niches' and 'landscapes' (Avelino and Rotmans 2009, 545). A regime is understood as the coherent set of structures and practices that determine the organization of the societal system that exists at that moment (Grin 20 Jan. 2016). In other words, the functioning and activity within the social, the cultural, the institutional, and the economic sector that together make up the way society is organized.

The change from one regime to another is triggered by broad developments that occur in the 'landscape' combined with innovative practices experimented with in the niches of society (Avelino and Rotmans 2009, 545). Here, developments in the landscape can be understood as broad developments like individualization or the shift to sustainable energy, and niche-practices can be explained as innovative practices that do not yet quite fit into the current organization of society, for example the innovative and experimental practices of City Makers. When broad societal developments and niche practices coincide and reinforce each other they can trigger existing structures to break down and be replaced by new modes of organization accompanied by a shift of power (Grin 20 Jan. 2016).

The commons is also a perspective on a reorganization of society and governance. The word 'commons' is often used to define 'common resources', but in this thesis I understand the commons as a mode of governance. In his accessible book 'Think like a commoner' scholar and activist David Bollier explains the commons as a reappropriation of public resources and space, where these were previously owned by the state or market (2014, 58). The main shift in value that happens in commons thinking is that of a neoliberal perspective that defines humans as selfish profit driven individuals towards a more communitarian vision of humans as collaborative and reciprocal beings.

One of the first scholars who questioned the economic assumption of the homo economicus was political scientist Elinor Ostrom. In the 1960s Ostrom started to study 'common-pool resources' (CPRs), which "are collective resources over which no one has private property rights or exclusive control, such as fisheries, grazing lands and groundwater" (Bollier 2014, 27). Ostrom found out that instead of overexploiting such a common, people develop ways to collaborate and govern themselves in order to achieve continuing collective benefits (1990, 182). In her book 'Governing the Commons' Ostrom

concludes that governance by external authorities is not the only way in which collective resources can be managed, since it neglects the fact that on a small local level people can communicate and interact with one another and thus develop modes of self-governance (1990, 183-184).

With this Ostrom defies Garret Hardin's well-known thesis on the 'tragedy of the commons' on which many economics curricula have been based. In this article Hardin argues that every rational individual will try to maximize his or her personal gains, which according to Hardin justifies the imposition of private property rights by the market and necessitates authorities such as the state to safeguard the public good (1968, 1244).

Professor Tine de Moor argues that the current rise of citizen initiatives can be seen as the third wave of institutions for collective action (commoning) in European history (2013, 11;15;17). Historical analyses of these types of self-organization[2] shows that although all types of self-organization have different shapes and duration; they do follow surges of commercialization and privatization (de Moor 2013, 21). When the limits of the market become apparent and citizens are unable to obtain what they need via the market or the state they start to provide in goods and services themselves.

1.3 Positioning in the field and personal reflection

During the time of my fieldwork from February until June 2016 I worked as an intern at Pakhuis de Zwijger in the program series 'New Democracy' and 'Neighborhood Communities' [Buurtcommunities]. I was there as a researcher working in the field I wanted to study. It was a complex situation to be in, trying to balance the work load with doing research. This also had a big impact on the way I positioned myself towards City Makers. During all the programs, events and activities I talked to them as an intern. Often it was only when the conversation got more personal, or when I asked if I could interview them, that I explained I was also researching City Makers. Although this was confusing for myself in managing my time for doing research, I never experienced any negative feedback on my two roles from the City Makers I met.

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[2] In the Middle Ages called guilds, in the 19th century called 'markegenootschappen', and currently measured as the number of citizen cooperatives

My position as an intern actually also gave me the opportunity to be a real insider in the City Making movement, helping and organizing it from the heart. It also gave me access to all meetings and events and gave me a reason to talk to a lot of people. As an intern I saw some people regularly, who I would otherwise have a hard time approaching, but as an intern I could build up the necessary rapport with them. Besides the time management, the internship was therefore a very strategic choice. Along the way even preparing me to enter the work floor.

As a researcher I sometimes became very aware of my own passivity compared to the active City Makers I was studying. While I was part of the in-crowd, enriching myself with the same discourse of 'city making' and 'co-creation', I myself also became a representative of the City Makers movement. I, however, consider myself as one of the most passive type of citizens, only taking up my right to vote during elections and occasionally going onto the street when it concerns a demonstration for humane treatment of refugees or a protest against racism. I have for example never started an initiative myself nor am I 'active' in my own neighborhood. My double position among City Makers made me question what 'active' citizenship actually is? Am I active when I promote the same values through writing blog texts instead of initiatives? And what about the network of people that support a City Maker's initiative in their neighborhood by visiting it, buying a share in it, or sustaining it otherwise. Are they active enough?

These questions made me conceptualize active citizenship as sliding scale. It is not either active or passive, there is are gradations of active citizenship in between. This helped me to think in more flexible terms about political engagement. By analyzing these forms of political engagement as part of a movement towards a more participatory democracy, I take a quite political stance on the legitimacy of our current democracy and government and the way it should relate to citizens. The result is a thesis that is not neutral, but inherently political. As Stryker and Gonzalez write in their reflection on Paula Nader, this thesis fits into a more democratically relevant social science that does not steer away from positioning itself critically within existing power relations (2014, 8). With this thesis I would like to stress the potential *democratic relevance* of anthropological research to open up thinking and gather yet unheard perspectives on possibilities for a more democratic society.

With this in mind, this thesis to a certain extent speaks more about desires than about impact. How would City Makers like to contribute to a more democratic society? Here

both the desires of City Makers, for example the desire for co-creation and a level playing field, and my own desire to see society develop towards a close to ideal form of democracy play a role. In *Utopian Politics* Rhiannon Firth intelligently connects this kind of wishful ethnography research to 'utopianism' in which she "conceptualizes the function of utopias not as perfection-seeking but as the construction of spaces of 'otherness' from which we can criticize the present and engage with multiple alternative possibilities, in order to educate desire and inspire action." (2012, 5). In the same vain the practices of City Makers do not lead to blueprints for democratic renewal, but mainly to articulations of desires. I like to think that sharing the desires for democratic renewal might inspire new democratic practices.

1.4 Method

The information in this thesis was gathered by participant observation, interviews, and discourse analysis. "Participant observation is a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and culture" (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 1). Importantly, I did not take part people's daily life as individuals but in their life as City Makers. Visiting the same places, participating in the same events, and generally submerging myself in the same network of City Makers. Being in such close and repeated contact made it possible for me to learn their perspective on participation and their discourse and definition of city making. A lot of my time was spend as an intern in Pakhuis de Zwijger, organizing the events that I would later visit, which gave me the opportunity to observe the way the notion of City Makers was actively constructed. At the office, during informal conversations with City Makers and during events I made notes of experiences and quotes, which I would later analyze and work out in more detail. These field notes formed the main way of recording my observations (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 160).

As another important source of information I used interviews to gain more in depth insight in City Makers' perspectives on their role as City Makers and as citizens. The interviews were particularly useful to gather the personal opinions of City Makers in order to compare these with the general discourse of city making to learn about their shared

practices and ideas. I did six semi-structured interviews with open questions, in order to get respondents to share their own perspective on the matter (Bernard 2011, 156). During the interviews I made use of a topic list with several questions per theme. These questions were the guideline in the interview, but were used with flexibility in order to keep a natural flow in the conversation, skip certain questions or go deeper into others. At the start of every interview I gave an introduction about my research and asked the respondent for their consent to audio tape the conversation. Every interview was taped and afterwards transcribed. To analyze the information, I grouped together the same issues from different interviews.

Next to the interviews with City Makers I also did four expert interviews with scholars Christian Iaione (professor of public law at LUISS University in Rome), Tine de Moor (professor of 'Institutions for Collective Action in Historical Perspective' at Utrecht University), Jan Willem Duyvendak (professor of sociology at the University of Amsterdam) and John Grin (professor in policy science and system innovation at the University of Amsterdam). The purpose of these expert interviews was to place the discourse and practices of City Makers in the broader discussion on democratic renewal. I asked the experts to give their perspective on active citizenship from their respective fields of study. Compared to the interviews with City Makers I have decided not to anonymize the information from these interviews, since these are academic and thus public opinions. After transcribing the interviews, I send the experts a report on the gathered data so they had the chance to read it and if necessary correct it. The contextualization and analysis of the data in this thesis remains my own personal interpretation.

Next to the observations and interviews I gathered insight into the perspectives of City Makers on democratic renewal through critical discourse analysis. Discourse analysis looks at the way language is connected to society and analyses the way relationships of power manifest in language (Blommaert 2000, 448). Hereby language/discourse can be a critique on social structures. This is an interesting perspective when studying City Makers, because they construct their own perspective on power through their use of language. For example, by using words as 'co-creation' and 'making the city'. I observed such use of language during events and conversations, but also when reading about City Makers online and in magazines.

1.5 Structure thesis

This thesis is structured in three main ethnographic chapters. Chapter two deals with the question: who are City Makers and how do their practices relate to active citizenship? By looking at a few examples of City Makers some shared characteristics and motivations of City Makers can be defined. Next I will discuss why City Makers become active in the public domain and what this means for them in their role as 'citizens'. Arguing that they broaden the concept of citizenship to include 'making' as a form of political engagement.

Chapter three deals with the question if City Makers are legitimate representatives of the general interest? By providing public services City Makers take up a role as translators of the general interest. However, it is clear they are just a small elite of active citizens. I therefore question whether the actions of City Makers create inequality between active citizens and other citizens, instead of acting in service of the whole society.

Chapter four deals with the question how City Makers perceive their relationship with the (local) government and what new political relations they put forward? To create public services one needs to collaborate with the municipality in some way. Based on City Makers experiences and expressions of desires I discuss what democratic relationships exist between City Makers and government and what democratic potential their actions entail.

In the final chapter I will reflect on the main arguments from the three chapters and the answers they put forward on the sub questions and main research question of the thesis. I will reflect on what this means for the theoretical understanding of citizenship in connection to democratic renewal and provide suggestions for further research.

2   Acting like a City Maker

On the 28th of May eight different city expeditions were organized by Pakhuis de Zwijger in light of the international City Makers Summit. During this Summit about three hundred City Makers from across Europe came together for one weekend to meet and learn from each others actions, and to discuss the future of the City Makers movement. Together with another representative of Pakhuis de Zwijger I travelled to The Hague to guide around a group of these City Makers who signed up to learn more about the local initiatives. With the fifteen of us we cycled from initiative to initiative with at every stop one or two local City Makers who told us their story. Although we initially had just five initiatives on our program, this quickly doubled because we kept encountering other initiatives that were also worth visiting. For example, when one building turned out to host multiple projects or when cycling to another district of town we were pointed at other City Makers initiatives along the way. This increased the sense that all these initiatives have something in common and are somehow related in their purposes.

An exception was the first initiative that we visited, called 'Ruimte voor de Stad' [Space for the City]. The municipality of The Hague initiated this spatial planning agenda in order to create a long term urban development plan that actively involves citizens in shaping their living environment. To realize this the municipality assigned city design teams of professionals to make an inventory of useful city making initiatives in every city district and set up a workspace in the city center where citizens can share their ideas for the city. An urban planner of the municipality welcomed us in the workspace and showed us some of the initiatives they had found and which they chose to support. This spawned a discussion among the visiting City Makers who questioned whether the approach of the municipality was truly supportive to citizens' initiatives or favored those initiatives that are also economically beneficial. As a City Maker from Greece stated: "Does it really empower people or is it just a way to deal with the crisis?". In the conversation between the City Makers and the representative of the municipality a tension surfaced between a bottom-up and a top-down approach to making the city.

Strikingly many of the initiatives that we visited afterwards were not connected to the municipality's development plans. After Ruimte voor de Stad we continued our tour to

the Roggeveenstraat where a group of residents decided to stop the municipal plans to demolish the old neighborhood by uniting in a cooperative so they could buy 65 of the houses in their street. One of the initiators told us it had been a long and difficult process before the financial support as well as the legal permission was granted to cooperatively buy the houses. But as a result, the neighborhood community can now decide itself what happens to the street and mix affordable social housing with houses that are for sale.

Around the corner we were invited for lunch at Lekkernassuh, which is non-profit co-operative run by volunteers that aims to create an alternative food chain that is local, sustainable and in ownership of residents of the city. According to one of the initiative takers healthy, honest and tasty food should be accessible for everyone. Therefore, anyone can become a member of the organization, buy vegetable packages or pay for part of the vegetables by working for the organization on voluntary basis. The organization also decided to share its building with other social initiatives. We for example met a member of the Timebank, which is an organization that enables an alternative economy based on transactions in time instead of money. As the young member of the organization explained, by sharing your skills and knowledge through the Timebank residents invest in their local community instead of big commercial companies. One of the desired outcomes of the initiative is to add a new bottom-up form of autonomy within the current economic model[3].

After lunch we continued our expedition to the festive and busy street market at the Weimarstraat and café Kali Tengah where Jeroen Boon introduced us to the neighborhood's energy cooperation the 'Groene Regentes'. Its 80 members aim to make the neighborhood more sustainable by placing solar panels on the surrounding roofs and introducing a shareable electric car. Our next destination was the Schilderswijk, a district that is widely known for its social unrest and violent fights that broke out between different ethnic groups and the police. In the middle of the neighborhood next to the large market, we met with a young guy of 28 who is the founder of Ap's Recycling, a cleaning company set up in collaboration with the 'Haagse Markt' that employs young guys from the neighborhood to clean the market and surrounding area. Many of the boys who work at Ap's – or Appie's – cleaning business have been on the verge of crime or radicalization. Appie makes sure that they get the strict rules, the attention, and the trust they need to turn their life around. With

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[3] See https://timebank.cc/about/history/

his personal and local approach Appie is able to deal with a complex problem, which the municipality has a very hard time dealing with.

In the same neighborhood we visited a public library, which is turned into a 'participation library' after it was forced to close because of the municipality's austerity measures. With a lot of volunteers, some City Makers from the neighborhood make it possible to keep the library open as a place for children and adults to meet and do homework. A little bit further down the street we visited another place designed to meet and exchange, namely Pakhuis de Regâh located in the Bazaar of Ideas. Co-founder Edgar Neo explained to us that inspired by Pakhuis de Zwijger in Amsterdam they decided to start a similar kind of platform in The Hague. A place where City Makers can meet, exchange ideas and co-create new initiatives for the city.

Our last stop was the Binckhorst, which is an industrial location just outside of the city center. After the municipality decided to label the area for organic development, Sabrina Lindeman of the 'OpTrek' stepped in to start an experiment to turn the Binckhorst into a vibrant area again together with its residents. Sabrina found a way to reactivate people by – amongst many other projects and initiatives – brewing their own community beer that has the taste, look and feel of the neighborhood. The circularity of the brewing process, which includes baking bread with the residual grain and locally growing of hop, makes it possible for the experiment to encompass the entire neighborhood and answer to several different problems.

2.1 Basic principles of City Makers

The City Makers and their initiatives that featured in the The Hague city expedition have different concerns, different organizational forms and different goals, but they also have a lot in common. Also in comparison with the other City Makers that I encountered there are some shared characteristics that can be distinguished. Of course these are not all, but from what I experienced these are the main shared characteristics: local and bottom-up, experimental frontrunners, and collaborative and holistic. Below I will shortly describe each one of these set of principles to give more insight in the practice of city making.

2.1.1 Local and bottom-up

The City Makers in The Hague are running a public library, are taking care of a sustainable energy grid in their neighborhood or are reducing criminality in the area by employing local youth; all these activities take care of local issues that are at hand, and find solutions that are specifically catered to the neighborhood. When I asked City Makers 'why are you doing what you are doing', the representative of a neighborhood cooperative answered:

> "The situation was so urgent we just needed to do something. Not talk but act. Of course we need the municipality as a partner, for money and regulations and such. But we were so touched by the situation that we just started arranging and organizing."[4]

Or the man from a neighborhood energy cooperative who replied:

> "You ask me why I organize this in this place. It is because here is the organizational motivation and the public support to bring it into reality."[5]

The localness of their actions emerges, because City Makers react to a local need, urgency or demand. People set up a street cooperative, because their street is threatened to get demolished otherwise, they do not set up street cooperatives to govern all streets in the city. Likewise, a City Maker decides to counter youth unemployment in the neighborhood, because he personally feels connected to the faith of these young man and the crime rate in the neighborhood, not because he is necessarily concerned about youth employment in general. The incentive that comes first is the local urgency or need to act.

It is like the very name 'City Makers' already implies, people making the city from the bottom-up. The online City Makers' platform Cities in Transition poses it as follows: "City Makers are people who contribute to build and co-create their city in order to increase the livability, mostly from the bottom-up". City Makers take up services that are not only beneficial to themselves, but impact the livability of the street, neighborhood and the city at large. In Dutch literature these kind of initiatives are called citizen initiatives [burgerinitiatieven]. Differently from international literature where citizen initiatives are often defined as citizen participation in politics, the Dutch definition of citizen initiatives is

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[4] From interview, 24 June 2016
[5] From interview, 7 July 2016

"the concrete initiatives citizens start in order to contribute to issues they care about in the public domain" (van de Wijdeven et al. 2013, 10).

As the City Maker from the neighborhood cooperative explained, they might still need the support of the government in terms of facilitation, but they themselves are the ones who initiate. It is this shift of initiative that makes City Makers' initiative to be qualified as 'bottom-up'.

2.1.2 Experimental frontrunners

Because of their bottom-up character the solutions and interventions of City Makers differ from the solutions that originate from businesses or the government. Inspired by the local context they design their initiatives to fit with specific local needs and interest groups. Like the example of the Binckhorst in The Hague that started a community brewery that could combine different issues of the area dealing simultaneously with community building, spatial redevelopment and sustainability. Or the example of the residents that collectively bought their street in order to save it from demolishment, redevelop it, bring about more social cohesion and have the autonomy to create a more culturally diverse neighborhood. Personally, I was amazed again and again by the creativity and vigor of the City Makers that I encountered. Every single one of them to a certain extent entered into new and uncertain territory by becoming a maker instead of a passive consumer of the city around them.

In Dutch literature there is one book that focuses specifically on the City Makers' movement and their innovative methods and strategies. I will quote one paragraph in a bit more length:

"Throughout the Netherlands community businesses, neighborhood entrepreneurs, social initiatives and all kinds of cooperatives have been established. City Makers did not study books to learn how to do it. They also did not use any scientific research to choose and plan their approach. They became inspired, and just started doing it. Mostly in the form of: daycare of elderly people, creative hotspots, self construction, cooperative neighborhood development, homeless shelters, community theatre, their own energy supply systems, city farming, community kitchens, redevelopment of industrial real estate, and much more. They started out with practical solutions for practical problems and only secondarily decided on its formal form." (*my translation,* Joachim Meerkerk in 'Het Nieuwe Stadmaken' 2015, 23)

Next to reacting on a local interest or urgency, there is an aspect of experimentation in this kind of doing. As Meerkerk mentions in *Het Nieuwe Stadmaken* the activities of City Makers are not based on blueprints of how to act, but are largely shaped by the issues that are being confronted. As a result, the action-based approach of City Makers maintains a sense of flexibility and openness to try out new things. City Makers are those people who dare to implement novel and creative solutions to existing social or spatial problems. In this sense they are frontrunners, because their actions defy the normative understandings of how things should be done. City Makers think of innovative ways to work with the current situation, and importantly, with the interests of the local community as their starting point.

2.1.3 Collaborative and holistic

They may be frontrunners, but City Makers never work in isolation. Because they react on local issues they need to work together with other local actors. In the first place to generate a supportive network in the neighborhood to sustain the initiative, but also because their initiatives often involve different aspects and different expertise. Like the alternative food chain in The Hague that set up a collaboration between organic farmers and residents of the neighborhood who now take care of the distribution of the food. Another quite smart collaboration is Appie's cleaning service that connects unemployed youth to the Market cooperation to clean the space where they would otherwise be of nuisance.

The initiatives of City Makers often successfully serve to connect different interest and create local solutions that are taking into account different and specific aspects of the neighborhood. City Makers initiatives are thus based on a shared interest of an otherwise divers group of stakeholders.

What keeps these people together in the collaborative production of services is sense of trust and reciprocity. According to Tine de Moor such a high sense of reciprocity is characteristic of bottom-up initiatives, because it can only exist when people feel committed to the initiative and are involved in the way these services are organized[6]. A success factor therefore is a high sense of social control and internal solidarity because members meet each other face-to-face and invest by means of their membership and get

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[6] From interview, 20 May 2016

green energy, health care, affordable housing or healthy food in return. City making can thus be understood as the collaborative production of services for a specific local context.

2.2 Taking matters into your own hands

"You can wait 6 years for the government to do it or you can just do it yourself"[7]

Some City Makers that I met, like the one from the quote above, were quite disappointed in the way the government takes care of the public domain. Like one of the City Makers who explained during our interview that he already lived in the same neighborhood for about twelve years and saw the area turn into a deprived neighborhood with high crime rates and an unattractive shopping street. Over all those years the municipality had tried to increase the livability in the street, but failed. At one point, when there was a robbery at the jewelry shop during which the owner of the shop got shot, he had had enough. He organized himself together with two other residents and "took matters into our own hands"[8].

It is not always that City Makers act out of discontent over the quality or speed of state or market solutions. Sometimes there is simply no other player qualified to take the 'job'. On the 20th of June I travelled to a care cooperative in a small village near Utrecht to interview two of their representatives. While the rain poured down on the street, we sat down at the kitchen table with tea and cookies, while they poured out their enthusiasm. They told me that in 2007 the municipality did a livability research on the village which showed that the best possible response to the depopulation of the village was to increase the amount of local services so the social cohesion and self sufficiency of the elderly in the village would remain. However, after the liveability research several years of delay followed because no official organization wanted to take up this task.

In the annual general meeting in 2012 the municipality eventually declared that they really needed an organization that could commission these welfare services. On the same evening a group of residents organized a voting and started a special working group to take up the assignment themselves. Now they have a well-functioning care-cooperative that

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[7] From field notes, 28 May 2016
[8] From interview, 24 June 2016

collaborates with local professionals to organize care and housing for the elderly people in the village. As the two representatives told me, the kind of care that is currently offered in the village would never have been there if a regular welfare organization would have taken up the assignment. More than 40% of the village is a member of the cooperative and the care that is offered is uniquely personal and flexible.

Whether it is because of discontent, a lack or the need for innovation, City Makers take up tasks and services that traditionally are taken care of by commercial or government organizations. Instead of consumers, these citizens become producers of services themselves. With this City Makers show a form of active citizenship that goes beyond the traditional notions of responsible or active citizenship. As I mentioned in the introduction city making involves a definition of citizenship that goes beyond responsibility towards the nation-state.

In the journal *Citizenship Studies* Koning et al. analyzed such alternative configurations of citizenship and grouped them into three types of citizenship agendas that go beyond the normative framing of citizenship associated with the nation-state (2015, 122). The first can be defined as 'regulated outsourcing' meaning that non-state actors in collaboration with the state take over responsibility for guaranteeing citizens rights, for example in housing or health care. The second configuration is 'mutual formulation of citizen agendas', which means that non-state actors like unions or gangs play a role in citizens agendas while claiming a place within the state (Koning et al. 2015, 124). The third type of configuration is termed as 'insurgent contestations of citizenship agendas', which means that non-state actors develop "citizenship agendas that can diametrically oppose those of the state" (Koning et al. 2015, 125).

Since City Makers do not take over the 'state's agenda', nor do they necessarily claim a role within the state, especially the third configuration of non-state citizenship agenda relates to the practices of City Makers. City Makers create public services not out of belonging or responsibility towards the state, but out of interest of their community or neighborhood. Perceiving their actions as 'insurgent contestation' allows this type of citizenship to be conceptualized not as a form of control but as a form of collective action instead (Koning et al 2015, 126). This shows, that although their actions have less to do with participating in the state, the actions of City Makers do carry democratic relevance. Taking matters into your own hands also means you make the decisions.

Lekkernassuh in The Hague started up a local food chain so residents can have more control over the quality of the food that they consume. The Timebank strengthens the economic power of the neighborhood by letting people invest locally. A clear characteristic of the City Makers initiatives is thereby the strengthen of local decision-making power. Like the City Maker from Greece argued in the conversation with the municipality of The Hague, these initiatives should empower citizens. In line with the notion of 'doing' as as a form of political action (Ratto and Boler 2016, 7) City Makers, sometimes unknowingly, challenge the status quo by organizing things differently from the bottom-up.

2.3 New modes of political engagement

"Together we create the city of tomorrow"[9]

As public service providers instead of consumers City Makers take up a responsible role within society, safeguarding the general interest. Micheletti and Stolle's calls this type of non-reciprocal responsibility 'sustainable citizenship'. "Sustainable citizenship holds the central claim that people should do all they possibly can to help improve social justice and safeguard nature to make the world a better place in which to live" (Micheletti and Stolle 2012, 89). According to Micheletti and Stolle 'sustainable citizenship' does not lead to an increase of social capital, because in their study on consumer choices not the expected principles of selflessness and non-reciprocity, but economic benefit and personal health turned out to be the most important reasons to be nudged into sustainable citizenship practices (2012, 113). Based on self-regarding motivations this consumerist type of sustainable citizenship is not so much directed to democratic citizenship, but is merely focused on private lifestyles.

Although this does not fit with the more community oriented practices of City Makers Micheletti and Stolle's notion of sustainable citizenship points towards an important aspect, namely the role of self-interest in defining citizenship agendas. Self-interest plays an important role in the practices of City Makers and goes hand-in-hand with their sense of responsibility over the general interest of the neighborhood. This can be seen in all the

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[9] From: Citiesintransition.eu

examples of city making that have come up by now. Every City Maker started their initiative because they as a resident of the street or neighborhood had something to gain. It is their personal needs and interests that give City Makers the intrinsic motivation to act, while it is the demand from the neighborhood that sustains it. However, by coming up with their own solutions to public problems they do not disassociate themselves from the general interest, but rather raise another voice to express social value next to the public services offered by the market and state. In contribution to the public realm there is an important role for self-interest.

This opposes the general perspective on individualism as the opposite of democratic engagement. In his well-known essay (1993) and book (2000) 'Bowling Alone' Robert Putnam argues that social ties, membership of civic associations, and other social networks are essential prerequisites for social trust and political participation. Without these associations people are thus less inclined to do something for the public good. Putnam argues that databases show that the decline in Americans' political participation goes hand in hand with a decrease in membership of labor unions, religious groups and other civic associations (1995, 6). This trend of civic disconnectedness that gets fed by technological developments, increased mobility and individualization drives a wedge between our personal interests and our collective interests (Putnam 1995, 8). What is left is a disconnected public that misses the tools for democratic participation, because it is civic engagement that makes up a well functioning democracy.

Many scholars have since attacked Putnam on his claims on the decline of social capital. For example, Steven Durlauf has dissected Putnam's questionable use of empirical data, and argues that Putnam is guilty of "overclaiming" the causal relationship of why social capital is in decline (2000, 5). Others, like Richard Reeves have pointed out that Putnam only focuses on certain forms of community building that are indeed in decline, but totally neglects other, new ones, such as informal, digital or workplace related communities (2001, 23-24). That people are less connected to traditional civic associations does therefore not mean that they are not finding new ways to express their civic engagement in an individualized society.

The personal frustrations and interests of City Makers that make them start their initiatives does not shatter, but strengthen the social capital of their neighborhoods. A fitting term to describe this kind of public action that simultaneously serves your self-

interest is 'well understood self interest' [welbegrepen eigenbelang]. In philosophy this notion goes back to Adam Smith's economic concept of the 'invisible hand'. With this he meant that the baker bakes his bread and sells it in a way that he can earn as much money as possible. Because of the baker's self-interest we can benefit from an optimal balance between the price and the quality of the bread, because when this is not the case we would buy our bread at another bakery. We can use this notion of well-understood self-interest to understand why individual citizens who are not tied to civic associations or strict membership are still collaborating for the common good.

Albert Jan Kruiter uses the same term to explain the thought of political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville. Tocqueville tried to understand the success of American democracy by investigating how American individualism could strengthen public participation. Tocqueville analyzed that it is not so much an 'invisible hand' of pure self-interest, but also the usefulness of public participation for the self that triggers citizens to sacrifice some interests to be able to fulfill others (Kruiter 2010, 118). He concludes that the comprehension that a thriving public domain is eventually in your self-interest greatly benefits a democratic society.

The initiatives of City Makers follow the same logic. It is because of the understanding that improving the public domain benefits others, and benefits their own well-being that makes City Makers take action. But there is something more. Their 'well-understood self-interest' is not a reason to invest in the public, in the sense of the government. It is a trigger to do exactly the opposite and take public tasks away from the government and into their own hands. This kind of community building does not fit in Putnam's version of community as a way through which social capital can strengthen engagement with the existing representative democracy, and it also defies the perspective on community as a way to directly change or influence governmental decision making. It offers a third way of citizens taking governance tasks to the community level.

This analysis fits with Geoghegan and Powell's third activist definition of civil society as political site and actor itself with the "emancipatory potential of ordinary people to take back control of their contexts" and reinvent democracy (2008, 441-442). This does not mean that social initiatives have the potential to take over the role of the state, which is unnecessary and impossible. But to have, as Geoghegan and Powell nicely formulate, "the capacity to reintroduce the notion of the public good" (2008, 446).

What I mean by this is that a City Maker becomes a political actor by their action, because through these actions City Makers formulate the general interest from the community instead of the general interest being formulated by the state or market. The shared interests of the individuals who make up an initiative reformulate what is of public value, whether this is cultural diversity in the neighborhood, organic food or personalized health care. As one of the City Makers in The Hague exclaimed at the end of her talk:

"We resource the city, we are a value creating network"[10]

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[10] From field notes, 28 May 2016

# 3	From Uniformity to Diversity

It is the City Maker's Pre-Summit. City Makers from all over Europe have come together to discuss the most important principles that should be included in the City Makers Agenda that will be presented as an annex to the EU Urban Agenda at the end of May. We are in the biggest room of Pakhuis de Zwijger. The festive atmosphere of the opening ceremony still lingers, a buzzing feeling that we are together from 60 different countries to do something innovative, to change the cities we live in from the bottom up. The dialogue session deals with the democratic principles that would help to enable City Makers' initiatives. Mentioned are mapping as a tool to empower marginal initiatives, a need for more experimental and transparent governance, and the acceptance of failure. Then one of the City Makers from the audience takes the microphone placed at the edge of the stage and joins the conversation by saying that we are wrong to focus on the needs of City Makers instead of the needs of citizens. "By making a City Makers Agenda for the EU we are actually creating a divide between City Makers and citizens, whereas the city should be a home for everyone." Here we are with a room full of City Makers discussing how we can improve 'democracy', but suddenly it is being questioned if we are actually the demos. Is it just semantics or are City Makers not the citizens and citizens not City Makers?[11]

The previous chapter showed that citizens are designating public value to certain public issues by organizing these themselves. But can everybody do it themselves? What about the interests of those who are not part of a City Maker's initiative? This chapter will deal with the question of equality and whether City Makers are forming a new elite consisting out of well-off highly educated white middle-aged active citizens. This issue was repeatedly raised during programs sessions at Pakhuis de Zwijger such as the Pre-Summit above, but also during informal conversations with City Makers. If we set too much hope on active citizens like City Makers, what will happen with non-active citizens? Can City Makers act as the representatives of rest?

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[11] From field notes, 4 Feb. 2016

3.1 An elite of frontrunners

Much research has already been done to investigate whether the type of active citizens such as City Makes are a homogenous group of well-off highly educated white middle-aged citizens. For instance, the research of Schinkel et al. in Rotterdam mapped the amount of social initiatives throughout the city and found that actually in the poorer and more diverse neighborhoods the number of initiatives is highest (2010, 1). Or the quantitative research of Denters in Enschede showed that participation level in neighborhood initiatives is higher for citizens with an average education level than with a higher education level (2011, 406). Another finding in Denters et al.'s research is that they do not find a significant difference between the neighborhood agenda's of the active citizens compared to the neighborhood agenda of non-active citizens (2011, 411). Denters et al. deduce from this that if both are aligned in their plans and ideas about the neighborhood, it does not matter that those with the most capability and resources to initiate this ideal, are the ones that are leading collective action.

The fact remains that most City Makers that I encountered and spoke with were highly educated, middle-income and often white people. I estimate about 80% compared to about 20% from a lower educated and low-income background. Which does not necessarily say anything about the type of neighborhood these City Makers were active in, because they were active in all kinds of neighborhoods. The exclusiveness of the City Makers movement also came up during the fifth New Democracy program 'The Politics of Experimentation', which I co-organized in Pakhuis de Zwijger. The active citizens at this event are called 'City Makers' during many of the other events, so I consider their perspectives in this event to be of equal relevance. What became clear during the conversation is that there are different roles within City Makers' initiatives.

Pepik Henneman, director of Meneer de Leeuw a lab for societal innovation, was invited to share his experiences with the Leefstraten initiative. This initiative started in Ghent where a group of citizens came up with the idea to give a residential street a 'haircut'. They banned all the traffic between two points in the street, rolled out a green carpet, and reclaimed it as a space for living. With this action they aimed to improve the

urban environment by giving the street a social function instead of just that of infrastructure. People could now use their street as a picnic place, a playground, a garden and overall a place to meet each other. The initiative was a great success. The people in the neighborhood embraced the initiative and made full use of the new space to organize events to come together. The high level of participation by the residents also triggered the local government officials to embrace the potential the initiative offered and to give it their support.

Henneman explained that there are different layers of participation in such an initiative. First, you have a small group of frontrunners who come up with the idea and actually dare to implement it. Second, you have all the people who participate in the experiment and thereby make it a success. Third, you have the city officials who support the initiative and thereby sustain it. Although they are all important for the success of the experiment, the frontrunners are crucial. Unlike the others, frontrunners act out of an intrinsic motivation and an important out of the box set of intentions. It was the intention of the frontrunners of the Leefstraat to show the social impact of urban infrastructure and rethink citizen's ownership over public space that made them do things differently. And it is by doing that the perspective of residents and city officials could be changed. He therefore pleaded that we should not dismiss frontrunners as just a small unrepresentative group of active citizens, but that we should value what they are capable of doing:

> "Please love your frontrunners. They go faster, they break rules, and they have a different speed. They organize themselves and just do it."[12]

It is this hands-on mentality of frontrunners that makes bottom-up initiatives possible. During the same New Democracy session Frank Alsema shared a similar conclusion with his experience with Buiksloterham, an experimental living space in North Amsterdam. Alsema was one of the initiators who took up the challenge to redevelop the empty area and use new technologies to turn the brown field into one of the first circular neighborhoods. He stresses that the collective is very important for such an initiative. Collaboration and sharing of practices has been crucial for its success. However, there are always different levels of participation within such a group. He explained:

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[12] From fieldnotes 7 Apr. 2016

"I think you always have in groups people who are hackers, they are active or they are debaters. You have people who are lurkers, they just want to watch and follow it a bit. And then you have people who are only voting for example. You all need them. They all have their own role. You don't want to have a whole group of only active people, it would be chaos."[13]

His division into different actors illustrated how the actions of frontrunners are important, but are in itself not enough. Setting up a successful initiative does not take place in empty space. There should be enough people who support and participate in the initiative. From her research in urban climate experiments keynote speaker professor Harriet Bulkeley concludes the same:

"These experiments work when they are made well, when they are maintained well and when they are lived. Being in an experiment is quite hard work, because you have to be both experimental and normal at the same time. So you have to become part of what is regarded as normal action. You should not upset the residents of a particular area. Instead they should come to accept it as part of their daily practice. So it has to become embedded and normalized. But at the same time to retain its ability to break rules, to learn; to maintain its potential to have an effect, it still has to remain experimental. I think the experiments that manage to balance it, to become both normal and experimental at the same time, have the most effect."[14]

Like Alsema, Bulkeley agrees that experiments should involve different levels of engagement. When an experiment becomes 'lived' by the people in the neighborhood it has more chance for success. It is therefore very important to gather a bigger group of people around the frontrunners of the experiment. However, what the examples of the Leefstraat, Buiksloterham, and Bulkeley's research also show is that the transformative potential of an experimental initiative comes from doing things differently, from breaking the rules and following the intrinsic motivation to do things better, more social or more sustainable. For this, initiatives need their frontrunners. It is they who dare to make the step to turn their ideals into action. This is why again and again frontrunners are an essential part of a bottom-up initiative. All the City Makers whom I interviewed or talked with had similar

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[13] From field notes, 7 Apr. 2016
[14] From field notes, 7 Apr. 2016

stories of a small group of very active citizens who are the driving engine behind the initiative. One by one they stressed that initiatives need these frontrunners, change makers, innovators and pioneers. To get anything done from the bottom-up you need "a group of stubborn people, who can do their stubborn things"[15], "you need a few crazy people like us who are willing to put their time and energy into something like this"[16], and "you just need to start doing it with a few people then other people will see the effect and join in"[17].

Often this small group of frontrunners becomes the face of the initiative. In an interview a City Maker explained how she was actively contributing to building a stronger neighborhood community. Together with a small group of other active residents she organized events where the neighborhood could come together, like a street fair. At one point people started to approach this group as the representatives of the neighborhood and asked them when they were going to organize something new. She narrates: "At that point we started to reconsider our goal. We wanted to connect people and create a network, we never had the intention to speak on behalf of the whole neighborhood"[18].

More frontrunners had trouble with ending up as the representative of the initiative, not because they did not like the credits or the responsibility over its organization, but because people come to expect you to be the executor of all initiatives. Important for many of the initiatives I visited was that they were organizing their own initiative in their own neighborhood. If someone wanted the same thing somewhere else, or a different idea realized in the same neighborhood, they should do it themselves: "I am not going to execute someone else's ideas, I am not a public servant; I am a City Maker. If you have a new idea you should execute it yourself"[19]. This exclamation by one of the initiators I interviewed reflects an important distinction between City Makers and public servants. City Makers are grounded in their neighborhoods and come up with new, innovative things because they are driven by an intrinsic motivation and need to improve their direct surroundings. It is exactly this motivation and active stance of 'just do it' that makes their initiatives a success. The local context therefore plays an important role for the activity of frontrunners. As I mentioned in chapter two, their own interests are the backbone of their actions. Their

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[15] From interview, 24 Jun. 2016
[16] From interview, 20 Jun. 2016
[17] From field notes, 8 Apr 2016
[18] From interview 12 May 2016
[19] From interview, 24 Jun. 2016

locality and personal interests in their own surroundings thus strengthen the frontrunners motivation for action.

So although they are a small elite, City Makers are needed to make social initiatives and bottom-up improvements in the neighborhood happen. But not everyone is able to become a City Maker, so how can we safeguard the general interest?

3.2 The democratic legitimacy of City Makers

From the way City Makers talk about their role as frontrunners it becomes clear that they are not trying to be representative for the the general public interest. Of course I encountered a few initiatives where City Makers actively attempted to engage people from different backgrounds, but in general the initiatives of City Makers do not perceive representativeness as one of their requirements.

City Makers however play an active role in creating public services and demanding more democratic control, thereby becoming important actors in formulating public interests. If they are not representative of the broader public, what then is their legitimacy to do so? To answer this question, I tried to understand the link and intentions of City Makers with the people around them by questioning them on the way they involve the people around them and how they perceive their responsibility as a frontrunner for the general interest (of the neighborhood). Their answers can be grouped in three viewpoints on their democratic legitimacy: working from demand, accepting diversity, and being inclusive.

3.2.1. Organizing based on demand

"If you don't have public support you're pulling on a dead horse. We have so many members, because we hit an 'open nerve'. There is a tremendous need for what we do."[20]

An initiator from a care cooperative in the quote above clearly stated that the only reason why they started the initiative, was because there existed a lot of need for local care among

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[20] From interview, 20 June 2016

residents. Because of the broad felt need the initiative became an immediate success that could count on the support of a large part of the village population. Another City Maker in Amsterdam put public support of local residents as the first and foremost requirement for organizing City Makers' initiatives.

> "The core question is whether you have public support in your neighborhood. That's the only lath you should have to jump over. If you have public support, it is legitimate what you are doing, and you may thus put public money in it."[21]

According to these respondents the initiatives of City Makers should be considered as serving the public interest if there is a broader support than just a set of active City Makers. The initiative should first and foremost be organized based on the needs of the neighborhood. A set of City Makers might initiate something but there should always be a supporting network to sustain it. When I asked City Makers how they organized such a supportive network I received the following answers:

1. "Online especially the Facebookpage grew very easily, making several people admins. And offline there was in total a group of 10, with a core group of 4, who did all the organizing, with a lot of people around it who join in, or come to help occasionally."[22]

2. "Everybody who has a share of 1,000 Euros or above can be a member of the cooperative, which is connected to the foundation that is managed by a small group of people. This group is accountable to the cooperative and submits its decisions about spending the money to the cooperative's general assembly for their approval."[23]

3. "How do you organize something you do not want to organize? We are still searching for the perfect modality to establish horizontalism. We experimented

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[21] From interview, 24 June 2016
[22] From interview, 12 May 2016
[23] From interview, 7 July 2016

with the cooperative association form, but we did not like the voting. Voting is a form of exclusion because the majority chooses what the minority should do. Now we are a foundation with a board only for the financial administration and logistics, for the rest it should be largely self-governed through collaboration."[24]

4. "We are a cooperative, members pay a small annual fee. We function with a board of six people and a team of one professional and a lot of volunteers."[25]

5. "Next to an association we have now started a cooperative in order to invest capital. People can become member of the cooperative for an amount of 50.00 or higher. Thereby they also gain a voice in the general assembly and co-decide on the process together with the board."[26]

In order to engage people from the neighborhood in the initiative these City Makers came up with different organizational strategies, like uniting people in a cooperative via a membership or shareholder structure or gaining widespread support via social media. This supportive network is what makes the initiatives a success.

In their empirical research on the sustainability of citizen initiatives Igalla and van Meerkerk come to a similar conclusion: "those initiatives that are sustained the longest are also characterized by a strong network structure, which means a 'fully connected' or a 'polycentric' network" (2015, 50). This means that initiatives that organize themselves either in a network that centers around a cohesive group of multiple actors who share the main responsibility, or around multiple loosely connected groups that share the responsibility among the groups, have the most chance to be successful.

Igalla and van Meerkerk's research also states that the fact that these 'fully connected' or 'polycentric' initiatives have a horizontal network structure where power is spread over different actors, makes them more successful than initiatives where power in concentrated in the hands of one actor (2015, 29). A similar argument is put forward by

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[24] From interview, 13 June 2016
[25] From interview, 20 June 2016
[26] From interview, 24 June 2016

Jeffrey Juris who studied the strength of social movements. Juris states that all successful networks share the same broad guiding principles:

> "(1) the building of horizontal ties and connections among diverse, autonomous elements (e.g. movements, organizations, groups, etc.); (2) the free and open circulation of information; (3) collaboration via decentralized coordination and directly democratic decision making; and (4) self-directed networking." (2008, 11)

The success factors for social movements as described by Juris for a great extent go beyond the ambitions and capabilities of local City Makers initiatives. However, when asked how they organized their network the desire for horizontalism and collaborative decision-making did surface, like in the community center from quote three on the previous page. From the conversations with City Makers I learned that their strive towards this kind of horizontalism, collaborative decision-making and equal stakeholdership only worked if they limited the reach of the initiative. This limitation to only the local interests leads to the second viewpoint on the legitimacy of City Makers' initiatives.

3.2.2. Accepting diversity

Almost every initiative I learned about was focused on a particular street or neighborhood and had clearly formulated rules of exclusion. For example, an energy cooperative that placed windmills in a small municipality. In an interview with one of the initiators he explained to me that with the profit of these windmills the cooperative is able to spend money on subsidizing solar panels or isolating houses in the neighborhood. Such subsidies are however only available to you if you live in the area of the windmills. So for the sake of clarity, they limit their scope to everybody who has that area's zip code. This means that people who live on one side of the main road can make use of the subsidies, while people on the other side of the road which belongs to another municipality cannot. On my expression of indignation about this strict rule, the respondent answered:

> "It is quite a coarse measure, but the basic idea is that those who live closest to the windmills, who experience their shadow and noise, they also have the most right to our services. Also if you would just extend it without limit, the money we can spend on supporting sustainable energy will evaporate, and we lose our effectiveness"[27].

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[27] From interview, 7 July 2016

In order to stay functional, the initiative is necessarily limited in size. Also the care cooperative that I visited used the zip code to determine whether people could become a member. The respondents explained that if people from neighboring villages would be able to join, the cooperative would not be able to offer the personal and high quality care that it is designed to provide. The local focus of city making initiatives does not only come from their response to local needs and support, but also from the inevitable exclusion of 'other people'.

Political economist Elinor Ostrom formulated exclusion as one of the rules of thumb for self-organization. After extensive field studies in self-governance over shared resources Ostrom formulated the following five principles for effective commons governance: "it is relatively easy to monitor, rates of change are moderate, communities maintain frequent face-to-face communication and a dense social network, outsiders can be excluded at relatively low cost, and the users themselves support effective monitoring and rule enforcement" (Dietz et al. 2003, 1908). As Ostrom describes the method of exclusion is important because the size of the initiative is positively related to the initiative's capacity to maintain a sense of cohesive face-to-face community, trust and consistency that is needed for a self-organized initiative to sustain itself. Excluding non-members is thus a common aspect of self-organizing initiatives.

This inevitable exclusion of the 'rest of the city' however necessitates City Makers to start their own local initiative. These initiatives do often exchange knowledge and know-how during City Makers events or on online platforms such as 'hieropgewekt.nl', a knowledge platform for local sustainable energy initiatives. But the initiatives themselves are local and relatively small in scope. The result is a proliferation of local and individual energy, care or community initiatives that all offer different types and qualities of public services.

During my interviews with City Makers I had a hard time accepting the diversity of the initiatives compared to the equal distribution of public services via the welfare state. In my perception the equal rights as safeguarded by the welfare state seemed more fair than being a lucky resident who can benefit from having a local initiative in the neighborhood. City Makers however reacted very unshaken about the fairness of their initiatives. For example, the initiators of the care cooperative reacted by expressing a strong conviction that the way the welfare state currently organizes public services is in fact not fair at all:

"People are not the same, but they are molded into equals"[28]. Just like another City Maker from an active neighborhood community who reacted by asking me to define 'equality' and quoting Aristotle by stating that: "that the worst form of inequality is trying to make unequal things equal"[29]. These City Makers clearly did not value the uniformity of the welfare stat as fair. Treating everybody in the same way, namely neglects the diversity of needs that exist within society.

In an interview the initiator of a community center started to explain the value of diversity over uniformity by drawing nine equally distributed dots on a piece of paper (see Figure 1), showing that they have no room to move, because then they would infringe on the space of another dot. Then he drew the same nine dots but now distributed at random, showing that when they have the freedom to move, they can move according to their own needs. If a majority of dots however chose to move into one corner, there should still be a kind of welfare system that safeguards the basic public services for the remaining dots.
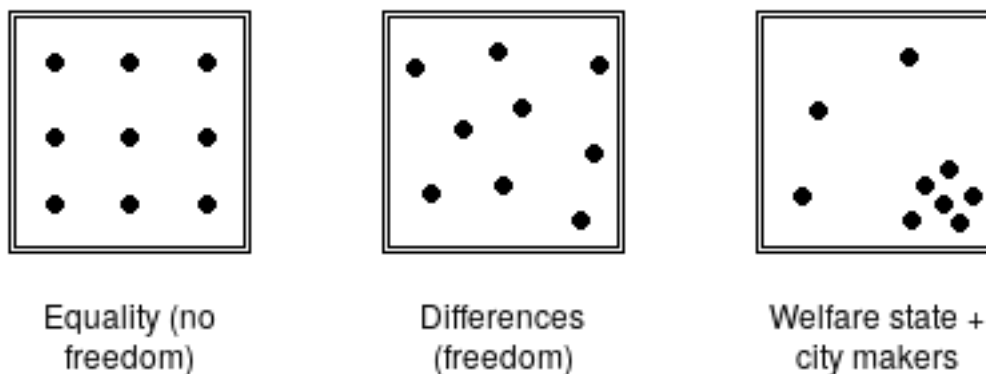

Equality (no freedom) Differences (freedom) Welfare state + city makers

Figure 1

So from my conversations with City Makers I experienced a strong drive away from uniformity towards allowing more diversity in public services. By creating local services in the context of the neighborhood City Makers could react directly on the local needs. They preferred this diversity over the uniformity of the welfare state, but also acknowledge that it is the task of the welfare state to take care of those who fall outside the services of local initiatives.

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[28] From interview, 20 June 2016
[29] From interview, 7 June 2016

During the first evening in the New Democracy series, a man from the audience stated the usefulness of the resulting differences: "In such a transition there are always some frontrunners who bring about change. In this sense inequality can be an advantage that we should value instead of uniformity". The acceptance of differences is an important motive for City Makers. In their eyes diversity of public services does not make their actions less legitimate, but more democratic compared to the uniformity of the welfare state. There is however still an important role to play for the municipality. In my expert interview with John Grin, professor in system innovations, he explained that these new challenges call for a political system that exchanges a commitment to uniformity with a commitment to a diverse set of interests. This would mean that governments need to relate differently to social initiatives, which brings up questions about new decision-making processes and how this should be organized. I will come back to this governance question in chapter four.

3.2.3. Inclusivity

The above two viewpoints on the legitimacy of City Makers lead to the conclusion that their initiatives should not necessarily be representative, but they do have to be inclusive for the local residents. Like one of the City Makers nicely put it during an interview:

> "Inclusivity has a quantitative side called representativeness and a qualitative side. When we just focus on representativeness you demand every group to be a reflection of society, which is impossible. We think about inclusivity from the qualitative side, which means that everybody who wants to has the opportunity and facilities to participate, and that power, capital, and information are equally distributed over the neighborhood so there is equal propaganda for everyone to participate."[30]

Everyone in the neighborhood should have the opportunity to join the initiative. If not all groups in the neighborhood do so, the overall opinion is that, this is not your responsibility as an initiator as long as you have made it an open invitation. One of respondents for example failed to engage the Turkish community in his cooperative. According to him "it's

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[30] From interview, 13 June 2016

like parties. You can invite everyone, but you should not expect everyone to like your party"[31]

In their research on the role of social initiatives in relation to a representative democracy Tonkens et al. conclude that next to active citizens there are three types of non-active citizens that need to be taken into consideration: loyal citizen, who mainly trust in the expertise of the government, but are open to be marginally engaged if issues interest them; positively critical citizen, who trust the government to play its role, but also have confidence in the initiatives and expertise of active citizens; and the aloof citizen, who are not interested to be engaged in decision-making processes and expect the government to take care of public services (2015, 102). Because of these types of non-active citizens, in particular the aloof citizen, a participatory democracy also needs a firm basis of representative democracy in the form of a (local) government that safeguards the provision of basic public services (Tonkens et al. 2015, 108).

In an interview Tine de Moor, professor Institutions for Collective action, confirmed that there needs to be a balance between self-organized citizens and the welfare state, she argued that city making should not become a new form of philanthropy in which the active citizens take care of the interests of less active citizens. There will always be a need for collective facilities.

This balancing act between active citizens and the welfare state also got confirmed by City Makers. In an interview with a City Makers specialized in strategies for collaboration between the municipality and the neighborhood, she answered that her primary motive is to enable everyone in the neighborhood to have the chance to get engaged. "I don't want to be like 'we City Makers will take care of it from the bottom-up', it should be a collective renewal of our democracy together with citizens and the municipality"[32].

Sociology professor Jan Willem Duyvendak also spoke about this kind of collaborative collective action for the general interest[33]. Duyvendak called this the need for a 're-collectivization' [recollectivisering] of our welfare state. This means that we need to find a way in which the diversity that has been generated is again reflected in the welfare

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[31] From interview, 24 June 2016
[32] From interview, 12 May 2016
[33] From interview, 14 July 2016

state by finding new methods to collectively feel responsible over the public interest and services. Part of this would be a renewed sense of interdependence.

From the above we can conclude that City Makers initiatives are just as legitimate to translate general interests into public services as the welfare state is. Some of the above City Makers even consider their initiatives to be more legitimate due to their connection to local needs and the accommodation of differences. Two things the welfare state is often critiqued for. City Makers however do not cater to the needs of all citizens, their scope is inevitable limited in order for them to function. There is therefore a strong need for the welfare state to safeguard basic public services for citizens who are not included in local initiatives. The next question is how the local and the municipality should relate to each other while they work together for the public good. In the next chapter I will discuss the desires that City Makers formulated to bring about a genuine collaboration between (active) citizens and governmental institutions.

4   Towards a New Democracy

A room full of residents, City Makers and experts has gathered at New Democracy evening number eleven in the library in De Hallen in Amsterdam West. This evening deals with democracy at the neighborhood level, and in particular with the mode of governance of the municipality of Amsterdam. Keynote speaker Alex Brenninkmeijer has just published a research report on the over politicized functioning of the city's governance districts. Brenninkmeijer explains that the interests of citizens become disregarded because of the internal power struggle and unnecessary bureaucracy among the politicians of the city districts and the central city council. "Next to a structural change this also calls for a cultural change" states Brenninkmeijer, one in which democracy is more important than politics.

During the conversation one of the residents of the neighborhood is asked to share her story of her initiative to improve the quality of living in her building block. She explains that the municipality had given a commercial building company the task to remodel one of the buildings in the block, but that these new plans violated existing rules about the maximum height of buildings and would dramatically decrease the living quality of the surrounding residents. She explains how at first she just tried to contact the person at the municipality who is responsible for the building assignment, but that finding the person responsible already proved a difficult task. After many months of failed communication with the municipality the woman, together with other active residents, decided to ask for legal support in their case against the municipality. At the end of her story she exclaimed: "I am not an angry citizen at all… I just had to yell harder and harder because we are simply not being heard".[34]

4.1 City Makers as equal partners of the government

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[34] From field notes, 2 Nov. 2016

After the event in Amsterdam I kept thinking about the last exclamation of the woman who tried so hard to be an active and responsible citizen without the municipality valuing her efforts. In the case of the woman in Amsterdam-West it ended up in a legal dispute against the municipality, while for some of the other City Makers I spoke to such a disconnect mainly ended in feelings of disappointment towards the municipality. Also occasionally, City Makers questioned the municipality's intentions for supporting their initiative. For example, one of my respondents spoke about his initiative to improve the shopping offer in the neighborhood: "The initiative was supported as a shiny example for two or three months after which the city district said 'well thank you, well done, back to usual'"[35]. He was clearly frustrated by the 'business attitude' of the municipality. The instance illustrates a discrepancy between City Makers who start their initiative to have a long-term impact in the neighborhood, and city officials who perceive them as just temporary projects.

According to the advisory report of Brenninkmeijer: "Amsterdammers are not very dissatisfied nor very satisfied. But they often feel powerless as if they encounter a bureaucratic wall. They want their arguments to be heard with the prerogative that their interests are taken into account" (Brenninkmeijer et al 2016, 19). The key concerns for the gap between citizens and municipality that Brenninkmeijer mentions are a bureaucratic distance between decision-makers and citizens, transparency of policy making, and the need to redirect attention to common interests. On a similar note, Stokkom and Toenders conclude from their research on active citizens in disadvantaged municipalities that a better collaboration between citizens and municipality makes a lot of difference. Their research shows that especially the long-term involvement of the municipality makes a big difference in the rise of active citizenship initiatives between city districts (Stokkom and Toenders 2010, 11).

Like the examples above show, City Makers expect that their activity in the neighborhood comes with a different relationship with the municipality. After all, they are both working for the general interest. With this, City Makers become a legitimate governance partner of the municipality. From the perspective of the municipality the encouragement of active citizenship in the neighborhood however often stands aloof from encouragement of political participation. This is for example illustrated by the often quoted

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[35] From interview, 24 June 2016

WRR report 'Vertrouwen in burgers' [Trust in citizens] of 2012 that clearly states three types of citizen engagement: societal participation, which includes active engagement of citizens in societal processes; societal initiatives in which citizens take matters into their own hands to solve societal problems; and policy participation, which entails processes of the government in which citizens are asked to contribute thought and input (51). The advisory report also acknowledges that from the perspective of citizens these types of participation are fundamentally the same, while policy makers see them as consisting out of entirely different issues and sets of responsibilities (WRR 2012, 51).

There are thus different conceptions of what kind of political responsibilities and rights active citizenship actually entails. In her oration at University of Utrecht Evelien Tonkens criticizes the discrepancy between societal participation and political participation. Participation and active citizenship is about more than just a redistribution of tasks between citizens and government, it is also about recognition (Tonkens 2014, 3). This means that while citizens take up tasks that were previously done by the government, they also expect to be taken serious as equal conversation partners in decision making processes. Active citizenship comes with new responsibilities, but also with new political rights.

For the City Makers movement political decision-making power is a pivotal part of their practices of active citizenship. When City Makers came together as a movement during events and dialogue sessions their sense of political engagement became very explicit. Doing things differently does not only entail topics of sustainability and welfare, but also democracy itself. Especially during evenings in the New Democracy series and the City Makers Summit the topic of political participation took central stage.

A prime example of this was the City Makers Summit which was organized parallel to the Informal Minstrel meeting on the EU Urban Agenda during the Netherlands EU-presidency in which European urban authorities would agree on a common agenda on topics like housing, climate adaption and migration. A central goal of the movement represented by Pakhuis de Zwijger was to get City Makers recognized in this agreement as important stakeholders in urban policy making. And indeed, it succeeded to get a version of their joint statement accepted as an Annex in the EU Urban Agenda. This achievement was celebrated as an important moment in which the political relevance of City Makers was being recognized by one of the highest authorities, namely the EU. The Summit represented a decisive moment in which City Makers actively lobbied for more political power. And for

an understanding of democracy and active citizenship as a two way street in which also in the realm of governance citizens should be taken seriously as a stakeholder.

City making is very focused on shaping new democratic relations. In his book 'Democratic Legitimacy' Pierre Rosanvallon states that these kind of relations are greatly needed, since old ways of 'governance by the people' are not enough for legitimate governance. Traditionally democratic legitimacy has been established by means of a majority vote (2011, 1). However, representation by elections through majority vote can never be the will of the 'whole people', and can therefore not be sufficient to determine democratic legitimacy (Rosanvallon 2011, 2). In a redefinition of political legitimacy to our current society Rosanvallon points to the fact "that there is more than one way to act or speak on behalf of society and to be representative", and that we need to broaden the definition of legitimacy (2011, 8). "Democratic legitimacy requires a tissue of relationships between government and society" and it is on this that the social appropriation of political power depends (Rosanvallon 2011, 9).

The practices and desires of City Makers show such a strategy to create new webs of relationships between government and society. In the remainder of this chapter I will discuss how City Makers perceive to create new relationships with local governments in order to make urban governance more legitimate. These propositions can be summarized as: shifting from participation to co-creation, demanding subsidiarity, and allowing more flexibility.

4.2 A shift from participation to co-creation

The City Makers' annex that got accepted in the EU Urban Agenda contained the following few sentences:

> "The Ministers agree:
> To recognize the potential of civil society to co-create innovative solutions to urban challenges, which can contribute to public policy making at all levels of government and strengthen democracy in the EU."[36]

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[36] Pact of Amsterdam: www.eu2016.nl

In the initial proposal 'civil society' was still 'City Makers'. The Council of the European Commission however did not go along with the language of City Makers, but chose for the broader term civil society to be sure to include a wide variety of engaged citizens and organizations. What did get accepted was the word 'co-creation'. At first the Council namely decided to use the word 'participation', but the lobbyists from the City Makers movement supported by EUROCITIES[37] managed to get it changed back into co-creation.

The emphasis that is put on using the word co-creation instead of participation illustrates an important difference between the two. The definition of, in this case, 'political participation' can be determined by distinguishing three generations of participation that can be found in the Netherlands (Hendriks and Drosterij 2012, 48). The first generation of political participation entails giving citizens the opportunity to give their opinion about a policy decision at the end of the decision-making process. The second generation of participation, also called 'interactive policy-making', is about involving citizens from the start and during the decision-making process. The third generation of participation is called 'active citizenship' and differs from the others by an exchange of initiative. Here the initiative for participation does not come from the government, but from citizens (Hendriks and Drosterij 2012, 48).

The definition of co-creation seems to be a mixture of the second and third generation of political participation in which government and citizens co-produce policy, without one party leading the initiative. In co-creation government and citizens work together as equal stakeholders from the start onward. As one of the City Makers explained their choice for co-creation:

> "Let's stay away from a top-down or bottom-up approach, we believe we need to stop thinking in those terms."[38]

The issue is thus not who initiates the participation of the other in the decision-making process, but the goal is that the whole process is done in collaboration. In the academic debate such a notion of co-creation can mainly be found in the field of business and marketing where it has been defined as "the joint creation of value by the company and the

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[37] A network of European cities, http://www.eurocities.eu/
[38] From field notes, 30 May 2016

customer" (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004, 8). In the field of governance and citizenship the concept of co-creation remains theoretically underdeveloped.

In a review study on co-creation/co-production with citizens in public innovation Voorberg et al. define co-creation along similar lines as the triple generations definition of participation I mentioned above. In their study they found three types of co-creation in which citizens are actively involved as: co-implementer, co-designer, or co-initiator of public services (Voorberg et al. 2015, 1339). Furthermore, Voorberg et al. notice a variation in the nature of the relationship between government and citizens varying from involvement, to joint responsibility, to partnership (2015, 1340). This means that co-creation can imply a collaborative relationship between citizens and government on merely the production level, but also at the level of full-scale governance.

For City Makers it is a political choice to consistently use the term co-creation over participation, because it entails a more democratic form of political engagement. As Amalia Zepou, one of the active City Makers from Greece, formulated during the City Makers Summit, co-creation is a way to democratize urban governance:

> "All these words co-creation, collaboration, co-everything, is about giving responsibility to citizens. The voting turnout is lowering, people don't believe in elections. But if you have citizens who are active in their city you have there an expression of responsibility in a different form, other than voting."[39]

Practices of co-creation can thus offer an alternative to traditional forms of political engagement such as voting. Sharing responsibility over the city can offer citizens who are politically unengaged by traditional methods a new way to engage with the government.

In the field of marketing, firms can produce more value by co-creating their products with customers, which means that the experience of co-creation itself becomes a source of value creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004, 12). In the same sense co-creation with citizens can be seen as a way to generate political value. The study of Voorberg et al. hints to this perspective of co-creation as a "process of sense-making in which citizen involvement is seen as having important political value" that could fill the existing deficit of political legitimacy in our current democracy (2015, 1349). How exactly co-creation could be used to create such political value is however left open for further research.

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[39] From field notes, 30 May 2016

City Makers are very clear about the value of co-creation. In order for co-creation to work, City Makers need to be recognized as equal partners in shaping the public domain. During the City Makers Summit I sat next to a City Maker from Bulgaria. She explained to me that in Bulgaria the post-communist government and citizens are not even working on the 'same page' yet. She said that she felt that in Bulgaria they first needed to lose the mindset of government and the citizens as opposites and instead invest in a mutual willingness to interact before they could start attempts of co-creation. This leap of faith was however often hindered by the constant rotation of political parties in the City council.

Also Dutch City Makers struggled with the mindset of the municipality. One example is a community house in Amsterdam West. During a city expedition I cycled through Amsterdam with a group of City Makers. One of our stops was an old school building that had been transformed as a flexible working place, artist residence, music school, neighborhood meeting place and community garden. The City Maker who guided us through the building explained how the previous city council supported the initiative as a valuable asset to the neighborhood, but that the change of political parties after the elections had made an end to the partnership that existed between the active citizens and the municipality. The new city council did not perceive these active citizens as colleagues to improve the neighborhood, but as clients who should pay a high rent for the monumental building or be replaced by commercial companies who could venture the building.

While market partners are often perceived as the logical choice for shaping the public realm, citizens are still often disregarded as guardians of public interest. For collaboration to happen, there is thus need for a mentality shift in line with the commons, positioning citizens as equal partners next to the state and market. One of the key scholars in the commons movement, Christian Iaione, argues that the main answer is a redistribution of power. "Basically it is about updating the governance structure of the city. Urban governance has been premised upon the idea that it is either public or private, but now we are seeing that more and more the city is being governed as a commons with the community as an important driver"[40].

Co-governance or co-creation is thus about setting up collaborations between citizens and the municipality on terms of trust and equal partnership. City making is

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[40] From field notes, 30 May 2016

simultaneously a claim for a political say on the interpretation and governance of general interests. For this to happen there is need to create a new democratic organization based on principles of subsidiarity.

4.3 Demanding subsidiarity

One very politically minded City Maker's initiative that I encountered was that of Eva. I met her at almost all events on City Making in Pakhuis de Zwijger and talked to her often on the subject. Eva started out as an active resident in her own neighborhood, organizing events and building a network together with neighbors to make the neighborhood more connected and more enjoyable to live in. Because of these activities she gained a lot of experience in working together and communicating with the municipality in order to arrange the right permits and conform to the municipal regulations when organizing public events in the neighborhood. In our interview she told me that after these successful events the municipality applauded the activities of the group of active neighbors, and declared that they should continue even though the help from the municipality would not continue. For Eva this moment brought up the question why policy by the municipality and the activities of the residents are not two sides of the same coin? Were they not together working on the same goal, namely improving the livability in the neighborhood?

She then decided to use her experience as a mediator between civil servants and citizens to develop a method to bridge the gap between policy making and the daily life of citizens. Within this method she tries to combine the municipality's intention to work with a neighborhood focused approach, with a form of collaboration that also suits the interests of citizens. A set of steps is followed through which residents of a neighborhood are able to formulate their joint priorities and communicate their top choice to the municipality. The municipality then approves and if needed makes the proposals fit with existing policies. After this the residents choose the local organization that offers them the best proposal for implementation of the plans. As a result, the final plan that is implemented is generated by combining the input of all relevant stakeholders in the neighborhood. Because of this process tasks are not simply outsourced to citizens, but developed with a feedback loop from citizens to municipality and back. In this way residents as well as the municipality

becomes able to make decisions that really benefit the neighborhood. And the expertise of both the municipality, residents, and other local organizations are all incorporated in the execution of the final plan.

Eva's initiative shows that being seen as a meaningful stakeholder in decision and policy making involves a redistribution of decision-making power.

"The participation society is a rhetoric of the government. There is a big difference with what City Makers are doing. This is about changing decision-making power and bringing influence down."[41]

What is highlighted by this example is that genuine collaboration and an attempt at co-creation between municipality and citizens entails bringing decision-making power down to the level of those who are best suited to analyze what is needed. The residents have the expertise to come up with proposals for the neighborhood and the municipality has the expertise to make them fit in legal terms. Using the expertise of each stakeholder at the right moment in the decision-making process is often referred to as the method of 'subsidiarity':

"the principle that decisions should always be taken at the lowest possible level or closest to where they will have their effect, for example in a local area rather than for a whole country." (Cambridge Dictionary Online)

Basically subsidiarity means that those who live in a certain context are also empowered to make decisions concerning that context. During the City Makers Pre-Summit of 4 and 5 February 2016 one of the City Makers summarized the discussion on the recognition on the role of City Makers in the EU Urban Agenda as follows:

"Cities are the places where policies are spelled out in practice. The Agenda thus has the opportunity to finally make this connection between regulation and the people who have to live with them."[42]

With the lowering of decision-making power also comes a sense of ownership. Getting ownership over your living environment enables you to become active in shaping it. A City Maker from Amsterdam poignantly illustrated the role of ownership for making the city:

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[41] From interview, 12 May 2016
[42] From field notes, 5 Feb. 2016

"We have build a whole system in which we outsourced everything to the governments, everything is professionalized towards bureaucracy, which is very nice. It is very well organized, we have nice garbage containers and a disposal system. But the disadvantage of outsourcing everything, is that nothing is mine anymore. If you lift a stone out of the sidewalk here, I would not know what to do with it, maybe put some plants in it. The whole public space is in ownership of the municipality. If I step out of my door I enter the space of the municipality. But why is it of the municipality? Why not from the community! We have created a playing field in which citizens who live here think 'I am a consumer, I just live here, while the municipality takes care of the garbage'."[43]

Giving citizens decision making power over their surroundings makes citizens co-owners over the city. That is not an unthinkable thing to do when it is their home after all. To turn people into citizens instead of consumers they should be able to co-decide on matters that interest and affect them.

As the opposite of processes of commodification and enclosure of public space (e.g. Saskia Sassen 2014), City Makers encourage processes of public ownership. It is for a reason that the City Makers' slogan on the square outside Pakhuis de Zwijger states: "We own the city". As Sheila Foster and Christian Iaione describes in their article on 'The City as a Commons' the city making movement asserts not just a 'right to the city' as described by Lefebvre, but "the city as a shared resource" (2016, 3). The theory on the commons here helps to understand how also public space in the city can be seen as a shared resource. This shared resource can be managed by local governments, but as City Makers show it can also be co-managed by citizens.

Lowering decision-making power on terms of shared ownership calls for a quite different approach to governing the city. To realize co-governance in the current context therefore would call for a great deal of flexibility.

4.4 A desire for flexibility

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[43] From interview, 24 June 2016

During the evening program on the politics of experimentation one of the City Makers explained how they keep in close contact with the municipality during their self-building project, because of the necessity to fit regulations and get construction plans approved. "We are creating a circular neighborhood. The new technical measures we are using clash with the system. But we do need rules for that, which is a complex thing for the government."[44]. Doing something new often does not fit into existing policy frameworks. These new practices therefore express the need for more flexibility in policies and legislature. Like the City Maker from a care cooperative told a civil servant who did not approve of less parking spaces per house because of standard policy: "it is no fun to say that something is not possible, it becomes more interesting when you think together and try to come up with a compromise on how to make it possible."[45].

Next to more flexibility in legislature to accommodate the novel practices of City Makers, their initiatives also ask a different role of the government. An energy cooperative that I visited made so much money with their windmills that they decided to invest it in isolating houses in the neighborhood. The responsible City Maker remarked the strange situation that resulted in which they as a non-public organization took up the task of isolating houses and giving people subsidies on solar panels. The only task of the municipality was to accommodate the whole initiative, mainly by allowing them to use the land for the windmills. Practices such as the sustainable energy initiative or the care cooperative actively change the distribution of roles by taking up tasks as public actors next to the state and market. It shows that new relations are shaped through practice.

During the program on experimentation, professor of Geography Harriet Bulkeley gave a fitting analysis of the shifts that occur through these kind of new practices:

> "We don't want to think of experiments as curiosities to be admired. That we, like Alice, try a little drink of this and a little bite of that and scale ourselves up and down to fit through that door into Wonderland. But instead we need to think of experiments as working where they are able to achieve some form of disturbance. [...] We should perceive experiments as a mode of intervening in the city that is revealing all sort of new things about what is possible to do, where questions of

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[44] From field notes, 7 April 2016
[45] From interview, 20 June 2016

politics might be arising but also where transformative potential might come from."[46]

It is through the disturbances, the flexibility in legislature, the redistribution of roles, that City Maker initiatives open up opportunities for new modes of governance and novel forms of democratic relationships.

This perspective on City Makers' initiatives as experiments that push for change through their newness and drive for innovation fits very well in transition theory in which so-called niche practices push existing societal systems to change resulting in new structures and practices (Avelino and Rotmans 2009, 545). However, this way of thinking pushes City Makers back into a top-down and bottom-up discourse, which does not suit their collaborative intentions. The very practices of City Makers try to do away with the top-down / bottom-up and niche / regime dichotomies. It is through attempts of co-creation between citizens and government that these initiatives shift democratic relations and open up opportunities for new modes of governance. In a recent article Avelino et al. came to a similar conclusion "that niche-regime interaction can be understood as a dialectic process of innovation, capture and translation, in which niches and regimes are equally involved" (2016, 4).

City Makers work in innovating governance by collaboration on terms of co-ownership over the city. On February 25th I co-organized a public conversation called 'Co-creating the city'[47], which brought City Makers and civil servants together to formulate set of recommendations for good urban governance. One of the recommendation was not to look for best practices, but for best processes. A City Maker from Croatia emphasized that you cannot simply copy-paste a successful model of co-creation, since depending on the context, a practice that worked in one place can have adverse effects in another. Government and citizens therefore need to take the time to experiment together, enabling a solution-based approach on the basis of on the real life context of citizens.

The city is an ideal space for such a solution-based approach. As the late Benjamin Barber argued in his 'If Mayors Ruled the World' cities are the most networked and interconnected of our political associations and are hindered less by party politics and

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[46] From field notes, 7 Apr. 2016

[47] See the program and the video recording here: https://dezwijger.nl/programma/co-creating-the-city

desires for sovereignty compared to the state, which makes the urban context better suited for experiments and novel collaborations (2014, 4). An example is the work of Christian Iaione, one of the frontrunners of the Bologna Regulations, which set up dozens of pacts between the city of Bologna and citizen initiatives to collectively govern certain aspects of the public domain[48]. According to Iaione:

> "Experimentalism should be one of the ways in which policy makers can come to understand that this is a cultural shift they need to make, they need to learn by doing it. We try to reframe how public policies are created. Because public policies should be created out of experimentation. They should go out and practice, that is how we created the regulation and we are creating new public policies in different cities."[49]

A Dutch City Maker spoke about the same kind of 'experience driven co-governance': "The municipality needs to step out of the door and come join us here in the neighborhood. Only when you collaborate together with citizens you discover the true needs of the people"[50].

Of course this flexible approach to governance and experimentation in the public domain does not guarantee success. During almost every City Makers program I went to the necessity of accepting failure was discussed. Failure belongs to innovation. As one of the City Makers from the care cooperative mentioned during our interview there is no such thing as 'guaranteed innovation'[51]. City Makers ask from local governments not to fear failure, but embrace it as a learning process. In our interview Christian Iaione compared experimental democracy to the practice of ring fencing. "It is a technique of separating risks. By giving more autonomy you decrease the amount of risk. Because when someone fails, the costs are contained"[52]. According to Iaione we should invest in reframing failure as the next step to success, since it costs far less to invest in experiments with citizens than to invest in a huge public policy reform, that have similar chances of failure.

An example of a frontrunner in adjusting policies according to the needs of social initiatives and allowing for experimentation in governance is City Maker and vice mayor of

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[48] Bologna Regulations:
http://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Bologna_Regulation_for_the_Care_and_Regeneration_of_Urban_Commons
[49] From field notes, 30 May 2016
[50] From field notes, 15 June 2016
[51] From interview, 20 June 2016
[52] From interview, 31 May 2016

Athens, Amalia Zepou who announced during a conversation on failure that they are actually now celebrating 'Failure Day' in the municipality of Athens (From field notes 5 Feb. 2016). As also the other City Makers expressed such flexibility and reframing of failure is crucial for allowing new modes of governance to emerge.

City Makers speak of a clear desire to be taken serious as an equal and legitimate stakeholder in the public domain. Some because they just do not want to be hindered by local governments in their innovative practices, while others actively seek a closer collaboration with local governments. Either way, their practices call for the emergence of new democratic relations between citizens and government that are better suited to the current organization of our individualized society in which citizens want to have a say when they are asked to be active.

5   Conclusion

The main question of this thesis was: How do City Makers related to Pakhuis de Zwijger contribute to democratic renewal? Through a description of City Makers and their own perspectives on their practices in the public domain this thesis provides a bottom-up formulation of active citizenship and the practices of democratic renewal.

First, I discussed the underlying motivations of City Makers' actions and examined how their practices fit into existing notions of active citizenship. Observations and conversations with City Makers showed that they are personally triggered by a local urgency or lack to create their own public services separate from those of the market and state. By creating public services that benefit their neighborhood City Makers show how they connect personal interest to engagement with the public domain. This demonstrates a mode of active citizenship that successfully combines individualism with a sense of solidarity towards the community. It also shows how citizenship agendas are formulated not *against* the government, nor *in service* of the government, but as partner to the government. City Makers become translators of local general interests and thereby, with their communities, producers of public value.

Secondly, I questioned the democratic legitimacy of City Makers as a small elite creating public services. A closer look on the organization of City Makers' initiatives showed that their initiatives are only effective and successful when: there is a demand and network of users; the initiative is limited in scope to a local context; and if there are frontrunners who dare to take the initiative. This means that City Makers are indeed not representative to society, but create a great diversity of local and small-scale public services that are unequally divided over society. As a consequence, City Makers provoke a shift of understanding of the principle of equality. Instead of safeguarding equality by providing everyone with the same services as is in done in the welfare state, City Makers argue that there is more fairness to diversity if hereby the different needs are better taken into account. As a result, the practices of City Makers point towards a welfare system that tries to be inclusive instead representative to differences.

Third, I examined how City Makers perceive their relationship with local government and what type of new democratic relations they propose. From the way City Makers talked about their collaboration with the municipality and actively tried to shift the discourse on citizen participation to that of co-creation, it becomes clear that City Makers manifest themselves as equal partners to local governments. They hereby try to do away with urban governance being perceived as either top-down or bottom-up. By taking up the role of an equal public partner City Makers shift the focus of the relationship with the municipality from that of power to one based on public interests. This generates the need for different collaborative interactions. Entailing a lowering of decision making power to those who live with the consequences and know their needs best (subsidiarity), and an allowance of a more flexible and context based approach to policy-making that is not afraid to innovate. It is through these practices that new democratic relationships between citizens and local government can emerge.

In short the answer of the main research question is that City Makers contribute to democratic renewal because they take up a new role as equal public partners to the state. And it is from this position that city making practices create the basis for opportunities for different decision making processes to emerge in which citizens have more say and ownership over their own living environment. With their local, innovative and one of a kind activities City Makers push for change in policy and different democratic relations. Thereby providing quite clear propositions and the right set of circumstances to increase the democratic legitimacy of urban governance. The character of their actions thus call for the 'disturbances of the existing order' (Bulkeley 7 Apr. 2016), or fruitful niche-regime interactions as described in transition theory (Avelino et al. 2016, 4). In summary the new approach City Makers impose and desire with their actions looks like figure 2. Reformulating the legitimacy of urban governance as based on an inclusive provision of public services, that takes local needs central stage, provides citizens with a say over issues that affect them and is flexible to accommodate change and innovation.

In terms of citizenship City Makers' practices propose a shift from citizens as consumers to citizens as producers of public value. It urges to take a 'politics of doing' seriously as a form of civic engagement. As to the connection between active citizenship and democratic renewal the stories of City Makers showed that their contribution to democratic renewal is not just civic empowerment through self-governance, but that it is

civic empowerment through co-governance. Opening up opportunities for collaboration that are vital for increasing the legitimacy of urban governance. Most of the energy for democratic renewal might be found among City Makers, but through their activity they envision that it is through equal and collective action with local governments that truly different democratic order can come about.
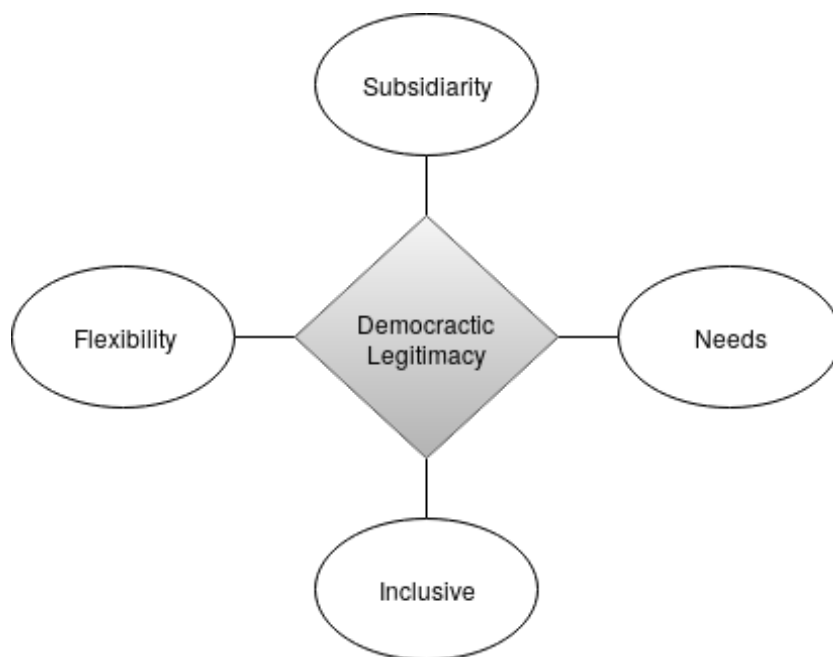

Figure 2: Democratic legitimacy of urban governance according to City Makers

Further research should examine the perspective of non-active citizens and active citizens that feel excluded from the City Makers movement. Within the scope of this thesis I did not have the opportunity to go into the negative effects of city making. However, from people outside my research population I have heard that the collaboration between City Makers and municipality does not necessarily benefit citizens with similar plans in the neighbourhood. For a more critical analysis on the effect of City Makers it would be valuable to research the negative effects of certain active citizens on other groups of (active) citizens. For example, by investigating the effect of (possible) mechanisms of favouritism by civil servants.

Another aspect that the scope of this research barely touched upon is the role of civil servants in the collaboration with City Makers. In conversations and events, it was often mentioned that for co-governance civil servants have to become 'service designers' or

'enablers' of active citizens. But what should this role look like in practice? How do you design a bureaucracy that makes people to work together? Example such as the online platform SynAthina could be further analysed. This also relates to the issue of 'voluntarism' that was brought up very often. To create deeper understanding of co-creation between citizens and government it would be fruitful to examine how citizens can take up an equal role in the public realm that does not take the shape of voluntary action next to 'real jobs'. Answers to such questions are key for taking civic empowerment seriously.

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20 Jan. 2016:   New Democracy #1: In Transition

5 Feb. 2016:   New Europe City Makers Pre-Summit – Co-creating citizens and government

5 Feb. 2016:   New Europe City Makers Pre-Summit – Redesigning democracy

25 Feb. 2016:   New Democracy #2: Co-creating the city

7 Apr. 2016:   New Democracy #5: Politics of Experimentation

8 Apr. 2016:   BewonersBedrijven On Tour

28 May 2016:   City Makers Summit – City Expedition The Hague

29 May 2016:   City Makers Summit – City Expedition Amsterdam

30 May 2016:   City Makers Summit – New Democracy and the Co-city

30 May 2016:   City Makers Summit – Europe by People

15 June 2016: New Democracy #8: De Inclusiviteit van stedelijke innovatie

2 Nov. 2016:   New Democracy #11: Democratie in de buurt