

**ROTTERDAM TARWEWIJK,
A RESILIENT NEIGHBORHOOD?**

A CASE STUDY

Key Topics Discussed:

COMMUNITY BUILDING AND RESILIENCE

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“IT’S YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, SO IT’S YOUR CALL”

High unemployment, impoverishment, poverty, school dropout, crime, and insufficient integration of an over-representation of ‘New Netherlanders’: a combination of difficult issues presents problems in many urban areas. Despite sustained attention and significant investments, the cities and the Dutch government have not been able to gain sufficient control of these intractable issues. According to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Integration, there are about 100 problem neighborhoods or disadvantaged neighborhoods in the Netherlands. In political and administrative circles, these neighborhoods are referred to as ‘priority neighborhoods’, ‘empowered neighborhoods’ or ‘strong communities’, terms that reveal no information to people who are unaware of the issues involved.

Since 1994, Dutch municipalities and the national government have been investing significant sums in cities and urban renewal under the banner of ‘metropolitan policy’. The primary focus in those policies is the physical environment, such as the quality of houses and residential areas, followed by social cohesion within neighborhoods. The mantra ‘clean, intact and safe’ has dominated many policy plans and implementation plans since that time. After 2008, the emphasis shifted to social engagement by the people. The focus was primarily the development opportunities available to people through participation (or the option of participation) in work, education, the housing market, public facilities and leisure activities.

“ An approach based on the power of people. Because the resilience of the city is in the people. (The Minister of Housing, Communities and Integration).¹ ”

Clearly, government authorities had already been looking at other forms of participation since the mid-1990s, using such terms as ‘interactive policy’, ‘coproduction’ and ‘citizen engagement’. This concerns participation by citizens, civic organizations and companies in policy processes for the public sector. Since that time, policy papers released by government authorities have been overflowing with such ambitions as ‘reducing the gap

between the government and the citizens’, ‘giving the city back to the people’, ‘strengthening local democracy’, ‘listening more closely to the people’, and ‘do what you say and say what you do’. Still, these practices are having a hard time getting off the ground. Ten years later, there is still a strong need for more professionalization of citizen participation and interactive policy.²

The neighborhood approach has also had a strong focus on citizen participation since 2008, with mottos such as “the citizen at the centre” and “It’s your neighborhood, so it’s your call.” At the end of 2009, the Minister of Housing, Communities and Integration stated that resident participation in neighborhoods is going well, but “it can certainly be even better.”³ He argued in favor of increased and more diverse involvement and more say for the local residents.

And what are things actually like in these neighborhoods? In the words of the Minister of Housing, Communities and Integration, have resilient neighborhoods become a realistic prospect? Allow us to convey you to the reality of one of the Dutch priority neighborhoods: the Tarwewijk neighborhood in the city of Rotterdam.



FIGURE 1: Sticker from the communication campaign “It’s your neighborhood, so it’s your call” which was distributed by many cities.

TARWEWIJK: ISSUES, CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

“ In 2010, measured according to the methodology of the safety index, there should not be any unsafe or problem neighborhoods in Charlois anymore. (...) Although the level of monitoring and enforcement that has been built up will be continued and expanded where necessary, for example in the area of environmental monitoring, the task in this council term is the promotion of safety by the citizens. (Source: Administrative Program 2006-2010, City District of Charlois). ”

The Tarwewijk district was built ca. 1930 as an expansion of Rotterdam to provide housing for port workers. There are about 5,300 homes in the area, about 75 percent of which are privately owned; 50 percent of those are rented out. Rental is primarily arranged directly by the private owners; in the interviews and documents, they are often referred to as ‘landlords’, ‘rack-renters’ or ‘slum lords’. The available housing is often poor quality: outdated and deteriorated. Tarwewijk is a young neighborhood (the youngest in Rotterdam): 40 percent of the inhabitants are under the age of 24 and 78 percent of the inhabitants belong to an ethnic minority.

Starting in the late 1970s, many middle-income families left the area. Throughout the 1990s, Tarwewijk was the topic of increasingly negative news reports. Where



PHOTO: street view in Tarwewijk.

similar neighborhoods were the target of quality incentive programs, such initiatives passed Tarwewijk by. Slumlords and drug dealers carved out a niche for themselves in parts of the area. The low rent attracted underprivileged people. Tarwewijk has now also become a place where newcomers (more and more often people from Central and Eastern Europe) live when they first come to Rotterdam. People can disappear altogether in the neighborhood; the anonymity is intense. Impoverishment, drug-related crime and nuisance, illegal sub-letting of rooms, empty buildings, social injustice, unemployment and a huge transit rate are the result. At the end of the 1990s, the problems escalated for the first time in Millinxbuurt (which covers seven streets) in Tarwewijk. In particular, the nature and concentration of drug trafficking, the low number of passers-by and the concentration of slumlords made the situation in Millinxbuurt in the 1990s unique.⁴

CHRONOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF EVENTS (2002 – PRESENT)

2002: THE SHADOW OF PIM FORTUYN

Flamboyant Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn, who was assassinated in May 2002, won 36 percent of the seats in the Rotterdam city council just before his death.⁵ Dissatisfaction with the safety situation in the city had been rife on the streets of Rotterdam for some time by that point. Fortuyn’s party, Leefbaar Rotterdam (Livable Rotterdam), capitalized on that issue. After the elections, the party held a strong position in the new municipal coalition government. One of the main priorities of the new coalition was safety in Rotterdam.

2003-2007: STRONG FOCUS ON SAFETY AND HOUSING QUALITY

Within the municipality of Rotterdam, various city districts run the neighborhoods and areas. Tarwewijk, for example, is in the city district of Charlois.⁶

Rotterdam designated nine ‘Hot Spots’, a term which refers in this context to an area covering one or more

streets that are characterized by impoverishment, crime, filth and degradation. Three of the nine hot spots in Rotterdam are located in Tarwewijk, including the Millinxbuurt area. To demonstrate how seriously the city took the issue of increasing safety in these areas, a new civil servant was introduced: the city marine. The city marines reported directly to the Municipal Executive Committee, circumventing the structure of the civil service. Their only assignment was to resolve problems in the implementation of the safety policy.

“**I work for the city. I am not part of a municipal service. I am a direct representative of the Municipal Executive Committee and am required to report to the Mayor. I have a full mandate and resources to deal with the problems in the neighborhood. That gives me the opportunities to talk to all the municipal services in the neighborhood, from the supervisor to the director.**” (interview with a city marine from the City of Rotterdam)

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The high percentage of private home ownership makes it very expensive to buy homes. As an alternative to physically restructuring the area, the city district has therefore placed a strong emphasis on intensive management. For instance, housing owners frequently receive written orders to keep their houses well maintained. Crooked owners are put under pressure through stringent police inspections, after which they receive orders to improve the house. If they do nothing, the buildings are purchased by the Tarwewijk public-private neighborhood development company (‘Maintain or Sell’).⁷ Renovated homes are then sold on the market in the cheap segment of the housing market.⁸

Besides its focus on safety and physical structure, the city district is also increasingly investing in social integration and the economy. The City of Rotterdam has soaring ambitions here. Even in the 1980s and early 1990s, the municipal government was already experimenting with what was known as ‘Opzoomering’.⁹

This uniquely local term refers to initiatives by local residents for promoting safer and cleaner conditions in their own street, as well as encouraging community contact. In many cases, it concerns practical initiatives such as street dinners, game days, odd-job days, clean-

ing campaigns and block parties. After 2003, the City of Rotterdam took a more active role in these efforts, in part through the People Make the City program. The immediate focus of the program is restoring social cohesion and active citizenship, especially in neighborhoods that have problems with safety.

The program is intended to contribute to a friendly, trusted, social and livable street with active citizens.¹⁰ Local residents decide for themselves whether to take part in activities in their street and what they want to do, as well as what responsibilities they take for making it happen. The street needs to be able to count on support from the municipality, welfare institutions, housing corporations and other authorities.

FROM 2007 TO THE PRESENT: TARWEWIJK = AN ‘EMPOWERED NEIGHBORHOOD’

The problems are difficult to resolve, however; the neighborhood still receives (very) mediocre scores on the social index and the safety index.¹¹ The 2009 Safety Index shows that nine of the ten unsafe or problem neighborhoods identified in 2005 no longer have that status; Tarwewijk is the only one that has that ‘problem neighborhood’ label, although two new problem neighborhoods have been identified. Tarwewijk also has the lowest score on the Brand Power Index, which measures how strong the ‘Tarwewijk brand’ is compared to other districts and neighborhoods and to what extent it evokes negative or positive associations (source: the National Housing Survey 2008).¹²

Due in part to those reasons, Tarwewijk was one of the forty priority neighborhoods or ‘empowered neighborhoods’ designated by the Dutch government in 2007.¹³ The designated neighborhoods receive extra attention (and funding) for housing, work, education, integration and safety. The Dutch government, municipal authorities, housing corporations, local organizations and the people living in the community work together to define their goals and how to reach those goals. By doing so, the Cabinet aims to transform and improve these priority neighborhoods with those involved.

In Tarwewijk, the Action Plan for Empowered Neighborhoods specifically emphasized more variation in the

available housing, physical improvement of the houses and intensive social guidance for the local residents, combined with a targeted focus on order, safety and the quality of the public spaces.¹⁴ In March 2010, it has been about 1.5 years since the approach was launched, 1.5 years spent primarily on drawing up the action plan for the Tarwewijk neighborhood and converting it into implementation plans. The Action Plan for Empowered Neighborhoods will run for ten years.

ACTORS INVOLVED

Many actors are involved in Tarwewijk in various steering groups, programs and projects.

This control of Tarwewijk is assured by a quarterly ‘Charlois Noord steering group’ comprising representatives from the immediate stakeholders, such as the Charlois district (portfolio holder), Woonstad Rotterdam housing corporation (regional director), the municipal services and the city marine.

- The City of Rotterdam, has various municipal services such as the Roteb waste collection and street cleaning department, the building and housing department, the social services and employment office, the city inspectorate, and the urban architecture office. One of the exceptional figures in the City of Rotterdam is the City Marine. The City Marine has a highly active presence in Tarwewijk, focusing primarily on safety. (photo: Roteb and the City Inspectorate clean up junk in the Tarwewijk neighborhood and try to track down the perpetrators.)
- The City District of Charlois has a high-priority focus on welfare and the quality of the outdoor spaces. Two key figures play an important role in this context: the district coordinator (for the entire Charlois district) and the area manager for Tarwewijk.
- The police primarily focus on enforcing public order and safety. The police take a regional approach by using district police officers. This reduces the gap between the police and the local community.
- The Public Prosecutor’s Office works closely with the municipal government and the police, e.g. in offering a seamless approach to juvenile offenders.
- Various welfare institutions, such as the Charlois Welfare Foundation, offer activities and services ranging from playschools, preschools, after-school child care, school social workers, general social work, and social aid, advice and information, through to courses and recreational activities for all ages.
- Housing corporations, such as the Woonstad Rotterdam housing corporation, have non-profit activities for managing and renting out affordable, good-quality, well-maintained housing.



- The ‘Organization for and by the Inhabitants of Tarwewijk’ is under full management of local residents. They work to promote safety and community interaction, among other activities. They consult with the Charlois district and the City of Rotterdam every two months.
- Businesses (like the small and mid-sized enterprises, including a local supermarket) have proven crucial to the local economy. A neighborhood supermarket offers work to many immigrants, thus contributing to labor participation in the neighborhood.
- Various religious and civic organizations offer a wide variety of activities and services in the neighborhood; these include two churches, a mosque, the multicultural women’s centre Cleo-Patria, the Buurtpost volunteer center, and an organization for playground work.

The steering group establishes the annual programs and adopts the annual reports, monitors the situation, takes decisions that exceed the authority of the program group and cut the Gordian knots as needed.¹⁵

The program group, chaired by the area manager (the Charlois district) is then responsible for managing various project groups: physical (housing and the economy), safety and outdoor spaces, social and communication. The program group also includes representatives from the housing corporation, the city marine, and the project leader from the Urban Architecture Office.

However, it is also apparent from nearly all the interviews that cooperation is still not organized sufficiently along the lines of an overview, based on the vision for the overall situation. It should be noted that professionals in Tarwewijk are capable of making connections where necessary based on the tangible problems at hand, an ability that has proven more than necessary to supplement the management structure described above:¹⁶

“ I am amazed that I am sitting at the table with those parties and thinking, why do I have to be the one to take this initiative, and why don't you find common ground? (...) For instance, I constantly have to drag the police back into it. And I also have to ask the housing corporation what they're up to. Sit them down at the table and have them communicate with each other. (interview with a city marine from the City of Rotterdam)

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CONDITIONS FOR INPUT FROM SOCIETY

AIMS

Both the Administrative Program 2006-2010 for the Charlois district (“the promotion of safety by the citizens”) and the Action Program for Empowered Neighborhoods are geared towards active participation by citizens who take personal responsibility. The Action

Plan for Empowered Neighborhoods instituted by the national government states that the inventiveness and strength jointly invested by the people of the community and the local organizations and residents' associations are essential to the success of the neighborhood approach. For example, the people living in the area – individually and in organized groups – constitute an important party in drawing up and implementing neighborhood action plans.¹⁷ Experiments being carried out in various municipalities are gradually revealing how this input can be provided. The use of resident budgets is an important instrument in this context, even allowing municipal decision-making powers to be granted to citizens, giving them control over the structure, management and supervision of public spaces. In total, this involves about 15 million euros a year for the 40 priority neighborhoods.¹⁸

The input by the city district and the Action Program for Strong Communities are subjected to a number of specific process objectives:

- substantive enrichment: improving the substance of policy and implementation;
- increasing support for the policies and thus increasing feasibility;
- increasing responsibility and self-reliance among citizens, civic organizations and companies to make a contribution to public affairs.¹⁹

CONDITIONS FOR INPUT BY CITIZENS

In order to achieve these goals, it is important for appropriate conditions to be in place to allow citizens to make a meaningful contribution to the public cause. The opportunities and risks were explored in various discussions with key people. It is striking to note that far more risks were mentioned than opportunities. There are a number of major obstacles.

Unclear division of roles and expectation management. The Neighborhood Action Program of the Charlois district implies that the city district frequently invites local residents to exchange thoughts with each other about the policies and their implementation.²⁰ However,

the role in which citizens are involved is not clear in this context. Are they there to advise the municipal and district government, help make decisions, act as a partner in an alliance, or even take part as a policy owner? Good communication with participants and solid expectation management necessitate a clear division of roles between the local government and the citizens. The motto of these priority neighborhoods (“it’s your neighborhood, so it’s your call”) gives residents high expectations. The interviews showed that residents are quickly disappointed when they contribute good ideas: they are allowed to have their say, but in practice they see that many ideas do not get past the planning stage, often due to a lack of funding and implementation capacity.

Four dialogue partners noted a lack of trust between the local government and the residents. Concessions are made only to be abandoned upon further consideration, and there is not enough attention for the small irritations that local residents face every day. Various respondents referred to promises and the many ‘wonderful plans’ drawn up by the municipal government – often assisted by citizens – which never see the light of day, or only achieve partial implementation. “First you have to show that you mean it sincerely and that you also take care of the little things.” (interview with a city marine from the City of Rotterdam)

Lack of a constructive relationship. Complicating factors in addressing the problems include the relatively high percentage of private ownership of housing. There is a mutual distrust between the local government and the house owners / landlords. The city does not consider ‘slum lords’ to be reliable partners. They do not maintain their buildings well, offer poor quality and often unsafe living conditions, and let their accommodations to large groups. A person who owns a large number of buildings in the neighborhood indicated in an interview that he felt that he was ‘lumped together’ with such malfeasance and that he does in fact benefit from a livable neighborhood, since that also raises property values. However, this property investor has experienced ‘prejudice’ from the Charlois district, while he is open to cooperation with the city district and the housing corporation, for instance in selecting tenants.

“ Sadly, the good ones have to suffer along with the bad. I do understand quite well that there are some characters running

around who do things differently. (interview with a private property owner) ”

“ We will now be launching a building-to-building approach. We are going to resolve all the irregularities in the house. The owner needs to sit down at the table with us, so we can give him the tools he needs to make that happen. (interview with a project leader from the Urban Architecture Office, City of Rotterdam)²¹ ”

No strings attached. The local government and the residents need each other. However, Tarwewijk has an extremely high percentage of transit residents. The municipal register shows that nearly 25 percent of the local residents move every year. And that only covers the people who are officially registered.²² There is still a small core of original inhabitants, primarily elderly native Dutch people. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to build up a constructive and close relationship with the local community. People often have brief associations with the neighborhood, and it is often difficult to see who lives there, since they do not register their presence in the municipal register. The local government has little to no time to build up a trust relationship with local residents.

“ These people don’t feel any need for a relationship at all. They’re just camping here. (interview with a community worker from a welfare organization) ”

“ A team went door-to-door to check out the social situation. By the time they were done, they had to start all over again because so many people had moved” (...) In the Pendrecht area, 80 percent of the homes are owned by a housing corporation. There are a number of active residents’ groups there, in part because those people settle down there for a longer time period. It’s a more active neighborhood. (interview with a city marine for the City of Rotterdam)²³ ”

The added value of participation is not always realistic.

One barrier mentioned by various dialogue partners is excessively high ambitions on the part of the administration. The municipal and district administration expect a certain contribution from participants, but the expectations are not always realistic.

For instance, situations have been reported in Tarwewijk in which people neglect their own backyards and do not take any responsibility for maintaining them. This issue is often related to socially underprivileged situations and an accumulation of problems, such as debts, ill health, domestic violence, etc. As a result, their priorities are not focused on a livable neighborhood, or they may even completely isolate themselves. Many residents also deal with social disadvantages; for instance, they may speak little or no Dutch. This requires a great deal of capacity in order to offer these people guidance and allow them to participate (find work, but also interact with the neighborhood).

“ A livable neighborhood is not the first priority for people living at or around the poverty line. Their priority is on survival. (...) They have a dozen other problems, relational issues, poor health. You have to feel well enough to function. (interview with a community worker from a welfare organization) ”

“ The experience is that you can't leave it up to the locals. As a government authority, you have to be more involved in this neighborhood because of the resident profile.” (...) The yards in the Bonaventurstraat are completely overgrown. Those are difficult streets to tackle. You could say that we should have the local residents participate, but that process takes too long. Something has to happen now, and then we are going to resolve the matter. (...) It's still a bridge too far for residents to deal with those gardens themselves. (interview with a city marine from the City of Rotterdam) ”

CAPITALIZING ON THE CONDITIONS AND CREATING THE PARAMETERS

Do the threats to citizen participation mean that nothing gets off the ground, that citizens take neither initiative nor responsibility? Is Tarwewijk a resilient neighborhood? By capitalizing on the conditions, the municipal government achieves its goal: a number of civic groups are capable of actively working on behalf of the neighborhood. Targeted support is offered: What can citizens, civic organizations, and businesses achieve on their own if they are given enough room to do so? What would they do better if they received adequate support from the municipal government?²⁴ The government may not be reaching broad layers of people in the neighborhood, but there has been a number of successful projects and citizen initiatives.

RESIDENT CONSULTATION

Residents have been organizing their own resident consultation since May 2006, geared toward identifying and reporting undesirable situations in the neighborhood to the city administration. The issues it addresses include litter, broken streetlights, prostitution and drug-related problems. Residents organize a resident consultation meeting. The city views these notifications as an assignment, reporting the results no more than two months later. (interview with a city marine from the City of Rotterdam) The resident consultation meeting is convened



PHOTO: people taking part in the Civilians in Uniform project.

every two months to meet with the city marine, the district administration, the police, the City Inspectorate and Roteb.

NEIGHBORHOOD PREVENTION: CIVILIANS IN UNIFORM

The Charlois administration subsidizes the Organization for and by the Inhabitants of Tarwewijk (OvdB) in order to “promote a good residential and business climate in Tarwewijk and – in that context – to promote and encourage participation, joint initiatives, cooperation, self-activation, self-reliance, and a sense of responsibility among the people living in Tarwewijk.”²⁵ This approach has achieved results. A recent and visible result produced by the residents’ association is the citizens’ initiation Civilians in Uniform.

Neighborhood Prevention: Civilians in Uniform was established in 2005 with the aim of improving the safety and perceived safety in Tarwewijk, which should be expressed in a score on the Safety Index. Volunteers go out into Tarwewijk once every two weeks on a fixed or variable evening, with police back-up. They check and inspect the streets in the neighborhood. The volunteer group taking part in Civilians in Uniform consists of about 20 people. They are trained in walkie-talkie use, their powers, the general municipal by-laws, administrative law and social skills.

INVESTING IN THE PERSONAL STRENGTHS OF THE RESIDENTS: EMPOWERMENT AND THE TUPPERWARE APPROACH

The Charlois district invests in supporting residents by means of schooling and training. This makes it possible for them to participate in processes and support initiatives. It also increases citizens’ capabilities. Strictly speaking, the Civilians in Uniform project is an example of such an initiative. Another example is the energy coaches. This project helps people save energy, thus participating to increased participation, employment opportunity and social cohesion.²⁶

Ten mothers from Tarwewijk serve as energy coaches for



PHOTO: 192 women in Tarwewijk receive an environmental diploma. They learned – from specially trained local residents – how they can handle energy, water and waste more efficiently. Thanks to the lessons, these women can save 100 to 150 euros a year on their power and water bills.

the other mothers in the neighborhood. Before starting work, they receive energy efficiency training and are given information about energy-efficient products. The mothers can then pass on the knowledge they gained in their own language. The energy that can be saved comes from lifestyle changes and is supported/reinforced by introducing simple energy-saving materials, like a low-flow showerhead, low-energy light bulbs, radiator foil, weather strips, etc. The point here is to achieve an effect that spreads on its own. This project also helps bring the participants closer to the job market.

“ These ten women were trained to teach the lessons to other people. In the end, we reached 200 people with this initiative. Those 200 people are still involved in the neighborhood, such as in the Safety Day. We ask residents to help organize the events on that day. That also attracts new residents. And they all bring along the lady who lives next to them. I call it the Tupperware method: getting more and more people to participation in community activities. (interview with the community coordinator for Tarwewijk)

”

SETTING UP A 'PARTICIPATION FUND' TO DEAL WITH 'MINOR IRRITATIONS'

The Charlois district has set up a participation fund of €40,000. Residents can submit initiatives for such things as extra lighting, activities or services. Initiatives are subject to conditions. The district administration evaluates the initiatives on the basis of municipal policy and other criteria. The participation fund is not yet operational at this time.

“ We see a poor score for health. There is a great deal of obesity. A small grass-covered field would give people a place to do sports; that initiative is in line with the focus of the policy. (interview with the Tarwewijk community coordinator) ”

LESSONS AND INSIGHTS

So is Tarwewijk an example of a resilient neighborhood? Based in part on the interviews with key figures, many recommendations and valuable lessons can be offered for increased professionalization of citizen participation in Tarwewijk, in order to achieve a resilient neighborhood. The following chapter formulates a number of challenges that may not be new, but are highly topical.

EFFECTIVE ROLE ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPECTATION MANAGEMENT

“It’s your neighborhood, so it’s your call.” In this communication campaign, the municipal administration and the national government create the expectation that citizens can ‘buy’ projects, as if they could just pull them off the shelves in a supermarket. As sub-projects are implemented, however, the people’s role shifts from consumer to citizen, but the city does not offer the people explicit insight into the change: the citizen is expected to settle for a compromise that considers the various interests. How do you introduce transparency in this process? How can a municipal administration be responsive, while at the same time retaining the ability

to consider the various interests in a transparent and careful manner?

Unfortunately, citizens are frequently disappointed with the local government once the process is done. Rather than improving the relationship between government and society, the process has had the opposite effect. This is an issue in Tarwewijk, for example in relation to the neighborhood action plan. A dialogue partner referred to a situation in which new plans were made over and over again, relying on citizen engagement. Each time, residents invested a great deal of energy and commitment, only to be proportionately disappointed when it turned out later that their input was not feasible or doable:

“ The Mijnsbuurt area should really be restructured. However, insufficient resources are available. Every time, new plans are made all over again, involving a huge amount of energy and commitment from residents. When it comes down to it, the budget is not available. Now we need 40 million, but we don’t have it. (...) It’s very difficult for me, because you’re dealing with a neighborhood now where the citizens are being asked if they want to participate for the umpteenth time. You can’t give anything in return, so it gives a skewed impression. (source: interview with the Tarwewijk community coordinator) ”

The same can also be seen in the plan for providing access to the participation budget of € 40,000, which has not yet been made available. However, expectation management stands or falls with clout and fulfilled promises.

“ This participation budget has not yet been made available. The consequence is that promises that were made to residents, such as cleaning streets, replacing lights, have not yet been kept. This leads to irritation among residents. (interview with a representative from a residents’ organization) ”

EXTERNAL INTERACTION DEMANDS EFFECTIVE INTERNAL INTERACTION

The internal interactions within the local government are not always coordinated with the external interactions. This holds true both for the Charlois district and for the City of Rotterdam. Many examples were mentioned in the interviews. In several cases, there was a mention of insufficient internal cohesion to take decisive action in the neighborhood. Is citizen participation an ‘extra bonus’ that comes on top of what already happens normally, or is it part of the regular activities? There are indications from the interviews that external operations are still not yet considered a given by many municipal services.

“ Many things go wrong, which is because there are too many people working here who never listen to the people who live here. Someone sitting behind a desk comes up with an idea, and then dumps it on the residents. In those cases, no one uses the knowledge of the streets. (interview with a community worker from a welfare organization)

“ How successful cooperation with the city district is depends on the civil servants that you have to do business with. (interview with a representative from a residents’ association)

PREVENT PARTICIPATION FOR THE SAKE OF PARTICIPATION

An advisory group was recently established in which local residents from various backgrounds took part (source: interview with a community worker from a welfare organization). These people live all over the neighborhood and come from various backgrounds. Something odd is going on there. Inquiries about the aim of this advisory group revealed that it primarily acted as a ‘permanent sounding board’. One of the dialogue partners indicated that as many as 100 surveys are conducted in the neighborhood throughout the course

of the year: students, universities, researchers, research bureaus, consultancy firms, civil servants, politicians, and public administrators pound on the door constantly to ask the residents questions. The advisory group is available to people and researchers who would like to make use of the answers. However, it is very questionable whether the administration will be able to sustain the people’s enthusiasm for this purpose.

INVEST IN A SMALL-SCALE APPROACH

One of the urban welfare programs is the 2003 initiative ‘People Make the City’. The relatively small-scale approach, which addressed a street or about 100 households, contributed to a good connection to the environment of the residents: “We opt for this scale because this is the level at which people irritate each other or enjoy each other.” (interview with a community worker from a welfare organization) According to this dialogue partner, the lesson learned here could effectively be applied in other projects and programs, which unfortunately happens far too infrequently.

” MAKE CLEAR POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHOICES: WHAT WOULD BE A FEASIBLE PROSPECT FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

This is a fundamental question, and in essence a political issue. To what extent is the vision expressed for the neighborhood feasible? A number of dialogue partners indicate that the ambitions that the district administration has for the neighborhood may be too ambitious. They wonder if there are good, feasible future prospects for the area. Could such a vision also accommodate the fact that Tarwewijk is a ‘transit neighborhood’ with a high rate of turnover? And what qualities would be associated with that in terms of e.g. physical and social structure? In that scenario, what do you accept from residents and from the government, and what is considered unacceptable? What do you deliberately invest in, and what do you avoid at all costs or leave up to other

agents in society? Dialogue partners wonder whether there might be ambitions closer to current practice that are more feasible and also contribute to a livable neighborhood.

“**The city needs a transit neighborhood as well, but you have to be prepared for it. For instance, there needs to be a seriously solid police presence, and cleaning needs to happen frequently because people don't clean the street themselves.**” (...)

“**A street where half of the residents are Poles or Bulgarians who come here for 3 or 4 months to work and then go back to their countries will not be making a major effort on behalf of the neighborhood. (...) What you can achieve with them is that they have good housing and follow the rules and conventions as long as they're here. I know people from Poland, for instance, that didn't know they were allowed to put their trash bags in the public container, since they don't pay taxes.** (interview with a city marine from the City of Rotterdam)

“**The government is good at making plans: 'how should it be?'. There is not enough of a link to the environment in which the residents live. Policy needs to be based more on the here and now. (...) You shouldn't cling to the illusion that Tarwewijk will become a highly developed neighborhood.** (interview with a participation consultant from the district administration)

FIXED OR FLEXIBLE CONTACT WITH CITIZENS?

The advantage of more or less structured residents' groups or associations is a certain degree of clarity: there is a recognizable point of contact; a long-term relationship can be built up; there is a collective awareness on the residents' end. However, the neighborhood rapidly circumvents these structures, in part due to the high rate of transit. Today's neighborhood is entirely

different from the neighborhood three months ago. That also places many additional demands on the administration to reach residents in other, less conventional and less easy ways: on the street, at the supermarket, in the park, in and around the school. This takes a great deal of capacity and commitment.

“**We try to involve all the groups, but that's not easy. They do not come to you on their own, so you have to approach them actively yourself. I don't see that getting off the ground yet.**” (interview with a project manager from the Urban Architecture Office, City of Rotterdam)

TARWEWIJK AS TESTING GROUNDS FOR NEW INTEGRATION ISSUES

Many old city districts have been working hard for years to ensure effective integration of immigrants from countries such as Turkey and Morocco. In the 1960s, it was still assumed that they would work in the Netherlands on a temporary basis, and many did. But almost no one anticipated that many of them would find a new homeland in the Netherlands.

A number of dialogue partners are warning now that the local government should not too easily overlook the temporary workers from various Central and Eastern European countries. Many return to their country of origin after working here for six months. However, they often come from EU countries, which creates easier terms for staying, such as the Poles. According to several dialogue partners, whether all these people will return (or keep returning) is very much in doubt. They may also start building connections to the Netherlands. “Isn't that the European ideal?” asks one dialogue partner. Based on the input from the current residents/visitors in Tarwewijk, it may be possible to anticipate potential new integration tasks.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING ABOUT IT?

The district administration facilitates resident evenings where residents can air their grievances. It is a noble endeavor and the residents' evenings are active assemblies. But a dialogue partner states that it throws the door wide open to all sorts of complaints that could much more appropriately be handled by a good complaints hotline or complaints office. It's like a 112 or 911 emergency hotline for all your complaints: "With all those meetings, you're currently mainly focusing on the negative." A lesson that the district administration plans to experiment with via the participation budget is a counter-question: 'What are you doing about it?'. The internal budget for the residents' association is used to encourage residents to deal with small irritations themselves. Experiences gained elsewhere show that a participation budget works well in conjunction with the power to make decisions within a municipal framework.

“ You give the residents joint responsibility for the result. If they complain now, they're actually talking about themselves. (interview with a city marine from the City of Rotterdam)

”

CONCLUSION

Actual practice in Tarwewijk shows that there are a number of very good examples in which citizens take action themselves and take responsibility for their own neighborhood, supported and facilitated by the municipal and district administration. Considered in terms of



PHOTO: Street view in Tarwewijk.

the number of participants, however, the level of participation in the neighborhood is still limited. It concerns a small number of active residents compared to the total population of the area.

Naturally, when the local government addresses the residents, it faces the current zeitgeist and a relatively large group of outsiders who remain aloof. In addition, a relatively large percentage of the residents have limited options for effective participation, for instance because they don't speak the language well. For example, the interviews showed that the group of 'native Dutch' residents is over-represented in the group of active participants. The Energy Coaches project, however, is a successful project for reaching a relatively large group of residents who are difficult to reach and enabling them to participate actively.

On the other hand, the municipal and district administration has to some extent created the situation itself. Residents are often contacted and asked for their input on plans (such as the neighborhood action plans), and the people who do take part then do not see any tangible results. That achieves the opposite effect, damaging the residents' trust in the administration.

However, this situation is not unique to Tarwewijk, nor to Rotterdam. Publications and reports are regularly released which show that resident participation in the neighborhood still (too) often ends in disappointment.²⁷

The national government, municipalities and housing corporations made a ten-year commitment to the neighborhood approach, with about eight years left to go. These years offer many opportunities for realizing the ambition of a resilient neighborhood. Both the professionals and the residents have high expectations for the participation budget that will be set up. Experiences from elsewhere indicate that it can increase the impact of appealing to personal responsibility, particularly in combination with decision-making powers with a municipal framework.²⁸

ENDNOTES

1. Speech at the annual conference of the Nicis Institute, October 2007.
2. Compare to: Igno Pröpper, *De aanpak van interactief beleid: elke situatie is anders* [The interactive policy approach: every situation is different], Coutinho, third revised edition 2009 (first edition 1999).
3. Letter from the Minister of Housing, Communities and Integration to the Dutch House of Representatives, 3 November 2009 (Parliamentary Papers 2009-2010, 30 998, no. 75).
4. See: Leiden University Crisis Research Center, *Een drugscene op Zuid (de Millinxbuurt)* [A drug scene in Rotterdam South (the Millinxbuurt neighborhood)], 2000.
5. The political assassination of Fortuyn in March 2002 led to responses of shock and even violence in the Netherlands. The murder in the generally so ‘uneventful’ Dutch political climate also received extensive coverage in the international media.
6. The city districts of Rotterdam are sub-municipalities that fall under the municipality of Rotterdam. The Rotterdam municipal government has delegated a number of tasks and powers to the city districts. The primary emphasis is on welfare and the quality of outdoor spaces.
7. The neighborhood development company is an alliance between project developer AM Wonen, housing corporation De Nieuwe Unie (now Woonstad Rotterdam) and the city district of Charlois.
8. See: Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (Housing, Communities and Integration), *Herover het vastgoed, herover de wijk* [Regain control of the property, regain control of the neighborhood], July 2009, p 6: 7 percent (about 370) of the total number of residential units have been acquired; 230 of those are being renovated and about 120 houses have been demolished. Housing association De Nieuwe Unie purchased about 350 houses.
9. Named after Opzoomer Street in Het Nieuwe Westen, a district in the west of Rotterdam.
10. City of Rotterdam, *Plan van aanpak: Mensen maken de Stad, Sociale Integratie... Zo gaan we dat doen* [Action Plan: People Make the City, Social Integration... That’s how we’ll do it], 8 June 2003.
11. The annual Safety Index is a ‘barometer’ that compiles various data sources into a single safety index figure for all of Rotterdam and for the individual city districts. The index is based on the subjective perceptions of 10,000 Rotterdam residents and on data from the police department, fire department, Roteb (municipal cleaning department) and other municipal services. The opinions of the population receive the most weight. The Social Index assesses the social quality of the various parts of the city based on capacities, living environment, participation and social engagement.
12. See also: Woonstad Rotterdam, City District of Charlois, Municipality of Rotterdam, *Opgroeien in de Stad, een kindvriendelijke Tarwewijk* [Growing up in the City, a child- friendly Tarwewijk], Rotterdam, November 2008.
13. See: Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (Housing, Communities and Integration), *Actieplan Krachtwijken, van Aandachtswijk naar Krachtwijk* [Action Plan for Empowered Neighborhoods, from Priority Neighborhood to Empowered Neighborhood], July 2007. The Action Plan for Empowered

Neighborhoods aims to transform 40 priority neighborhoods back into ‘empowered neighborhoods’ within 8 to 10 years. These neighborhoods would be places where people have opportunities and are eager to live there again.

14. See: City District of Charlois, *Actieplan Tarwewijk 2007-2010: Actieplan voor een gebiedsgerichte aanpak* [Action Plan for Tarwewijk 2007-2010: Action plan for a targeted regional approach], 2007.
15. See: Woonstad Rotterdam, City District of Charlois, Municipality of Rotterdam, *Opgroeien in de stad* [Growing up in the city], November 2008.
16. Practical research on experiments also confirms this impression in other municipalities. See: Letter from the Minister of Housing, Communities and Integration to the Dutch House of Representatives, 3 November 2009 (Parliamentary Papers 2009-2010, 30 998, no. 75).
17. Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (Housing, Communities and Integration), *Actieplan Krachtwijken, van Aandachtswijk naar Krachtwijk* [Action Plan for Empowered Neighborhoods, from Priority Neighborhood to Empowered Neighborhood], July 2007.
18. Parliamentary Papers 2009-2010, 30 998, no. 75.
19. Compare to: Tilburg University, Tilburg School of Politics and Public Administration, *Nogmaals aandacht voor bewonersparticipatie, Een tweede meting van de bevordering van bewonersparticipatie in de krachtwijkenaanpak* [Another look at resident participation, A second assessment of the promotion of resident participation in the empowered neighborhoods approach], November 2009, p 9. This document refers to the support base, the quality of the neighborhood action plans and the implementation.
20. City District of Charlois, *Wijk Actieprogramma Sociaal 2008-2010* [Social Neighborhood Action Program 2008-2010], p 3.
21. This dialogue partner considers ‘tools’ to include subsidies and facilities for arranging a loan to cover home improvements. Compulsory measures are also available: the municipality can cite the resident, as a last resort.
22. This is not unique to Tarwewijk. Many Dutch neighborhoods are familiar with this situation. The turnover rate in some neighborhoods in the municipality of Deventer is 50 percent per year (*NRC Handelsblad*, ‘Nieuwe democratie komt van de wijkbewoners zelf’ [New democracy comes from the local residents themselves], February 27, 2010).
23. The dialogue partner is referring to the Intervention Team.
24. See: Igno Pröpper, *De aanpak van interactief beleid: Elke situatie is anders* [The interactive policy approach: Every situation is different], Coutinho, 2009, p 23 and 24.
25. www.ovdbtarwewijk.nl
26. SenterNovem, *Energiebesparing in de Tarwewijk, projectplan energiebesparing middels gedragsverandering* [Energy savings in Tarwewijk, project plan for saving energy through lifestyle change], undated.
27. ‘Bewoners hebben te weinig macht’ [Residents do not have enough power], in: *de Pers*, 6 February 2010, and

'Bewoners achterstandswijken achter manifest' [Residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods are behind manifesto], in: *het Parool*, 6 February 2010.

28. For instance: Partners+Pröpper, *Wanneer werkt participatie, Een onderzoek bij de gemeenten Dordrecht en Leiden naar de effectiviteit van burgerparticipatie en inspraak* [When does participation work? A study of the effectiveness of citizen engagement and participation in the municipalities of Dordrecht and Leiden], commissioned by Nicis, 2006.

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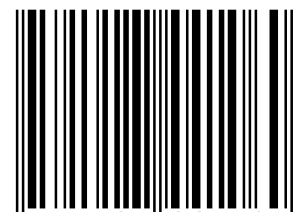
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