MICROSTRUCTURES AS SPACES FOR PARTICIPATORY INNOVATION

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ABSTRACT

Microstructures are networks that aim to solve persistent social problems in rural or urban areas. These are transdisciplinary networks of inhabitants, entrepreneurs, professionals, and academics who bind their forces to realize an ambition they share in the area concerned. They require small investments in governance which we expect to result in social entrepreneurship and self organisation. We developed a six step program to develop microstructures and tested it in Feijenoord, a Rotterdam area characterized by socio-economic, cultural and linguistic diversity, but in general inhabited by people of colour and low income. This paper describes the pilot, its theoretical roots, outcome, and lessons learned.

INTRODUCTION

Inspired by the success of micro-credits, in which small financial investments – which in turn symbolize trust – facilitate entrepreneurship and result in high return on investment, we (consultancy firm Urbancore and research agency OrléoN) developed the concept of microstructures. Microstructures are transdisciplinary networks of people with a shared concern in their local area. Transdisciplinary means that people from different knowledge domains (disciplines) and types (academic, professional, experience) join forces to analyse a problem, thus generating a common sense about the origins of the problem and possible solutions. Moreover, in order to actually solve the problem they actively engage in a process that requires some executive powers, putting the microstruc-

ture in the seat of public management. In turn, this requires a careful preparation of microstructures in terms of finding the right people to participate. This preparation is a six step program we designed. In this program, narrative research and network strategies are combined.

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN OF THE SOCIAL

To cut budgets and to stimulate citizens to fully engage in society, Dutch government seeks ways to promote active citizenship. One of these ways is interactive policy making, in which citizens are invited into the policy-making process. The outcome of this experiment is rather disappointing (Enthoven 2005). Arnstein (1969) has developed a ladder of participation in which the level of participation ranges from being

consulted about new policy to setting the agenda and co-decide. In the Netherlands, interactive policy making has remained largely on the lower rungs of the ladder. In some cases, citizens are involved in decision making, but in most cases, citizen participation is limited to preparation of policy. Still, Dutch government remains very interested in ways to co-produce policy with social actors and social actors are interested in co-production, with government and/or with each other as well (Enthoven 2005).

In a critical study on the discourses of active citizenship, I (Basten 2002) found that the ways in which different parties define active citizenship in the Netherlands is distributed in bipolar categories of on the one hand citizens concerned with specific societal issues and on the other hand politicians and policy makers. Within the latter group, definitions diverge largely along the lines of political affiliation. Citizens concerned with societal issues do not tend to call themselves 'active citizens', but they consider themselves for instance environmentalists, fighters for gay rights, responsible entrepreneurs, free thinkers, union leaders, or anarchists. Citizenship is not the issue as such, neither is becoming active. These people tend to identify a problem and act on it from a sense of justice. Democracy, open society, and solidarity are key values herein and citizenship is more or less a by product of activi-

ties aimed at achieving these values. In contrast, the definitions of active citizenship as used by politicians and policy makers contain much essentialist morality, pointing at both what 'citizenship' and 'active' should be. From a neo-liberal point of view, active citizens are those citizens that are financially self-sufficient and do not use up state resources. The neo-republican definition of active citizenship focuses on political involvement. It defines citizens as active when they participate in for instance councils and commissions. Finally, the communitarian definition highlights citizenship as participation in civil society, mostly in voluntary work in socio-cultural contexts. The analysis (Basten 2002) showed that none of the definitions was able to fully describe the concerned and engaged citizens we spoke with in in-depth interviews, and moreover, that most of these citizens defied these definitions all together. Where to place, for instance, anarchists who voluntarily waved high income jobs and lived on unemployment benefits in order to rethink society and experiment with new socio-economic models? Or responsible entrepreneurs, who did not so much engage politically, but sought ways to introduce youngsters into the labour market or to produce and provide environmentally and socially acceptable products? Furthermore, these definitions were gendered. They precluded for instance women from citizenship when they stayed at home to raise children; child rearing is not considered valuable for society (Lister 1997).

All definitions were treated as self evident and neutral, thus charging 'active' with implicit moral choices about what to be active with. The concerned citizens in the empirical part of the study, however, defied these descriptions and went on doing what they thought was good for society. From the point of view of politicians and policy makers these were not the activities they desired. The discrepancy between their own definitions of active citizenship and the activities of concerned citizens made them disregard these activities. They concluded that active citizenship in the Netherlands was at a lamentable low level and should be encouraged. Appeals to active citizenship fell,

however, deaf to the ears of concerned citizens, who considered themselves to be already active. The analysis of the discourses of active citizenship started with a review of the literature of Dutch academics. Interestingly, the literature showed a contempt for civic involvement, using terms that referred to diseases (Hollanditis) or obstacles (hinder power). In short, in the Netherlands there seems to be a difference between civic activity, engagement, and involvement as such (citizenship as practice) and as perceived by politics and policy-making (citizenship as instruction). Traditionally, mutual trust is low. Part of the low trust in civic participation can be explained by the regent culture that has dominated political life since ages. Government tends to see itself as Father State, with a specific pedagogical task regarding its citizens (Metz in Hendriks 2008). Distrust in government is not new to the Netherlands either (Aerts 2009). Dutch citizens keep their trust in democracy and how it is institutionalised, but they question the legitimacy of modern politicians and specific government bodies. There is a crisis in legitimacy (Raad voor het Openbaar Bestuur 2010).

Against the backdrop of this mutual distrust, in which both civic and political activities are contested, the ambition of participatory design of the social is a challenging one. In a theoretical study of prerequisites for public co-production, the notion of the public was central (Basten 2010). A public, in terms of Dewey (in Basten 2010), is a group of people that arises in reaction to an event that existing political and scientific structures and institutions are unable to respond to adequately. In such a situation, a public prepares the future settlement of the affair. In the study, a public is equipped with means to handle its own research. Hence the name 'researching public'. A researching public is a temporary and heterogeneous network of people concerned with one and the same event and its outcome. There is a widespread consensus among sociologists that modern societal life is organised in networks (Cf. Castells 1996). Narrative research was also a key notion in this study. On a collective, public level, narrative truths, as opposed to historic truths, play an important role in ana-

lysing the origins of the event and in making sense of its consequences (Cf. Elliot 2005). In this study, I described public activities as citizenship in action. The study, however, was a theoretical exercise that lacked empirical evidence of practices. Putting the theoretical model to the test, in which narrative and network were key notions, we designed a method that would enable us to both shed light on sensemaking (discursive or narrative) processes and tap into (networks of) civic, political, and professional energy. We (consultancy firm Urbancore and research agency OrléoN) designed a six step program in which we combined narrative analysis of meaning production by stakeholders in order to map their logic on the one hand, and strategies for network building, matching stakeholders according to their logic concerning specific societal issues on the other hand. These networks, in which meaning and logic are binders, are called microstructures. We tested this program in Feijenoord, a Rotterdam urban area. In the next paragraph, the six steps are presented.

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS AND MEANINGFUL NETWORKS

A microstructure is a small-scale, heterogeneous network of people (entrepreneurs, inhabitants, professionals, academics, civil servants, etcetera) who join their forces to solve a local problem they really care about. They can turn into single issue movements or other social networks, but we assume that they do not yet exist or operate only on a scale too small to create an impact. The process of creating microstructures is therefore an attempt to identify subliminal social needs and potential problem solving capacities, and to join the people concerned in a productive network, mini public that prepares new decision making and ways of working. To be successful, a microstructure needs both a joint problem analysis and some executive powers that take the co-production of policy beyond tokenism. This calls for a careful preparation, in which strategies for network building and narrative research go hand in hand. In our program, we distinguished between back-stage and front-stage performance while creating and facilitating

microstructures. Initially, microstructures do not exist or only on a subsurface level. For them to become (more) productive, they need to be created or made manifest. Where to find the right people to participate? This is mostly a concern for our backstage activities. Alternatively, to enable microstructures to attract participants we had not noticed or thought of ourselves, they also need a public face. This is the goal of front-stage activities. In short, back stage we select and front stage we facilitate people to self select, the latter to preclude we exclude interested parties. Table 1 summarises the six steps, which will be elaborated in more detail below.

of Feijenoord, in which he had collected his personal contacts. We enriched this database by adding new contacts and asking all contacts for further contacts. This enabled us to invite a lot of people personally for the first public meeting. Some 60 people participated in this meeting. Our goal was to enthuse participation, so we chose an appealing location (a local restaurant) instead of the usual spots for public meetings, such as community or sports centres. Our choice of location was also supposed to underscore that microstructures were not just another municipal initiative but an experiment initiated by several parties concerned, i.e. municipality, housing corporation,

signed up to be interviewed in step 3.

STEP 3A: INTERVIEWING

We enlarged the list of respondents by personally inviting others as well (both opportunistic and purposive sampling) and by asking respondents to suggest others (snowball sampling). Our selection criterion was that respondents had to be actively engaged with their neighbourhood. How they were active (for instance as inhabitant, entrepreneur, professional or civil servant) or for what were no criteria for selection. We wanted to focus on engaged and active people as the interviews were also used to select participants in the microstructures to be built. We chose narrative interviews as these are themselves potentially enthusing. In narrative interviews, people are invited to tell stories about events in their personal lives. We designed an interview guide for open questions about living, working, friendships, activities, and growing up in Feijenoord. We trained students with role playing to do the interviews and we invited people to be interviewed. Although we had invested a lot of time in establishing personal contacts, we found it difficult to find Moroccan women willing to be interviewed. In the end, 26 people were interviewed; 16 men and 10 women; 13 Dutch, 5 Moroccan, 3 Surinam, and 5 respondents of other ethnic origins (for instance Cape Verde or second generation immigrants). The interviews were recorded and transcribed extensively (including 'ehs' and slips of the tongue).

Step	Front-stage	Back-stage
1		Orientation on key players in the area: walk around, talk to people, get them interested, sow the seeds for future networks by inviting people personally for step 2
2	Public meeting: outline of the program and invitation to participate, starting with signing up for step 3	
3		Narrative research: interviews with candidate participants and analysis of collective logics, to be presented in step 4
4	Public meeting: feedback of the collective narrative and invitation to step into microstructures, to be further developed in step 5	
5		Meetings of microstructures: deepen collective logic and problem analysis, develop program for problem solving and prepare for making it public in step 6
6	Public meeting: present the programs of the microstructures	
7	Grounding the microstructures, assuring that they continue along the lines of self organisation and social entrepreneurship.	

Table 1: front-stage and back-stage activities.

The table also shows a seventh step. Although we were not involved in this step, some ideas about grounding microstructures will be discussed.

STEP 1+2: MOBILISING AND ENTHUSING

The first step is to start mobilising possibly interested parties. In Feijenoord we invested a lot of time in face to face contacts, getting to know people and getting them involved in the program. We used the database of the civil servant responsible for the development

an external sponsor and us (we invested in this pilot as well). To further underscore this special character, we had a rich schedule of activities which both reflected the program in total (examples of narrative interviewing on stage and of dialogue techniques in groups) and appealed to a sense of community (we made a film and digital photo collage of the area which we showed during entrance and a local singer sang a song about Feijenoord). As a result, people not only were informed about the project, bur several people also

STEP 3B: ANALYSING THE NARRATIVES

The interviews were analysed three times. The first analysis was a thematic analysis as performed in grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967). This resulted in an overview of themes and events that mattered to the respondents (what). We classified the themes in the five subjects from the interview-guide and connected themes that were related. For instance, growing up in Feijenoord was connected to living in Feijenoord as both took place in a built environment that was uninviting for children (lots of buildings, not much place for playing, unsafe traffic conditions, impoverishment). Furthermore,

it was connected to working, as the local labour market did not offer a lot of prospects and youngsters did not have many opportunities to show and develop their talents.

The second analysis was an analysis of perspectives (who). This analysis was based on the actant model of Greimas (in Bal 1985). In this model, that was designed for the analysis of literature, six positions can be identified in stories. There is the (anti) hero (subject) who sets out on a quest with a goal (object), there are powers that send him or her on the quest, there is a beneficiary (sometimes but not necessarily the hero) and there are helpers and adversaries. These positions are called actants, because they can be both human (actors or characters) and non human (entities). In every story there are subjects and objects, the other actants can be left out. An analysis of perspectives sheds light in how respondents position themselves in regard of the themes and events they bring up. For instance, when it came to youngsters, we found two main positions adults held. The first was youngsters as adversaries, causing problems in public space. Sometimes they (as subjects) set out to correct them (object), sometimes they expected others (municipality, police, social work) to act. Only people with personal negative experiences stereotyped all youngsters as trouble makers, attributing bad behaviour to a general sense that everything gets worse (dystopia). The second was youngsters as the beneficiaries of respondents' activities and projects, aimed at creating chances for them in the areas of sports, music, culture, and art. These people also sometimes had negative experiences with youngsters, but attributed bad behaviour to lack of present activities and lack of a future perspective. Youngsters themselves often took the role of subject with their own undertakings. The role of subject, however, was denied to them by adults, who saw them as either adversaries or beneficiaries. The latter positions made it difficult for them to understand youngsters fully.

The third analysis was an analysis of values based on rhetoric used by respondents (how). A narrative is not only a story, but also a performance, even when it is in an interview context.

It is assumed that rhetoric, as a device to persuade a public (Kohler Riessman 2008), is an indicator for the value and truth the teller or narrator wants to convey. Some themes, for instance the quality of the built environment, were discussed using exaggerations, repetitions, colourful language and metaphors, whereas others, such as friendships, were discussed in more abstract, distant terms, stressing that a neighbourly feeling is more important than intense friendship relationships. Most people had some friends in Feijenoord, but more friends in other places. They did, however, all stress the fact that Feijenoord is a multicultural area and that they felt that mutual, neighbourly contacts could be improved. This, they felt, was more important for the social quality of the area then were new friendships. As a consequence, they wanted more possibilities for people to casually meet. Therefore, we changed the theme 'friendship' into 'connectedness'.

STEP 3C: CONSTRUCTING FEIJENOORD LOGIC

The triple analysis was used to construct a collective Feijenoord narrative, in which the five themes were presented as separate chapters, but with references to and fro to demonstrate the thematic interconnectedness. The analysis showed that most respondents who had lived in Feijenoord for a long time had feelings of nostalgia and to illustrate that, the chapters were organised chronologically. The chapters also showed how respondents had different ideas about the themes they discussed by organising the chapters as a dialogue with arguments for and against different positions. Below is an excerpt.

*… **Ik weet zeker dat er heel veel kwaliteiten is in Feijenoord en mensen die een bijdrage willen kunnen leveren in de buurt. Maar deze mensen moeten benaderd worden en die moeten de kans krijgen om betrokken te zijn.** Wij zijn een netwerkorganisatie, wij werken enorm veel samen met mensen uit de wijk. Zowel individuen als welzijnsorganisaties, jongerenwerkers, kunstenaars. Xxx   xxx Wij verbinden ons heel erg makkelijk aan partijen in* de wijk xxx   xxx en hebben een positieve input gegeven in de afgelopen anderhalf jaar door gewoon ontzettend leuk met jongeren te werken...

The use of colours and the labels ('verbinding' and 'opgroeien' or 'connectedness' and 'growing up') supports the referencing among themes. The larger font indicates that these lines are part of the summary of the story as it was presented in the next step, the public meeting. This is the translation of the excerpt:

*… **I'm very sure that there are a lot of qualities in Feijenoord and of people who want to contribute to the neighbourhood. But these people must be approached and get the opportunity to be involved.** We are a network organisation, we work enormously much with people in the neighbourhood. Both individuals and social work, youth workers, artists. Xxx   xxx We easily connect with parties in the neighbourhood xxx   xxx and have given a positive input in the past year and a half by just working very pleasantly with youngsters...*

The triple analysis gave insight into what we called the Feijenoord logic. For sake of space limitations I will not go too deeply into this logic, but I will briefly sketch some results. First and foremost, all respondents expressed a sense of pride in their Feijenoord, but they also saw room for improvement. What they said Feijenoord needed was better education, better job opportunities, better physical quality of the neighbourhood, a more open space for people to meet and get to know each other a bit better. Most respondents agreed on what Feijenoord needed, but they differed in the analysis of the situation and consequently the solutions they sought. We found two positions. The first was based on what we identified as traditional active citizenship. These respondents took part in commissions and councils (neo-republican). They defined their activities in terms of representation. They had the contacts with municipality and the housing corporation, but they felt that they were not representing the people of Feijenoord any more, as newcomers

Figure 1: Coming about of microstructure 'Cultures living together'

were often from a different ethic background. Part of their problem analysis was precisely how Feijenoord had changed into a collection of cultural, linguistic and socio-economic islands with little connections between them. They blamed these newcomers for not trying to blend in and municipality for disregarding the effort it takes for newcomers and older residents to get acquainted. They felt that no one had taken charge of the situation and felt powerless to do so themselves. The second, in contrast, was based on a new kind of active citizenship. These respondents took initiatives to solve the problems they saw. Sometimes this was a small initiative, such as buying flower bulbs to plant in her garden so that children in her apartment building could see the flowers blossom and learn to appreciate nature. Sometimes, however, this was a large scale, almost programmatic initiative that involved a lot of parties and organising, such as a sports school or an art sale where children could sell paintings for the local hospital and a Dutch well known artist performed. Typical for these respondents was that they just started and did not wait for grands or permission from municipality. Unlike the other respondents they had little or no useful contacts at the start, but sometimes developed useful contacts along the way.

Another difference was that they in fact did represent a lot of people in Feijenoord. In short, one group had the contacts and knew the routes in official public administration, but were part of a small, closed network of (mostly white) people they had worked with for a long time, whilst the other group was deeply rooted in the neighbourhood and knew how to build open networks for collaboration, but sometimes lack access to official public administration. Identifying the issues and respondents as part of one of these two types was helpful in the next step.

STEP 4: PRESENTING THE COLLECTIVE NARRATIVE

The fourth step was a public meeting in which parts of the collective Feijenoord narrative were read out loud, so that respondents and other interested local parties could hear the overall story back in their own words. As said earlier, the structure of the story reflected the themes that were considered most important, the different perspectives on the themes, and a comparison between what Feijenoord was like and has become today. The telling of the story took almost half an hour, but people listened captivated. After the story was told, the audience reflected collectively on its narrative and historic value, giving further meaning to

the analysis. In the coffee break, several people stressed that they appreciated the effort that was taken to feed back the results of the analysis in the form of a story in their own wordings. This was experienced as a reward for their own efforts. People also said that the story was very authentic and that this helped to embrace the overall analysis, also the parts that were not theirs or what they previously perceived differently. They had actually learned more about their Feijenoord and its specific strengths and weaknesses. In other words, the collective narrative and its presentation had achieved that people in Feijenoord could agree on what needed to be done. After the break, the meeting continued in groups that were the preliminary microstructures. Inhabitants, entrepreneurs, professionals, and civil servants mixed and chose a theme for the story that appealed to them. They started with discussing the analysis, sharing their own insights and experiences (figure 1).

In the end, they presented their programs and an outline for future actions. These programs were 'Cultures Living Together', 'Feijenoord School' and 'Senior Citizens in the Streets'. The first program was aimed at ameliorating cultural openness in Feijenoord, so that people got to know one another and possibly better get along. The second program had as its goal to teach newcomers at Feijenoord (both youngsters and people who had moved into the area recently) about the past of this urban area (here lay the roots of the Rotterdam harbour area, one of the biggest in the world) in order to inspire them to big ambitions. The third program was to focus on senior citizens and improve their access to public space. Interestingly, all microstructures had both types of engaged citizens, so that the qualities of both types added up and erased the weaknesses of one or the other.

STEP 5: BUILDING THE MICROSTRUCTURES

The programs and goals outlined above in the fourth step were further developed in the fifth step, where the microstructures met three times. All three microstructures, varying from five to ten participants, collaboratively designed programs with which they want

Figure 2: Second meeting of microstructure 'Cultures living together'

to establish what they think is important for Feijenoord. In the first meeting they continued the analysis and started to design a program, focusing both on concrete activities and extending their network. The character of this meeting was more one of a brainstorm, in which all ideas were welcome. The second meeting was a bit more goal oriented and started with prioritising the activities, so that participants could focus on a to do list, such as for a public pick-nick in the local park (figure 2).

In the third meeting the plans were further detailed. In this meeting preparations were also made for the public presentation of the programs.

STEP 6: PRESENTING THE PROGRAMS

The sixth step was the public presentation of the programs the microstructures had developed. 'Cultures Living Together' outlined some activities for the near future, such as a pick-nick in the park and a festival in which cultures present themselves, followed by monthly exhibitions in which cultures alternatively host different activities such as cooking and dancing. Their ambition was to include multinationals as Unilever, with head quarters located in Feijenoord. 'Feijenoord School' focused on its ambition to create a curriculum in collaboration with multinational Hunter Douglas and other large organisations in the area. This curriculum was intended to help youngsters orient on working life, teach them for instance how to do a job interview, offer internships, and possibly a job. 'Senior Citizens in the Streets' presented a list of structural activities, such as activities for elderly at the community centre combined with a consultation hour about for instance Alzheimer's

disease and other age-related disorders. This public meeting was the end of our involvement with the Feijenoord microstructures.

STEP 7: GROUNDING THE MICROSTRUCTURES

In this pilot our further involvement in grounding the microstructures was not foreseen. We did however include a small curriculum for the professionals who took over our facilitation. Our main reason for this was that we acknowledge that most professionals are unfamiliar in working with people who take initiatives and just act on a social problem they perceive. These are usually not the people they work with, the ones needing help. In other words, we thought it would be important to introduce them to a different kind of collaboration, in which they were not supposed to know it all, but to enter in an open and equal relationship with non-professionals. We met professionals in Feijenoord twice. In the first workshop, we explained the concept of microstructures and the six step program. We discussed with the participants how to build networks as they shared past experiences with working with clients. We stressed that citizens and entrepreneurs would not participate in microstructures as clients, but as people with specific knowledge about Feijenoord, knowledge professionals could lack as they see only one side of the picture. In the second workshop, professionals drew up a list of do's and don'ts for professionals in microstructures. They came up with the following list (table 2).

Although the workshops were successful in that they engaged professionals and in that professionals were willing to experiment, we felt unsure about the long-term impact on professional behaviour. Collaborating intensively with some of them, we were very alert to small signals indicating superficial learning. Examples hereof were professionals who stressed that the networking element of the six step program was a luxury they did not have in normal working conditions, while our thesis was that networking should be just that: part of regular activities. Anther signal was the repeatedly referring to non-professionals as people who did not really understand what was going

on, who were too shy to step forward or who analysed the situation based on deficient information. We interpreted these signals as resistance. This worried us and we tried to be very consistent and consequent in both our own actions and in responding to these signals, repeating the concept of the microstructures and its constituting parts in both the narrative meaning making and the active network strategies. At the time of the sixth step, we felt a bit more confident. However, we have lost sight of the microstructures and that feels unsatisfying. We feel we have established three microstructures with a lot of potential, but also that we may have left them too early. On the other hand, we have spoken to the person

Do	Don't
Ask open questions	Think for inhabitants
Offer network and knowledge	Take over
Help in sequencing and prioritising activities	Underestimate the quality of input and the one giving input
Offer locations for meetings	Make everything bigger then it is
Offer facilities	Immediately pronounce objections
Take risks	Immediately offer funding as an easy answer
Keep your own promises	Safeguard your own position
Be explicit about your own expectations	

Table 2: do's and don'ts for professionals in microstructures.

who initially gave us the assignment, and she reported that the microstructures are still in progress. So maybe, as we asked of professionals, we should learn to be not in control and to trust in the competences of others.

FINAL REMARKS

In this pilot, we were eager to find out whether or not transdisciplinary teams were able to collaborate in social design. We combined our working experience and theoretical knowledge to design a six step program to create microstructures. Looking back, we conclude that local stakeholders are very able to come up with an analysis

of the situation, the problems therein and possible solutions. We think the narrative approach, which respects all inputs and by way of a triple analysis puts them into coherent logics, is a powerful tool to create networks based on shared meaning making. A negative point is that it is a labour intensive method, which makes it rather costly. A positive point is that people felt listened to, which was for some of the Feijenoord respondents reason alone to feel committed to their microstructure.

As for the mobilisation part, we found that the investment in time we needed to establish personal contacts had indeed resulted in a large network of potentially interested people. We invited some and others initiated participation themselves. In total, some 80 people were involved in the program and 20 of them participated actively in the microstructures. Although we were unable to interest some people we thought could attribute greatly (most of them were too busy with their own projects), we do think we have reinforced social engagement in Feijenoord. However, as we left early we are unsure about its long-term impact. In a final session with the professionals we worked with, they acknowledged that the microstructures might still be a bit fragile, but they stressed that they were committed to ensure their flourishing. As they estimated, it will take at least a year before the microstructures would operate more autonomously.

As envisaged, microstructures need some executive powers in order to actually realise their ambitions, therewith generating self organisation and social entrepreneurship, which could spill over onto other activities of the participants. We feel this latter part of the pilot was underdeveloped as we left at a critical point in the development of microstructures. Therefore, we will try to find other places to experiment, explicitly including a longer incubation time. Special attention will then be paid to tokenism, as we had the impression that professionals, despite their list of do's and dont's's (see table 2), would easily slip back into their habit of taking over. It is especially important that participants in microstructures experience the power to make substantial changes, as this is considered to be an example for future civic activity. As the Dutch tradition in co-production of policy is not unproblematic, tokenism might reinforce cynicism on the sides of parties that would better co-operate in making society better.

To conclude, we recommend the following based on our lessons learned. First, start small in small steps. The scale of activities has to fit what people can handle. Therefore, large ambitions should, if necessary, be divided into smaller initiatives. This calls for patience and adequate facilitation. Small successes together also add up to large achievement. It is important to take a long-term perspective, hang in, and continue attention and care. Second, extend the networks and enrich the database with personal contacts, also of the unusual suspects. In the course of the pilot we found out that the databases of our partner organisations were not very helpful, incomplete and containing wrong and outdated information. We recommend a good network analysis which contains all sorts of contacts, for instance from clients, but also from people who have successfully initiated social projects, from companies and other parties relevant for microstructures. Third, connect microstructures to other relevant local partners. The content of the Feijenoord microstructures suggests that it is important to create a network between these initiatives and other relevant social stakeholders. One could consider other civic initiatives, partners in social work and education, large companies, associations of entrepreneurs, etcetera. Fourth, install a social area supervisor. In the Netherlands, the function of supervision is normal in physical projects concerned with building and maintenance of the area. He or she is responsible for the quality of the build environment. We suggest a similar function, responsible for the quality of the social environment and starting from microstructures. He or she is the ambassador for this kind of collaboration, opens doors, and oversees initiatives in order to interconnect them.

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