

Making Makkies

An ethnographic study of social and economic value generated through participation
in a social community currency project in Amsterdam Oost



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FOREWORD

My decision to select the Makkies project, a community currency in Amsterdam Oost as the location and focus of my fieldwork during my master studies lies in two defining moments that left an impact on me in the winter of 2017. The first was reading the book, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* by Anna Tsing, the second was watching the rise of Bitcoin, which fueled a general interest in alternative currencies. By tracing the supply-chain route of matsutake, Tsing opens the readers eyes to the threats and damages of unsustainable supply chains and capitalist driven production processes. Tsing takes the reader on a journey through the forests of Oregon to the Matsutake markets in Japan. In doing so she refers to the Marxist notion of alienation. Marx used the concept to talk about the separation of the worker from processes of production, as well as other workers. Tsing takes on Marx's perspective on alienation and expands on it by pointing to what she calls salvage accumulation, a further separation of non-humans as well as humans from their own livelihood processes.

Alienation distances ourselves from our 'entangled' realities as Tsing would put it. According to Helleiner, in large scale economies individuals can feel a sense of alienation as large and anonymous economic forces seem to control their lives in ways that are hard to understand. Peoples alienation is reinforced as their participation in the economy no longer seems closely tied to meaningful local values and social relationships (Helleiner 2000: 40). Alienation has spread from modes of production and entered the realm of the social. Speaking from recent fieldwork experience and prior volunteer experiences I noticed in many social organizations in *Amsterdam Oost* that there appears to be a growing gap in contact between citizens of different social classes.

Theoretical data suggests a growing rate of urbanization. The growing wealth gap in cities will only exponentially increase as an article by Angel et al suggests followed by urban land cover in developing countries increasing from 300,000 km² to 1,200,000 km² by 2050 (Angel et al. 2011: 53). Social alienation appears to be manifesting itself in the growing wealth gap. A report released by the UN projects the population to keep growing and hit 10.1 billion by the end of the century (Gilles and Dugger 2011). Since our global population is still set on growing issues such as the growing wealth gap will only increase. I want to find tools and solutions to solve these issues. My general interest first directed me to platforms that were focused on exchange of skills, services or goods. These exchange systems, such as LETS system, were often used to bring the community together and help build social cohesion.

The second defining moment was seeing the potential of alternative forms of currency in the unprecedented rise of bitcoin. Cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin represent non-government backed digital currencies that have grown substantially through public interest but mainly because of the underlying blockchain technology. Although I am certainly an advocate for the potential of cryptocurrencies they will not be dealt with much in the case study of Makkies. The technological details of bitcoin in this case are not as relevant as the idea of the potential of alternative currencies. In the case of Bitcoin, value is being generated by the users, miners who participate in the system, maintaining it, contributing to it and are therefore rewarded with tokens for doing so. Bitcoin carries with it not only the potential of a currency, but feelings of anti-establishment and a 'reversal of the status quo' sentiment. The idea of value being generated by its participants is what turned me to alternative currency systems, I wanted to find a system of value that rewarded community orientated, or environmentally conscious behavior. One of the growing concerns in society today is to address the aforementioned ails of climate change and capitalist production processes, which carry with them notions of salvage accumulation and alienation. These are all entirely a product of human behavior and consumption. I felt we needed to reconsider what constitutes value in our society, this is what sparked my interest in alternative currency systems.

MAP OF AMSTERDAM (FIG 1.)



INTRODUCTION. SEEKING ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS OF VALUE

Since Linton's LETS systems we have witnessed the introduction and scaling of several forms of alternative currencies. The Alternative Currency Database includes more than 300 local alternative currencies. The resistance to the power of the state, expressed as growth in alternative, non-government backed currencies, contributes to the positioning of alternative currencies as a response to perceived failures of capitalism and the nation-states that continue to support market-based capitalism (Cohen 2017: 739). One of the most notorious examples of this being the Financial Crisis of 2007 which was centered in the U.S on the subprime mortgage markets. Bundles of mortgages were traded between investment banks, hedge funds and other conduits for more than they were worth leading to uncertainties about the value of the securities collateralized by these mortgages. Which led to the freezing of interbank lending in August 2007 followed by the massive credit crunch. The crisis not only weakened major banks balance sheets, but also saw a drop of over 50% in many stock prices (Bordo & Haubrich 2009: 17). According to Adams and Mouatt (2010) the financial system is now driven on speculation and gambling on the markets, which provides a risky and volatile base. Given the potential riskiness of financial institutions and markets, it seems clear alternative currencies have come up in efforts to achieve stability.

Debates on alternative currencies indicate we may be on a turning point in how value is captured and exchanged in society. Seyfang & Longhurst argue that innovations such as alternative currencies are based in the social economy (rather than the market economy). They are driven by social need and ideological commitment (rather than seeking profits) (Seyfang & Longhurst 2012: 883). The creation of alternative currencies is explicitly designed to foster a decentralized sense of economic space by altering transaction costs in ways that encourage participants to change consumption patterns and 'buy locally' (Helleiner 2000: 37). Like Seyfang & Longhurst, Cohen agrees that development of alternative currencies is often driven by grassroots and/or a technologically empowered movements, to confront the ills perceived to be powered and exacerbated by market-based capitalism, such as climate change and income inequality. (Cohen 2017: 742) Environmental problems have been exacerbated by the large-scale nature of economic life in industrial societies. Long-distance trade produces more pollution and draws away benefits from localized economic activity (Helleiner 2000: 39).

Local currency advocates not only seek to challenge the globalization of economic life but also to challenge the neoliberal goal of 'depolicizing' the economy. Helleiner explains where neoliberals prefer 'the invisible hand' of the marketplace, including the idea that the economy must be managed by a central authority such as the nation-state. Local currency advocates disagree and instead believe the nation-state is no longer capable of performing this role in the age of globalization. Local currency advocates believe that nation-states are too large a community to be genuinely democratic and responsive to local needs

(Helleiner 2000: 42). In this sense, one could view alternative currencies as, a resistance against perceived ills of nation building and more recently the automation of work (Cohen 2017: 741). There are many possible explanations for the implementation of a currency. Alternative currencies can also spring up in social conflict, in cases of social or economic injustice, or social exclusion. In these sorts of cases community currencies have come up as solutions to remedy this. In Argentina for example a barter system has emerged in response to community and worker demands to expand forms of social inclusion and unity (Primavera 2010: 42).

Nowadays studies speak of the promising potential of community currencies in improving social capital or building ties within local networks, yet often fail to specify how value is created in a particular community currency system (Cohen 2017; Collom 2011; Nakazato 2012; Sanz 2015). This has left me in search of in-depth and specific information in how value is created among participants of a community currency system, in search of answers I have chosen to investigate Makkies, a community currency project in Amsterdam Oost. The focus of my research is thus to uncover how social value is created among members of the Makkies system in Amsterdam Oost.

The central question of my research is: How is social value created through participation within the community currency Makkies in Amsterdam Oost?

The following sub-questions were formulated to accompany the central question.

How has the development of the *Indische Buurt* and the *Oostenlijk Havengebied* played a role in why Makkies was developed in Amsterdam Oost? And what are the motivations for users and participants to engage in Makkies (a community currency system)?

Which forms of social value are important for participants of Makkies (a community currency) system in Amsterdam Oost? How does participation in Makkies contribute to a sense of belonging to the community among the participant groups?

How can changes in the structural arrangements of Makkies in Amsterdam Oost affect its ability to function as a community currency system and what are shortcomings identified in the project?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK. THE CONCEPTS

In order to understand the different forms of social value that are present within the Makkies system I turn to the notion of community development. Community development has been defined by Florin and Wandersman (1990) as voluntary cooperation and self-help/mutual aid efforts among residents of a particular locale which aim to improve the physical, social and economic conditions of the community or community members. Economic conditions as mentioned in the definition of community development, prove to be an important layer in understanding motivations of different groups of participants within the Makkies system. For especially volunteers in the Makkies system the economic value of Makkies slowly began to outweigh the social value of the currency. For other groups such as the Coordinators which were not users of the Makkies system, participation in the community currency was focused more towards the social value that they felt they could achieve by participating. I have chosen not to directly adopt the concept of community development in understanding Makkies because as I will indicate, different user groups seek different forms of value that do not always directly improve the community as a whole but remains social, physical or economically orientated in some way.

Social value in Makkies can be understood as benefits to social capital, which has often also been an outcome of other alternative currency projects (Sanz 2015; Seyfang and Longhurst 2012). Social capital has been defined as ‘the structure of relations between actors and among actors that facilitates productive activity (Schucksmith 2000: 211). Putnam’s conceptualization provides a more layered conceptualization as ‘features of social organizations, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions’ (Putnam 1995: 167).

The social value generated within Makkies is different from social capital in that it is not focused on a structure of relations between actors or centered in networks. Often in the case of Makkies the social value generated by participants is centered on a sense of belonging to the community. The practices they conduct that tie them to the structures around them. Social value as I define it in the case of Makkies takes on characteristics of social capital and community development. The characteristics of social capital that are present in social value are that actions are also based on a foundation of trust, norms of engagement between participants, these in turn are directed from a structure of networks. However social value differs from social capital in that the acquired capital is not directed at the individual or society, but is instead directed within the structure of Makkies, by spending and earning within the system or specifically within the neighborhoods hereby supporting local businesses. Social value is also obtained within a set of relations, between participants or groups of participants within Makkies.

Social value takes on elements of social capital but is in many ways also acts like community development. Actions and participation in Makkies also imply voluntary cooperation between participants, acting within a particular locale who aim to improve the physical, social and economic conditions of the community or community members that participate in the system. Social value understood as such serves as a basis for looking at the forms value generated within the Makkies system.

Community development as defined by Florian and Wandersman (1990) suggests a homogenous body of the community, this is not the case in Makkies, as there are participants and users in the system that do not reside in Amsterdam. When speaking with participants it became clear that the concept of the community could differ among different user groups.

The most frequent and common use of ‘the community’ in the case of Makkies has been identified as pertaining to Amsterdam Oost as a whole. During interviews it became clear that volunteers and coordinators would refer to ‘the buurt’ or the neighborhood when talking about ‘the community’. The neighborhood is specifically the 2 districts Makkies is active in, the *Indische Buurt* and the *Oostenlijk Havengebied*. Interviews revealed that there are additional implicit understandings of the community among different respondent groups. Especially volunteers could refer to even smaller sense of ‘the community’, in those cases they were often referring to the community of volunteers that participate in the Makkies system. When groups such as the local businesses were referring to the community this often implied the specific district their store was located in or in other cases would mean the overarching community of Amsterdam Oost. The Municipality of Amsterdam was the group that most stuck to the broadest sense of the definition of community presented above. Due to these varying levels of understanding of the community among participants this has led to social value generated by participants being directed back to specific levels within the community.

Belonging is the final concept that is firmly rooted in the Makkies system. Belonging is closely tied to community and the center of social value generated in Makkies. All participants groups shared a sense of belonging to ‘the community’ through their participation in the Makkies system. In her article May (2011) points to the importance of understanding people’s everyday sense of belonging to their relational, cultural and material contexts and what that says about the interconnection between self and social change. Focusing on belonging provides an alternative to top-down theorizing, which May points out has in the past focused on how changes in society require people to adapt. In contrast, because of both its location in the everyday realities of people and its dynamic nature, belonging is a concept that allows us to examine mutual interaction between social change and the self (May 2011: 374). Understanding belonging is also crucial in understanding the value generated for different participants in the Makkies system. Feeling a sense of belonging to the community is a characteristic shared by all participants and

proves to be deeply intertwined with how participants feel they are generating social value within the Makkies system.

May also explains everyday practices are often regulated and creative, hence generative of social change (May 2011: 364). May's main argument is that human behavior should be understood through the notion of social practices. Individual actions, or practices she explains have often been thought to reaffirm and construct social structures around them. This contrasts with Bourdieu who takes on a relational approach to show the interplay between structure and agency, the reproduction of power relations and the possibilities for social change (Christoforou 2018: 279). Bourdieu introduces notions of field and habitus to describe the interaction between objective and subjective social structures and combines this with reconceptualizations of capital that derives from a variety of economic and non-economic (cultural, social and symbolic) capital resources (Christoforou 2018: 280). Bourdieu distances himself from determinist thinking preferring to highlight agency, focusing on the individual's potential to shape society while themselves being a product of that society.

However, Bourdieu's focus on the relationship between agency and structures proves to be ill suited to observe the changes and effect of practices on the structure of the community currency Makkies, because like social capital it draws focus to the individual instead of highlighting the structures and practices. Following May's argument by explaining the focus on the practices and structures around people I will be able to analyze the case of Makkies. This focus will allow me to narrow in on the relationship between practices of the participants and how practices shape the structural arrangements of the community currency project they partake in. Looking at belonging as May states allows for a dynamic examination of the self and the society they live in. Within the community currency Makkies participants come together through practices and together give meaning and create a sense of belonging to Amsterdam Oost.

This thesis is therefore an ethnographic case-study towards understanding the in-depth dynamics of a local community currency. The central aim of this paper is to show how value is created for different users and participants of the community currency system, the value of community currencies has often only been described to show how participants can build social capital through participation. With this thesis I aim to show that community currencies can offer its user and participants a variety of benefits, in the form of social value but also economic value that increasingly plays a role in the development of Makkies. However ultimately each group of users and participants seek different outcomes. At times there is strong overlap between Makkies users in motivations to engage in Makkies. Among participants greater variations are seen among motivations to participate. Through storytelling I aim to show how participants within the community currency system have opened up to share their experiences and indicate how the system provides them with individual contributions through different aspects of social value. How they

understand the community currency project that they take part in and what values they feel are created by the system and are important to them. This thesis will also aim to indicate how structural rearrangements, especially in regard to who is encouraged to participate can result in implications that have lasting impacts on the effects and outreach of a community currency project.

UNDERSTANDING ALTERNATIVE CURRENCIES

Before exploring the different layers of Makkies and how it could build value and a shared sense of belonging among its different groups of participants it is worth looking at the development of alternative currency systems. The following section will look at the development of alternative currencies, the different forms of alternative currencies are important to grasp a full understanding of the processes of Makkies. Alternative currencies as the literature will show have in some cases emerged as a form of resistance to the state, empowering citizens that are not able to take part in conventional financial systems (Primavera 2010; Sanz 2015). Alternative currencies seek to create new systems of exchange and often use their own forms of currency, they all seek to provide some form of value for their participants but do this in different ways. In explaining the development of alternative currency systems, it may prove useful to begin with a currency system we are more familiar with.

Money functions as a means of exchange, unit of account, store of value and standard for deferred payment. Modern money, at least described in classical accounts of Marx, Weber, and Simmel provides a universal yardstick against which to measure and evaluate the universe of objects, relations, services and persons (Maurer 2006: 16). Money commodifies goods so that we can understand them as products, in order to compare their values. By setting a price or value on goods or services it ties them together under a common system. More recently the channels of money transaction, in corporate and the traditional banking sector, are increasingly technology based. Electronic digits have virtually replaced coins and paper (Adams and Mouatt 2010: 8). One thing that is universally agreed upon is, currencies are mechanisms for enabling an exchange between parties (Cohen 2017: 740). What is often different among currencies is their agreed upon value, this can vary day to day, or within a month as we saw in the turbulent rise of bitcoin late 2017, to its fall early 2018. When looking at national currencies many Latin American countries, have over the last 20 years experienced very high and volatile exchange rate depreciations, which have affected their domestic currencies leading to high inflation rates (Bjornland 2005: 375). There are various dual currency developments today that aim to mitigate these effects to domestic currencies, countries such as Venezuela still suffer under high inflation and currency devaluation, they remain interested in looking towards developing a dual currency system to provide

stability to their economy (Adams and Mouatt 2010: 8). Dual currencies or alternative currencies are not a new phenomenon they are able to perform a set of functions that can substantially improve the quality of economic and social life (Adams and Mouatt 2010: 9).

In some form or another local alternative currencies have been around for centuries. Since the widespread adoption of national currencies, local alternative currencies have had a place in societies around the globe. In 1982 in British Columbia, Canadian Micheal Linton launched the first organized complementary currency system in the second half of the twentieth century known as LET's and originally meaning "Let's move against lack of money". It later adopted the initials for "A Local Exchange and Trading System" (LETS) which is a locally created not-for-profit community enterprise (Primavera 2010: 41). Its function was to enable people to trade goods and services with each other where the national currency is in short supply (Williams 1997: 1). It was a mutual credit system in which registered accounts were made in a central payroll and/or "checks" issued. Participants could be companies or individuals, and under certain conditions, they exchanged products and services, keeping positive and negative limits, within preset balances (Primavera 2010: 46). Alternative currencies are very similar to Linton's LETS in the sense that they are designed to meet the needs of the defined community, typically on a not for profit basis (Dodd 2015: 32). Another project named Noppes is also still active in parts of the Netherlands, it closely resembles Linton's system of LETS. Noppes uses a website which serves as a network for exchanging goods and services. Alternative currencies have commonly been implemented in a grassroots fashion as a response to economic shocks, such as at the start of the economic crisis around the start of the twenty-first century (Cohen 2017: 745).

COMMUNITY CURRENCIES

Community currencies are a subset of alternative currencies that are tied to a specific demarcated and limited community. The community could be for example, geographical (local currencies); business-based (mutual-credit systems; or even online (digital currencies). Community currencies are built on an alternative or local currency as a medium of exchange of service and goods (Michel and Hudon 2015: 160). Community currency advocates frequently argue that community currencies can contribute to social sustainability by promoting social cohesion (Collom 2011; Sanz 2015; Nakazato and Lim 2016). Others have indicated the potential for community currencies to facilitate networks and build ties among community members, this in turn improves their social capital (Sanz 2015; Nakazato 2012). Other community currency cases aim to indicate how like other alternative currencies they can foster local economic activity by preventing global outflows and increasing circulation within the community (Michel

and Hudon 2015: 161). One common goal is that community currencies aim to deliver services either neglected by the state or private industry and functionality that mainstream money cannot – such as providing liquidity to cash poor areas to relieve unemployment and help people meet their needs (Seyfang and Longhurst 2012: 66). A range of community currency systems exist although most are either a form of LETS or time banks. While each local currency operates differently, these initiatives all seek to support local communities over foreign companies and investors (Cohen 2017: 746).

Social community currencies are the newest form of community currencies; they are often grassroots and are developed with close ties to the users themselves, they are introduced to allow exchanges; like any community currency they produce no interest (Primavera 2010: 54). In 1995 Argentina was under structural adjustment plans imposed by the World Bank and IMF it crippled the domestic industry (Primavera 2010: 49). The domestic currency suffered, and many individuals faced a decrease in purchasing power. To combat this a credit system was used in the barter networks, these networks were importantly self-managed at different organizational levels (Primavera 2010: 51). In the case of the *creditos* bartering system that reached over 100,000 users in Argentina the system was socially orientated because it focused on meeting the needs of its users rather than economic gains. By focusing on social aspects such as inclusion of all community members meant that all were able to participate. Primavera explains that the system sought not to use high-cost products, instead every user could bring whatever product he or she was able to deliver, even idle-used objects, this meant users without a specific skillset or product to offer could still participate in the system. The barter system was self-managed, every user was a prosumer (both producer and consumer). This was the reason the system flourished, by allowing the whole community to participate it strengthened ties among community members and helped build trust and loyalty. The barter system started as an initiative of a small group of environmentalists who aimed at ‘doing good business’ to deal with rising unemployment in the area (Primavera 2010: 47). Participants were encouraged to meet up with one another, there were monthly assemblies of clubs on regional and national levels. The money earned selling goods was encouraged to be spent in the same club, transactions between community members would provide economic benefits between members within a club and focus on local development (Primavera 2010: 48). Essentially, the credit system was also a political movement, aimed at giving power back to producers and consumers as a form of social justice and redistribution of wealth.

Time-banks which is an important concept to understand in the case of Makkies are another form of alternative currencies, the concept was invented by Edgar Chan in the late 80’s. In a time banking system, each hour spent helping another member equals a time credit recorded into a time bank account. Modern systems are digital although many still work with paper (Kwon, Lee and Xiao 2017: 303). The number of

hours worked is recorded per location. In many time-banks services are traded within the network of members on a broader than one-to-one basis. Services range in sophistication from simple services, such as walking the dog or car-washing, to more complex services, such as teaching piano or language lessons. Sometimes sensitive personal services, such as legal assistance, child-minding, or providing care and help to elderly or more vulnerable members of the community. Much of this is true for Makkies, where members were initially encouraged to exchange services between members. As the Makkies system grew it became more common for participants to earn their Makkies at social organizations by working there as volunteers. Time Banks are based on a philosophy of building strong communities, providing care in the community, and incentivizing and rewarding volunteers (Avelino et al. 2014: 13).

MAKKIES A SOCIAL COMMUNITY CURRENCY

I have always been curious about alternative systems of value as the importance of different economic systems has been stressed upon us since Malinowski's research. His investigation of the 'Kula ring' used within Trobriand society of the coast of New Guinea not to mention Frans Boas's research of 'potlach' practices among indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest and Canada urged us to look for social meaning in practices of exchange. Both of these great anthropologists provide valuable anthropological accounts of alternative exchange systems. They indicate how within their researched groups, practices exceed conventional ideas concerning the exchange of goods. In both the 'Kula ring' and 'potlach' there were important social dimensions at play that were crucial aspects of the exchange which affected how groups or individuals build social ties, conveyed power or reaffirmed their status.

Within the Kula ring for example the articles of value are shell necklaces of a special type and armlets made of Conus shell. In the case of the Kula the exchange of necklaces and armbands takes place between individuals residing on different islands. The former always travel North, East, South, West, i.e., clockwise, and the latter in the opposite direction. Other articles of value may also be part of the transaction but in a subsidiary manner. The Kula necklaces and arm-shells have different values, highly valued ones have individual names, and their wanderings are followed with interest. The ownership, or trustee, of each object is temporary, and ranges from a few minutes to one year possibly two. An individual who retains an object beyond a year is regarded as a mean person. The exchange is very different than bartering, since no haggling takes place. An equivalent gift is always expected, but cannot be demanded or enforced, the only punishment for failing is a loss of esteem. If at any time an equivalent gift cannot be bestowed, intermediate gifts may be given to smooth the way until the real repayment takes place. Meanness is the most despised vice in the exchange, and generosity the essence of goodness.

However much an individual would like to give a good equivalent for the object received, he may not be able to do so. As there is always a sense of competition to be the most generous giver, a man who has received less than he gave will not keep his grievance to himself but will brag about his generosity and compare it with the other's meanness (Malinowski 1922: 473).

The most important character of Kula exchange system is the attitude of the natives towards it. The objects are not regarded as currency, as they are never used as a medium for exchange or as a measure of wealth. They serve merely to be owned and displayed and then exchanged. Their studies of traditional societies and their exchange systems make an interesting point concerning alternative currencies. That is, that in the history of money, a great many forms have been used to suit various conditions and serve specific functions. Beads, shells, jewelry, pieces of metal have all served as form of exchange (Adams and Mouatt 2010: 7). But the exchanges often ran deeper than simple economic transaction. The case of the Trobriand Islanders indicate that exchanges can have deeper social implications. The anthropologist in me therefore had no doubt that there was more to contemporary alternative currency systems. I wished to gain a deeper understanding of alternative currency systems. I wanted to know if there was any additional social value being generated in contemporary alternative systems.

Makkies is the social community currency project in Amsterdam I have chosen to investigate for my fieldwork. It currently operates within geographically set boundaries, Makkies is active in the Eastern part of Amsterdam in two districts, the *Indische Buurt* and the *Oostenlijk Havengebied*, see fig 2. Makkie is a time currency, or time-bank. The currency takes the form of physical notes, with one Makkie equaling one hour of service or community/volunteer work. Volunteers can also be paid out per half hour of volunteer work. Volunteers are the only participants earning Makkies in the system and often work at one or two social organizations that offer its volunteers Makkies for the time they input into the system



(Makkies 1 Hour bill and 1/2 Hour bill)

Makkies aims to promote social cohesion among community members by stimulating them to engage with each other. Community members of Amsterdam Oost were initially encouraged to exchange Makkies amongst themselves for simple services and tasks. Or by spending Makkies on activities together. More recently goals include fostering local economic development, by introducing new spending points for Makkies such as at small locally owned businesses or other businesses willing to accept Makkies as a form of payment. The Makkies ecosystem mainly grows by adding more social organizations that work with volunteers. Nowadays new businesses join through the introduction of the Makkie-coupon.

The Makkies system has developed over time, at first it included characteristics of LETS systems such as a reciprocal exchange of services. Community members were encouraged to exchange skills with one another and there was a website that allowed users to post their skills to offer or request help they were looking for. Over the last 2 years the project has been increasingly targeting the poorest residents of the neighborhood in efforts to stimulate them to be active and potentially find work by engaging more within the community. The project was initially funded by Community Currencies in Action (CCIA), a launch pad for community currencies is received initial help in setting up from companies like Qoin which have international experience in setting up alternative currency projects. The project also received continued funding from European subsidies for 5 years. Funding was mainly used to set up events, community festivals, and to pay professionals working on the project. After this period, it continued to receive some European funding but to a lesser extent and was mainly funded by the Municipality of Amsterdam.

During the first years the project had also been backed by different organizations that helped realize the production of the bills used within the system, such as the *Nationale Postcode Loterij*, local housing organizations such as Eigen Haard, and the Municipality of Amsterdam who only at first only allocated money to be directed through coordinators. Currently the bills are created with the help of the Municipality of Amsterdam

In Chapter 1 the environment where Makkies is active as a community currency will be explained as the history of the neighborhoods turn out to play important roles regarding the decision to develop the community currency in Amsterdam Oost. It will indicate why the *Indische Buurt* and the *Oostenlijk Havengebied* was chosen as the location to launch Makkies. How to earn and spend Makkies with the system will also be explained. The process of spending and earning Makkies evolved in a way that stimulated the local economy. This focus on promoting a sense of circular economy was the first step in moving away from socially orientated activist goals towards an economic focus. The internal development indicates the Makkies system is willing to develop from its grassroot foundations which set the stage for new goals which as we show later are increasingly set and influenced by the state. Finally, the different users and participants will be presented.

In Chapter 2 arguments and statements made by respondents will present the inherent paradox of Makkies. That while it claims to be active as a tool to promote social cohesion and therefore favor social value, it is increasingly attributing a greater value to its purpose as an economic tool. Increasingly participants that earn Makkies tend to spend them at locations that accept Makkies as a form of payment. The increased development of the Makkies as a system of payment has been developed by the Municipality of Amsterdam. Value generated for different participants in the Makkies system will be explained as practices that generate social value. Social value as I have explained is closely tied to a sense of belonging. This chapter will look at how practices conducted by users and participants, can invoke a feeling of belonging to different levels of the community. Lastly this chapter will show that Makkies continues holds on to its core principles such as building social cohesion by providing a platform for community solidarity .

Chapter 3 will look at how a change in funding for Makkies has had structural consequences for who has access to Makkies and has ultimately changed the goals achieved through the use of the community currency system. This chapter will show how Makkies has been captured by the state rather than resist as is more often a founding principle of alternative currencies. Additional shortcomings of the Makkies system will also be addressed, identified by participants that either distribute or earn Makkies. This chapter will also discuss structural rearrangements within Makkies were due to new collaborations with different partners. This pushed Makkies to develop from a grass-roots initiative, meant as a means to

exchange services between neighbors to a tool used by the Municipality for ‘social activation’ of particular residents. This has affected who now uses and participates in the Makkies system, which has significant implications for the further development of Makkies. I will show as the Municipality got more involved it started influencing the direction of the project which has in some cases resulted in the deprofessionalization of many social jobs in the two districts. The result of support from the Municipality has led to greater numbers of users and participants within the project but has also burdened volunteers with greater responsibilities. One example speaking from my own volunteer experience involves taking on duties of social workers, other volunteers also indicate now conducting care tasks that would have been performed by professionals in the past. To conclude I will return to my central research question, and readdress the arguments above and provide a final remark and reflection on the continued development of Makkies

RESEARCH METHODS

Ethnographic case studies of alternative currency systems can help provide complex and descriptive information regarding the effectiveness of community currencies. By participating and being a volunteer within a community currency system I have uncovered different forms of value and motivations to participate among the different user groups. In my efforts to learn as much as I could about Makkies I have absorbed as much as possible in the Makkies system for a period of three months. During this period, I conducted fieldwork participating as a volunteer within the community currency project in Amsterdam Oost, specifically in the *Indische Buurt* and the *Oostelijk Havengebied*. As Clifford Geertz once wrote, Anthropologists don't study villages, they study *in* villages (Beatty 2010: 327). I have taken Geertz's words to heart and have immersed myself in the environment of my fieldwork, which was the Makkies community currency project. By taking on as many volunteer positions as possible, having informal conversations and in-depth interviews with other volunteers, different organizing bodies and figures that are a part of the Makkies project.

I got involved with Makkies at various levels from working at the Makkies Information Point, (hereafter known as MIP) where a lot of decision making was made regarding the development of the community currency system. The currency is also distributed at the MIP in Amsterdam Oost on the Sumatraplantsoen 48A. I would spend over 3 days a week at different locations throughout Amsterdam Oost. I could also expect to be called to come assist for functions such as helping prepare for an event at a local community center during the remaining days of the week.



(Makkies MIP Outside and Inside, Jennifer sitting with volunteers)

Access to the community currency project proved to be more difficult than I had expected. I had at first thought that many organizations would openly post information regarding needing volunteers on the Makkies website or some shared database. However, this was not the case, so in order to get started as a Makkies volunteer I would need to show up and ask what could be done. My journey as a volunteer started at the MIP on the Sumatraplantsoen 48 in Amsterdam Oost. This is where I first met Anne-miek Fokkens I quickly established good rapport with her and decided to hang around. My position at the Makkie-store and MIP would be one I would keep throughout the rest of my fieldwork. After explaining my interest in the Makkies system and my visit and my willingness to participate as a volunteer I was immediately put to work and was asked to help at the Makkie-store.

After a few weeks of volunteering at different social organizations I decided to focus on the locations where I had met over 5 different volunteers so that I would obtain as much useful and diverse data as possible, the locations I have selected were Vonk (Community Activities Center), the MIP and *Buurthulp Oost* (Community Support Center). I focused on obtaining as many interviews with volunteers as possible, this was also the case in interviews with local business owners.. A single in-depth interview was conducted with the new Municipality project manager of the Makkies project on the very last day of fieldwork.

During the 20 interviews recorded which ranged anywhere between 20 minutes to 1 hour. I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with selected respondents. I conducted 1 interview with one of the original designers of Makkies. I had 4 interviews with local business owners, 6 interviews with coordinators and 9 interviews with volunteers. Many interesting conversations were also held in informal settings. The most important themes that came forward during my interviews were value creation, motivations for participation, changes in volunteer work and shortcomings in the Makkies system. Many more themes were present when analyzing the interview data. Fragments of interviews and informal conversations aim to highlight the most important findings and will be presented in the chapters below. After obtaining permission from respondents to use fragments of our conversations for this research I have decided not to use pseudonyms.

Data and material for this research was gathered in a variety of channels and involved method triangulation. Method triangulation involves the use of multiple methods of data collection about the same phenomenon (Cartel et al. 2014: 545). Data gathered for this research, includes field notes and participant observation, another important research method in this research has been analyzing reports from the Municipality of Amsterdam, using the Makkies website and the Community currencies in action site, as well as the Makkie folder. Finally, a few books related to alternative and community currencies were also used.

Participant observation involved being a committed volunteer for many different partner organizations within the Makkies system. Tasks involved as a participant observer included, cooking, recruiting new businesses, working at the store, providing administrative assistance, meeting different volunteers or community members at various locations throughout *Amsterdam Oost* and occasionally meeting in *Amsterdam West*. As a participant observer I spent time paying attention to individuals at people spending their Makkies at the Makkie-store, having informal conversations with respondents and making countless field notes. that concerned I had three fixed days of volunteer work per week.

As a participant researcher I was often observing people participating in the Makkies system, I was observing people volunteering for their Makkies, distributing Makkies and spending them. By watching and observing I could distance myself and was able to see how participation was affecting different groups of participants. I directly tried to engage with the Makkies system by volunteering and working for my own Makkies. I also shared my own experiences with other participants and was able to build rapport with many of the volunteers who in turn shared their experiences with me. My involvement as a volunteer was driven by a need to understand on a personal level what it meant to engage in the practices that I was trying to study. On the other hand by becoming intimately involved in the project and immersing myself in my research environment it became hard to distinguish what was subjective and objective information during my research. Occasionally there was overlap in my own experiences and those of volunteers, such feeling more connected to Amsterdam Oost through my participation. These instances left me reflecting on whether or not what I was experiencing was objective information or subjective information that I considered objective since it was being reproduced among the other volunteers while we had a shared experience.

By engaging directly, I was also becoming part of the study, on one side gaining deeper understanding of feelings and experiences of the participants in the Makkies system, on other hand I was influencing and making an impact to the Makkies system in a sense shaping the development of Makkies. Especially my role at the MIP involved reaching out to local businesses and trying to convince them to join the Makkies system. My role involved expanding spending points for volunteers to spend their Makkie coupons. This started to blur for me what was objective and what was subjective knowledge, since I was actively making an impact such as directing Makkies to more economically centered uses. Upon realizing this I felt I had to point out that I was disagree with the idea that anthropology can be objective, if you are engaged directly it always become a subjective experience. Therefore, the objective of my research is not to give to the public something that is objective, but to give a study that is insightful and give people who are reading it an idea of my experiences and the experiences of participants.

CHAPTER 1. MAKKIES. A ‘COMMUNITY BUILDING’ CURRENCY

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the origins of Makkies will briefly be explained. This will be followed by explanations of different participants in the Makkies system and character sketches of selected respondents will be presented. A brief overview of each respondent group will also be given and motivations they have given to participate in the system will be presented. This segment will also discuss how participants spend and earn Makkies. The historical backdrop which led to the development of Makkies in *Amsterdam Oost* will be discussed in the first section of this chapter. As Makkies developed it aimed to act in a circular way, this is part was done to act the part of a community currency but also showed the first tendencies of Makkies taken on a more economic direction. The chapter will conclude with an answer to the first sub question How has the development of the *Indische Buurt* and the *Oostenlijk Havengebied* played a role in why Makkies was developed in Amsterdam Oost? And what are the motivations for users and participants to engage in Makkies (a community currency system)?

Makkies was named after the *Makasserplein*, a square in the middle of the *Indische Buurt* where it launched, it is one of the few community currency projects that remains active in the Netherlands. Makkies differentiates itself as a social community currency from other alternative currency systems by operating directly between its users or participants. Much like in the case of the barter-network in Argentina. Makkies was at first a grass-root driven project, it was designed by Qoin. Rob van Hilten, one of the lead designers and owner of Qoin indicates how he and his team wished to set up Makkies based on other successful currencies they helped set up elsewhere. It was designed for community members living around the *Makasserplein*. After its launch it was promoted by activists, community members, housing corporations and social organizations living or situated around the *Makasserplein*. Due to its popularity when it launched it quickly developed into a more complex system. Exceeding the neighbor to neighbor exchanges it was initially designed for and quickly became active throughout the rest of the *Indische Buurt* and the *Oostenlijk Havengebied*.

Social roots in the *Indische Buurt*

Amsterdam Oost was a suitable environment to launch a social community currency because of its history of migrant and immigrant inflows in the late 1980's.

Built between 1900 and 1930 as part of the former '*Overamstelse Polder*' districts such as the *Indische Buurt* were meant to stem the flow of dock workers to Amsterdam. By the 1960's the *Oostenlijk Havengebied* lost its function as a harbor started to suffer from physical dilapidation and the suburbanization of the more prosperous residents. In the 1970's a broad coalition of communists, shopkeepers, squatters and resident groups protested against the dilapidation and called for urban renewal of the area (Sakizlioglu and Uitermark 2014: 1377). The municipality of Amsterdam responded by demolishing and rebuilding, to improve the quality of housing. Many private apartments and houses were bought by the Municipality, replaced with new housing and transferred to the housing corporations. Most of the newly constructed houses or apartments were social rental housing (Dukes 2011: 5). In this sense the resident resistance largely succeeded in that the government agreed to provide renovated or new affordable housing to the residents, but the outflow of more prosperous workers did not stop. Their places were taken by immigrants from Morocco, Turkey, and Surinam in the 1970s and 1980s, making *Indische Buurt* a very multicultural but relatively poor neighborhood. (Sakizlioglu and Uitermark 2014: 1378)

Around 2000 more than 60% of the 23,500 residents in Amsterdam Oost were citizens with migrant backgrounds, these were often Surinamese, Antilleans, Moroccan or Turkish migrants but also other non-western foreigners., at the beginning of the 20th century the *Indische Buurt* had redeveloped as a working-class area.

Amsterdam Oost currently remains a working-class neighborhood but has developed a rich multicultural character and is due to this one of the most culturally representative areas of diversity in the city. It is one of the areas of Amsterdam where a growing number of urban renewal projects are located. Central areas of the *Indische Buurt* such as the *Javaplein*, a square near the *Makasserplein* have developed rapidly and the streets and buildings are clearly newly renovated.



(Javaplein, at the heart of the Indische Buurt)

However, these developments have not always gone without a hitch, there are some citizens that believe that the rapid gentrification of parts of the *Indische Buurt* have made areas less accessible to citizens who have been living in the area for years. This is in part due to housing and living costs slowly increasing in certain areas. Mieke Maas would prove to be one of the most crucial respondents who I interviewed about the developments in *Amsterdam Oost*. She was living and working for different social organizations in *Amsterdam Oost* since 1981. Currently she works as a coordinator at the Meevaart, one of the larger social organizations working with volunteers and Makkies. In her interview she pointed out that despite the many changes in the area *Amsterdam Oost* has always had a strong sense of community solidarity.

“The mentality in Oost has always been we should collectively arrange things that need to be done for to solve problems in the neighborhood. The build-up in the area has always been strong, there was a strong squatters’ movement here with good social connections that has been a community backbone.”(Mieke Maas, 15th of May).

The build-up Mieke is referring to is a shared feeling of needing to get things done among particularly the socially active members within *Amsterdam Oost*. These actors contribute to creating a feeling of

community solidarity within the community. This has been kept alive through a network of smaller community groups in the area where these actors come together. Mieke explained how Makkies were used to stimulate continued resistance to urban renewal projects in parts of the *Indische Buurt*. One such a development project involved trying to encourage older residents to leave their top floor apartments, due to them not physically being able to manage the many flights of stairs in building with no elevator. She explained

“We used the Makkies system to get volunteers to ask the neighborhood for help. We needed signatures to encourage the Municipality to build stairlifts for the older residents living on the top floors. If we had failed many of these residents would have to move to other buildings or even retirement homes. We succeeded, and we rewarded volunteers at the Meevaart who went around spending time collecting signatures with Makkies.” (Mieke Maas, 15th of May).

Mieke’s example illustrates how the participants can use the Makkies system to mobilize the community and look out for other community members. Political motivations that made the *Indische Buurt* additionally viable as a candidate for selection to launch the community currency was because the same goals, in this case promoting social cohesion, needed to be met with existing government projects. The *Indische Buurt* was one of the areas addressed in the 2006 ‘Grotestedenbeleid’ A national plan targeting 31 larger Dutch cities with the goal to improve ‘aandachtswijken’ or focus districts and provide citizens living in that area with more means to improve their social capital (Cornelissen and van Oort 2006). The success of groups such as the Blijvers within Makkies shows how the community currency system does manage to fit within debates surrounding alternative currency at times coming up as form of resistance to autocratic powers such as the state development plans. Designers such as Rob van Hilten felt that projects such as Makkies which addressed similar goals such as getting community member to participate more in the neighborhood would therefore be encouraged by the state, and make the project more likely to receive funding.

During our interview Rob van Hilten’s interview explained that when Makkies was launched it was important to create a system of value that rewarded participants for their social contribution and encourage them to become more involved with the community. One reason for participants and users to participate was because there was a system in place that made it possible to become active in the community. Goals that overlap with other project such as the Bristol pound where supporting small and medium business would become equally important, once the focus would also turn to involve businesses into the system. Social organization and activity centers such as CIVIC and the Mirror Center would help encourage people to become more involved in the community. The support and drive not to mention the collaboration within these organizations would provide community members spaces to develop

themselves and seek support. The fact that Mieke shows there is still an important sense of community solidarity present in the neighborhood is also an important reason why Makkies was launched in the two districts. Furthermore, political motivations and reasonings such as the ‘*Grotestedenbeleid*’ would prove to be the last push to drive the development of Makkies. These would open up channels of support from external actors like the Municipality of Amsterdam making it another reason Makkies received continued support to develop itself within Amsterdam Oost. However as external actors such as the Municipality of Amsterdam became more involved in the project, they saw its potential for reaching goals and meeting their own targets. Leading to structural changes in Makkies that have had lasting implications for the development of the Makkies system.

How to Earn/Spend Makkies?

A 2016 Evaluation of Makkies indicates that Makkies can be earned in two ways. By completing a chore or job for a social organization connected to Makkies in the *Indische Buurt and the Oostenlijk Havengebied*. Some examples of this are helping organize activities for the elderly, cooking, catering or helping organize community festivals. The second method is by completing a task for another community member. There used to be an online ‘*Makkie Marketplace*’, where help where jobs needing help could be posted. (Jakobs and De Wilde, 2016) According to Anne-miek use of this marketplace stopped in 2017. “*However, jobs between community members still exist, these include helping move, painting or simple household jobs such as cleaning or helping around the garden*” (Anne-miek, 25th of April)¹.

During my volunteer work at the MIP I worked closely with Anne-miek Fokkens, she was one of the key figures organizing, driving and motivating the rest of the community to take part in the Makkies system. Anne-miek is a middle-aged woman who has always been deeply committed to the community. She has lived and worked in the community for over 15 years. Often spearheading many community organized festivals or other social events. Anne-miek was also one of the longest working coordinators and participants within Makkies system

What is essential about the non-market economy of informal works and volunteer jobs is that it still provides a space for skills to be exchanged and rewarded using community currencies. There is a wide range of jobs volunteers can expect to perform for Makkies. These include cooking, cleaning, hosting and providing services such as getting a haircut. Other tasks include offering support or care to more vulnerable citizens, which could involve having conversations or doing groceries or a combination of the above. Activities can also be organized by volunteers to pass on to other community members such as teaching sewing, working with excel or language classes. As a participant observer I could regularly sit in

on organized activities such as sharing skills when they were organized at community center's like Vonk. Excel classes were held one per week for women who were interested in becoming hosts at the community center. The schedule for hosts working at Vonk is made a week in advance at the community center. The hosts are expected to be able to understand the timetable and make changes when necessary, such as swapping shifts with other volunteers or if someone is sick, volunteers will support one another. Classes are taught by more experienced hosts who are familiar with Excel, subsequently these volunteer teachers will be sitting in on classes such as the sewing class that is held on Fridays.

My exchanging and sharing skills these can help build stronger economic relations and social ties between citizens where cooperation and sharing are valued (Seyfang & Longhurst 2012: 68). These segments aim to show is that everyone has something to offer in the case of Makkies. Community currencies can empower socially-excluded groups, such as retired citizens or citizens with no formal education, boosting self-esteem, self-confidence, social participation and well-being (Seyfang & Longhurst 2012: 69).

In her article Primavera investigate the *creditos* system which started in Argentina and saw success in Brazil. One significant characteristic of the creditos network was that it was self-managed which provided members with more autonomy and a greater feeling of control in their lives (Primavera, 2010, 42). In the Makkies system there are a few functions that are self-managed. Positions such running the Makkies-store, and host positions demand individual initiative and a greater sense of personal responsibility, as opposed to volunteer jobs that are directed by a coordinator such as helping at events, where no own initiative is demanded. Hosting volunteer jobs for example at Makkie partners Vonk are one set of functions where planning, and scheduling of volunteers is done by the volunteers themselves.



(Receiving my own Makkies for helping at Vonk)

These first additions to the Makkies system accepted individual Makkies as a form of payment, the local bike shop for example accepted 20 Makkies for a second-hand bike worth 75 euros. A haircut could be scheduled at the hairdresser for 2 Makkies. These newest additions to the Makkies system were businesses often only accepted the Makkie-coupons, some new additions included stores such as the Balkonie (a fashionable plant store), Stov (a luxury gift shop), Licht & Meubel (a high end furniture store), Jansen Vintage (a second-hand furniture store). Other more common additions included smaller cafes or stores.

The coupon that has been introduced is the newest initiative of Makkies and it is referred to as the Makkie-coupon. The Makkie coupon is a voucher worth 15 euros which volunteers can obtain in exchange for 7 Makkies. The coupon makes it easier for local small and medium business to join the Makkies system by not having to deal with individual Makkies. The initiative has proven quite successful

as the number of businesses joining was around 2-3 per week at the end of my fieldwork period. Locations that have been involved with Makkies a longer time such as at the Makkie-store still accept individual Makkies, but currently all new businesses joining the system only accept the Makkie coupon.



(the Makkie coupon)

Coupons are only considered valid if they have the signature of Anne-miek or Jennifer. Like the Makkie bills they are only distributed at the MIP. Businesses that accept the Makkie coupon are reimbursed up to a maximum of 85% of the coupons value by Anne-miek or a senior volunteer that has offered to make the rounds and pick up coupons. The money to pay back the local businesses is paid through the budget for Makkies reserved for attracting businesses, the Municipality of Amsterdam is currently the main funder of the Makkie project. Anne-miek who spearheads many of the new initiatives of Makkies is given a monthly budget to improve or add innovations into the Makkie system. The coupon was her idea to bring local businesses into the Makkies system and make the program more exciting for volunteer participating in the system.

Moving towards a Circular Economy dream

“Makkies was implemented to encourage interaction between members, and neighbors in the community Makasser square. The goal was to take what we saw in England and the United States and recreate similar project in the Netherlands. First of all, we saw in England that by rewarding people for their social contribution, people responded and became more prone to become more involved in the neighborhood. Second of all was that because of their feeling of responsibility in the community it improved the neighborhood, making it cleaner and safer. A community currency system is nothing more than an infrastructure where it becomes possible to create value for participants” (Rob van Hilten, 17th of April).

Rob van Hilten is a middle-aged man who has extensive experience working with alternative currencies. Since 1989 he has set up his company Qoin, together with his partners they launch alternative currencies systems world-wide. Rob explained his motivation to get involved with alternative currencies was to create a system that places value on non-economic practices. Rob is speaking from his experiences setting up and experimenting with community currencies. In his remark he refers to the Bristol Pound, a community currency project in the U.K he helped design and launch. The Bristol Pound is primarily designed to support local small and medium businesses owners (SME's). The Bristol Pound also seeks to increase the sense of community cohesion by having users meet many local business owners. These features of the Bristol Pound are closely aligned with the current goals of the Makkies system. Valued one-to-one against pound sterling, the Bristol Pound can only be spent at local SME's and thereby aims to retain wealth in the community. In the long term, increased links between small and medium business owners would localize possible supply and production chains to create a more resilient and sustainable economy for the area (Dodd 2015: 56).

Ideally Rob van Hilten explains he wanted connect volunteers, coordinators and local businesses in a circular way. This had proven successful and what was he had in mind for the development of Makkies, building a system similar to the Bristol Pound that supported the community by also stimulating the local economy. The following brief vignette is one of my typical Wednesday's volunteering for the Makkie-store which captures this circular exchange.

It's a Wednesday morning and I get the call to come help collect groceries for the Makkie-store. I meet up with Judy and Jennifer who run the store and making sure it stays stocked for volunteers interested in buying products with Makkies. Our day starts with our stop at the Albert Heijn, here we come to pick up groceries that would no longer be sold in the supermarket, these items are close to their expiration date, no longer intended for sale or have been replaced to make room for new products. In other Albert Heijn's

these products would generally be sold with a large discount, or even discarded to make room for new products. In this Albert Heijn, an agreement has been made between the manager and Jennifer from Makkies. Jennifer is now permitted to come pickup whatever stock is offered to her. Judy and Jennifer systematically sort through the goods. Judy catalogs the important items, and Jennifer selects the items she knows customers would prefer to buy. The item Judy and Jennifer are most eager to see is the family size laundry detergent, valued at over 12 euros which flies off the shelf for 7 Makkies.



(Makkie-store in action)

This series of exchanges indicates the system started veering away from its socially oriented beginnings and gained a more economic focus. During one of our informal talks Anne-miek indicates interactions promoting social cohesion were central to Makkies when it launched. But now Makkies has evolved and focuses on providing goods or economic discounts for participants while helping local businesses. In this case the local Albert Heijn in Amsterdam Oost that has chosen to donate goods towards the Makkies system. Because the Albert Heijn was one of the first additions to the Makkie system it signed a contract to participate by accepting individual Makkies from volunteers. Until this contract runs out it cannot

accept the new Makkie coupon. But it was not uncommon for smaller supermarkets or stores to support events with contributions which would act in a similar way.

The whole process becomes a circular transaction which can be best explained through its levels. By providing an essential service for volunteers in the form of offering low-cost and affordable products, volunteers can enjoy a greater sense of economic freedom by losing less of their household income to food and cleaning products. Supermarkets such as the Albert Heijn need to occasionally get rid of the products that are taking up space in the storage. Instead of spending money to remove them, they would donate products for volunteers to come pick up. Most of these products would end up at the Makkie-store where they could be exchanged for individual Makkies. Many of the volunteers that are currently active in the Makkies system and shop at the Makkies store receive some form of welfare checks or are on a limited monthly budget. The set-up of the Makkie-store offers volunteers an alternative, it provides supplementary means to access goods and services that they might otherwise be financially excluded from (Seyfang & Longhurst 2012: 67).

Users and Participants in Makkies.

Currently users and participants in the Makkies system can be classified in four categories. Volunteers, coordinators, local businesses and the Municipality of Amsterdam. Volunteers are the biggest group and the only users of Makkies in the system, in total there are between three to four hundred volunteers active in all the social organizations and centers involved in the Makkie system. There is around a 40/60 ratio between men and women active at the different organizations. According to Anne-miek Fokkens, “*when Makkies launched we had volunteers and people participating of all ages, young and old working together*” (Anne-miek, 18th of April). Currently the average age among volunteer is over 50 years of age. The diversity among volunteers varies and includes citizens from all backgrounds, Dutch, Surinamese, Turkish, Moroccan are among the largest groups. Essentially all cultural groups living in Amsterdam Oost are represented within the system.

Volunteers – Users of Makkies

Volunteers are generally citizens that live in Amsterdam Oost, the volunteers that do not live in other parts of the city or in districts a little further away. Such as periphery zones of Amsterdam like Purmerend. Volunteers participate and earn Makkies, generating them into the system with the often-added intention to spend their Makkies back in the system. This reminds us of Primavera’s barter network

where every user in the system was both a producer and consumer of goods in the system. By allowing the whole community to participate it strengthened ties among community members and helped build trust and loyalty (Primavera 2010: 47).

Makkie volunteers are the biggest spenders and only earners in the system. Volunteers fall under their own subcategory as users of Makkies.

Anneke is one of the older volunteers that has recently taken on more community responsibility as a volunteer. She is an elderly lady, with a Dutch background. Her work experience has been centered around elderly care, she decided to take charge of a program that supported care-workers. As a volunteer for Makkies she regularly visits citizens that have lost contact with the rest of the community, according to some of her clients she brings in positive social energy and conversation into their lives. She also cooks for a handful of citizens that are no longer able to cook for themselves, either due to physical disability or mental disabilities. Anneke has a total of 5 citizens that receive help and support from her. She enjoys doing the work yet recognizes that some of the citizens she sees should be receiving more focused help and professional care. Anneke is an example of what organizations that are partners with Makkies like to see in volunteers joining the system today. That is that she takes some of her own professional experiences or interest with her when taking on the new responsibility as a volunteer

Esther is another volunteer in the Makkies system she has always worked until she had to retire. She is a 60 year old woman who has always worked in retirement homes and care centers. What she enjoyed most about Makkies was that she too could retain social ties to different community members. She had this to say about Makkies

“I like it (Makkies) I can do a lot with them. I tell people I meet here (Buurthulp Oost a community center), Hey come on over to my house, I’ll give you coffee and cake and you pay me with a Makkie. That’s how you develop new contacts and meet new people. You might take that Makkie and spend it at the hairdresser and have some new conversations there. But you can only start when you start talking to other people.” (Esther, 9th of May)

Coordinators – Participants and Users

Participants in the Makkies system make up all the citizens or organizations that do not earn Makkies but are affiliated with them in one way or another.

Coordinators are the second largest group of participants. They have a fundamentally different position compared to volunteers because they get paid for their work with the Makkies system. Coordinators are

often paid by social organizations that are affiliated to Makkies. These organizations receive funding based on a budget that is allocated by the Municipality of Amsterdam or other sponsors. All the coordinators I spoke to during my fieldwork lived in Amsterdam. Coordinators were generally Caucasian Dutch citizens and, in all cases, had come from professional socially related backgrounds. Among coordinators there was a 50/50 ratio between men and women. The average age of coordinators was middle-aged between 40 and 50 years of age. Eric van de Langkruis was one example of a coordinator that has been active in the neighborhood for a number of years and developed close ties to volunteers and other community members. Eric is a driven and enthusiastic coordinator of volunteers at one of the larger social organization working with Makkies. He is a middle-aged man and is currently living on the *Celebestraat* in Amsterdam East. Positioned right in the middle of the *Indische Buurt*. He did two different studies before completing a speed-course of Cultural Education. He is currently the lead volunteer coordinator at one of the larger social organizations working with Makkies, called CIVIC. CIVIC is one of the largest social organizations that works with Makkies in Amsterdam Oost. CIVIC offers community members support by linking vulnerable citizens who may have money issues, difficulty finding a job or other problems such as feeling alone to social workers or encourage them to participate in the community. They have between fifty and one hundred volunteers active at a time at CIVIC.

Coordinators are often key figures at different social, housing or welfare organizations. These different organizations are currently the central earning points for Makkies. Coordinators frequently direct volunteer activities and ensure that there is no foul-play in registering the number of hours or in the distribution of Makkies in the concerning social, housing or welfare organization. Jennifer Veltman was another coordinator that I frequently had contact with during my fieldwork she mainly worked at the MIP. Like Eric, Jennifer was middle-aged and completed the course Cultural Education. She also has a history of social work in the neighborhood. Unlike Eric she completed her study at a later age, she was 40 when she started studying. Right after completing her course she helped set up Aqua Swing classes at the Mirror center, a form of physical therapy combined with sport. The Mirror Center is an activities center in Amsterdam Oost, it is a space that offers a wide variety of physical activities from trainings in relaxation and meditation to courses on dancing and reading. Most activities are set up in collaboration with teachers or other social organizations. Jennifer also helped set up other projects at the Mirror center, such as food programs and helped Judy find paid work as an instructor. Jennifer Veltman faced a burn-out and slowly got more involved in the Makkies project, she explains to me how she gradually took on more tasks the longer she worked for the project.

“I started off trying to recruit new businesses to join the Makkie system. That wasn’t for me. Shortly after that the Makkie-store opened up and I slowly got involved as a distributor of Makkies at the different

organizations. I set up appointments with organizations, arranged the contracts and distribute an amount of Makkies per month based on how many volunteers work at the organization. I go by and control from time to time, but I expect organizations that join to take care of their own basic administration. If I get the impression they are distributing too much, I become stricter and ask them to show me how they register the hours volunteers make.” (Jennifer Veltman, 2nd of May).

Coordinators occasionally participate as volunteers themselves at different social organizations. Anne-Marije was one of the coordinators that frequently worked as a volunteer, next to her responsibilities as a coordinator for Makkies. She works as a freelancer for the project and is paid by a part of the budget for Makkies that has been allocated for professionals in the system, she is the sole coordinator of the social media of Makkies. Anne-Marije in her interview revealed sentiments shared by a number of freelance coordinators when asked what sort of volunteer work she currently does.

“Well, a part of my work as a freelancer for Makkies means that I don’t get paid for all my hours, I contribute a lot of passion hours as I call them for the project (Makkies). Aside from that I am a volunteer at a number of social events in the neighborhood. Grab the Night for example is a film festival that I volunteer for.” (Anne-Marije, 17th of April).

Coordinators were the only group that were at times overlapping into another subcategory category, namely users. Coordinators can be participants facilitating or guiding actions conducted by users, or they participate as volunteers themselves, due to this they can also be classified as users. During the interview with Anne Marije it became clear that she got involved with Makkies through different channels that were active in the neighborhood. She had set up Studio K, which is a movie theater that also functions as a café/restaurant. Studio K is one of the locations that accepts Makkies as a form of payment. She has also heard that the Makkies project required someone with a communication background, having studied that at university she offered to share her expertise with the project.

Local Businesses & the Municipality of Amsterdam - Participants

The third group is the newest growing group of participants, which are local business owners. When the Makkies system launched there were only a handful of business that participated which included a hairdresser and local bike shop. Unfortunately, both owners were not available for interviews.

Currently the majority of business owners are middle-aged men. Women business owners tend to be younger or in their early 30’s. The ratio of men to women among business owners was 70/30. Many of the local businesses such as supermarkets and other produce shops such as a fish monger were owned by

Moroccan or Turkish citizens of Amsterdam Oost. Among the newer businesses that were joining there was a greater diversity among owners.

The final group is the Municipality of Amsterdam, currently the main funder of the project of which I was only able to have one informal conversation and one official interview with a representative. Much like the Coordinators the participants from the Municipality have a fundamentally different position from volunteers since their participation in the system is a paid function. Therefore they will never share the same interest for directing the project from socially orientated goals towards economic ones. The interview was conducted with the current project manager of Makkies working at the Municipality of Amsterdam, Irene Wever who started working for Makkies since the beginning of May 2018. I also had an informal meeting with her predecessor Lilian Kuerten, both representatives working for the Municipality were women. Lilian Kuerten is a middle-aged woman, Irene Wever is in her late 30's. Both women were Dutch and did not reside in Amsterdam Oost.

Conclusion

As is made clear in the section discussing the social roots of Makkies, that within the *Indische Buurt* and the *Oostenlijk Havengebied* there were citizens of many different backgrounds, and ethnic diversities living next to one another. The Makkies system was seen as a way to help build bridges between different groups living in Amsterdam Oost. There were citizens with strong academic backgrounds living next to those who went straight to work after receiving some form of formal training, living next to citizens who had never worked at all. Mieke Maas confirms this stating “*When Makkies launched there was a strong sense of solidarity and we focused on bring those with means in touch with those without.*” (Mieke Maas, 15th of May). There were no real-cut off of volunteers when it launched. The only criteria that was important for volunteers according to Annie-miek was that, “*Volunteers need to be motivated, ready to roll up their sleeves preferably with a smile on their face.*” (Anne-miek, 25th of April)

Makkies were used to encourage all members of the community to share skills and trade services for one another. “*Makkies were meant to encourage all citizens to participate, they were available for all citizens regardless of income and background.*” (Anne-miek, 25th of April) Because Makkies were available to all citizens of Amsterdam Oost the project drew in a great variety and diversity of participants, from many different ethnic backgrounds but also from citizens that were highly educated to those that weren't. The project was very successful at first Anne-miek explained, however, *after an initial period of high community interest, the project lost momentum due to user dissatisfaction in services provided throughout*

the community and a lack of locations willing to accept individual Makkies (Anne-miek, 25th of April).

This led to a steep decline in volunteer participation.

Makkies appeared to clearly share many characteristics with in particular LETS systems where goods are traded within a community or paid for through services (Dodd 2015; Williams 1997). The circular nature Makkies aims to achieve through channels such as the Makkie-store indicate that Makkies is able to achieve core goals and values that must be upheld to be a community currency. Community currencies in particular are seen as tools to increase circulation and hereby promote local economic activity (Michel & Hudon 2015: 161). This circular series of transactions captured in the vignette of the Makkie-store ultimately places more value on the economic utility of Makkies rather than the social value that is generated from conducted practices together or exchanging Makkies for services. It marks the beginning of a shift within Makkies as it develops and takes on new partners which means a change in value inside its own structure.

Chapter 2. Social value in Makkies

Introduction

There is an inherent paradox in the case of the community currency Makkies. The currency system has always upheld an image of its central role meant to serve as a tool to promote social cohesion in the neighborhood where Makkies is active. Social cohesion, and social value for that matter is generated through shared feelings of belonging to the community. This belonging can be specific to particular participant groups, tied to different scales of the community. Practices as we will see are driven by a sense of wanting to contribute to structures greater than the individual. But as I will indicate Makkies has at the same time continued to direct itself away from its socially orientated origins and increasingly serves an economic function for especially the volunteers that participate. This chapter will conclude with an answer to the second sub question: Which forms of social value are important for participants of Makkies (a community currency) system in Amsterdam Oost? How does participation in Makkies contribute to a sense of belonging to the community among the participant groups?

Socially orientated value

Makkies truly began as a social community currency focused on purely bring the neighborhood together. This was confirmed by Anne-miek who like Rob van Hilten was involved with the initial development of Makkies. As mentioned earlier, its roots are grounded as a means to promote social cohesion in neighborhoods around the *Makasserplein* in Amsterdam. Anne-miek explains that when Makkies launched in 2012 it was a very well received project, the community embraced the idea that any community member regardless of age was able to volunteer and help within the community.

“At the beginning Makkies could only be earned at large community events or housing projects. In order to really bring the entire community together. Young and old were working together to organize, clean-up and set up large-scale community events.” (Anne-miek, 25th of April).

Eric van the Langkruis also added that

“By connecting weak and strong citizens of Oost you create more possibilities and form a stronger connection in the neighborhood.”

The idea was after receiving Makkies for helping at large events within the community, participants that were there would then exchange Makkies amongst each other. Ideally Anne-miek explained “*The idea was that neighbors would help each other.*” (Anne-miek, 25th of April). One neighbor would help his neighbor by walking his dog, or helping around the house for example, and the neighbor would return the favor by providing help with jobs around the house or offering to exchange a skill.

During the interview with Esther one of the older Makkies, she confirms this sentiment explaining that it was important that Makkie users help build the system by thinking of individual ways to help of community members. “*I believe people who have earned Makkies should come up with ways to help one another. To build interaction between different people.*” (Esther, 9th of May).

Volunteers have also indicated that after the addition of new economic channels such as the coupon they can now choose to spend individual Makkies outside of supplementing household products and consumables, such as tickets to the Concert Hall, or large discounts to the Spa or to take swimming lessons which all cost between 1 or two Makkies per person. The social value generated among many users through their participation makes them feel as if they are part of the greater whole of the Amsterdam community.

“*Oh yes, the Makkies help in other ways too. If you want to you can use them to get discount at the gym. You can use them to take swimming lessons at the Sportfondsenbad (Public swimming pool). You can take language classes. I do this with other Makkie users but also people I know who do not earn Makkies.*” (Fatima, 11th of May)

Volunteers are the group that generate social value through their practices with other members or produce goods that have social value in physical ways. One clear example of physical value created by volunteers is by a group of volunteers that make art pieces out of plastic bags collected in certain areas of Amsterdam Oost. The group of volunteers who call themselves Haak-in make lamps and room dividers out of the collected plastic.

Coordinators like Mieke Maas reward volunteers who participate in the group with Makkies. Mieke explains when Makkies received more funding due to budgets being allocated for community development such as the ‘Grotestedenbeleid’ she was able to provide the group with support from professional artists. Together the volunteers and artists created several installations that were placed around the community to show what could be achieved by working together.

Belonging to the community

Belonging to the neighborhood is a shared feeling across many of the respondents and in many cases is one of the main reasons users or participants are active in the Makkies system. Through their participation participants and users indicate they build ties to other members but also feel like they are contributing towards the development of the neighborhood.

Fatima was one of the volunteers interviewed, Fatima works at Vonk, a community center that rewards volunteer with Makkies. Fatima works there as a host and earn around 8 Makkies a week, the maximum amount of Makkies a volunteer can earn per week, for a total of 32 per month. Fatima is a middle-aged woman who has been volunteering for over three years. She has been living in the Netherlands for over 27 years and has never lived outside Amsterdam. She explained with a smile, that she wouldn't have enjoyed living anywhere else. She has lived across the city but enjoys living in *Amsterdam Oost* in particular because of its rich diversity and she has many contacts in this part of the city. Her interview revealed a growing trend amongst Makkie volunteers, that they do not join as volunteers voluntarily but are assigned as such by social services, since no other suitable work can be found for them at this time. She explained she would have preferred a full-time job because she is now dependent on welfare checks. She indicates that she had only been receiving Makkies this past year. She described working for a day-care center and a retirement home for a number of years before working as a volunteer.

“I really enjoyed my work in the past, I worked at a child day care center. I have always enjoyed working with kids. Making food, washing and playing. That is why I volunteer here now, because I enjoy keeping social contact with the neighborhood.

Coordinators also share a sense of belonging through their participation in the Makkies system. Eric felt that by working as a coordinator at CIVIC he was useful to the rest of the community. He had the following to say about his motivation to participate.

“Why I do this work is because I can't stand doing work that doesn't feel useful. You could say that is what everyone would say, but I'm sure that they would ultimately say that what they do isn't as useful as they would like. I find what I do useful because I help direct people onto different tracks in life, I can contribute to processes in the neighborhood. I can help people feel happier with one another, that people feel comfortable amongst each other. Through my work I can open up dialogues between people, by offering them Makkies I can help them do fun things in the neighborhood.” (Eric van de Langkruis, 7th of May).

While working for the MIP I did manage to obtain an interview with Hicham the eldest son of the owner of the supermarket El Jawharra one of the most recent additions to the Makkie system. Hicham is currently the manager of El Jawharra and during our conversation he revealed motivations shared by many local businesses to currently participate in the Makkie system.

“I know Makkie volunteers are active in the Indische Buurt, from what I have heard about Makkies is that they (volunteers) are helping improve the neighborhood. They get paid in Makkies, and with Makkies they buy coupons. We decided to help by becoming one of the points volunteers can spend their coupons. We hope to help the neighborhood and volunteers for Makkies by joining into the system.” (Hicham, 14th of May).

During our interview Irene indicated she had been working for the Municipality of Amsterdam for just under two years before being asked to take on the role of project manager of Makkies. Prior to her new position she worked for Amsterdam Stadspas which is a Municipality funded initiative in Amsterdam meant to offer discount and subsidies for the unemployed citizens of the city or those with low income. Like many of the coordinators she has an academic background in Cultural Education. She has lived outside of Amsterdam before moving to the city 4 years ago. Irene explains

“What I enjoy most about my position is that I have a specific role to fulfill, most importantly it is socially relevant to the community.” (Irene Wever, 15th of May).

Her motivations to participate are aligned with motivations of many of the coordinators and volunteers. Different participants engage in the Makkie system in different ways, but all shared a sense of belonging to the *Indische Buurt* and the *Oostelijk Havengebied* in Oost. The commitment to the community runs deeper than simply seeking or providing economic incentives. The interview with Irene from the Municipality of Amsterdam, revealed that even at its highest level Makkie participants enjoy the contributions they make back to the community, by contributing they are a part of the development of Amsterdam Oost, they belong within it. Interestingly the degree to which they talk about the community varies, while Makkies presents itself as a community currency that provides benefits for the entire community. Fragments of the interviews reveal that the sense of community among many of the participants is much closer to themselves than the entire Amsterdam community as a whole. The only group that continues to refer to the community and rarely to a specific neighborhood is Irene Wever from the Municipality of Amsterdam. Out of all the respondents she was also one of the few that did not live in Amsterdam Oost at the time. This may have also influenced her manner about speaking about the effects of Makkies as she has few direct networks in the community to relate to.

Solidarity in the System

Coordinators like Mieke Maas immediately saw the use of Makkies, Makkies was used to reward volunteers that helped mobilize community activity and build a sense of community solidarity. Makkies were also used to provide much needed services and strengthen the community groups were also formed with the system that further developed building ties between each other.

“Makkies were used to provide services and meet one another to grow stronger together and improve each other’s lives. Groups were formed such as the group ‘de Blijvers’ that helped arrange what was necessary to ensure that stairlifts were provided for the elderly.” (Mieke Maas, 15th of May)

“These days we have groups of up to 15 people who all come together around a shared problem or share something in common. On Tuesdays we have a group of people with psychiatric problems who come and support each other. Wednesdays we have a group for care workers, and Thursdays we have a group for older Turkish ladies with health problems.” (Mieke Maas, 15th of May)

The case of the ‘Blijvers’ is the clearest example of community members using the Makkies system to resist state development plans and as a community come together and provide solutions to this. These are core aspects of alternative currencies. Alternative currencies are based in the social economy (rather than market economy). They have come on as a resistance to the state, empowering citizens that are being pushed out of state development plans or are not able to take part in conventional financial systems (Primavera 2010; Sanz 2015).

Shifting Social for Economic value in Makkies

Many volunteers I spoke to during my fieldwork described Makkies as an extra form of support, which they felt was an added layer on top of support they received from the government. Fatima serves as a good example of the largest group of volunteers who earn up to 32 Makkies a month. She explains it helps her financially by cutting costs on her grocery expenses. She does this by spending one Makkie at the local Albert Heijn which provides 10% discount to volunteers when paying for groceries. Fatima who has worked for over 10 years is now dependent on unemployment checks until she is able to find a full-time position. Because she is middle-aged she explains workplaces tend to hire younger employees since they cost less to hire. Because she has worked a number of years she receives a percentage of her usual monthly salary from the government in the form of unemployment checks. Her participation in Makkies generates social value indirectly through the use of Makkies to provide economic benefits to other community members, she does this by donating Makkies to volunteers or other community members that

do not receive as much government support and are dependent on lesser social welfare checks, which pay citizens less per month. Social welfare checks or *bijstanduikering* in Dutch is the lowest level of government support and the amount received is just under the legal minimum wage per month.

The expectations among volunteers about Makkies is that although they are generally satisfied with many of the ways to spend their earned Makkies. However, volunteers would like to see the spending points of the Makkies system to continue to develop. Elena prefers to spend her Makkies individually, but now sees the greatest value of Makkies developing in the coupon.

“I help here as a hostess and bring tea and coffee to guests that come in, or for other people that have workshops here. I don't paid for helping here but I get Makkies. I can take 12 Makkies, which is half I earn from volunteering for a month, to buy a coupon and spend that on something nice for the family.”
(Elena, 9th of May)

The coupon although currently financed and supported by the Municipality of Amsterdam was not an initiative they created, the coupon was an idea suggested by Anne-miek who was closely involved with the Makkies project when it suffered its period of steep decline in user participation. She felt that by engaging local businesses and evolving the locations volunteers could spend Makkies the program would gain renewed attention from the highly educated citizens who had been stepping away from the Makkies system as it increasingly was seen as a support system for the more disadvantaged citizens in the community.

Participation in the new coupon system includes an added benefit for many local small and medium businesses in that they also experience increased exposure on the websites, and a special mention on the Makkies social media page. The social media posts about the coupon are maintained regularly by volunteers such as Anne-marije. As mentioned in Hicham's interview this generates social value for businesses as it also allows them to connect more with the neighborhood by meeting volunteers that are active in the community.

While businesses share a sense of belonging through their participation in the Makkie system, the most important value generated for business that have joined the Makkies system is centered on the idea that by joining the system they will likely have more consumers that come by the store. The economic benefit from the perspective of local businesses joining is that local currencies build local circuits of economic value and prevent wealth 'leaking away', thereby increasing the local economic benefits and localization. (Seyfang & Longhurst 2012: 67)

“We have seen many new faces since we have joined as a spending point for the Makkies coupon. In the past we mainly saw customers that we knew closely, since our involvement with Makkies we see different sorts of people come in. They get enthusiastic about our products and that we support the volunteers.”
(Hicham, 14th of May)

Several volunteer participants indicated that they are content with their economic situation but realize their options to spend frivolously on products or activities that are not essential is limited. They are therefore pleased that Makkies offers them the opportunity to feel like they had a greater degree of purchasing power.

“ Yes I’m very satisfied with Makkies. Makkies can help with more than just the groceries. You can buy a bike with Makkies, but you can spend them on other things in the Javastraat, in the bookstore for example.” (Fatima, 11th of May)

Makkies can also provide access for the entire family to activities and events. Makkies let them participate in activities that the ‘rest’ of society was also a part of, this was an empowering feeling for many volunteers. The rest of society in this case referring to other members of the community that could spend money to enter these events. During one of my experiences as a participant observer I saw how volunteers were able to spend their Makkies at the Meevaart, a community center that works closely with the Makkies system. During the event which celebrated its 29th year of operation the Meevaart offered lectures, workshops and trainings which could be attended for a few euros or by exchanging one to two Makkies.

Conclusion

Makkies has started to increasingly act like money in its focus on economic benefits that can be obtained through different exchange channels. Some volunteer indicate since this is increasingly the case they wonder why standard compensations for Makkies cannot return. Money, especially for the volunteers who receive welfare, which is the increasing majority may be more useful, *“Money pays my bills, Makkies do not.”* (Fatima, 11th of May) Makkies does not and cannot act as a store of value There is no benefit for Makkie users to hold on to their Makkies. The Makkies they have earned from their service or volunteer work does not increase in value. Users are therefore always encouraged to spend their Makkies.

Social value was the initial focus on Makkies, over time individual economic benefits became more important. An increasing focus on economic value around a community currency means that initial goals such as promoting social cohesion start to dissipate. Despite this increasing economic focus, Makkies will

never act as a standard currency: as a medium of exchange, a store of value and a unit of account (Seyfang 2013: 230). However, one begins to wonder if volunteers could benefit more from actual money. Makkies has shown that there are important social contributions and feelings towards improvement of the community that appear to be important and shared across all the participants groups.

Belonging to the community is a shared experience for all the participants. As I have explained this belonging is influenced by a sense of scale with which a participant identifies themselves to a part of the community. What is clear is that in all cases, through their participation, through their practices, participants are generating social value. Actions within the Makkies system are based on trust which helps facilitate and build networks. The social value generated is tied to relationships of belonging which form the structure of practices and networks. Participants come together to improve especially the social conditions of all participants and increasingly the economic conditions of many of its volunteers.

Clearly there are still cases where social value is generated and the important aim of promoting social cohesion is still maintained within the Makkies system however it is becoming clear that Makkies has been directed to stimulate economic benefits for volunteers and local businesses participating in the system. The practices however remain highly social through the engagement with other members within Amsterdam Oost. The addition of the Makkie coupon has created benefits for new local businesses that participate and offers them a way to support the community and the volunteers that are active within it. Coordinators have opposing views regarding the direction Makkies has taken but are satisfied that there is a system that rewards volunteers that input their time for the improvement of Amsterdam Oost. Initiatives started by groups such as the 'Blijvers' indicates that Makkies still continues to build a sense of community solidarity and is therefore still contributing towards the development of social cohesion by building community solidarity in Amsterdam Oost. In doing so Makkies holds on to its grassroots anti-establishment origins and is able to fit within the paradigm of alternative currencies.

Chapter 3 . Becoming a Tool for ‘Social activation’

Introduction

In this chapter structural changes in perspectives among Makkie users and participants will be discussed, it will provide arguments that show how involvement of the Municipality of Amsterdam and other third parties have drastically altered the ability of Makkies to reach its principle goal of promoting social cohesion. It will also include remarks made by the different participant groups regarding the future development of Makkies. This chapter takes a deeper look at shortcomings and change in perceptions that are affecting the extent that Makkies can still attain its primary aim of social cohesion. It will conclude with an answer to the third sub-question: How can changes in the structural arrangements of Makkies in Amsterdam Oost affect its ability to function as a community currency system and what are shortcomings identified in the project?

The Structural Shift

Once the Municipality began becoming more involved in Makkies the Makkie system began to experience a shift in direction. This shift was driven by internal changes within the Municipality of Amsterdam for Stadsdeel Oost. When Makkies launched in 2012 it was primarily financed by the Municipality from ‘pots’ of government money meant for the social activation and participation of residents, European subsidies and the project received some additional support from partner organizations. During our interview Irene Wever indicates that after 2015 the situation changed.

“In the past Makkies was primarily financed by subsidies, after 2015 Makkies was taken over by branches of the Municipality focused on poverty reduction. It was taken into the new Poverty Attack plan. This was focused on encouraging citizens to participate, especially those that have been without for a longer period of time. Participation would be meant to reduce their distance to the job market.” (Irene Wever, 15th of May).

As the Makkies system was declining in popularity and use the Municipality of Amsterdam saw potential to reinvigorate the project Makkies and achieve its own goals. The sudden interest in Makkies within the Municipality could be due to internal shake-ups Irene explained. Newly appointed civil servants could have seen potential in the system and allocating some budget to develop Makkies. Irene Wever the current project manager of Makkies explained that that formerly existing structures such as volunteer

compensation were slowly being removed because civil servants saw potential in expanding into loyalty or reward programmes, such as Makkies. In the case of Makkies the project was seen to hit two birds with one stone as is made clear in the following statement. When asked if the goal of Makkies had changed from connecting all members of the community to specifically targeting unemployed and welfare receiving residents in the area, the project leader of Makkies from the municipality had the following to say.

“Makkies now focuses on reducing poverty in the community. Activation of unemployed citizens is a complementary goal, activation and reducing poverty. Research has indicated that on average volunteers using Makkies save between 20-25 euros a month, but if people establish new contacts, seek out a new activity of increase their network the effects to their well-being are greater. The two goals are aligned.”
(Irene Wever, 15th of May).

New Partners. New Meanings

Since 2017 Makkies has also started to work with ‘Stadspas’ or a City card. In Amsterdam citizens can receive a City card if the income they receive is below a certain level. The City Card provides citizens below a certain income level a high discount on many activities in the city not limited to Amsterdam Oost. During some interviews it became clear that some participants were reluctant to inform me that they had a ‘Stadspas’ because it was an immediate indicator of their household economic income level. The idea of the collaboration between Makkies and *Stadspas* was to increase the amount of spending point for volunteers. The added incentive for businesses joining is that they receive a compensation if a *Stadspas* users pay for their products or services in Makkies. Accepting a Makkie coupon as mentioned earlier also entitles businesses to a small compensation. When Coordinators like Anne-miek introduced the coupon into the Makkie system she wanted volunteers to be proud of their *Stadspas*. The new Makkie coupon which is essentially available to all citizens that earn Makkies can be increasingly spent in many small business around the *Indische Buurt*.

However positive attitudes around the Stadspas are not shared by all participants in the Makkies system. Accordig to coordinators like Eric van de Langkruis the addition of Stadspas registration for many volunteers has become a major obstacle for the development of Makkies. It also limits the ability the Makkies system can contribute to social cohesion among all the citizens of Amsterdam Oost. The change of funding and collaboration with this organization that is focused on poverty reduction was a decision that did not consider the implications for other volunteers in Amsterdam Oost

“By focusing on the poorest residents with City Cards you make the opportunity for them to come into contact with other citizens much smaller. They hang around within their own groups, or ‘clubs’. That was not the idea of Makkies when it was implemented.”. “By funding Makkies with the poverty reduction budget allocated for Amsterdam Oost. Makkies becomes small and conservative. Now it is increasingly linked to the City card, which only draws in more of the poorest residents of Oost. You make the possibility of developing it across the neighborhood smaller and it devalues the Makkies for other residents.” (Eric van de Langkruis, 7th of May)

Much like in the case of Makkies the development of the community currency project in Argentina was in part dependent on external support, when it concerned scaling up and making a greater impact. From the media as well as civil authorities but particularly from the local government. Eduardo Hekker, Secretary for Economic development, Buenos Aires City Government indicated that the city was keen to support what by 2001 was a large-scale reciprocal barter programme. He saw this as a tool for social inclusion. With the hope that it could lead to the initiation of small-scale enterprises and thus of employment creation (Pearson 2003: 226). Increasingly project Makkies was also seen as a tool for social inclusion by the Municipality of Amsterdam. The thought was that by activating the unemployed citizens and bringing them in contact with a greater variety of other citizens living in Amsterdam Oost this would simultaneously promote social cohesion in the community.

“Activating and reducing poverty. They work together if you ask me. Look research indicates that on average people save 20-25 euros from participating in Makkies per month. But if people meet new people, or try out a new activity it can help build a community network”. (Irene Wever, 15th of May)

Irene Wever explains it became a tool for social activation of particularly the poorest residents in Amsterdam Oost. When asked if goals such as promoting social cohesion were still essential to Makkies. She answered that social cohesion was still central to the project, but now included added goals the Municipality wanted to achieve with Makkies. The central goal she explained has become to activate those receiving government support of welfare. *“In the Indische Buurt there are around 1700 individuals that fit our target group. Currently 10% of these citizens are active as volunteers, with Makkies we hoped to target another 10% but this group is a difficult group to reach.” (Irene Wever, 15th of May).*

Irene’s response indicates that for the Municipality it is more important to now achieve targets rather than involving the entire community in the Makkies system. During conversations with coordinators and volunteers the impression of Makkies had always been to involve citizens of different backgrounds, from those with means to those without. I had seen that despite claiming this a certain type of resident was increasingly targeted to participate as volunteers, namely the poorer citizens of Amsterdam Oost. The

choice to continue to drive the project towards goals of poverty reduction according to Irene Wever was because the selection of who was participating as a user or volunteer was automatically gravitating towards these more vulnerable residents. *“The selection of volunteers for Makkies seemed to be an automatic process, yes it was meant for everyone but ultimately most volunteer were those receiving welfare support” (Irene Wever, 15th of May).*

The Municipality of Amsterdam was initially only financially supporting the project from a distance by allowing the allocated budget to flow through coordinators such as Anne-miek. Interestingly Irene explains that just prior to her involvement in the Makkie system, the community currency has seen a shift in its source of funding. This is currently influencing who is encouraged to participate within the Makkie system. Irene explains that in the past Makkies received funding from Municipality ‘funding pots’ that were focused on social improvement and activation of neighborhood. Now she explains the project is mainly being funded by Poverty reduction pot of Municipality funding. This as I will indicate in the subsequent chapter about value is the root of change currently at the heart of the Makkies project and is influencing who is encouraged to become a volunteer in the project. New goals set by the Municipality of Amsterdam are slowly beginning to affect who is targeted by the Makkies system.

Eric van de Langkruis disagrees and does not believe that the development and focus of the poorest residents was an automatic one. He also believes that after the increased involvement of the Municipality of Amsterdam in the Makkies project the goals of social cohesion were increasingly lost. *The “old philosophy of trading Makkies between each other, connecting rich and poor was just not interesting anymore. There suddenly was more political influence which results in changes in focus, big changes in focus, while you keep calling it Makkies.” (Eric van de Langkruis, 7th of May).*

Makkies was seen as a layer on top of existing programs meant to support volunteer that were active in the area. Especially the poorest volunteers participating in the project received government support in the form of ‘onkostenvergoeding’ which has always been financed from the ‘welfare pots’ at the Municipality. Conversations with users mentioned earlier confirm this dual working of government support and Makkies.

Coordinators who are participants that are closely engaged with volunteer users and participants at higher levels such as the Municipality identified this change as the ‘marktwerking’. Or the market change within social organizations in Amsterdam Oost. This market change affected social work at many levels. Mieke Maas explains

“There was a change in social work and a very different outlook from the Municipality. The market change came and social organizations became focused on making their own organizations stronger. This meant setting individual goals to determine their effectiveness.” (Mieke Maas, 15th of May).

Increased Responsibility. Loss of Quality

According to Mieke Maas the market change, was a factor that had altered in many ways how support and care was provided in many social organizations. The market change Mieke identifies in short refers to targets changing from the quality of help and care provided by taking the time to handle cases, to a mentality of handling the most cases as possible. These changes have been happening over the past few years she explains, assessment of coordinators was increasingly based on the number of cases they dealt with per week. So instead of provided adequate guidance, the few care or support professionals are asked to handle as many cases as possible, if the number of cases ‘helped’ by professionals is high then the organizations receives more funding from its sources according to Mieke. The result of this is that cases are not properly handled, or completed, by the professionals. When additional time is needed, or the case isn’t picked up by the professionals, the job is handed down to volunteers who are encouraged to pick up the remains when cases seem simple or may need continued support or support for a longer period of time.

Eric van de Langkruis also adds that this shift affected how social work was conducted within Amsterdam Oost once the market change took effect. One of the important structural changes that has also been identified among coordinators because of the market change has been the deprofessionalization of many functions throughout the city, primarily care and social work related. The deprofessionalization Eric identifies is focused on the disappearance of formerly paid functions in care or community centers and replacing these with volunteer positions.

“There was also a shift in performance, direction and policy advice. This is best shown among social workers. After this shift social workers started working as directors of volunteers. Where they used to directly support citizens in need they now look at the potential of volunteers to support others. Social workers used to be paid positions for graduates of colleges of higher education, now that they have been fired they come to me. Activities coordinator at many of our social organizations was also a job that required a completed college background. These have both been replaced by volunteers.”(Eric van de Langkruis, 7th of May).

A problem Mieke Maas identified during our conversation about the market change in social organizations. That is that volunteers are increasingly given more responsibilities than they are qualified for. This has been a growing trend following the market change of many social organizations.

“This has been going on for a number of years now. Organizations are shifting responsibility to the community itself, but people must be taught to handle this responsibility. Volunteers need to be able to carry this responsibility. The strength to support other citizens must be present, and it is often the case the volunteers do not receive the proper training. The situation becomes somewhat hopeless when volunteers who are often receiving support and being cared for by the state are now increasingly looked at to pick up the problems of another.” (Mieke Maas, 15th of May).

Because coordinators are positioned between the largest group of citizens that engage in Makkies, namely the users and the most influential group of participants the Municipality of Amsterdam they are able to provide the relevant information about both groups and how they interact with each other. Due to this they are best positioned to identify the shortcomings that are occurring within the Makkies system.

Volunteer vs. Social worker – the case of Mr.Somat

Currently the biggest shortcoming concerning volunteer work is that volunteer positions have been identified by coordinators as replacing formerly professional functions. This deprofessionalization of especially care and social work is a worrying trend in the Makkies project and may be indicative of deficits in management of volunteer structures at higher levels of organization concerning socially related work in Amsterdam. Since Makkies has been closely working with other social support systems such as the Stadspas the diversity among volunteers has declined. This directly affects the main goal of Makkies when it comes to values such as *connecting those with means to those without*, the Makkies system now increasingly targets a specific sort of citizen to volunteer in the project. Volunteers do their best to deal with situations they are often unfamiliar with, and often not qualified to do.

One of the regular jobs I had as a volunteer during my fieldwork was helping out as a ‘vertrouwenspersoon’ roughly translated to trusted person. Volunteering as a trust person in the neighborhood is becoming an increasingly more popular volunteer job. A trusted person is often a community member that has a stable housing and/or work background and is therefore able to provide some level of support to community members seeking aid with either. Support as a vertrouwenspersoon can be as simple as providing conversation to lonely citizens but can involve more personal assistance within households or help in the form of administrative assistance.

My experiences helping Mr.Somat was an example of a case where volunteers can be thrown into the situations they may not entirely be prepared for. I first met Mr.Somat at the community center Buurthulp Oost, Mr.Somat was very open about his life experiences and explained that a series of events had resulted in him living on the street. Mr.Somat is a large well-built man, in his 50's. He has a full beard and looked very tired the day I met him. He had spoken to Jeanette on the phone and came to the community center to seek support and guidance to help change his situation, Mr.Somat was currently homeless.

After some brief introductions we talked about the neighborhood and how long he had lived in Amsterdam. A few minutes later we were discussing more pressing concerns such as his income situation and what had occurred to Mr.Somat that had resulted in him living on the streets. One of the biggest issues he had were mounting bills that had all past their last day of expected payment, meaning fines had also built up. Bills from the lawyer, medical bills and warning letters from the UWV (Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen) a government institution that manages workplace insurance and issues such as unemployment checks. Mr. Somat had worked hard in a variety of professions from a young age, he had worked as a tailor, in garages as a taxi driver and has worked for over 6 years at Amsterdam Central Station before being declared unfit to work due to health issues that arose in 2016. Soon after he stopped working his wife divorced him and moved to Egypt with his two children. He spoke warmly about his children and was upset that he had not seen them in person in the last 2 years being unable to make the travel.

Since 2016 till late October 2017 Mr.Somat had been receiving unemployment checks from UWV and some extra monetary support from additional government channels. Mr.Somat had been open and truthful about his past and had exposed a part of himself to me, because of this his story seemed all that more genuine and I wanted to make a difference for him. It wasn't until our experiences at the Welfare desk center that we encountered differential treatment, one might even say unfair or second-rate treatment compared to other social workers that were also present. What happened was that Mr.Somat and I arrived at the reception of the Welfare desk center around 10:30 A.M. We had arrived on time since this was suggested to me when I called the center the previous day. While we were politely waiting to meet our case worker, we saw some individuals who had clearly arrived before us head into the rooms to meet their case workers.

However around 11:00 A.M the dynamics completely changed as pairs of what I later learned were paid social workers and their assigned cases were walking in. Cases were citizens that had sought help through the correct channels and were now coupled to a social worker. I later learned that this 'correct channel' process can be quite lengthy and administrative, this would have certainly discouraged cases such as

Mr.Somat from making use of these channels since he was not confident in his ability to write in Dutch. The result of this is clients like Mr.Somat end up through improper channels and instead of receiving professional help to improve their situation they are coupled with a volunteer.

What was unbelievable to me was that despite having arrived much earlier with Mr.Somat these social workers walked right into their appointments. To visualize this, they sat next to me and Mr.Somat at times struck up a short conversation. Despite arriving much later their numbers were called out before ours. The social workers and their clients walked right in and that was that. I looked around the first few times incase anyone else was seeing what I was. At first, I didn't say anything about this, thinking these were cases in dire need or maybe emergency cases. It wasn't until one hour and a half later after watching over a dozen pairs of social workers and clients arrive after us and receive meetings before us that I started making complaints at the reception. I explained I was here as a volunteer, essentially doing the exact same thing as the social workers. The lady at the desk answered back that this wasn't very common. I didn't leave it at that since I also saw countless individuals come in and try to establish a meeting by themselves. These citizens were either rejected outright at the reception or made to wait even longer than Mr.Somat and myself.

After I continued to make a commotion about preferential treatment and mentioning writing a complaint letter we were finally called upon to have our meeting. A large part of the job involved listening to conversations between Mr.Somat and the workers from the Municipality. Making notes and chiming in when necessary, I could not imagine this being very different from cases the social workers were assigned to.

Naturally the difference between professional social workers and myself was that their experience expedited their process at the center. Since the entire process was new to me I was frequently asking question to avoid miscommunications and be sure of information I was receiving. Ultimately we secured a positive outcome for Mr.Somat. However my experience at the welfare desk center has shown me that the system isn't set up in order to help these vulnerable citizens. If anything it adds layer and obstacles to filter out the cases that would give up at the sight of these hurdles. One example of this being administrative documents written in a highly official manner, at times over 7 pages long, these are required to be filled out before cases can moves on. Additionally, for volunteers who are giving up their free-time to help citizens they aren't taken as seriously and can also face longer wait times due to this. This makes the job all the much harder to do as a volunteer.

CONCLUSION

The change in perspective within Makkies can be traced back to when the Municipality of Amsterdam saw potential in Makkies to achieve its own goal of reducing unemployment and poverty in Amsterdam Oost. The Municipality actively became involved in Makkies by reaching out to their target group by phone and via mail to encourage citizens to participate in Makkies. The addition of partners like Stadspas simplified the process of reaching their target group, the unemployed citizens of Amsterdam Oost. Volunteers and coordinators often stated that they believed all members of Amsterdam Oost were encouraged to join. However this is not the case, while the Makkies system remains open to all community members particularly the poorest residents are stimulated to participate by the Municipality of Amsterdam. This structurally affects the constituent base of Makkies. The addition of partners like Stadspas have simplified the ability of the Municipality of Amsterdam to reach their target group.

Makkies now faces being labelled as a support system for the poor. Focused activation of a particular group of residents has affected the diversity of citizens within Makkies. The development to be most cautious of is speaking from my experiences as a ‘vertrouwenspersoon’ in that volunteers can be put in situations they are unqualified for. Due to an increasing drawback of the state in many care and support related functions. Many volunteers are themselves being supported by state structures and are now asked to be supporting figures for arguably even more vulnerable citizens in Amsterdam Oost. In this closed loop Makkie volunteers appear captured by the state. Makkies no longer acts as a community currency by promoting social cohesion (Sanz 2015; Collom 2011) or build diverse networks such as we see in LETS systems (Williams 1997: 4). But instead acts like a social policy, another support arm of the state. It clear that if Makkies continues to develop in this way it risks stepping away from its core principles.

RESEARCH CONCLUSION

The roots of Makkies are grass-roots and activist based as we have shown when Makkies launched. It sprang up as a currency meant to bring community members together. Its origins carry with it a strong sense of anti-establishment and resistance to state forces that have left out on providing services in Amsterdam Oost. Makkies were used to build bridges between citizens, in that sense it can be called an empowering tool meant to serve as a structure to exchange services and share knowledge. Nevertheless, the development of Makkies has shown that as its trend of activating specific residents continues it risks being trapped by the state, unable to return to where it began. As a community tool offering a structure used to conduct practices, hereby building relationships and networks by participating together.

Chapter 1 has argued that the decision to turn Makkies towards goal such as stimulating a circular economy in Amsterdam Oost has made it act more like a community currency, however it has also been the first step towards laying an emphasis on the economic value of Makkies.

In chapter 2 the paradox of Makkies as a social currency is investigated as it proves to act increasingly like an economic tool. Makkies to this day still lays strong emphasis on the fact that it is a social community currency. Cases like ‘the Blijvers’ confirm that community benefits such as community solidarity can be formed by individuals forming groups, using Makkies to mobilize the neighborhood. This example is a ray of light and shows the epitome of social value that can be generated within a community currency. Additionally, it is clear that in the case of the Makkies currency users and participants are driven by a shared sense of belonging to the community which draws them into the project and ties them together. Yet initiatives like the Makkie-coupon show that new initiatives are centered on creating a stronger economic value from Makkies for participants, especially volunteers in the system. Especially for volunteers it is clear that economic benefits become more important. However, for other groups like the coordinators and the Municipality of Amsterdam their participation remains centered on the social value of their participation.

Finally, in chapter 3 the biggest driver changing the direction and perspectives of Makkies has been identified as the Municipality of Amsterdam. By actively targeting citizens, in this case the poorest and unemployed residents, they are unfortunately driving the diversity of Makkies away. The strong ethnic diversity but also academic diversity were central characteristics of Makkies and are likely to be lost. The addition of new partners like Stadspas has allowed Makkies to reach more citizens but has added to the image that Makkies has become a support system for the poor.

Unfortunately, as the volunteer base within Makkies grows less diverse it is becoming clear that drawbacks from the state in care and support related functions has put an increased level of responsibility

on volunteers. Volunteers may not always be fully equipped to deal with these new challenges. Because of this the most vulnerable citizens in Amsterdam Oost risk now being left to not receive the adequate support they require. My experiences as a *vertrouwenspersoon* showed that I did not have the same access as social workers to the institutions. The case of Mr.Somat is good on one side because I was able to make a difference and change in Mr.Somats life, it is also possible that by helping him as a volunteer I have ensured he never receives the professional care he may have needed. As a volunteer I filled a gap where drawbacks of the state have left holes of the formerly professional functions. I realized as long as volunteers were used to fill these gaps and even if they do this inefficiently nobody can address the problem. Or the problem of the drawbacks of the state are not as visible

The concept of community has also shifted since Makkies was launched, not only has the nature of the community become specific for participant groups. The community of Makkies at first aimed to integrate these poorest members, but now its more focused on improving the lifestyle of members within the community, giving them more tools to increase their consumption. This is due to an increasing focus on the economic value of the currency. Interestingly since this has been an internal development lead by coordinators that have been involved with Makkies from the beginning, it is important for organizers to realize that their own initiatives can drive the currency away from its original goals and evolve in a way they may not have intended.

The aim of this thesis was to uncover what the social value was for participants and users of alternative currency systems, specifically social community currencies. This thesis has contributed to academic literature about community currencies by providing clear data and evidence of the social value generated within the Makkies system. The data gathered for this thesis confirms that social value is generated for both users and participants that engage in the Makkies system, social value is centered to belonging which in turn different participant groups ascribe to different layers of the community. The Makkies system has proved to improve especially the social and economic conditions of both users and participants.

This thesis has shown the community currency Makkies can provide a multitude of benefits for its members which include an environment to exchange skills, belong to a shared community, build community solidarity or reach out and provide economic assistance to financially weaker members. Makkies can be used to facilitate the building of networks between diverse community members given the right circumstances. By immersing myself as an anthropologist in the community currency system I have uncovered valuable information that can help build future successful community currencies.

REFLECTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I believe immersing myself in my field of research following anthropologists like Geertz and Malinowski before me has revealed data I would not have been able to obtain otherwise. During my fieldwork experience relevant emic perspectives presented themselves from within the four different groups. At times my role as a researcher was painfully obvious such as when planning interviews and when I first arrived at my research location. But as I participated and grew more involved in the Makkies system I was able to uncover critical data and have conversations in a very open manner as respondents were willing to divulge what they truly felt about the Makkies system. By being directly involved as a volunteer and participant observer one becomes a story teller of the actions and practices and the conversations and experiences shared with participants. Anthropology blends fiction with academia, and subjective experiences can affect the objective facts on the ground. This makes me question the influence of subjective experiences and makes me consider that my experiences as a volunteer may have been arbitrary. Based on shared experiences through participation with different volunteers and other participants, but still only and seeing just a part of the entire story.

Social community currencies are incredibly relevant for academia and for the era we live in, where threats to humanity seem exacerbated by processes such as globalization. Alternative or community currencies offer tools and structures to combat some of these problems by bringing society closer together and foster a shared level of understanding for one another. As a Sustainable Citizenship master student, community currencies are particularly relevant to our course because they look at the intersection between sustainability, globalization and ethnographic research. Community currencies are reemerging in our globalized era and is spreading in new forms around the globe. It is therefore relevant to monitor and understand how community currencies develop.

The wider implications for community currencies shows that Makkies like the community currencies that came before, remains able to hold on to core values such as being able to create a sense of social cohesion among its participants and users (Collom 2011; Sanz 2015; Nakazato and Lim 2016). Especially in the sense of creating a feeling of community solidarity through initiatives by groups such as ‘the Blijvers’. Makkies is still able to mobilize and connect citizens and can successfully achieve community resistance against state initiatives such as urban renewal plans which would see some of its more disempowering citizens be removed from parts of Amsterdam Oost. In its resistance Makkies acts like other alternative currencies where resistance to processes of the state are critical (Cohen 2017; Primavera 2010). However, as its collaboration with other systems such as Stadspas continues these core values may be at risk at the project increasingly activates a specific sort of community resident. In order for Makkies to remain an effective tool in the community it must remain relevant to a diverse body of volunteers which help form a

strong foundation for any community currency system. Due to increased demands of volunteer responsibility the case of Makkies has shown that volunteer work has come to replace formerly paid positions, resulting in volunteers acting as band-aids to gaps left by the state.

On one side Makkies has been focusing on building and achieving social cohesion throughout Amsterdam Oost, the development of Makkies has shown it wished to incorporate more community benefits. It wanted to integrate the social and the economic for its participants. However, choices have led to an increased focus on the economic value. A recommendation for Makkies would be to try and differentiate these two elements.

My final note and suggestion for decision making bodies of community currencies, in this case the Municipality of Amsterdam, should be to recognize that the effects and benefits of the community currencies can be far more effective if systems remain attractive for a diverse group of community residents. By developing itself as a tool for social activation of citizens receiving welfare and government support it devalues the Makkies and limits the potential of the system to continue its original goal of promoting social cohesion, but also providing benefits that would branch out and spread through the rest of the community.

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