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## **Real-life expressions of vital citizenship**

**- Present-day community participation in Dutch city neighbourhoods -**

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Workshop: Community activism and civic innovation

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***ABSTRACT – Though vital citizenship is often considered a key element for a strong (local) democracy and for quality of life in urban societies, still little is known about the expressions and drivers of vital citizenship in practice This paper examines present-day expressions of vital citizenship – effective, efficacious and viable citizenship – in the context of urban regeneration and neighbourhood development. The ‘Everyday maker’, as discovered in Danish local politics by Bang and Sorensen, is used as a sensitizing concept for examining the characteristics and tactics of their Dutch equivalents: the ‘Everyday Fixers’. Two cases of present-day community participation – a neighbourhood development corporation in the Dutch city of The Hague, and a resident’s initiative in the city of Rotterdam – show that Dutch Everyday Fixers are getting things done by being institutionally well-connected with local officials outside the hierarchic structure, and by being structurally rather than ad hoc involved in local community building and neighbourhood development.***

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## INTRODUCTION

Recently, in the public debate city neighbourhoods are often referred to as highly ‘uncivic’ places; places that lack a fundament of social capital (Putnam, 2000) and are trapped in ‘vicious circles’ leading to neighbours not knowing each other, people feeling unsafe and uncomfortable in their homes, and expecting a quick fix from local government to solve their neighbourhood problems. In our paper we try to look past this rather gloomy image of city neighbourhoods and their residents. We focus on, and try to understand, new initiatives of (apparently) vital citizenship and community initiatives that emerge in Dutch city neighbourhoods. Initiatives that – in various ways – try to tackle neighbourhood problems; carried by active citizens who are able to balance between self-organisation and coproduction with other local (municipality) actors.

Though vital citizenship is often considered a key element for a strong (local) democracy and for quality of life in urban societies (see Putnam, 1993; 1998; Van den Brink, 2002; Hendriks & Musso, 2004; Almond & Verba, 1963), still little is known about the expressions and drivers of vital citizenship in practice (Van Gunsteren, 1998; Denters & Van Heffen-Oude Vrielink, 2004). What does present-day active citizenship in regeneration neighbourhoods look like? This calls for bottom-up empirical research, taking as its starting-point cases where vital citizenship appears to be developing, connecting them to case studies that have already been done.

Research on citizenship is often quite abstract in a political-theory type of way - one would almost forget that citizenship is connected to people of flesh and blood. A notable exception is case-study research done in Denmark, by Bang and Sørensen (1998; 2001). They present the 'Everyday Maker' as a particular expression of active citizenship: an expression distilled from Danish practices; but relevant to other contexts as well, the authors suggest (Bang and Sørensen, 2001). In this paper, we will mirror the Everyday Maker as typified by Bang and Sørensen to observations of vital citizenship in a Dutch context. Their 'Everyday Makers' are active on a local (neighbourhood) level. They are able to self-organize and seem to 'get things done' in the neighbourhood. They do it themselves, do it locally, concretely, and they only cooperate with the system if need be (Bang and Sørensen, 2001). Is the notion of Everyday Makership adequate and precise enough to describe and understand cases of (apparently) vital citizenship in the Dutch cities? What does this all mean for the conceptualisation of 'vital citizenship'? The 'Everyday Maker Danish-Style' is used as a sensitizing concept (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), a conceptual stepping-stone, for the exploration of concepts of vital citizenship 'Dutch style'. Based on one and a half year of empirical research in Dutch city neighbourhoods we present a typology of present-day citizen initiatives in Dutch city neighbourhoods.

How do we go about practically speaking? In this paper we first pay attention to the context of the citizen initiatives: shifts in civil society in general and the context of Dutch regeneration neighbourhoods. Next the focus shifts to two cases of (apparently) vital citizenship in the context of urban renewal and neighbourhood development in Dutch cities. That is – in Dutch government jargon – keeping the neighbourhood 'clean, green and safe' and making the neighbourhood more 'liveable'; this needs investing not only in the physical renewal but also in the social infrastructure of the neighbourhood. The two cases we will elaborate on are in (1) *Rotterdam*; in the Pendrecht neighbourhood citizens try to change their neighbourhood's negative image and try to build social capital by organizing local activities with and for the neighbourhood residents; (2) *The Hague*; the BOM ReVa is a citizens-driven organization for neighbourhood development. In line with the notion of grounded-theory building, the line of reasoning in the paper will be case-driven, empirically-inductive and naturalistic: as close as possible to lived experience (Hendriks, 2003). After that the Danish Everyday Maker-ideal type is used as a sensitizing concept (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), a conceptual stepping-stone, for the exploration of the expressions of (apparently) 'vital citizenship' in the cases. We refer

to the Everyday maker-Dutch style as the 'Everyday Fixer'. What are the main characteristics of the Everyday Fixer and how does s/he get things done?

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND URBAN REGENERATION NEIGHBOURHOODS

In this paper we focus on practices of (apparently) vital citizenship in Dutch city neighbourhoods. We take a closer look at citizen initiatives in the context of Dutch urban regeneration and neighbourhood development that seem to be effective, efficacious and viable. Before we introduce the cases we will elaborate on the context of the initiatives. First we go into some of the broader trends in Dutch civil society, and after that we pay short attention to the specific context of the regeneration neighbourhoods.

Dutch civil society is in transformation. The processes of individualization, informalization and informatization seem – like in many western societies (Schnabel, 1999) - to have a strong influence on the functioning and character of the civil society (Dekker, c.s., 2004). As a result of the individualization process many traditional voluntary associations and traditional social communities are eroding. People like to be creators of their own life and make individual choices, and these wishes are not always compatible with voluntary organizations that have their roots in a tradition and era in which not the individual but the organization or group comes first. In the past decades citizens are more and more 'living apart together' with voluntary organizations, and more easily switching memberships from one to another organization (Dekker, c.s. 2004).

Closely related with individualization is the process of informalization; many former hierarchic relations are becoming increasingly egalitarian. This becomes manifest in a more informal civil society. Old structures often were strongly geographically embedded and connected with a specific life situation. Nowadays participation is a dynamic process in which citizens continuously switch identities and roles (Van Gunsteren c.s., 1992). Citizens are politically involved in a do-it-yourself kind of way in multiple places: in business, in politics, in Everyday life and in voluntary associations (Galesloot, 2002). A trend is that participation is less planned, calculated and corporately embedded, and more ad hoc, on issues in the neighbourhood or otherwise close to one's life world (Dekker, c.s. 2004).

Western society is becoming an information society, with an increasingly important role and wide spread use of information and communication technologies

such as internet, email and mobile phones (and various mixed forms). One of the consequences is a change of the meaning of time and space. People can nowadays 'come together' virtually in cyberspace, and at the same time be in different physical places. Communication with peers all over the world – in different time zones – is relatively easy. In the realm of civil society internet and email are much used as communication and connecting media. On the one hand this probably leads to a decline of social capital because of the decrease in face-to-face contact (Putnam, 2000), but it makes on the other hand way for new possibilities and chances. The internet has the potential to connect both the informalization and the individualization process: internet communication has a relatively egalitarian character and fits the modern individualized citizen (you can e.g. check email anytime, and in your own private space). It has the potential to bring people together that otherwise – in a 'traditional' face-to-face setting – would not have participated. The internet makes it easier to connect on the basis of personal identities and preferences, and makes it easier to escape - or stay away from - 'stigmatising' or 'fixed' group identities – e.g. ethnical group identities.

The above sketched transformation of the Dutch civil society (or maybe western society in general) is the decor or context in which new forms of (apparently) vital citizenship arise and take form. Another relevant context for understanding the cases later on is the context of the Dutch city renewal process and neighbourhood development. In the regeneration neighbourhoods citizen participation is not a very obvious phenomenon. In most renewal areas the resident population has changed extremely over a relatively short period. A lot of new residents – and with them a variety of 'new nationalities' – moved in. Other residents – the ones who could afford it – moved to the suburbs. Most houses in these renewal neighbourhoods are rented – at a relatively low rental price -, and most residents have little education and not a very high income (Kullberg, c.s., 2006). These neighbourhoods – with all its nationalities and a lot of people moving in and out – aren't places where much historically rooted social capital can be found. The level of education and ethnical diversity also don't raise much hope for a lively civil society (see also Putnam, 2007), and the Dutch population of socially active people still has a strong bias to 'white', 'high educated', and 'male' (Denters c.s., 2004; Hurenkamp, 2006). At the same time – at least in the discourse on this policy – neighbourhood citizens are considered an important and active party in the Dutch urban renewal process (WRR, 2005). The urban renewal is considered a continuous process that is not primarily the national

government's responsibility but that of local actors: city administration, housing corporations and citizens. Most Dutch renewal neighbourhoods have a local citizen board that is considered a serious deliberation partner of the institutional actors like the city administration and the housing corporation. These local boards are just one form of citizen initiative in relation with urban regeneration. Most local 'professional actors' (as opposite to 'lay actors') want to get more citizens actively involved. But there still seems to be a serious tension between preaching and practicing – or between wishing and realising – and in many 'problem neighbourhoods' citizens still are not a seriously involved party in the regeneration process (Engbersen, 2007; Tops, 2007).

#### CASES: BOMREVA (THE HAGUE), VITAL PENDRECHT (ROTTERDAM)<sup>1</sup>

The BOMReVa is a neighbourhood development corporation in the Regentes-Valkenbos (ReVa) neighbourhood in the city of The Hague. It was established in 1992. The BOMReVa is directed not only toward physical management (in the words of the project, to keep the neighbourhood intact and safe), but also toward the (re)development of locations in the neighbourhood and working to achieve social investment in the broadest sense of the word. By organizing services, the BOMReVa seeks to raise money within the neighbourhood, which can be subsequently invested in neighbourhood development projects that need money (Hendriks en Tops, 2002).

When the BOMReVa was conceived in the late 1980s and early 1990s, many perceived the neighbourhood to be headed in the wrong direction. On any given day, the central shopping district (the Weimarstraat) was a desolate sight to behold, covered with litter, ruptured garbage bags, and destroyed street fixtures. Surrounding developments sagged under delinquent maintenance. The ReVa was established as an association of residents who wanted to take action to improve the neighbourhood. This required a shift in thinking that occurred with remarkable speed under the leadership of Arie Schagen. The conflict model, which had frequently applied in the past, gave way to a cooperative model. People shifted away from "protesting against" toward a new identity of "rolling up their sleeves."

The members of the BOMReVa quickly learned a lesson that would be important for their operations. In 1992, an external agency was hired to develop a plan, but that resulted in a disappointing experience. The BOMReVa soon learned that their project

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<sup>1</sup> For the BOMReVa case we used text parts from the article "Governance as vital interaction - Dealing with ambiguity in interactive decision-making" by Pieter Tops and Frank Hendriks, 2004.

was no job for outsiders; it required the work of people who had feeling for the neighbourhood. The BOMReVa also learned that projects and plans must develop in action, and that people must therefore begin by taking concrete steps.

One of the first initiatives of the BOMReVa was the sweeping crew. The mess, filth, and ruined street fixtures in the central portion of the Weimarstraat formed a stumbling block in the conception and birth of the BOMReVa. The municipal sanitation department did not have the capacity to clean the street every day. The BOMReVa sweeping crew did. Eighty percent of the merchants were prepared to pay a monthly fee to cover the costs. A call for street sweepers was announced in the municipal job pool. The BOMReVa hired two part-time staff members to supervise the work. They refurbished two carrier bikes that the sanitation department had discarded, and fitted them out with trash barrels, broom, and shovels. The sweeping crew began daily operations on the Weimarstraat in January 1993. To fight the accumulation of garbage in the weekends, the sweeping crew sometimes went through the neighbourhood early in the morning with a megaphone, announcing as they went, "Wakey, wakey! The street is being swept again!"

Going to work on a single project called the next project into being, as it were. Soon the BOM started various different projects, for instance the renovation of an old and empty school building, a 'handyman service' and the development of a tennis park in the neighbourhood. The tennis park was built on a parcel of land that became available in the neighbourhood after a school closed. City officials had worked together with a small group of residents to develop plans for "housing on the green," but this plan lost its momentum. On the basis of results from a survey of neighbourhood residents, the BOMReVa came up with another idea at the end of 1992: the land should be used for building a tennis park. The directors of the BOMReVa made this decision on a Thursday evening. A sympathetic architect worked through the night so that Arie Schagen could submit the plans to alderman Peter Noordanus on Friday morning. He approved the plans the following Monday, and groundwork for the park was laid within a few months. A tennis association (Breaking Point [Breekpunt]) was established by active neighbourhood residents in 1993, and reached its maximum capacity of 400 members as early as 1994.

At this moment (fifteen years after the foundation) the future of the BOMReVa is uncertain. The municipality is developing new policy for organisations such as the BOMReVa in the city of The Hague. This affects (partly unintentionally) the financial basis of the BOMReVa in a negative way. The existence of the BOMReVa is now

questioned not because of the content of their work – most people find that the BOM still does a great job – but because of changing procedures and new municipality policy. This has a negative influence on the energy and the enthusiasm of the people in the BOMReVa. Triggered – and partly forced – by these recent developments the BOMReVa is now reconsidering their own future. The board of the BOMReVa realises the organisation has to look forward, and not cling to the ‘old dreams’ anymore. At this moment the board of the BOM is investigating new ways and possibilities for a ‘BOM-revisited’, a new start with an organisation that is better able to adapt to the new social en political context. Time will tell if the BOM is able to successfully reinvent herself...

‘Vital Pendrecht’ is a resident’s initiative in the Pendrecht neighbourhood in the south of Rotterdam. The initiative started in 2004. It wants to - by organising activities for and with people in the neighbourhood – strengthen the social structures in the neighbourhood and bridge the existing gaps between different (ethnic) groups. Vital Pendrecht is also trying to generate positive media publicity in order to change the neighbourhood’s negative public image in a more positive one. By doing so the people of Vital Pendrecht hope to motivate new participants and to get as much people involved as possible.

The Pendrecht area is developed just after the Second World War as a ‘garden city’: a green neighbourhood of relative piece and quiet, neatly constructed on the drawing table. Until the nineties Pendrecht was a nice middleclass neighbourhood with a good name. But the last fifteen years many young people with money to spend moved to new built outskirts with more comfortable houses, just outside of Rotterdam, and the average income in the neighbourhood decreased fast. The social housing mostly got rented by emigrants; in less than ten years the percentage of emigrants went from 10% to 50%. In 2003 a 13 year old kid got shot in front of the Pendrecht metro station, which gained a huge amount of media-attention. ‘Silent-marches’ were held, and the press began searching for incidents and stories. Soon more stories of drug-dealing, shooting-incidents and robbery appeared in the (local) press. In less than ten years the image of the neighbourhood became that of a serious problem-area.

Dominic Schrijer, since 2002 member of the administration of the Charlois district, was personally concerned with the question how to make residents again feel proud of their neighbourhood, and how to create a new social structure in the



neighbourhood. In the autumn of 2003 Dominic Schrijer conducted a meeting with some active residents to try and generate some (hopefully) fruitful ideas. At this meeting it soon became clear that there are enough potentially active citizens in the neighbourhood, but that these (groups of) citizens are too scattered, that the existing energy isn't bundled. The citizens present at the meeting were of the opinion that a simple plan was needed to activate these potentially engaged residents. It had to be an initiative from the residents themselves. In other words: professionals needed to stay at appropriate distance. And soon the idea was born: a Rotterdam tradition with Christmas is to have a giant Christmas tree in front of the municipal office, but this year the tallest Christmas tree of Rotterdam would be at Plein 1953, the central square in Pendrecht. Three residents spontaneously volunteered for the organisation of this event. One of them was Bien Hofman; she works part time for the Residents Organisation Pendrecht.

Bien organized this event – together with many others - within less than three months. In this period she started dropping the name 'Vital Pendrecht' as a logo name under which they organized the happening. They managed to get some positive press in the weeks before the event, and really made it – piece by piece – an event of 'the people in the neighbourhood'. In the end about 50 Pendrecht organizations were actively involved, among which were: resident organizations of different ethnic backgrounds (Turkish, Indonesian), local drama groups, the local Brass band, primary schools, scouts, a garden centre, a mosque, the housing-corporation, churches, the fire brigade.

The Christmas event was the starting point for many more activities in Pendrecht. Under the name of 'Vital Pendrecht' many more activities were organized by, or in cooperation with, Vital Pendrecht:

- Vital Pendrecht visited the European parliament with thirty neighbourhood children;
- A Pendrecht cycle-race;
- a temporary snow-gliding hill for the children during the winter holiday;
- another Christmas event;
- Under the label 'Pendrecht University', evenings are organised where ideas transfer about and for the neighbourhood is the central focus. In the Pendrecht university the 'professors' are the residents, and the 'students' are the professionals.

Piece by piece 'a positive vibe' is created; by letting people see and feel that Pendrecht is a neighbourhood to be proud of, by creating more interaction and

understanding between different ethnic cultures, and by activating and empowering people to participate in various initiatives.

And of course things don't always work out. Sometimes projects aren't as successful as hoped. The BOMReVa for instance tried to develop and run a bicycle shed. There was room for seventy bikes, but there were never more than five in the shed. So after a short period the BOM had to close the shed again. And the projects that are successful, also have some darker sides; the peace and quiet in the BOMReVa tennis park for instance was a short period disturbed by 'rebellious' youths, and the number of visitors at the activities of Vital Pendrecht doesn't always live up to the expectations. Vital Pendrecht has enough challenges for the future; they probably could include more financiers from different kinds of organisations en companies, and maybe the basis of active volunteers in Vital Pendrecht can be broadened. But, overall, the people in Vital Pendrecht and BOM ReVa realise that this is a part of 'the life in the big city', and when you try to make a difference in the neighbourhood 'you win some and you lose some' along the way. Overall, in both cases, the participants strongly feel that the 'wins' outnumber the 'losses'.

#### PRIMUS INTER PARES

The citizen initiatives are ideal typically initiatives of equals: decisions are made through deliberation, and everyone has an equal voice and equal power. In practice, though, some citizens are more equal than others. Citizen initiatives often have a 'primus inter pares', a first among equals. From a community-perspective you could call them informal community leaders, but taking the citizen initiatives as a focus they are the 'driving forces' of the initiatives. These people take the lead and – in most cases – they create room for manoeuvre for other citizens and inspire them to join or to also start an initiative. In some citizen initiatives the leading role is formally 'institutionalised' in the function of a chairman, but in many cases it isn't. The formal position – e.g. chairman – can make it easier for a person to 'get things done', but most of the time it is not the position that is the key to success, but it is the person: his or her skills and personality are important factors. In this paragraph we introduce the initiators and driving forces of the BOM ReVa and Vital Pendrecht: Arie Schagen and Bien Hofman.

Bien Hofman lives in Pendrecht, Rotterdam, for more than 25 years. She used to work for the local home-care service, where she helped people in Pendrecht who were disabled, or for other reasons needed assistance. Five years ago she quit and began a part time job – three days per week – for the Residents Organisation Pendrecht. Here she supports and facilitates the various neighbourhood associations, and she helps people in the neighbourhood with questions about all kinds of day to day problems, for instance: what to do and where to turn to for permits, language lessons, complaints about junkies... And she is always there for people who just want to have a social talk. In her spare time she is the driving force behind 'Vital Pendrecht'. And under that logo she tries to mobilize people to organize and join neighbourhood initiatives that – as Bien says – “are fun, but where people can also learn something”. Bien organizes activities together with others – for instance Rieks Westrik, social worker in Pendrecht – but she is the motor behind Vital Pendrecht.

When trying to characterize Bien the first words that come in mind are 'enthusiastic', 'authentic', and 'inviting'. She is a warm personality and when meeting her she always makes you feel welcome and appreciated at once. She is really fond of Pendrecht, and she will tell everyone who wants to hear it. She has her own way of getting things done for Vital Pendrecht. She combines perseverance with spontaneity. She looks 'on the bright side of life', and when trying to organize something she often is the last one to see difficulties or pitfalls. But her free-and-easy way of doing things has gotten her far. She is aware of the fact that involvement of local government and politicians is good for publicity, budget and network. She often invites local politicians to Vital Pendrecht activities; and when they come she makes sure that they are visible and have proper place in the programme – but: not too dominant, activities always are about and for residents, not about politicians.

Bien uses her network when she is able to. For instance, last year Vital Pendrecht tried to start up the initiative of the 'Pendrecht University' – evenings on which people could meet and share ideas about how to make Pendrecht a better place – and she had the idea to try and print T-shirts with a Pendrecht University logo. But she didn't have a budget.... so Bien contacted the mayor of Rotterdam. The mayor promised to arrange a small budget the next day, and he did. Bien printed the T-shirts, and send one to the mayor for a thank-you. Last December Bien also managed to get the Dutch minister Pechtold – responsible for urban policy – to officially open the Pendrecht snow-gliding hill. “I just send an email, and see what

happens”, Bien explains, “And most of the time you get a personal email in return. They are just like you and me, you know...”

Arie Schagen was initiator and director of the BOMReVa for more than ten years. Nowadays he is officially retired and no longer director of the BOMReVa. Henk Daalmeijer is the current director, but Arie is still very much involved in the BOM as ‘sidekick’ and advisor to Henk. Arie’s style was - and is - not that of a director in the classical sense. Arie is ‘hands on’, he is ‘one of the guys’, but at the same time there is no doubt that he is the leading man of the BOM ReVa. His style is very informal and extravert and he has a well developed sense of humour. When Arie is around, you will certainly notice him... Without a doubt he is very engaged with what is going on in the neighbourhood. And when Arie takes you for a walk in the neighbourhood, you will soon find that everyone knows Arie, and that Arie knows everyone.

Arie seems to combine strong involvement with initiative and a constant drive. He can sometimes be very direct in his communication and doesn’t like the typical Dutch ‘cosy’ consensus behaviour. Arie is not afraid of a confrontation with people from the city administration or with an alderman. But somehow these confrontations manage to stay productive; the relations never get permanently damaged.

Sometimes a confrontation can solve a dead lock. A ‘classic’ example of a certain confrontation is written by Hendriks and Tops in an essay about the BOMReVa (Hendriks & Tops, 2002). The example describes a confrontation between the head of the municipal department in charge of street-sweeping and Arie Schagen – director of the BOM – who had the idea of the sweeping crew project on the Weimarstraat. According to the oral reports, the following conversation took place: between the official and Arie Schagen:

- City official: So, you are going to sweep the street.
- Schagen: Yes. It’s a good idea, don’t you think?
- City official: Yes, but you just can’t do that.
- Schagen: Why not?
- City official: You have to have a permit for that.
- Schagen: And you’re going to arrange that for me, right?
- City official: I don’t think so.
- Schagen: I do think so.
- City official: If you start sweeping without a permit, then you’ll be in violation, and I’ll have to call the police.

- Schagen: You just do that. I'll invite the press. That would make great headlines: Police arrest citizens for sweeping the street on their own initiative!
- City official: And if you want to sweep in the Weimarstraat, what do you plan to do with the garbage?
- Schagen: We'll put it in the dumpsters there.
- City official: Then it becomes industrial waste, and you have to pay a lot of money to dump industrial waste.
- Schagen: Oh, yes. Then we'll just have to dump this "industrial waste" in the front yard of the alderman in charge. You know that we've done things like that before, so if you don't cooperate a little here, things can get pretty tough for you.

It all worked out eventually. The sweeping crew was able to get to work. The circle of those involved became broader. A solution to the "industrial waste problem" was found within the city budget. The city official on duty left. Noticeably better cooperative relations developed with officials that had agreed with the value of the street-sweeping initiative. Confrontation eventually turned into cooperation and co-production.

#### EVERYDAY MAKERS?

To what extent are Arie and Bien Dutch equivalents of the Bang and Sorensen Everyday Maker-ideal type? First we elaborate on the concept of the Everyday Maker.

In the late nineties the Danish political scientists Bang & Sørensen introduced the contours of a political identity – the 'Everyday Maker' – that they had found in a study of "Democracy from Below" at Inner-Noerrebro in Copenhagen (a traditional stronghold of democratic civic engagement) (Bang & Sørensen, 1998). This Everyday Makership can be seen as a form of vital citizenship (in the Danish context). The Everyday Makers are engaged in politics, but political engagement is directed towards concrete problem solving in Everyday life more than it is relating to the performance of government. These Everyday Makers combine individuality and commonality and appear 'in such social places where Putnam sees nothing but individuals 'bowling alone' (Putnam, 1995, 2000; Bang & Sørensen, 1998).

Bang and Sørensen discovered the new Inner-Noerrebro 'Everyday Maker' as a reaction to the 'Expert Activist'. These Expert Activists participate in multiple new issue-networks, policy communities, ad hoc policy-projects, and user boards; they try

to gain access to the bargaining processes that go on between public authorities and experts from private and voluntary organizations. By doing that the civic engagement in Inner Noerrebro slowly had become politicized to the extent “where the dividing line is no longer between voluntary networks and the coercive state. Instead, it has turned into that between expert networks and lay-actor networks” (Bang & Sørensen, 2001: 152).

These lay-actors usually were from a younger generation than the Expert Activists. The lay-actors weren't less engaged, but they were engaged in ways that the older generations sometimes consider unconventional. As Gina – an Inner-Noerrebro Expert Activist – said about the ‘new generation’: “It's often a matter of getting involved in a concrete project, and then engaging oneself 100 per cent in it for a short period, and then stop. They don't participate in the long-term. (...) the feeling that ‘there's no end to it’, prevents the young people of today from getting involved.” (Bang & Sorensen, 2001: 152). Bang & Sorensen called this new type of part-time activism ‘Everyday Making’.

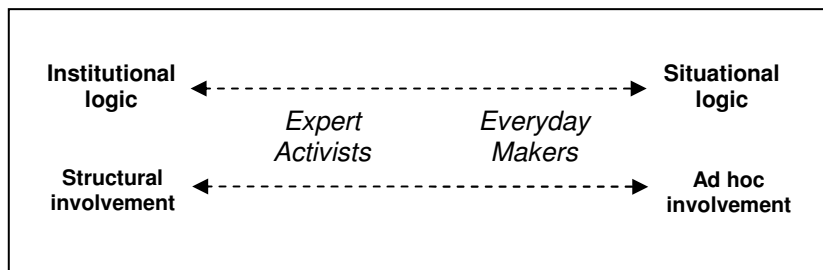
The Everyday Maker ideal type declares to act as followed (Bang & Sorensen, 2001):

- Do it yourself – don't wait for government action, but think what you can actually do yourself;
- Do it where you are – be active in your own neighbourhood;
- Do it for fun, but also because you find it necessary – ‘Everyday Making’ is not driven by a sense of duty only, it is a mix of the more pleasurable and personal with the more serious and societal;
- Do it ad hoc or part time – don't institutionalize the participation in a standing organization with formal rules and regulations. Don't make yourself heavily dependent on government budget;
- Do it concretely instead of ideologically – solve concrete problems in the neighbourhood in a practical way; don't be too much ideologically driven;
- Do it self-confidently and show trust in yourself – don't be a victim but get yourself involved and take responsibility for the fate of your neighbourhood;
- Do it with the system if need be – cooperate when it is functional; when you can't solve problems on your own, trust on bureaucratic or other expertise;

Is the above (Danish) notion of Everyday Makership adequate and precise enough to describe and understand the in this paper presented cases of (apparently) vital citizenship?

Both the Expert Activist and the Everyday Maker try to ‘make things better’ in the neighbourhood and both try to ‘get things done’. But the Expert Activist and the Everyday Maker have different ‘tactics’ and different ways of getting things done. The Expert Citizen is focused on the bargaining process with (most of the time) institutional actors. These institutional actors – such as municipality bureaucracy – act in terms of general rules, routines and universal starting points that are subsequently adapted to concrete situations. The institutional logic defines what is proper and “how it ought to be done”, and it has its own language, tempo and dynamics. This is logic the Expert Activist focuses on. The Everyday Maker though takes the concrete and tangible reality as a starting point of action. This ‘situational logic’ also has rules – some things are ‘done’ and accepted, while others are ‘not done’ – but these rules are often unwritten. Key concepts of the situational argument include commitment, productivity, ‘action’, and orientation towards results. And as above mentioned the Everyday Maker likes to operate on an ad hoc or part time basis, while the Expert Activist participates more structurally over a relatively long period of time.

Figure 2: Differences between Expert Activists and Everyday Makers



Arie Schagen and Bien Hofman are – at face value - Dutch equivalents of the Danish Everyday Makers. They have many similarities with the Everyday Maker-ideal type described by Bang and Sørensen, but when looking more closely some particular accents and differences can be seen.

- *They do it themselves* - Most of the time they don't wait for government action, but act themselves; the Everyday Maker is convinced that a better neighbourhood starts with residents action and initiative.

*But:* they do involve – many – others. Most of the time the first ideas, and initiatives come from the Everyday Makers, but the ‘implementation’ is done by a group of people, volunteers and often some professionals. In the end the initiative is carried not by the Everyday Maker alone, but by a group of residents.

- *They do it where they are* – Be active in your own neighbourhood; The Everyday Maker focuses on problems and issues in their direct proximity.

*But:* they don’t forget the world outside the neighbourhood. To get something done, you sometimes have to ‘scale up’ your focus. For instance gain positive media attention, or political/administrative attention from the city’s council or administration. And don’t forget to learn from experiences in other neighbourhoods, or from initiatives in other cities.

- *They do it for fun, but also because they find it necessary* – ‘Everyday Making’ is not driven by a sense of duty only, it is a mix of the more pleasurable and personal with the more serious and societal; you certainly need the fun-part to get yourself going, and to attract others to get involved.

*But:* when no concrete results are achieved the initiative will soon come to an end. Sometimes it is important to gain some quick wins, that are visible, to get people convinced and to ‘get the train going’. But the most important drive and guarantee for durability still is getting things done for the neighbourhood.

- *They do it ad hoc or part time* – Don’t institutionalize the participation in a standing organization with formal rules and regulations. Don’t become too dependent on government budget.

*But:* in Dutch practice government budgets and grants do play an important role in financing citizen initiatives. Everyday Makers, who want to start up a project, still often gain finance directly or indirectly from government institutions. Although the BOMReVa for instance managed to get paid by local shop owners for sweeping the shopping street, this is more an exception than it is a common practice.

- *They do it concretely instead of ideologically* – solve concrete problems in the neighbourhood in a practical way; don’t be too much ideologically driven;

*But:* sometimes a personal and strong motivation, or a strong belief in a better and a more social neighbourhood comes close to an ideology. Not in the political sense, but as a personal ‘driver’ and belief system.

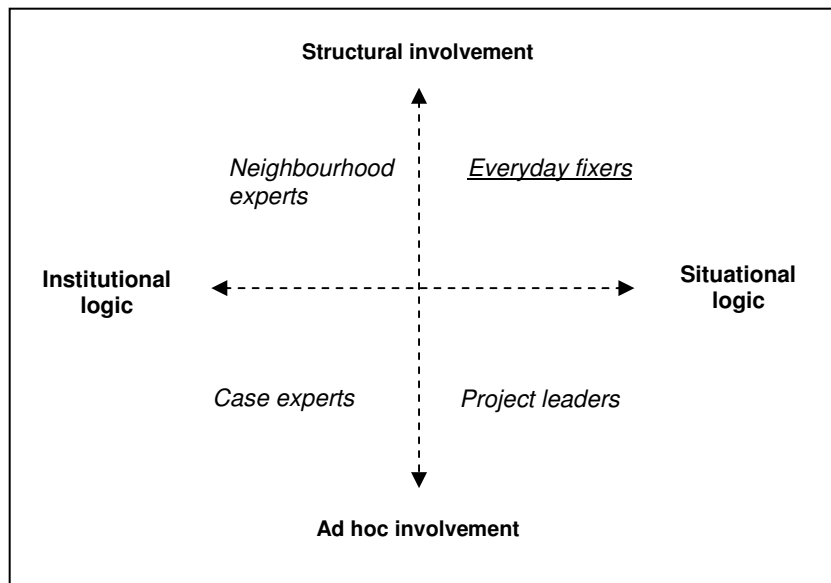


- *They do it self-confidently and show trust in their selves* – Everyday Makers don't act like victims; they don't look at professionals or other residents for help, but get themselves involved and take responsibility for the fate of your neighbourhood.  
*But:* don't be afraid to ask for help or to cooperate with other residents and experts. Don't overrate yourself, don't play bluff poker, or make promises you can't keep. Act on a basis of respect and trust in others.
- *They do it with the system if need be* – When you can't solve problems on your own, trust on bureaucratic or other expertise;  
*But:* try to cooperate only when it is functional, not out of habit or indolence. This can sometimes be harder than you think, because in practice it often is very easy to quickly lean on institutional support, finance and information. But try to stay critical, and keep 'doing it yourself', whenever that is possible.

When deducing from the above cases the two most prominent characteristics of Everyday Makership Dutch style are: (1) the Dutch Everyday Maker is more structurally involved than ad hoc, and (2) in 'getting things done' personal relations with local politicians / aldermen outside of the official hierarchic structure often are essential (Van de Wijdeven & Hendriks, 2006). Because of the differences with the Everyday makers, we will refer to the Dutch Everyday Maker as an 'Everyday Fixer' (see also Hendriks & Tops, 2005).

When rotating the 'structural involvement – ad hoc involvement'-axis in figure 1, you get two different axes that make four combinations. The Everyday Fixer combines a focus on the situational logic of the neighbourhood and its concrete problems and situations, with a structural involvement. In the empirical research we did over the last year it looks like we can distinguish four types of local 'driving forces' in citizen initiatives: see figure 2. In this paper we focus only on the 'Everyday Fixer'.

Figure 2: Everyday Fixers in a broader typology of local 'driving forces' of citizen initiatives (on a neighbourhood level, in the context of Dutch urban renewal processes and neighbourhood development)



We will go into the two characteristic

*1. Not ad hoc, but structural*

Most of the time the Everyday Fixers combine their Everyday Fixer-activities with a regular day job, or with other activities. But though the involvement is part time, it is not ad hoc, or on a project basis. Where the Danish Everyday Makers often get involved in a concrete project, and then “engaging oneself 100 per cent in it for a short period, and then stop” (Bang & Sørensen, 2001: 152), the Dutch Everyday Fixers are involved on a more structural basis. (the Everyday Fixers share this characteristic with the ‘neighbourhood experts’ in the above figure, but we don’t further elaborate on the neighbourhood experts in this paper).

Partly this is related to the personal motivations of the Everyday Fixers to become or to stay involved. Verba et al (1995) distinguished four rubrics of motivations: (1) selective material benefits; (2) selective social gratifications; (3) selective civic gratifications; and (4) collective outcomes. The Dutch Everyday Makers are often ‘driven’ by a combination of ‘selective social gratifications’ and ‘selective civic gratifications’ (Verba et al., 1995). Selective social gratifications are e.g. excitement – ‘the kick’ you get when things seem to work out the way you planned –, the chance to be with people you enjoy, and the respect or appreciation from other residents. Selective civic gratifications are e.g. ‘making the neighbourhood a better place’. Selective material benefits like ‘the chance to further my job’ or ‘I might get help from an official on a family or personal problem’ aren’t important motives. Influencing

'collective outcomes', or government policy sometimes is a motive for getting involved, but always as a means to an end. The accent on social and especially the civic gratifications, make Everyday fixing sometimes a life's work. In neighbourhoods where a lot has to be done, your job is just never finished. Along the way some Everyday Fixers get so much involved, that Everyday fixing has become a part of their identity, and this can sometimes make it complex to 'just stop' - especially when people in the neighbourhood keep approaching you with questions, and requests (Van Gunsteren, 2003).

Another reason why Dutch Everyday Fixers often are involved on a more structural basis, is that it simply takes a while to get things done. The neighbourhood problems often are complex and 'wicked'. In the context of modern governance no single actor has the knowledge and resources to tackle problems unilaterally (Stoker, 1998; Stone, 1989; Van Heffen c.s., 2000). And such as governments no longer have the means necessary to manage and control their surroundings (Van Gunsteren et al., 1995), this is also the case for citizens. Although citizen initiatives to tackle neighbourhood problems most of the time are not as ambitious as those of the local government, most of the time they do have to depend on or interact with the local municipality, or other institutional actors to get information, permits, budget etcetera to carry out their plans. The Everyday Fixers got to have a permanent attention for the process, and the parties involved.

## *2. Political support and personal relations*

The Dutch Everyday Fixers are able to organize political support in the form of direct personal relations with aldermen, council members, members of the local administration, outside of the official hierarchic structure (Hendriks & Tops, 2002; Weterings & Tops, 2002). These politicians trust the Everyday Fixers and give them the benefit of the doubt in realising their plans and ideas. The local politicians are willing to take (political) risks by supporting and helping the Everyday Fixers. As with all social capital there has to be a basis of reciprocity (Putnam, 1993). In the long run the Everyday Fixers have to show they truly are trustworthy. This is done not by telling, but by showing: by getting concrete and visible results and simply by keeping promises that were made. The Everyday Fixer makes sure that the politician gets a proper share in the success, via local media publicity and sometimes by giving them a 'spotlight' during neighbourhood activities. These personal bonds are essential to the success of the Dutch Everyday Fixer, and this success in return re-enforces the

personal bond. In a sense the fate and success of the Everyday Fixer is linked to that of the politician. When for instance elections decide that an alderman has to leave, the personal bond and the social capital have to be built up again.

One of the possible 'dark sides' of the Dutch Everyday Fixers is that they can easily become the new democratic elites in the neighbourhood (Verba et al, 1995; Fiorina, 1999). Local government institutions are getting to know the Everyday Fixers along the way, and start asking them to take place in (ad hoc) advisory boards concerning neighbourhood policy et cetera. By doing that the Dutch Everyday Fixers can slowly become Expert activists – or in figure 2 'neighbourhood experts'. The 'pulling force' of the institutional processes is relatively strong in Dutch regeneration neighbourhoods. But however most Everyday Fixers keep a critical view on local government and don't like to take place in local boards, it still is a fact that these people are more frequently in contact with the democratic institutions than most other neighbourhood residents.

#### CASES OF WHAT?

One of the best questions that one can ask in doing multiple case-studies is: what are these cases of? (Flyvbjerg, 2001). In connection to the cases dealt with in this paper: are these cases of the Everyday-Maker once again, or are these cases of something else? In the previous pages, we have argued that they are cases of something else, namely: a form of vital citizenship Dutch-Style – characterised by similarities but also important differences compared to Everyday Makership Danish-Style.

In a Dutch context it seems that vital citizenship – effective, efficacious and viable citizenship – requires citizens to be 'networked'. Autonomy is not an asset. Network-status is. Access to others – officials, professionals, citizens in other initiatives – is crucial in a context in which each and every party requires multiple partners to get things done. This is closely connected to the way in which democracy and administration are institutionalised in the Netherlands. In comparative politics, the 'Dutch case' is a case of consensus democracy (Lijphart, 1999) tied up with a Germanic administrative tradition (Loughlin, 2001). The essence of consensus democracy is power-dispersal and –sharing. Institutions sustain this pattern of democracy, not only on the macro-level of states (on which Lijphart focuses) but also on the micro-level of localities (on which we have focussed). In combination with

Germanic state thinking, consensus democracy in the Netherlands gets a particular expression. Like the national state, the local state in the Netherlands is an organicist, co-operative state. Unlike in the Scandinavian state tradition, decentralisation and autonomy are rather blurred concepts. Smaller units within the larger structure are not so likely to have clearly demarcated realms of autonomous action. Governance is always co-governance, production is always co-production. This is likely to have profound consequences for every position in the Dutch polity, including the position of the citizen who wants to get things done in a meaningful way. This citizen is almost forced to go native: s/he must hold a position in the governance network, just like any other actor in the co-governance game.

If it is true that the politico-administrative context 'explains' a good deal of the variation not explained by within-case, situational differences between Vital Citizenship Dutch-Style and Everyday Makership Danish-Style, then this insight might travel further than the two countries from which we have drawn evidence in this paper. Countries that resemble the Netherlands in terms of the institutional, politico-administrative context – countries like Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Germany: consensus democracies within a Germanic state tradition – might be expected to produce prerequisites of vital citizenship similar to the ones outlined here. Countries that resemble Denmark in terms of context – Norway, Sweden, Finland – should be closer to the Everyday Maker Danish-Style than to the Vital Citizen Dutch-Style. But these are hypotheses, propelled by this paper, but to be tested and refined on other occasions.

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