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GUIDE TO CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

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Who are we?

This guide is made by four students of the University of Groningen as part of the course The Global/Local Cultural Leader, which is a course in the MA Arts, Culture and Media. Every member of our group has a different educational background, as Celien studied Art History at KU Leuven, Hanna studied Metropolitan Culture in Hamburg and Culture & Organization in Lüneburg, Daphne studied English Literature in Groningen and Joanne studied Arts Education in Amsterdam. Our different backgrounds proved to be fruitful in our discussions on cultural leadership. Coming from different cities, we had also had different experiences regarding cultural participation. Our shared interest in cultural participation on the local level eventually turned into the guide that lies before you, as the end product of our course. We hope that it will be a helpful reference for those interested in cultural participation.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Johan Kolsteeg for his guidance during lectures and seminars at the University of Groningen. Additionally, a great thank you for Karin Noeken, the artistic director of De Wijk De Wereld who shared her knowledge and passion about the project. Last but not least, we would like to thank all the participants who did an interview with us: Arjan, Marie-José and Hanneke.

ABOUT THE GUIDE

INTRODUCTION



Photo credits: De Wijk De Wereld

“What we do is connect people. People who have never met before meet and they come out of their bubble. People look beyond what they see everyday and meet other cultures, young and old will mix. The idea is that if we have all these people and their stories then in the theater it will ultimately not matter who you are, everyone will just have a name” (Noeken 2021).

Culture is mostly about sharing, experimenting, feeling, doing and living together. It helps us to cope with the biggest challenge in life: the contact with another human being. It is about relationships with each other, feeling part of and distinct from a group at the same time (Laaksonen 2010,7). In recent years, there is a growing recognition of the influence that culture has on the quality of life and social cohesion (Laaksonen 2010, 9). Participation in cultural activities and having access to them forms an important notion in this practice.

Understanding accessibility and participation enables us to have a broader perspective on culture and what it means to people.

Participation is a process during which individuals, groups, and organizations have the opportunity to become actively involved in a project or program (Wilcox 1994, 50). It is proven that development without participation is counterproductive to democracy. Many contemporary conflicts result from unequal opportunities and access to participation (Vidović and Žuvela 2018, 21).

Therefore participation is something to strive for in a cultural organization. This guide provides both a theoretical framework and practical advice on participation. Identity, accessibility, the execution and maintenance are to be researched with the help of a beautiful case study: De Wijk De Wereld in Groningen, The Netherlands.

De Wijk De Wereld

De Wijk De Wereld (DWDW) is an initiative that started in 2017 when SPOT, the biggest theater organization of Groningen, noticed that they didn't have any knowledge about the experience of culture in the neighborhoods of their city. Also, the policies in the city were mainly based on 'thinking about' instead of 'thinking with' the residents. A project named De Wijk De Wereld (The Neighborhood The World) was born (De Wijk De Wereld 2021, 33). This project is executed by a team of four: an artistic director, head of production, dramaturg and a marketer. Together they produce a theater play together with residents of the neighborhood. Like Karin Noeken, artistic director of DWDW, states in the quote above, their goal is to connect people and create social cohesion. This case study will give an excellent example of the challenges and possible outcomes of cultural participation in a cultural organization.


“

**CULTURAL DEMOCRACY IS
WELCOMING EVERYONE,
NOT WORRYING ABOUT
THE RESULT, NOT
IMPOSING STANDARDS OR
IDEAS, BEING GIVEN
PERMISSION.**

Carine Osmont (Henley 2018, 3)

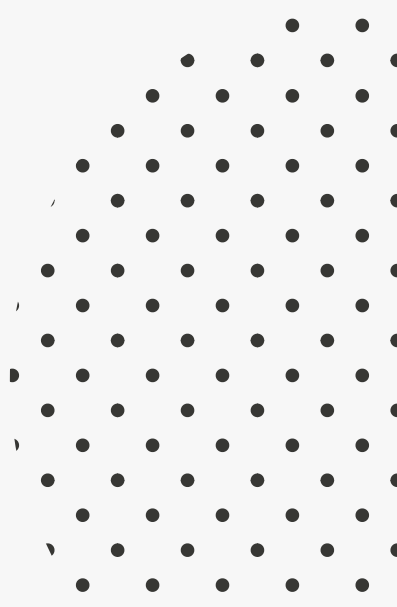
”

How did we get here?

To gather the relevant information and put them in a meaningful context for this practical guide, significant literature - also transferred from other disciplines - was explored. To investigate the actual operation method from the practice, the case study of De Wijk De Wereld was analyzed. Therefore, we conducted several interviews, both face-to-face and via phone calls. Next to the artistic director of De Wijk De Wereld Karin Noeken, we spoke with three former participants from the neighbourhood Beijum. These conversations were transcribed, translated into English, and decoded with the help of different strategies of critical discourse analysis. You can find these interviews in the appendix of this guide. Further, DWDW's official documents, project reports and the policy plan, which you can find on their webpage, were considered.

Who are you?

This guide is aimed towards people from the cultural sector, interested in the theory and implementation of citizen participation in cultural projects or institutions, or those about to start a process of cultural participation facing many questions on how to do it right. Obviously, everybody else is also invited to take a look at our guide, to learn, enjoy or criticize.



IDENTITY

Any successful organization needs to have an identity that is truly representative of what the organization is and does. Not only is it important for the internal structure of the organization to have a clear identity so everyone that works within the organization represents the same identity, external parties also need to know what your organization does and stands for. Right at the beginning of establishing your organization, it might be unclear what elements to pay attention to. This chapter aims to help you get on your way when you're at the onset of your journey. First, this chapter will explain what an organization's ideology might exist out of, which will help to figure out the "why" of your organization. Then, we will take a look at the question "why you?" to find out what makes your organization stand out. This chapter will also describe the elements of how to appeal to the target audience and stakeholders. Lastly, this chapter will lay out some elements to be aware of or avoid. A starting point for this chapter is the analysis of action-guiding thoughts, or rather the analysis of ideological thought in discourse as Mats Lindberg described it (Lindberg 2017). First, let us look at the inner-workings of this type of discourse analysis.

The Why

So, you might have decided that you want to set up a project for cultural participation in your area. This has no doubt been inspired by certain aspects in your own life and that's why it's relevant to you. To others, and maybe even to yourself too at this point, it might not be crystal clear yet what your idea is, nor the context behind it. That's why it's a good starting point to write down what your ideas are. Another way of describing ideas is as "action-guiding thoughts," which according to Lindberg are "inherent parts of, or relate to, the institutions in society (which most of them are), or are addressing the preservation or change of the institutions of society (which many of them do, either directly or indirectly)" (Lindberg 2017, 87). This means that the first point of action in figuring out the "why" of your organization is to place it in the context of the current state of affairs. There will most likely be multiple ideas regarding your organization that form the basis of the "why." This is very normal, as ideas usually do not stand on their own. The combination of all your ideas is called a "belief system" or "ideology" (Lindberg 2017, 87).

One way of analysing an organization's ideology is through the method Linberg proposed. When using this method, researchers attempt to find out what the system of belief of for example a political party is by analysing their discourse. The starting point for this method is that all belief systems are built-up in the same way (Lindberg 2017, 88). The action-guiding thoughts or ideas can be divided into three categories: values, descriptions and prescriptions. You can find the elaborate descriptions of these categories on the next page.



- 1) **value-statements**, expressed in various ways (ideals, goals, preferences, interests or desired end-states): values for short (V);
- 2) **descriptive statements**, expressed in various ways (narrative accounts, descriptive assertions, situational analyses, evaluative assessments, explanations or judgements) (of objects, agents, ideas, events, issues, problems, solutions or processes in the surrounding world or of the actual situation); descriptions for short (D);
- 3) **prescriptive statements**, expressed in various ways (normative or practical conclusions, policy suggestions, recommendations, imperatives, orders, norms or rules); prescriptions for short (P). (Lindberg 2017, 92)



The combination of all three categories, Lindberg argued, form a “sequence of *practical reasoning*” (Lindberg 2017, 92). An example of such a combination, a V-D-P-triad, can be found on the right. This triad is taken from DWDW’s 2021-2024 policy plan and shows a complete V-D-P-triad.

Example V-D-P-triad

V: ‘There must be high social cohesion and inclusion in a neighborhood’
 D: ‘Art gives access to each other’s consciousness, to each other’s environment → which brings about social outcomes’
 (De Wijk De Wereld 2021, 4) (Dme)

 P: ‘Connect residents of Groningen to culture!’

The contents of this deduction are all found in the policy plan. However, it might also occur that a description is implied, instead of textually present. In such cases, you might have to read between the lines or look at other discourses by the same organization (Lindberg 2017, 103). Lindberg describes that these three categories (V-D-P) must always, whether explicitly or implicitly, be present in the discourse of any organization in order to “lay bare the actual and effective action-guiding thought content” (Lindberg 2017, 103). Thus, before presenting yourself to possible parties interested in your organization, it is important to realize that people must be able to make deductions based on your discourse and understand the ‘why’ of your organization.



Why you?

It is also important to realize what makes your organization stand out in the crowd. This brings questions such as what makes your organization relevant, how does it add to or disrupt the current state of affairs and how is your organization different from and perhaps better than organizations in the same field to the surface. Let's take a look at our case study again. De Wijk De Wereld introduces a list of starting points that indicate the factors that make DWDW a successful method and which make them "stand out from other 'neighborhood initiatives'" (De Wijk De Wereld 2021, 3). By doing so, they imply that other organizations do not operate from the same starting points or lack in certain aspects. This argument returns in just one explicit starting point: "DWDW does not base its work on the problem, but on contact and attention (this is a different approach than that of community workers/municipalities/aid workers)" (De Wijk De Wereld 2021, 4). In other starting points, the difference is implied instead of textually present. Take the following starting point as an example: "Being human is central and determines the way we work, not someone's talent" (De Wijk De Wereld 2021, 4). With this starting-point, DWDW implies that their way of working is different and new. Even when someone is not familiar with other 'neighborhood initiatives' and therefore does not realize what the inherent differences are between those and DWDW, the way DWDW presents their starting points might just be convincing enough. Organizations usually choose ways to formulate their ideology that are positive and focus on the good (Alvesson 1990, 378).

Stakeholders

So far, the method as described above is merely a way to determine an organization's ideas and ideological content (Lindberg 2017, 93). What this method doesn't do, is to describe the truthfulness of this content. How others receive your ideas, for example how they regard their believability, is not part of this method. However, it is an important aspect to keep in mind. An influential theory on organization identity development states that "a healthy organizational identity results from processes that integrate the interests and activities of all relevant stakeholder groups" (Hatch and Schultz 2002, 1005). This means that you also have to think about how the interests of stakeholders are represented in your organization's identity. The influence of these stakeholders is an important part of how you reflect on your organization's identity and becomes an internal part of it (Hatch and Schultz 2002, 998).

Example

We saw that DWDW's social value is "high social cohesion and inclusion in a neighborhood." This value not only provides the context for what projects they want to undertake and how, but also relates to stakeholder involvement. A large part of DWDW's budget is granted by the municipality of Groningen (De Wijk De Wereld 2021, 12). The municipality no doubt shares this value with DWDW, which is how stakeholder influence is represented in DWDW's identity.

Target group

Of course, it depends on the scope of your project who the target group is. Like DWDW, you might want to single out a certain neighborhood in a city, or you could look at a larger scale, for example all city residents. Who the target group is also has a large influence on organizational identity. This part of the identity focuses more on the instrumentalization and explicit points of action of the organization (Hatch and Schultz 2002, 997). When taking into account the V-D-P-triad again, we'll find the more operative points of what the organization wants to do, instead of the social value. This is because the operative level needs to include points that will increase cultural participation and therefore must relate to the target group. Below is an example of such a V-D-P-triad.

Example V-D-P-triad:

V: 'Connect residents of Groningen to culture'

D: 'Too much was based on 'thinking about' [the residents] and too little on 'thinking with' (De Wijk De Wereld 2021, 2) (*Dsit*)

P: 'Find out more about the residents together with the residents themselves' (De Wijk De Wereld 2021, 2)

As you can see, this V-D-P-triad relates more to the operative level of an organization's ideology instead of the fundamental level. This is because it relates to specific goals, connecting residents of Groningen to culture, instead of social values such as high social cohesion and inclusion.



What to avoid?

Now that we've seen what are important aspects of organizational identity and ideology, let's close this chapter by taking a closer look at aspects that are better to be avoided. Of course, it's a complex undertaking, establishing your organization's identity. While it is normal to portray your organization in a positive manner in your discourse, it is important to refrain from misleading the interested parties.

Similar to this point is to refrain from trying to present a too broad or complex image of your organization. The main goal of establishing your identity is to "produce an appealing picture of the company for various publics (employees, customers, shareholders, government, etc.) and to position it in a beneficial way" (Alvesson 1990, 378).

Organizational narcissism and hyper-adaptation

The final two points to be aware of are closely related to what has been described before: organizational narcissism and hyper-adaptation (Hatch and Schultz 2002, 1006). The first dysfunction in organizational identity occurs when an organization appears to react to external factors such as stakeholders' opinion of the organization, but merely reacts to what the organization thinks the external factors think of the organization (Hatch and Schultz 2002, 1007). The second dysfunction happens when an organization pays too much attention to stakeholders (Hatch and Schultz 2002, 1010). This might be best explained with another example. De Wijk De Wereld wants to increase the cultural participation of residents in Groningen neighborhoods, but also retain the artistic value of their project (De Wijk De Wereld 2021, 6). If DWDW were to solely focus on the target group, the neighborhood residents, and "forget" the cultural part of their identity, DWDW would be a case of hyper-adaptation.

This all might seem like an overwhelming amount of information regarding organizational ideology and identity. Not to worry, as long as you stay true to your organization's identity, others will most likely get the same impression!

ACCESSIBILITY

Before you start with the process of participation, there is one ‘problem’ that needs to be tackled: the concept of accessibility. Cultural participation can bring really good benefits; it can help develop skills and self-confidence, build trust and increase engagement and offer a sense of positive identity. However, although this all seems very positive evidence, the benefits of culture are not evenly distributed across society (Keaney 2006, 27). In order to divide the positive effects of culture across society, you need to make your activities accessible. Access is often described as a fundamental condition for people to participate in society as members with full rights and responsibilities. It is a concept linked to inclusion and representation (Laaksonen 2010, 6).

Nowadays, ‘accessibility’ is a popular term to use when talking about cultural participation. However, what does it actually mean, and how do you reach full accessibility and inclusion in your cultural activities? In this part we’re going to explain how to reach full accessibility by taking a notion of the time, the place, the design of the cultural activities and do we research the visitors profile by focusing on the age, level of literacy, cultural background, disability, poverty and inclusion (Wilcox 1994, 27).

“

Art = elite. The more educated and affluent are not only more likely to attend cultural events - they are more likely to participate in the cultural sector in other ways too. Therefore it is necessary to take a look at the accessibility of your cultural activities.

- Emily Keaney, 2006

”

PRACTICALITIES

If you aim to ensure all sections of the community can be involved in meetings, check these possible barriers to participation. Note that it is impossible to be accessible to everyone - what makes something accessible for one person may create a barrier for another (Birds of Paradise Theater Company 2021, 8). Accessible and inclusive arts practice and presentation seeks to include, rather than exclude, as many people as possible (Zbitnew n.d., 7).

Language

As you begin to practice accessibility, engage in an ongoing process that thoughtfully evaluates language and avoids inaccurate, archaic and offensive expressions that perpetuate negative stereotypes. Language, after all, can reinforce a dominant viewpoint (Zbitnew n.d., 7).

When speaking, avoid unnecessarily long or unfamiliar words, jargon or technical terms. Keep your sentences short (on average 15 to 20 words) and simple, and use active rather than passive verbs wherever you can (Zbitnew n.d., 16)

Marketing

There are a whole range of factors that can motivate (and prevent) people from attending your events or visiting your organization. First impressions count: and this means your marketing as much as your front line staff. If someone can't read your brochure, can't see where to go for access information, or is offended by the language you use then they just won't bother. You need to develop trust and build a relationship with your audiences. This will take time. Start by making a commitment to access, communicating with people in the right way and in the right places, providing as much information about access as possible and making sure you deliver on your promises (Birds of Paradise Theater Company 2021, 5).

Building

The quality of buildings and spaces has a strong influence on the quality of people's lives. Therefore, decisions about the design, planning and management of places can enhance or restrict a sense of belonging. They can remove real and imagined barriers between communities and foster understanding and generosity of spirit (ECAB 2008, 3). To take people's needs into account while designing a building is called 'Inclusive design' (Earnscliffe 2021, 11). According to Jayne Earnscliffe and the Arts Council England, inclusive design is based on ease of use, freedom of choice and access to mainstream activities, embracing of diversity and difference, legibility and predictability and high quality.



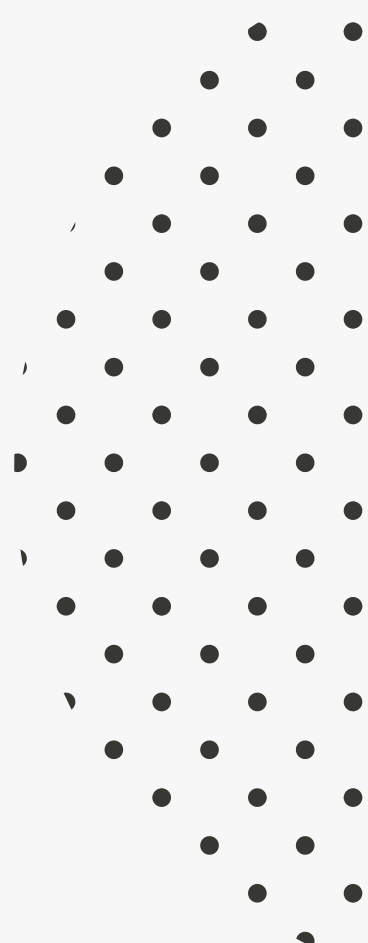
Photo of: The Nature of Why, Queen Elizabeth Hall, 2018. Credit Paul Blakemore

Disabilities

In order to make full accessibility possible, you should take a look at the facilities you have for disabled people. You can ask yourself the questions:

- Is the building accessible to people with disabilities?
- Should a signer be provided at meetings?
- Are all texts readable for everyone?
- Is it clear what people with disabilities can expect of the facilities (Wilcox 1994, 27)?

Another important note is about your staff. Train your staff to have an open attitude towards people with disabilities, in order to provide information about the services and help where possible (Earnscliffe 2021, 17).



Cultural background

Only with universal access are a variety of cultural expressions available and thus options for people to freely choose from (Laaksonen 2010, 5). When taking various cultural backgrounds into consideration, it is wise to think about the following questions:

- What are the customs and traditions of the people who you are inviting?
- What are the taboos of the people you are inviting?
- Does your building contain special rooms for prayer, or washing facilities (ECAB 2008, 11)?
- Are your activities planned during religious celebrations (for example Ramadan?)

Always ask, never assume.

"We have all heard this and it is something that we all forget in various ways in our working practices. Assumptions can be painful and therefore it is better to ask. However, asking is not enough. Admit your mistake and use this as an opportunity to develop an organizational-wide awareness to make sure it never happens again" (McDowell 2021, 3).



Timing

After taking note of the visitors and the public, it is time to take a notion of the timing of your cultural events. Take the following questions into consideration:

- Is it convenient timing?
- Are there any (religious) celebrations at this moment?
- Is it during the week or during the weekend?
- Is it in the morning, after school or late in the evening?

By choosing a specific time, you cannot prevent including and excluding people at the same time. So think about who your target group is (Wilcox 1994, 27)!


Poverty

In order to include everyone, and make your organization accessible, you should think about the expenses you ask of people. Questions you should take into account are:

- Should expenses be paid in some instances?
- Can you reassure people they won't ask to put their hands in their pockets?
- Are there affordable prices? Can events be costless?
- Can poverty be an open subject in your cultural activities?

Inclusive attitude

Accessibility is more than just a lot of facilities and easy readable text. Moreover, it is the attitude of your organization that counts the most. For example do you, or your 'community leaders' reflect the interests of your visitors (Wilcox 1994, 27)?



"Sometimes,
all it takes to
make a
difference is
an attitude"

(Laaksonen 2010, 8)

How does *De Wijk De Wereld* do it?

Karin, artistic director of De Wijk De Wereld: “We’re with five of us and we split up. We make flyers that we think will appeal and throw them into the more than 10.000 mailboxes of a neighborhood by ourselves. We also organise meetings and sometimes only 10 and sometimes over 100 people come. We do a sort of a speed-date, where we give them a question and they can speak to each other. Here we also explain who we are and what we want and we make sure we have coffee and cake. So people can say: “Hey I really had a nice evening!” And then, the next time we take them to the Stadsschouwburg where we will be performing. Sometimes it happens that people cannot come because of children at home, then we will try to fix a babysitter for that evening” (Noeken 2021, 32).

As you can see, De Wijk De Wereld makes a lot of effort to make participation accessible. They arrange babysitters, a good evening with cake and coffee and make sure people do have a successful experience. By being this open to the needs of the visitors/ participants you will reach a higher level of accessibility and therefore a higher level of participation.



EXECUTION

Now, the question of the best way for you to incorporate participation in your undertaking occurs. However, this guide is not able to give the perfect instruction for your need but can provide you with thought-provoking impulses to reflect your demands and to find your way of execution, with the help of the different levels of participation and the concept of bottom-upness.

First of all, carrying out a participatory process is costly and time-consuming. It is a process of constant compromising, thereby a clear assignment of roles and a common understanding is important. A distinct aspect is that the participation has to be initiated by a higher instance or from the citizens' own demand. The process does not happen by itself, it has to be introduced, explained, and also taught to get more and more autonomous (Wilcox 1994, 4). In that, there is not only the advantage, that "active participation will contribute to the empowerment of local groups and communities. Participatory approaches will encourage discussion and debate and will increase knowledge and critical thinking" (Voices of Culture 2016, 5) but it also questions the predominant model of offer, how it is still favoured and widely practiced in the cultural sector. Instead, the approach of participation rather focuses on the existing demand (Vidović and Žuvela 2018, 19).

Especially in the cultural sector, it is important to hear the demands of the citizen, to gain or keep relevance and therefore legitimize one's work. Especially for funded institutions, that is a major factor, but shouldn't determine the work (Schröck 2020, 5).

The Ladder of Participation

In 1969, author Sherry P. Arnstein developed a model, which proposes different levels of citizen participation. Following the emblem of a ladder, it shows steps going up with the degree of granted involvement of the residents. That's why it is called *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*. High up, the citizens are in full control, on the low end, they are only manipulated (Vidović and Žuvela 2018, 23). The model is and can be applied to a wide range of disciplines, including cultural projects. In a more practical manner, this guide suggests the adapted version of David Wilcox, who narrowed the ladder down to only five stances (1994, 4). Here they are from low to high.

Information: You just inform your participants and let them be part of the shared knowledge.

Consultation: You present options and receive feedback from the participants.

Deciding together: There is input from both sides. You come to an agreement on the best option.

Acting together: You jointly carry out the action.

Supporting independent community interest: helping the citizen to reach what they want, framed in your organization.

As you can see, Wilcox does not have a stance of full control of the citizens. However, considering his practical approach and target group of the executing instance, this makes sense. Similar to this guide, he provides this model to people who plan to initiate participation. Full citizen control is not part of that, other than in the concept of bottom-upness which is explained further now.



Bottom-Up progressing upward from the lowest levels (Merriam-Webster Dictionary n.d.)

Top-Down a situation in which decisions are made by a few people in authority rather than by the people who are affected by the decisions (Cambridge Dictionary n.d.)



Bottom-up or Top-down

The practice of cultural participation can be approached from the bottom up and from the top down, depending on the party that initiated the process and who holds the power (Vidović and Žuvela 2018, 22). Power relations are always there when different interests or uneven resources occur. However, there is an interdependency between both parties. When aiming to approach participation in bottom-upness, it is important to orientate your work on the demands of the participants while meeting their needs. You best put your ego aside and surrender your decision-power. The more empowerment of the citizens occurs, the more you work in the sphere of bottom-upness. An eye-level encounter is thereby most efficient and pleasant for everyone involved.

To not only see the black and white distinction of bottom-up and top-down, but rather to introduce a middle ground, the term Partnership can be helpful. The social scientists Nikkhah and Redzuan introduce this concept to inspect the relationship between participation and empowerment (2009, 171). In a partnership approach, a common goal and shared values are important as well.

Approaches	Participation	Empowerment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top-down • Partnership(cooperative) • Bottom-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation as a mean (static, passive, controllable) • Working together • Participation as an end (active, dynamic, self-mobilizing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low empowerment • Moderate empowerment • High empowerment and sustainable development

Table 1: Nikkhah/Redzuan 2009, 174: Summary of relationship among approaches, participation and empowerment

Did you know...

that you are a cultural participant every time you sit in a theatre? Though, there is a distinction made between passive and active participants. So, if you are consuming cultural content or attending cultural events, you are in fact participating passively. However, when you take part and create content with your own creativity, you are an active participant and get handed over power and responsibility about the process (Schröck 2020, 75 & Vidović and Žuvela 2018, 18).



Photo credits: De Wijk De Wereld

Where do you stand? *Position yourself*

So, what do you get out of all these information? There is no wrong or right level of participation or bottom-upness. No stance on the ladder is better than the other, states Wilcox. Your own strategy depends on your personal set goals, yours and your participants' expectations, your preferred and at all possible working method, the voluntary effort investment of your participants, and the outer circumstances. Important is that you specify where you stand and how you want to distribute the power of action. However, there is no need to define your stance with the set concepts. To ensure to know when you are most effective, you orientate at your own goals and values, if you don't have outer factors that determine your success. Barriers of causes of dysfunction can be mostly a lack of mutual understanding or a lack of openness next to other outer factors. Another aspect to think about is how you can evaluate your process and outcome of participation. "Participatory projects introduce new [...] experiences that cannot be evaluated using traditional [...] assessment techniques alone" (Simon 2020).

The Voices of Culture dialogue (2016, 5) summarizes the route to impact in a participatory process:

“

We listen to understand,
to learn, to gather data,
to change.

”

How does *De Wijk De Wereld* do it?

Looking at the case of theatre group DWDW, we find an example of citizen participation in a creative process, with both bottom-up and top-down encounters, you could say they practice partnership. Their strategy is centered around the stories of the neighbourhood and their residents telling them. The final product or rather goal of the process is the performance in the city theatre of Groningen. Further, their under-the-surface goals are to be openly accessed, to provide an opportunity for self-expression, and to archive a lasting cultural impact on the neighbourhood. To get there, they go into the actual neighbourhood, seeking potential participants with the help of low threshold events and networking (De Wijk De Wereld 2021). They orientate their process on the participants and their needs. Their proceeding is not exactly planned beforehand, but with an open creative process and an uncertain outcome. However, they have an institutional framing, a given structure passed from the top down (on institutional level), and a certain degree of security, e.g. through the funding.

Further, the final artistic decision-making power lies with the staff of DWDW, as artistic director Karin Noeken says: “Our guidance ensures that the right things are done [...] we guarantee quality, of course we keep an eye on it” (Noeken, 2021). They work together with professional artists in cooperation with the amateurs to on the one hand help them to express what the neighbourhood wants, on the other hand, to ensure the artistic quality and credibility (Noeken, 2021). To measure their success and impact, DWDW plans to investigate, together with the University of Groningen, their lasting effect on the neighbourhood through qualitative research of the participants’ experiences (De Wijk De Wereld 2021).

Studying this example shows how the cooperation of professionals and amateurs can work with the set goal of a cultural product. With the organizational power on the institution’s side and the focus on the ideas of the citizens and listening to their needs, both sides have to compromise, but work in the frame of their abilities and resources. With that, the process is orientated on working jointly with a clear allocation of roles.



Photo credits: De Wijk De Wereld



MAINTENANCE PARTICIPATION AFTER THE ACT

What is a successful participatory project? Without assuming there is one way to answer this question, there are multiple factors at play, which are already described thoroughly throughout this guide. Does everyone feel welcome, are expectations met, on what levels do participants have a say,... Judging by Boltanski and Chapello, one could also state that a successful project allows a participant to integrate in other projects, that connections are made. Setting the goal of engaging your audience in participatory cultural projects poses the question: what is in there for the audience after the event comes to an end? Participants may experience a redistribution of the power of action during the project of which they are part. As an organiser, you hope that this action continues to express itself in new events undertaken by citizens. You can ask yourself if structural cultural participation is one of your organisation's goals. As mentioned in the chapter on identity, this also sets expectations for the participants before, during and after the event (Bishop 2012, 119-120).

The example of De Wijk De Wereld shows a willingness to engage with lasting cultural participation that can go beyond the borders of the organisation's original goals and maybe also its possibilities. In the case of Groningen, there are already other organisations at play whose goal is to increase cultural participation. Maybe a strengthening of the bond between your organisation and national, municipal or other umbrella organisations is a start to anchor the cultural participation. Ask yourself: who else benefits from the citizen's increased engagement with the arts? How can we help each other? Addressing stakeholders in the discourse of your organisation is only the result of a stable, well thought out collaboration. Thinking back of the ladder of participation, the case of De Wijk De Wereld shows that a top-down approach to maintaining cultural participation is needed to anchor the already successful partnership and willingness for bottom-up initiatives.

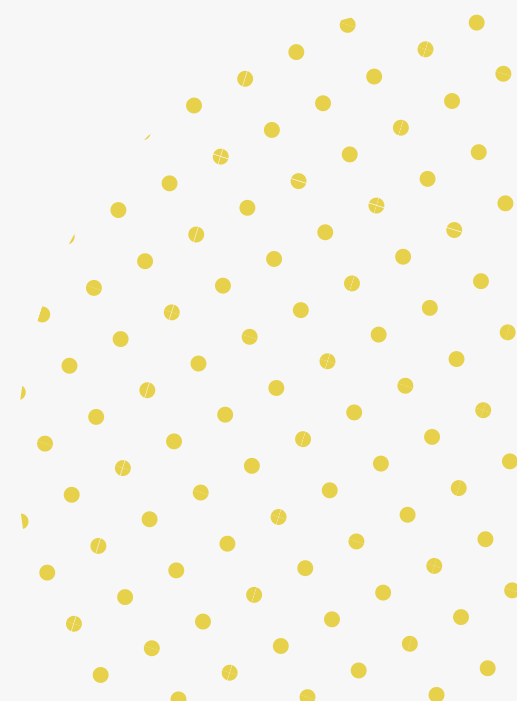
A pitfall for *De Wijk De Wereld*?

The objectives of De Wijk De Wereld's policy plan for 2018-2022 can be summarized into 3 points:

- (1) Connecting theatre lovers and spectators of all sorts of backgrounds of the neighbourhoods of Groningen with professional theatre makers
- (2) Performing the stories of the neighbourhood's citizens on stages in Groningen to lower the threshold and diversifying the theatre's publics
- (3) To lower the threshold to the theatre, performances can take place in the neighbourhood (De Wijk De Wereld 2018).

De Wijk De Wereld's approach to connecting with participants is very bottom-up in the sense that it depends on personal relations with the core group of the organisation. This results in visits of the organisation's team members to initiatives undertaken by the neighbourhood itself or in lasting friendships years after the initial project. The project itself has shown to be possible to revive cultural interest by people involved in it before, or to a formation of new groups of people with common interests and so on. The influence of De Wijk De Wereld's project thus extends beyond the borders of the theatrical world, and results in projects based on the efforts of the citizens themselves.

However, if one of De Wijk De Wereld's main goals is to lower the threshold to the theatre, we should (hopefully) be talking about an amount of time that also extends beyond the organisation's project. De Wijk De Wereld hopes to live up to this expectation by, for example, linking talented performers to other cultural organisations. But also this effort lays in the hands of the core team of De Wijk De Wereld and is not structurally embedded in the organisation, in contrast to it being one of their objectives. It depends on the amount of time and effort that individuals spend on this guaranteeing of cultural participation after the project. The revival of cultural participation and redistribution of power that was happening during the project of De Wijk De Wereld is afterwards only carried by a few individuals (Noeken 2021).



Projects can really help in temporarily lowering the threshold to cultural institutions and interest in the arts. Taking into account the first chapter on accessibility, you can ask yourself if the goals you set before undertaking the project also apply after the event. We give you some questions to start your reflection with. (Walker/Fleming/Sherwood 2003).

	Before the event	During & after the event
Venue	How accessible is the venue of our project (for who, in what way, why)?	How accessible is the venue of our project (for who, in what way, why)? <i>E.g. Is it possible for the neighbourhood to organize or participate (in) an activity without our organization?</i>
Motivations for participation	To what extent was a participant already engaging in cultural activities? To what extent do socio-economic factors, cultural background, disabilities, time use, interest in culture influence the cultural participation of a participant?	To what extent is a participant engaging in cultural activities? How were these factors at stake during the event? To what extent is their influence on the cultural participation changed after the event?
Method	How does our project come about?	To what extent was participation influenced by our working method? How can this method be used by participants after the event? How does the method allow for engagement with our organisation after the event?
Organization	How do people (get to) know my organisation? How does my organisation reach their target group?	Which connections were formed during the project? Between who and of what kind? To what extent have these connections the possibility to bloom within our organisation?

Table 2: Reflective questions towards lasting cultural participation based on Walker, Fleming and Sherwood, 2003.

CONCLUSION

We started off with exploring the possibilities of Lindberg's Values-Descriptions-Prescriptions triad for establishing the so called ideology or belief system of your initiative. We referred to De Wijk De Wereld's use of "starting points" as an example of how you can communicate your ideas to your target audience and stakeholders in a literal and subtle manner. We emphasized that this method doesn't include the truthfulness of your content and thus organization. Therefore we gathered some key points for presenting your initiative in a positive way, referring to Hatch and Schultz's notions of "organisational narcissism" and "hyper-adaptation".

In the second part, we zoomed in on some points of attention for making your initiative accessible for all. These had to do with language used in content, the marketing aspect of your organization, the building where a project takes place, disabilities, poverty and the cultural background of your target audience, the timing of an event and the inclusive attitude of your organization. The summarizing motto is to "ask, never assume" these factors.

Next, we looked at different ways of engaging with participation on the basis of Wilcox's interpretation of Arnstein's "ladder of participation" which shows the involvement of citizens in a participatory project. This model assumes that the citizens are never fully in charge. Different approaches to the ladder are categorized as "bottom-up" or "top-down" and have different working methods and ways of investing in the participants to reach their goals. There is also a compromising approach called "partnership" theorized by Nikkiah and Redzuan. We discussed the latter by using the case of De Wijk De Wereld.

To wrap up, we looked at what happens after a project took place. De Wijk De Wereld serves as a learning model because they operate alongside other organizations with a comparable goal and public but distinguish themselves with their working method. In relation to the part on identity, an organization should think of its degree of involvement with the afterlife of cultural participation in order to set clear expectations to the audience and stakeholders. Depending on this involvement, we posed some initial questions that can be useful for reflection on how to move forward in guaranteeing cultural participation, based on a model by Walker, Fleming and Sherwood.

With this guide, we hope to hand over some theoretical insights on cultural citizen participation based on our acquaintance with the inspiring case of De Wijk De Wereld. We hope to provide new insights or inspiration for existing organizations and future projects.



Photo credits: De Wijk De Wereld

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Interview Arjan (inhabitant Beijum) 12.10.2021

D: "What is your name? I saw Arjan?"

A: "Yes, Arjan van Rijs"

D: "Sorry what did you say?"

A: "I said Arjan van Rijs, A R J A N van R "lange ij" S"

D: "And you participated in DWDW, is that right?"

A: "Yes that's right"

D: "Okay and why did you choose to participate?"

A: "Eh because I thought it was a fun project"

D: "Okay, what was the reason you thought it was fun?"

A: "Eeeuhm, I think mainly because of the challenge to perform on the stage of the Stadsschouwburg"

D: "Okay yes, is that because you haven't been there before? Or have you been there before but just not on the stage?"

A: "Exactly, the last one. Not on the podium"

D: "Okay, and how did you hear of DWDW?"

A: "Well, I'm in the neighborhood renewal so I heard it came to Beijum and I actually just jumped in"

D: "Okay, nice! Uhm, you said neighborhood renewal? Is that an initiative from within the neighborhood?"

A: "Well, it's an initiative from the municipality of Groningen"

D: "Yes"

A: "And Beijum is a neighborhood renewal neighborhood. Uh, so I'm at those meetings"

D: "Oh okay, and DWDW came there and so you had quite an easy way in?"

A: "Yeah I heard of it pretty early on and I knew Karin Noeken already, because I participated in some courses from her"

D: "Oh okay, What kind of courses? Also artistic ones? Or theatre?"

A: "I did a course of "Kleinkunst" (cabaret?) with Karin"

D: "Okay, so you were already interested in culture before this project"

A: "Yes, definitely"

D: "Okay, did you feel welcome at DWDW?"

A: "Yes, I definitely felt welcome"

D: "Okay and what was the reason you felt welcome there?"

A: "Yes... euh"

D: "Was that... oh sorry"

A: "Yes, just because you are welcome. And like I said I already knew Karin Noeken so I already knew someone"

D: "Yes, uhm, Was there for example also space for your own input from you and?"

A: "Yes, because the part I did I actually wrote myself"

D: "Yes"

A: "So there was space for your own input, but the communication about that was insufficient. Because at first instance we were, I was invited to write my own piece"

D: "Yes"

A: "So I did that, but eventually I only knew what I was gonna do on the day of the final rehearsal, because only by then it was clear how much time there was"

D: "Oh that's also a bit stressful, such a short amount of time before"

A: "Yes, but I was one of the few people, most people already knew before that time what they had to do."

D: "Yes"

A: "But because I wrote my own part and, well, the part was too long every time"

D: "Yes"

A: "Well, about that was a bit uncertainty, also about the feasibility and the the the... uhm, well"

D: "Yes"

A: "The [unintelligible] direction"

D: "Yes okay so there was a certain person who make the decisions about that and the communication about your part was a bit unclear, if I understand correctly"

A: "Well, Karin was the director"

D: "Yes"

A: "It was just really busy. So..."

D: "Yes"

A: "Like I said I had written my part, it was too long, then I rewrote the piece and it was still too long and uhm with the time in between I still had my own company and Karin was of course also really busy, so eventually it came down to that I only knew what I was going to do exactly on the day of the final rehearsal. And to be honest even after the final rehearsal it's be changed a little bit. Ehhh."

D: "Yes"

A: "Let's say we had a really interesting process"

D: "Yes, exactly. Okay euhm. So Euhm. **So how did the content of the show get decided on?**"

A: "Well in fact everyone was challenged to come up with their own themes, and their own parts of what they would want to do. People who couldn't do that themselves were helped with discovering what they wanted to tell. It was about telling your own story, as it were."

D: Yes"

A: So people who didn't know how to do that were helped, so that also with them a piece was made, written, done. And people who were able to do that themselves could do that."

D: "Oh okay, and what was the piece that you did?"

A: "I did a cabaret piece!"

D: "Oh nice, okay! Did you also have previous experience with that or?"

A: "Apart from the course I did with Karin I had no experience, no. I did study it a lot but I did that by myself. I studied that by myself and, well, I like writing and so that's why I did that."

D: "Okay, yes sounds nice! And so then for the first time on stage in the Stadsschouwburg with this piece "

A: "Yes"

D: "Yes, and **before the performance you had been there before right? In the Stadsschouwburg**"

A: "Yes, as audience? Yes for sure"

D: "Also mainly at cabaret? Or also other stuff"

A: "Yes mainly cabaret but also to performances for kids with the kids"

D: "Okay nice, and **did you also go to the Stadsschouwburg after the performance, or? Due to covid it's of course a bit different but would you like to?**"

A: "I've been once since to the performance of Karin Noeken herself"

D: "Okay"

A: "And after that not any more, because like you said, corona has definitely spoiled the party."

D: "Yes"

A: "And we also don't have the money for it now so..."

D: "Yes okay. Let's see. I see we have almost had all our questions a little bit. **Are you now still doing cabaret or courses that relate to it?**"

A: "No, now I'm working on setting up a theatre project here in Beijum"

D: "Oh okay, super nice! Is that also because of what you experienced at DWDW?"

A: "No, actually it gave an extra push. There were already plans to do something with that before DWDW. And I also agreed with Karin that she would also help with that."

D: "Yes"

A: "And I of course now also have a network from DWDW, because I'm in good contact with many of the participants"

D: "Yes of course, that's super useful. Because you now also have more handles within the neighborhood"

A: Yes and also more hands"

D: "**Did you feel like a lot of different people participated in DWDW, euhm, for example also people who didn't do much with culture who might now also help with new projects?**"

A: Hmm, I find that hard to say, because the people I have most contact with now are people who already did stuff like that such as doing courses that relate to stage art or who were already doing stage arts, so it's hard to say. I did get the impression that definitely at the first meetings there were quite some people who I expect didn't have much with culture"

D: " Okay. I'm kind of curious because we have some other interviews, but this is the first. So I'm curious if we're interviewing new people who didn't do much with culture before. It's probably different from what you're telling me."

A: "I can't say exactly but I saw that a couple responded from my group, Christianne, Freddy, Hanneke, Marie Jose."

D: "Yes I see those"

A: "Christianne does a lot with culture, she does amateur theatre and other things. From the others I don't know exactly what they did or didn't do"

D: "**Are you still in contact with the people from your year, or Beijum, or do you feel like the neighborhood has gotten closer because of DWDW**"

A: "As I said, I still am in contact with some people from my group and we have a relatively active app"

D: "Yes"

A: "If the neighborhood has gotten closer I don't know"

D: "No, so one of the goals of course was to bring people who don't go to the Stadsschouwburg or cultural initiatives to things like that, did you notice anything like that from the neighborhood?"

A: "Well in the sense that the want to bring theatre to the neighborhood has gotten bigger and more people that actively want to participate in theatre. But corona has spoilt the party a lot, because nothing was possible. In that sense [intelligible]"

D: Yes exactly, well I really hope that in the near future that can be set up again, because it sounds like a good thing to be working on

A: "Yes, in this way, a lot of momentum is lost"

D: "I can imagine, but there is something, an interest"

A: "There is definitely an interest for this, but the setting it up of everything is still problematic."

D: **"But getting together is something that is going to happen again in the near future or is that something that also still needs to be set up again?"**

A: "Yes the goal is really to set something up in the neighborhood that has to do with theatre, but also inclusive of courses and stuff like that.

D: "Yes sounds good!"

A: "There is certainly enthusiasm for that. i have no crystal ball but i hope we can make it happen"

D: "I hope so too. I've actually had all the questions by now, but I really liked hearing from you what your experience was. And I'm very curious to see what the future will bring with the new project"

A: "Me too"

D: "Thank you for your cooperation"

A: "You're welcome"

D: "Have a nice evening"

A: "Same to you"

D: "Bye!"

A: "Bye"

Appendix 2. Interview Marie-José (inhabitant Beijum) 12.10.2021

Joanne: Then I'll start with the first question. What is your name?

MJ: Marie-José Chiabu

Joanne: Okay, so you are from France?

MJ: No, no Congo

Joanne: Aah Look, Congo. And you just mentioned it, but could you tell us in a few words why you chose to participate in the theatre project?

MJ: Yes, because I was very active in the neighbourhood and I really enjoyed participating.

Joanne: Yes, good to hear. And how did you know DWDW?

MJ: Through Karin. The first time I was there

Joanne: Yes, you saw the theatre performance?

MJ: Yes.

Joanne: And when you participated in the project for the first time, the first time you came, did you feel welcome?

MJ: Yes.

Joanne: And how did that happen?

MJ: Because I was in a group of women called the neighbourhood jury. That group went to shows and theatre and we had to choose one winner out of 16.

Joanne: And where did you first participate in the project? Where did it take place?

MJ: That was in the city theatre. I did not participate myself, but I was there.

Joanne: Okay, as a visitor.

MJ: Yes.

Joanne: And later you did participate, right?

MJ: Yes.

Joanne: And how did that start? Can you describe that?

MJ: I am very active in the neighbourhood with cooking, and Karin was looking for people in the neighbourhood. And she already knew me from the other neighbourhood jury group. She said: "Yes, you are also going to cook for DWDW. I really enjoyed doing that.

Joanne: How nice. And do you remember how the content was chosen, in other words what the show was about?

MJ: Well, it was about what we do here in the Beijum district. I'm not the only one, but everyone sees Beijum as a bad neighbourhood in Groningen. But we have shown our good side to the world. That Beijum is not a bad neighbourhood.

Joanne: OK, so you came up with your own stories?

MJ: Yes

Joanne: Okay, and were any stories chosen to play?

MJ: Well, I think so, because everyone had to do what they do in the neighbourhood. For example I like cooking and had to cook. And other people, it was different things.

Joanne: Okay, so there were different things, so you cooked, but what other things were there?

MJ: Well the ... men and other people were reporters here in the neighbourhood, and others were doing things that belong here in the neighbourhood. People arguing over a fence, things like that, not difficult.

Joanne: Before the performance in the City Theatre, had you been there?

MJ: Yes.

Joanne: What kind of performance did you see there then?

MJ: Um, it was 16 times and I can't remember the names. I remember one that I really liked, that was Horreur.

Joanne: Okay, so you visited the theatre often.

MJ: Yes, yes.

Joanne: And did you go to the city theatre after the performance?

MJ: Yes, yes.

Joanne: And did you do anything cultural before the performance?

MJ: Well, um, I do not do much in the way of culture, but I just like culture, I show people what my culture is, what I do here.

Joanne: Well and of course what you do with cooking is also part of culture.

MJ: Yes, and I also do a fashion show with my Congolese clothes and people really liked that.

Joanne: Yes, wonderful. And did you do more with culture after the show?

MJ: No, no.

Joanne: Okay. And can you tell us something about the people who took part in DWDW? Were they very different people or did they all look alike?

MJ: Well, they were different people.

Joanne: Okay, can you tell us more about that?

MJ: Yes, from young to old, very different.

Joanne: And do you have the idea that the neighbourhood has become closer together, and how do you see that?

MJ: Yes. Because a lot of people who participated didn't know me before. They'd see me in the paper and say hey, where do you live and I lived very close by. Very nice. Almost everyone knows me here in the neighbourhood.

Joanne: And that is because of the performance.

MJ: Well, not because of the show, but more because of the cooking. With the cooking here.

Joanne: Yes. **And can you tell us if you still notice something of the performance two years later?**

MJ: Yes, look, it was a very special experience. And we have become a whole group that goes to every performance again. But because of covid, things have changed completely. And I think it's also a pity that you need a QR-code to enter the theatre.

Joanne: Yes, so that makes it more difficult to do things together with the neighbourhood.

MJ: Yes.

Joanne: Yes, that's very understandable indeed. **Well, these were my questions, do you have anything else you'd like to tell us?**

MJ: ehh, like what? Ehh

Joanne: **What was the most beautiful thing you took away from the performance?**

MJ: Well, you know, when I went to the performance for the first time, I thought it was very special, because it was also the first time I was in the city theatre. And then I saw an actress and I really wanted to be there. My dream has completely come true because of DWDW.

Joanne: How wonderful, I think this is a very nice ending. Thank you for talking to me.

Appendix 3. Interview Hanneke (inhabitant Beijum) 13.10.2021

Recording failed. Notes from Celiën

What's your name?

- Hanneke Daartma, 43 years old, mother of two kids

Why did you participate with De Wijk De Wereld?

How did you get to know the project?

- Open call via Facebook, pointed out by a friend. I asked her if it was put in the group of the neighbourhood but she didn't remember.

Did you feel welcome? Why was that?

- Yes, but it was more difficult because of corona, and it was not so easily accessible. Originally it would start in May, but eventually it was August and then they could gather physically

How did they choose the content of the play?

- Karin looked at the "bigger image". The project was divided into groups, which each had a leader. There was dance etc. You could choose your group.

What did you do in the play?

- Was part of the sketch called "the neighbours". Karin led this group. But she also sang and entertained the visitors between scenes.

The play took place in the City Theatre, did you go there before the project?

- Yes, but a very long time ago

Did you go to the City Theatre afterwards? Or would you like to?

- One time. It was not accessible because of Covid and very busy with the kids, but would like to go again in the future

Did you participate in cultural activities before the project?

- Yes, when she was young and also when she was 30 years old she participated in a musical. Also wanted to become part of a band but the rehearsals were too hard to schedule because of the kids. So participated in a lot of culture, but almost not anymore since she got kids.

Did you participate in cultural activities after the project?

- Not really, because of Covid and the children. But there is a group of people in the neighbourhood who want to organise a theatre group and she will be part of that. She said it's quiet for now, but someone is working on it so it will happen in the future

Did you have the feeling that a lot of different people participated in the project?

- Yes. But most of them were good at expressing themselves. Only a few were more introverted. There were a lot of different backgrounds: international, from the neighbourhood,...

Do you have the feeling that the neighbourhood has become closer because of the project and why is that?

- Not the whole neighbourhood, but the people who participated will greet and talk to each other on the street.

What do you see of the project now, two years later?

- No projects anymore, except for the theatre group but that's also a small group of people and is done by the neighbourhood themselves
- Was certainly a "thing" (dingetje) at the time for the neighborhood, it was big
- Now she only follows online info about projects

Appendix 4. Interview Karin Noeken (artistic director DWDW) 13.10.2021

Remark: "(?)" means I didn't hear the speaker very well or don't know the name of the shp/ neighbourhood/ organisation

Joanne: We have 8 questions and at the end if you want to tell something else, then that's completely free.

First question is what do you think is the identity of De Wijk De Wereld in Groningen?

Karin: Good question. Well, um, the identity is actually the identity of the neighbourhood, actually. So, um, so we go out into the neighbourhood, we look for people, so we look for connection and we try to be as authentic as possible in who we are and we're really curious, we really want to start a conversation, we're going to connect with the neighbourhood, by literally sitting there in the neighbourhood and euh by that we get to know the neighbourhood and the neighbourhood gets to know us and we go along with the neighbourhood and in that way we offer something extra by the encounters and that can be euh the encounters with people, the encounters with stories, with the neighbourhood as a neighbourhood, and we turn these into culture in the sense of theatre or music or dance or visual arts or photography or - and that depends a bit on what is and is going on in the neighbourhood - we meet people who just shout "we want to participate", well that's great, but we want to get through the user aspect (?) and so we go and drink coffee, eat soup, dance, play bingo with the neighbourhood's organisations, anything that organises anything, we go along and there we hope to meet the people who are not so quick to shout, but who secretly want to join in.

Joanne: Who is we?

Karin: We have a team of five, Ahmad A Abdulwahab, Jantien Kurpershoek is a programmer at SPOT Groningen and she is a dramaturg, but that goes beyond dramaturgy and Mirjam van der Heide is in charge of marketing, who does the marketing, so how do you get your target audience in a different way, that really has to change and then we have production, which Iris [van Dijk] and I do, I do the artistic direction, so, but we do a lot together so that is a team event and we do that from SPOT Groningen the question arose at SPOT Groningen and euh there was the question how can we ensure that the theatre is for everyone and then we said well then we give the Schouwburg to the neighbourhood for a week, So for a whole week, from Saturday to Sunday, it belongs to the neighbourhood and they need to feel that, so it becomes a neighbourhood centre and euh, from there we actually started and the NNT is also a partner in this and ultimately the municipality as well, the whole social domain is involved and that is then presented with art and euh and then euh and from there we did the first time in Selwerd and it was very successful and a lot of people wanted to continue and then we thought oh well, what about now, because you stir up the neighbourhood a bit with everything and then we leave and people notice that we are gone, so then we have a kind of guarantee and we are trying to find that guarantee with Vrijdag but also with the NNT, so Vrijdag is a partner in this but not the only one, also Noorderpoort, De Noorderlingen, whatever the question is. So that, that is us.

Joanne: Beautiful and

What would De Wijk De Wereld want to bring about?

Karin: Euh well preferably a bit of chaos that everyone thinks "huh?" "So when it comes to organisation, it's a bit of chaos, so it can be an organisation like Vrijdag and then we'll kick them into the neighbourhood, so to speak, and also residents and, of course, because of what we do, we are also very connecting, so people meet each other who have never met before and also to get out of the bubble a bit, so that people look beyond what they see every day, than what they see every day, so that people also meet other cultures, young and old, and the idea is that if we then have all these people and there are stories, then when we are in the theatre it will ultimately not matter who you are, everyone will just have a name and whether you are from Syria or from the Oosterpark or young or old, together we will create this performance and we hope that this will continue in the neighbourhood of the I'm curious what they'll say in Beijum in the Indische buurt about working with people who were a bit mentally confused (?) and who, as a result of the project, walk differently in the neighbourhood than they did before. In addition, we are also working on developing talent in the sense that we are working with makers who are making their first performance in the theatre and who have to make things in a different way than they are used to, because we are asking them to listen to the people and to make something based on their story.

Joanne: So talent development of the makers?

Karin: Yes, the talent development of the creators but also of people in the neighbourhood. Ahmad, for example, who is now part of our team, came from Syria and wanted to dance and then we said come and dance.) to give everyone the feeling that they are welcome and the NNT has embraced that. Furthermore, we have Charlotte Wierda, who is one of the spoken word artists, so sometimes we pick up gems in the neighbourhood and also gems that become very visible, but also people who didn't know that they could do something and now think: "yes, I can do something", and that can be very small or very large.

Joanne: Erm, let's see, we are doing research on bottom-upness and bottom-up in cultural organisation.

What is bottom-up for you?

Karin: Well, that you are authentic, that you really want to know, that you're really curious and that you really listen and that you're interested and that you put all your ego aside for a moment that it isn't about - well, that's what I thought at the beginning of course, "SPOT Groningen wants this because they want to have people in the hall". It's not about ticket sales, it costs us more than - people who live in poverty, who you also want to have pay a euro and usually we pay the euro back, so yes, bottom - yes, it is and we have to make sure that it is, that you also think a bit about authenticity, that it is not a system of going to all the districts and doing your thing that people think, "yes, you and your art there" people can just see through, so you have to do what you promise, so, uh, that is what it is.

Joanne: Nice, that's for sure ...(?) Okay then, actually the next question is:

To what extent is DWDW an example of bottom-up organisation if you look at the content of the programme?

Karin: Yes, I think it is an example, of course, but the tricky thing is that, for example, because we start from bottom up that we also can't always very well explain what we are going to do, we do have a number of certainties, of course, the theatre and over the years we can show what we have done, but that differs every year and that differs - look, now we go to a more authentic neighbourhood, an old neighbourhood, yes, that is a very different kind of neighbourhood than we were in Beijum or in Vinkhuizen, Beijum has a lot of young families and a very different kind of people. It is a very different neighbourhood than the Oosterpark or the Indische buurt, it is also a much more coloured neighbourhood, so you also have to do other things because you also have other creators and sometimes you have a different conversation - in the Oosterpark, there is a lot of new construction in such an old neighbourhood and the people from the new buildings don't meet the people in the old buildings and vice versa, so yes, we will see if we can jump in - there are organisations like Kopland where there are women who have been abused or whatever and who also want to pick up their lives, we can make sure that they do and so gradually we meet all kinds of things and we actually adapt to that so we don't ask them to adapt to us but it is different every year, so we have done five versions now and they are five different versions, which is also due to corona. And also to realise that the things we do in the neighbourhood are also very important, so at first we just came to pick people up and take them to the theatre, but now we also do a lot of things in the neighbourhood. Well, we have "Meet the makers" for instance, so we will take a walk in the Oosterpark or in the neighbourhood and then you will meet the makers and they will show you who they are and what they do... We have a small theatre that was made in corona times that is a 1 on 1 where you get a kind of concert, it is possible that we will read to people because many families in neighbourhoods like Vinkhuizen Oosterpark are not read to very much (?), so then we will work together with Forum, so, so, it's the whole cultural bingo, then we just go out on the street and then you don't win a prize in the sense of a piece of meat or something like that, but you win a piece of music or a violin. And that's exciting because then the violinist will play a piece of music or a violin and the last time we did that we had two moroccan boys who won it and they won the prize and then she stood in front of it and she started to play and the boys were all "wow" and then the violinist thinks "gosh of those rascals" and in the end they all wanted to hold the violin and they had never done that so sometimes it just rolls on very nicely

Joanne: And euhm next to the programme h

How do you see bottom-up in De Wijk De Wereld in the organisation structure?

Karin: With us or euhm?

Joanne: Yes

Karin: Well, that's funny, we recently had a kind of a heyday and you have to explain who you are because we are asked everywhere if you want to do something there and there and there and that's of course very nice, but can you do what you do? Can we do what we stand for at Delfzijl? Well, that is quite difficult, if I am at home and there is a meeting of someone in the Oosterpark tonight, I take my bike and I cycle there, which I don't do very quickly if I have to go all the way to Delfzijl, so you can't guarantee that you can do that. And then it turns out that we may not be able to deliver so we actually think that we should be able to get on our bikes to go somewhere and in the organisation we naturally also try to take along people we meet who may want to do decor or in the security we also have a lot of people who want to see things or there are people who They always come back and help us and we stimulate that and we also try because we are at SPOT Groningen - look SPOT Groningen did not know that this was going to be successful and that has its strengths in such a large system as SPOT Groningen they have now appointed a programmer who has to have something to do with De Wijk De Wereld otherwise not and there is my colleague is now also a programmer to make the connection with SPOT Groningen, with the neighbourhood and with social issues, so even in SPOT Groningen there is suddenly a change taking place, or we are giving away 10 tickets to people who never go to the theatre and then we make a call or ask, so you can see that things are changing in that area as well, Yes, and within the social sphere within the municipality something is also changing, because look, art and culture were always sort of in their own department and next to that you had labour and you name it, and now all those social spheres have given money to be able to do this because they all think it is important and they support it, so all those social spheres now realise that culture can do something in connecting, in broadening, in becoming visible, in tackling things without us always having to solve them, and that was the discussion before: how do we get people a job? No, they have to take care of that themselves.

That can be an impetus for someone to become active, of course, but that has been somewhat reduced and the 'having to measure' is something successful if you can say it is measurable in the sense of "well, so many people", no, they now have that with music, fortunately, by means of brains you can see what music does, well, I think that theatre has the same effect, but that has not yet been researched or measured but with music it is now suddenly very important that everyone does music because it is so measurable but we have moved past that, that is not how it should always be. But every now and then we still have these types of people of whom you think [makes movement with hand as if a bit crazy, has weird thoughts that don't align with hers]

Joanne:

How do you maintain the balance between artistic quality and participation?

Karin: Because we really work with professional people - we really go into the neighbourhood with a team. We bring the makers- are professional makers. In all kinds of forms, so we ask them to do that and with that we guarantee the quality, and of course we keep an eye on it, because sometimes someone drops out or we've had someone who started dancing drunk, so then you think "oh dear", but because the makers know very well what they're doing and where they're doing it, and our guidance ensures that the right things are done, and because we have the theatre as our stage, everything is illuminated by literally and figuratively putting a light on it and it's also not a- we make short scenes of 15 minutes and we do that a bit because these people have never played before eum because we search for the credibility of the people on stage and we make that theatrical but that credibility must remain because that ensures quality so if you then for an hour long that is the difference with amateur theatre and what we do - you also have amateurs on stage then you sometimes see through that and they almost drown but because we do a quarter of an hour we ensure that [credibility].

Joanne:

How do you make the neighbourhood residents feel at home at De Wijk De Wereld?

Karin: By just being honest, sincere and doing what you promise and also being honest I think you also have to tell someone - I have also told someone, in principle everyone is allowed to participate, really everyone is allowed to participate, and we also give that feeling: thin green and yellow, everyone is allowed to participate unless you become aggressive or no longer workable, then we will talk, but it can also be that someone wants something euh - I've already had someone who, yes actually you could also speak to her but I do not know if she wants, who really wanted to sing, sing solo, but she cannot sing, so in everything- and I try to manipulate that and euh and then there was corona so usually we look for a choir where people can sing, but there was no choir and she wanted to sing and so then I tried in all kinds of ways to give it quality and a kind of- well that she also understands what she is doing because you don't have to be able to sing beautifully as long as you can make it theatrical and that doesn't work either so then I have to protect her from herself and say "you can't join in" because if we do then it becomes embarrassing and that's what bothers her the most, People say to me "that small piece was an ugly", but she suffers from it, she feels it. But then in Beijum, Merel, who wanted to do all sorts of things to herself and that is also visible for all sorts of reasons and I said "well what would you like to do if you are in the Schouwburg" and then she said "well I would really like to sing a song", Pretty Me she had chosen and then I let her walk across the floor of the theatre and then she looks around and then she sees look this and then she gets a spot and then she sings Pretty Me and that's not fantastic and that's also acapella and she's not the best singer ever but because of how she says the text and because she knows so clearly what she's doing it's beautiful and her story is beautifully wrapped up in a very small song but I don't let her sing for 15 minutes because then, So you're constantly compromising between that but in principle everyone is allowed to participate but we also want to give that feeling by saying it and by listening to everyone so yes, even the autistic person that - I am sometimes talking for an hour to someone who, well, yes. And honest too, you have to be honest too, you have to be able to say "now it's done", now I have a boy who is a very sweet boy but he keeps on texting with the most horrible things about Corona and then I tell him to stop and well yes. They have to feel that they are doing it for themselves and not for me. We very much have to give them the feeling "you are doing this" so you have to make them feel responsible and also commit to us'.
(difficult to hear)

Celien: That's indeed an interesting nuance to make in the case of not being able to sing well, the feeling that they're doing it for themselves.

Karin: That is why it is also very difficult to explain what you are doing

Joanne:

You get different subsidies from different organisations? To what extent do these organisations influence De Wijk De Wereld?

Karin: Yes, it sometimes has an influence on, for example, Fonds 21 is very much geared towards young people and so what we do is to find out what is going on in the neighbourhood, we scan the neighbourhood and then we go and see, for example, Oosterpark, which I find interesting in the sense that there are many women there at Kopland all the women there and poverty is also high there, so you can apply for a fund in a very targeted way and of course you have to comply with the requirements, so we made a performance with young people in Beijum and then the 21 Fund says that we agreed that we would work with Jonge Harten, and of course that all went wrong, but we are still going to do that because we got money from the Fund, so in that sense we are sticking to the agreements.

Joanne:

Does it influence what you offer, the content?

Karin: No, we are not going to think of something because we think "there is money there", not at all. So first we think about it, we scan the neighbourhood and then we look where the funds are, so that's also exciting as an entrepreneurship, because sometimes in May you're not sure whether that fund will come in and SPOT Groningen says "we'll take care of it", so we do have a kind of back-up and so far that's always been OK, but it's not like "oh we're going to do something with the deaf now because that fund has a lot of money", no we don't do that.

Joanne:

What does De Wijk De Wereld do after the project to maintain the neighbourhood's enthusiasm for culture?

Karin: Euhm yes, well, that's usually because I've been in the neighbourhood for six months, I discover what's going on, what's not working, what's missing, because I get to know the neighbourhood well, and then as a result of that I often make a plan, for example, in Vinkhuizen they would really like to do something about poverty, especially visibility by young people, and then I happen to know that De Noorderlingen are going to make a performance to get young people to talk about poverty with young people so then I link them up again with the area managers and so on and they pick up on it and now a performance has been made and it is also being played in Vinkhuizen so that is how I link it up. With Vrijdag, I sometimes link things, which I think should be better. We come and we are also quite big, we are allowed to do that, we can do anything and we will see where it ends up, so to speak, and that is with the culture coach, who is only 8 hours a week, so he has to do it in 8 hours, and what happened a bit was that we were stirring things up and all sorts of things were happening in the district and then you leave and that all fell away and then Vrijdag had to pick it up and that often leads to the square metre, and there's nothing wrong with that, but it was already happening so then I check with Vrijdag whether we can tackle it bigger or, for example, the 'Indische buurt' I know there lives a director and the people I met really want to play so we linked them together and she's going to make a performance and she also has an idea about doing something together with Oosterpark because that's also next door, dance lessons are also given there, and so I try to implement a number of things and sometimes I do that with Vrijdag, but we have made Charlotte euh the neighbourhood poet and then I seek for Noorderpoort and then Vrijdag will take over, so it's a bit like euh yes, we have the neighbourhood spotters, which are a number of people who we ask if they want to see a number of performances and they have to co-program 4-5 performances for the theatre, we then stamp them and hope that they will become the ambassadors for taking something to the neighbourhood or to the theatre. So then we thought, the guarantee goes much further than just Vrijdag, which is still difficult, and that's a bit of a search, and that's also partly due to corona, which euh- But I'm now also going to the schools in Beijum, for example, the primary schools have indicated that we would like to do something together because our schools are very much - the black school, the white school, we don't want that at all, it happens anyway, because parents of white children would rather go there than (name of school)? and vice versa as well. Now we're going to do a project where all group 7 or group 7 kids from those schools are going to make a performance and we're going to do a walk through the neighbourhood with the intention that when they meet each other when they're 14, they'll say "hey, with you I did..." so that those kids won't start bashing each other but will say "hey, we know each other", that's what you hope, but you don't know if that's going to work, but no, I'm looking for someone else to do that, so it does differ per neighbourhood. In addition, yes, there are of course a number of people with whom you always keep some contact, I sometimes take a walk with someone, but that is not always possible, of course, but here too we try to ensure that The World Neighbourhood always remains somewhat in the neighbourhood, yes. But that could be better, I think, with Vrijdag in de Buurt [Vrijdag in the neighbourhood], we could get so much more out of it, also in communication.

Joanne: 8 hours a week is just too little to be able to manage a neighbourhood.

Karin: I also think that Vrijdag could get a lot more out of us in terms of communication and marketing and, uh, yes, I think we could do more.

Joanne: More cooperation

Karin: Yes, I just think that Vrijdag should go into the neighbourhood. In every neighbourhood, there's a community centre that you can enter free of charge, and you take all the young people or children or elderly people or whoever and you put them there and then you start making things, and this always results in people who maybe want to go to their courses, which is great, and you end up with people who just want to do something in the neighbourhood, and you have a very large group of people, and in Groningen there are more and more of them, who are not from the Netherlands and who live here and don't always feel that this is my- yes. I think that a lot of people from Syria, a lot of Syrians, now go to Babaddaar but they don't really go to Vrijdag, where they don't recognise themselves, and that also applies to SPOT Groningen. So we would also like Marie-José, who you are going to talk to tomorrow, a very nice woman.

Joanne: A fantastic woman

Karin: She is great, she, we still have to, we promised, she is going to cook in the kitchen in the Oosterpoort. And then the programmer thinks "ah well because that's a dark woman we'll do that when there's a reggae band", and we say "no, do that when the NNO (?) is playing", that all those white elderly people, sorry, do it then, make sure, make sure - also why isn't the kitchen controlled by all kinds of people, there is so much cooking in neighbourhoods and then they - why don't you take a cook in the Oosterpoort, because they want to open much more to the outside, a cook in the Oosterpoort, and then they say "Karin where are they?" and then I say "there and there", there is still a lot to do

Celien:
How do you gather these people to participate in that project, so you, you had already said something that you really participate in their activities, but?

Karin: Yes, there are five of us, so we can split up a bit, for example Mirjam from marketing is still dancing, she is with us. So we do that and we organise meetings, so then we do flyers, so we make a flyer that we think will appeal, so we try that and over the years we know a bit about how and what and we go to all the mailboxes and throw in all those flyers, 13 000 in Vinkhuizen, it was lockdown then, then we ask whether those people are coming, well, sometimes only 10, sometimes 100, it varies a bit per neighbourhood and if there are 10 then we are very happy and then we do a kind of speed date, So give the people a question and then they can talk to each other and then, well, we have a sort of game for that, we explain who we are, we make sure there is coffee and cake, so that those people think "hey, we had a really nice evening" and then they come again, we take them to the Schouwburg, we ask people "do you want to come, if you can't I'll pick you up", "oh I've got three kids I'm a single mother", we sometimes arrange a babysitter, and hey, that depends a bit. But those ten people, then we say "in two weeks we do again, do you want to bring someone" and then we have 20 people. And it remains until, we have sometimes had someone up to two or a week before the performance: "can I still participate in some way" and then we go and see, yes. And that's a bit more difficult in performances, of course, but we always need someone to accompany the group or, euh, so it would be nice if the entire theatre was taken over, also in the catering industry, and also in hostesses and hosts. We have to keep all the sheep together, so that, that yes, and we also lose someone sometimes, but preferably not.

Joanne: I have run out of questions. I want to know a hundred more things, but -
Do you have anything you want to say about the questions that have just been asked?

Karin: After yes, no, we're still thinking a lot about the guarantee, that it's all still too, no, I'm not happy yet. Look, things are going really well in the Indian neighbourhood, there's a really good neighbourhood there, but I notice, and this is perhaps another nice one, that in Beijum, for example, the area managers, the funny thing is, they are also inspired again, and so every now and then I still go there, actually it's no longer possible, meanwhile I have 5 neighbourhoods to serve, but well, I still go to some things to show that we are still involved and then some area managers get ideas from that, for example in Beijum they now go "Visit your neighbourhood", something like that, which has a different title, they are looking for a pacesetter in the street who will visit people "hey I know you, do you know them already" and so on, so that's very cool, so we invent that, that's not up to us but somehow because in any way because you push or pull like that [as De Wijk De Wereld]

Joanne: That was during corona?

Karin: Yes. Because a lot of organisations in the neighbourhood know each other too well, so this one has a fight with this one and this one with that one, that's absolutely fantastic [sarcastic], but because we try to stay and be as neutral as possible, so we also give a lot of things, now we did that in Vinkhuizen I think and we had that outside at Vrouwkracht, They want to start a restaurant and we are going to create the scene with sofas, with lounge sofas and we give that to them too, but then another organisation is angry because they didn't get anything, so then you have to say "well then you get that and you get that", and if someone starts nagging again then we say "well don't nag anymore because then we take everything back". And in some things, like in Vinkhuizen, well I can talk for hours, you have the Gea shop for people who- and all those people were standing in front of the shop, in front of the door, they were all a bit like that [shoulders together, shrunk down], because it was something with poverty, so we thought, that has to change, so we thought, we want a red carpet, a very big carpet, so that people think, go inside, it doesn't matter, go there, yes, that's a bit tricky, the municipality doesn't allow it, and then we thought, we'll send someone over there and they'll re-style people in the Gea clothes, well, 10 people came and 6 of them wanted to go, photos were taken of them, a couple of prostitutes, very cute, didn't want their picture taken, but a number of them did want to be on the posters, and now Gea has a very large poster with 6 people on it and then you feel, then you think "oh they're coming here too". Poverty too, people are always so careful about that, but maybe we should open it up completely