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## **EDITORIAL**

As previously announced, at the start of its 18th year the Journal of Social Intervention was converted into digital form. Replacing the familiar glossy cover and physical content, a pool of screen pages now presents not just the one issue, but also the convenience of searchable back issues, which are available for creative linking. Many readers are expert at this, while for others it is still a bit of a mystery and for the bibliophiles among us it is an abomination. The editors hope it will catch on fast and attract new readers, whom we look forward to hearing from.

In the previous issue, a new range of topics was introduced concerning neighbourhood-targeted interventions. Four of the five articles in the present issue touch on this, inasmuch as neighbourhood targeting involves locally based interventions. Their analysis focuses on the management function and also on the conflict of normative orientations: empowerment and social presence (Paes), cohesion and empowerment (Mayo et al.), actor-orientations within the 'neighbourhood machinery' (De Boer & Lugtmeijer) and creative-economic interventions (Basten). It concludes with the development of a questionnaire for clients concerning demand-driven care (Verkooijen & Elderhuis).

The area of Den Bosch-Oost (East) has for many years been known in professional circles and beyond as a place where strategy is developed for tackling poor health in the community. In 1980,

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a group of residents and professionals opened the district health centre, *Samen Beter* [Better Together], in which there is close cooperation between primary healthcare, health promotion and social work. As a qualitative case study, the thesis of Paes (2008) provides a good overview of 25 years of 'community-based health work'. In her article, she focuses on one of the features of this approach: the 'double actorship'. This concept indicates that both the worker and the client are subject and actor in a reciprocal relationship. The descriptions of the care provision relationships given by respondents are investigated using the social presence theory and empowerment theories. The author is concerned with the 'disentangling of characteristics, by seeking the meaning implied by the parties involved'. In that context, the article systematically investigates the meaning of the central concepts of community, health and the community-based approach. A feature of the work is the integration of the medical, lifestyle and social environment approaches.

A development emerges from the material of 'actors at community level', a procedure that is aimed at a number of neighbourhood residents. The question arises of how self-development and self-help can be achieved for vulnerable people: is empowerment to this end a suitable concept? The English author *Marjorie Mayo* has gained a reputation as a researcher and teacher in the area of Community Development and Community Work. While the context is perhaps expressly English, her research group touches on a problem that may equally inspire interventionist thinking in Dutch and Flemish settings. Mayo et al. assert that a considerable gap still exists in the government's agendas between the promotion of citizen involvement and citizen empowerment on the one hand, and the promotion of social cohesion on the other. Newly arriving migrants always run the risk of marginalization and social exclusion. At the same time, attempts at involving them can be counterproductive in the sense that they will increase competition as regards access to scarce resources. There is a risk that the more government policy fails to take account of these issues in its aim of involving citizens, the more solidarity awareness in society will be undermined. Mayo et al. point out that in the last ten years, Britain has undergone a series of reforms aimed at transferring powers and increasing citizen involvement within forms of local government. The aim was to achieve improvements in public services (healthcare, education, etc.) through the active involvement of users, or the promotion of 'user voice and choice'. This change model relies on consumers and residents organizing themselves. If certain groups are not well organized, or if they organize in disparate ways or do so on the basis of a shared identity, they often become invisible. In addition, there is a policy aimed at strengthening cohesion. But the government gives priority to the building of horizontal links between communities and at the same time to vertical links between communities and decision-makers. The importance of interconnections between these horizontal and vertical levels, however, is not acknowledged. There appear to be several public agendas in play.

For a period of eighteen months, three locations are selected that demonstrate different approaches to the problem. Over a hundred interviews are held with various stakeholders, combined with focus groups and participative observation of meetings and events. The researchers find that 'being heard' is not the whole story. They discuss the question of how to arrive at democratically deliverable, inclusive and effective forms of representation. The issue of strengthening social cohesion and solidarity is also discussed. They conclude with some 'emerging lessons'.

The practical contribution of *Nico de Boer & Eric Lugtmeijer* with the intriguing title '*De wijkmachinerie*' [The Neighbourhood Machinery] is interesting to read and discuss as a follow-up to the introductory article by Harry Broekman on 'the approach to *krachtwijken*' (priority neighbourhoods) (SI 2008/4). The authors indicate that over the last fifteen years in the Netherlands, a kind of 'neighbourhood machinery' has developed in fits and starts. There has been professional cooperation between municipalities, corporations, police and social work, aimed at a collective approach to issues in the area of liveability: cleanliness, wholeness and safety. This machinery is also increasingly being deployed in neighbourhood-targeted work on social cohesion and the encouragement of contacts among residents.

Since 2006, the authors have researched around twenty municipalities in the provinces of South and North Holland, Utrecht and Gelderland by means of 'quick scans'. Based on document analysis, a questionnaire and interviews with administrators, officials, professional partners and residents, profiles were created using a template. The authors supplied these with commentary, which acquired a broader base as additional comparative material became available. Following a presentation, points of learning were established for each municipality and 'collectively', and each group of municipalities subsequently followed a learning programme of five sessions. In the majority of the municipalities looked at, the authors came across 'a few difficult – although repairable – glitches in the neighbourhood machinery. They cite four of them:

- A distorted view of the residents
- An overestimation of the role of the municipality
- A fetishizing of the neighbourhood level
- An inability to tackle the real issues.

These glitches are subsequently explained. A few salient points from this:

The distortion of residents ranges between two extremes: on the one hand a kind of 'canonization' and on the other a kind of contempt. Many officials are at a loss as to how to deal with the

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citizen. The municipality is often fixated on the neighbourhood level, while for residents the neighbourhood level is by no means the ideal. Neighbourhood-targeted work still appears to be aimed at physical problems to a significant degree.

The good news is that, according to the authors, the cited glitches can be repaired by relatively simple means. For example, it is advisable to assume that citizens can play variable roles, that area officials are willing to take a step back as regards their self-image and that not every problem can be optimally tackled at neighbourhood level. They advocate a better analysis as a basis for a proven approach. Finally, they ask the question of whether, besides neighbourhood machinery, there is room in the 'ordinary' neighbourhoods for radical redesign.

The actor perspective of Paes returns – albeit in a different context – in the research by *Verkooijen & Elderhuis* on the development and validation of a questionnaire on 'demand-driven care'. This concerns the issue of the extent to which customers experience the care they receive as demand-driven. The writers find ambiguities concerning issues such as: upon what exactly do customers have influence and what is the nature of the influencing process.

In their conceptualization of 'demand-driven' the authors assume an approach whereby within an equal interaction the customer's request leads to a suitable delivery as regards timing, manner of delivery and the individual who carries it out. The care provider listens, asks questions, advises and encourages the customer to say what he requires. The concrete questions thus put by the authors are as follows: 'what does a validated measuring instrument look like? How can we check the extent to which customers with purely functional limitations (which require structural care) experience the care they receive as demand-driven?'

The development of the questionnaire involved working with three successive draft versions, submitted to external experts, over-65s and customers of participating organizations. The fourth version was tested for statistical validity and reliability. The authors are of the opinion that the result delivers a sound questionnaire. They consider it defensible that it is used to ask solely customers for their findings, and not the care provider or manager.

A policy for promoting the creative economy can certainly qualify under certain conditions as a valuable social intervention. At least, that is the thrust of *Basten's* analytical contribution concerning Dutch policy and the experiments in which the author himself is involved. Creative economy is not just about a dazzling image; it can also be deployed as an intervention against degeneration.

Basten finds her starting point in the work of Richard Florida, who set out his concept in the bestseller *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2004). According to Florida, creative persons pursue

three correlating values: individuality, tolerance and meritocracy. Cities that score high in technology, talent and tolerance appeal to them. The Dutch endeavour in this area is expressed in the term 'hot spots' or 'breeding grounds', which show a link between cultural economy and urban renewal.

But this policy has side effects. The hot spots are often temporary, and their use is followed by demolition or a lucrative sale. Hot spots are instruments against degeneration. The project Maximum Tolerance Zone (MTZ) started in 2007 in Voorstraat Noord, Dordrecht, shows that a different approach is possible. Attempts are being made here to provide a counterweight to the shrinking of the necessary openness and diversity, partly owing to the preventative exclusion of risk groups. MTZ aims to revitalize the public space, in a physical, socio-cultural and legal sense. The learning process is not aimed at the Other, the citizen – to whom the government often restricts itself – but a shared process, in which system and living environment participate.

Finally, you will also find in this digital version the familiar columns with book reviews and Higher Social Education News. Ellen Grootoonk discusses the books '*Goed werk. Verkenningen van normatieve professionalisering*' (Good Work: Explorations of normative professionalization) and '*Werken aan zin in werk. Denk- en werkboek voor begeleiding van professionals*' (Working on the will to work: Notebook for the guiding of professionals). Ger Tillekens discusses '*Jongeren en gaming. Over de effecten van games, nieuwe sociale netwerken en educatieve kansen*' (Youths and gaming: Concerning the effects of games, new social networks and educational opportunities) and Marlies Mols discusses '*Professionele begeleiding en spiritualiteit. Pastorale supervisie nader verkend*' (Professional guidance and spirituality: Pastoral supervision further explored). In the column Higher Social Education News, we meet Margot Scholte, who was appointed lecturer with the J.W. Rengelink research group on Social Work, at INHolland University of Applied Sciences on 1 September 2008.

Lambert Mulder, editor

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