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into the effects of creative entrepreneurs on deprived
neighbourhoods.

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THE MUNCHAUSEN PARADIGM FOR DEPRIVED NEIGHBOURHOODS: PULLING YOURSELF OUT OF THE SWAMP OF DEPRIVATION

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ABSTRACT

The Munchausen paradigm for deprived neighbourhoods: pulling yourself out of the swamp of deprivation

Since the 1980s, many initiatives have attempted to tackle the deprivation currently experienced in South Rotterdam. Efforts have been made to attract creative workers and, in a counter-reaction, other initiatives have aimed to encourage the creative talents of poorer residents to strengthen their economic position. One example of this is Freehouse, which has established projects in the Afrikaanderwijk, including a neighbourhood cooperative. Our article addresses two questions: 1) What are the effects of the Freehouse projects on the economic

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position of residents of the Afrikaanderwijk? and 2) Which insights do our results provide into the possible effects of local government policies that rely on citizens playing an active role? Although the economic effects of the projects were limited, our study reveals that citizens' initiatives, such as the Afrikaander Cooperative, can help residents gain employment. In order to succeed, these initiatives should not be hindered by obstructive regulations, and they should include input from the residents who function as staff. However, in deprived neighbourhoods, many residents require support to be able to contribute to citizens' initiatives, and cannot be expected to act like Baron Munchausen and pull themselves out of the swamp of deprivation by their own hair.

Keywords

Citizens' initiative, work and income, creative entrepreneurship, role of the local government, social policy, distance from the labour market

SAMENVATTING

Het Münchausen paradigma voor achterstandswijken: jezelf uit het moeras van achterstand trekken

Sinds de jaren 80 hebben veel initiatieven geprobeerd het achterstandsniveau in Rotterdam Zuid te verminderen. Verschillende initiatieven waren gericht op het aantrekken van creatieve professionals. Als tegenreactie stimuleerden andere initiatieven de creatieve talenten van arme wijkbewoners teneinde hun economische positie te versterken. Een voorbeeld hiervan is Freehouse, dat projecten in de Afrikaanderwijk startte, waaronder de oprichting van een wijkcoöperatie. In dit artikel staan twee vragen centraal: 1) Wat zijn de effecten van de projecten van Freehouse op de economische positie van bewoners van de Afrikaanderwijk? en 2) Welke inzichten bieden onze resultaten in de mogelijke effecten van lokaal overheidsbeleid dat uitgaat van een actieve rol van burgers? Hoewel de economische effecten van de projecten beperkt waren, laat ons onderzoek zien dat burgerinitiatieven zoals de Afrikaanderwijk Coöperatie wijkbewoners kunnen ondersteunen bij het verkrijgen van werk. Om dit met succes te kunnen doen moeten deze initiatieven niet worden gehinderd door belemmerende regelgeving en moeten zij input krijgen van bewoners die als staf fungeren. In een achterstandswijk hebben veel bewoners echter ondersteuning nodig om te kunnen bijdragen aan zulke burgerinitiatieven. Van hen kan niet worden verwacht dat zij zich zoals Baron von Münchausen aan hun eigen haren uit het moeras van achterstand trekken.

Trefwoorden

Burgerinitiatief, werk en inkomen, creatief ondernemerschap, rol van de lokale overheid, sociaal beleid, afstand tot de arbeidsmarkt

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, many interventions have been launched to tackle socioeconomic problems in a number of deprived urban neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. Rotterdam has a considerable number of such neighbourhoods, mainly located in the southern part of the city, where since the 1990s various successful physical interventions have taken place. Examples of these are the construction of the Erasmus Bridge, connecting the northern and southern banks of the Nieuwe Maas river, and the Kop van Zuid district, which has provided a new function for the oldest harbour of South Rotterdam. However, socioeconomic problems have not disappeared from South Rotterdam. In 2003, the municipality of Rotterdam launched the programme "Rotterdam persists. Heading for a balanced city" (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2003). Subsequently, the Rotterdam City Development Corporation (OBR) created enterprise zones, which were established between 2005 and 2008 in various neighbourhoods in South Rotterdam. These zones aimed to contribute to the revitalization of these neighbourhoods by reducing governmental regulation and stimulating entrepreneurship (EDBR, 2005). Furthermore, in 2006 the City of Rotterdam, the three boroughs of South Rotterdam, and five housing associations signed the "Pact op Zuid" (South Rotterdam Pact), in which they agreed to a joint investment of €1 billion by 2016 in the social, economic and physical qualities of South Rotterdam, in order to regenerate this area. Unfortunately, the socioeconomic problems have persisted, especially in seven neighbourhoods including the Afrikaanderwijk. Since the scale of the problems was larger than in other Dutch cities (Deetman & Mans, 2011), a national programme was considered necessary to tackle the problems, leading to the establishment of the "Nationaal Programma Rotterdam Zuid" (National Programme for South Rotterdam) in 2011.

Meanwhile, Rotterdam, like many other cities, embraced Florida's (2002) creative city approach and invested in encouraging creative entrepreneurship and attracting the creative class. The aim here was to attract investment and jobs, which would in turn stimulate economic development and employment. The OBR launched a programme for the creative economy (OBR, 2007) and contributed to the opening of enterprise centres for creative entrepreneurs (De Kleijn, Wils & Harteveld, 2011). The first of these enterprise centres was the Creative Factory located in the

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Maassilo, a former grain warehouse on the edge of the Afrikaanderwijk. Apart from contributing to the economic development of Rotterdam, the Creative Factory was also intended to contribute to the economy and quality of life in surrounding neighbourhoods. However, many authors have criticized initiatives like the Creative Factory for primarily aiming to attract new urban elites rather than improving the living conditions of poor residents in deprived neighbourhoods (e.g., Jarvis, Lambie & Berkeley, 2009; Peck, 2005). As a counter-reaction, various projects have also been initiated that aim to stimulate the creative talents of local residents in the field of creative production, in order to strengthen their economic position. One of these initiatives is the Freehouse foundation, which was founded by a visual artist.

Freehouse

After its establishment in West Rotterdam, Freehouse was asked in 2008 by Vestia, a housing association, to relocate its activities to the Afrikaanderwijk. As a partner of Pact op Zuid, Vestia not only invested in improving of its housing stock, but also in projects aimed at improving the socioeconomic position of poor residents and quality of life in the neighbourhood. Both Vestia and the borough of Feijenoord – which at that time was responsible for policies concerning the local economy and welfare (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2010) – financially supported several of Freehouse's projects. The first project Freehouse initiated was "Tomorrow's Market", which aimed to revitalize the Afrikaander market (Van Heeswijk, 2011). Subsequently, Freehouse initiated several projects in which artists and designers were linked to local residents with creative talents. As part of these projects, a number of assignments were given to artists and designers, several of which involved fashion in cooperation with local clothes makers supplied by Freehouse. In 2009, these projects resulted in the foundation of the Neighbourhood Studio, where the clothes makers worked for designers, museums and enterprises. Freehouse also initiated a project in the Afrikaanderwijk in which a food designer was put in touch with residents from various cultural backgrounds who were able to cook. This resulted in the foundation of the Neighbourhood Kitchen in 2010. Since Freehouse wanted to involve both a larger group of local residents and entrepreneurs, it founded the Afrikaander Cooperative in 2013 as a network organization for residents, entrepreneurs and organizations. This local cooperative aims to stimulate local production, cultural development and knowledge exchange within the Afrikaanderwijk, in order to facilitate access to education, paid work or entrepreneurship.

Recently, various other local cooperatives have been established in the Netherlands, such as the North Rotterdam Neighbourhood Cooperative and the Neighbourhood Cooperative 030

in Utrecht. The foundation of neighbourhood cooperatives and other citizens' initiatives fits in with the current policy of the Dutch national government to stimulate the "do-democracy" (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2013), in which citizens co-decide and tackle societal issues themselves. This was the result of a process of the decentralization and deregulation of social policies that commenced in the 1980s (Heeg, Klagge & Ossenbrügge, 2003). Initially, decentralization was motivated by the argument that it would result in better accessibility to public administration (ROB, 2000). Later, decentralization was also deemed to offer a means of saving public spending (Boogers, Schaap, Van den Munckhof & Karsten, 2008; ROB, 2000). Subsequently, a general policy change occurred, whereby the government sought to impose less regulation; in turn, citizens and their organizations would have the freedom to pursue their own priorities (Tweede Kamer, 2014–2015). Furthermore, due to the economic crisis of 2008, when both the Dutch national government and local governments were required to make spending cuts, further decentralization of social policies took place alongside substantial budget cuts. Consequently, municipalities were retrenched from parts of the social policy domain. The underlying expectation was that citizens would take responsibility for various services and forms of support and would take the initiative as local government intervention was scaled back. As a result of the budget cuts, citizens did indeed take the initiative, including the establishment of neighbourhood cooperatives and other citizen-run organizations. Various authors, such as Hilhorst & Van der Lans (2013), have argued that the do-democracy should be strengthened further, as they see many examples of strong social networks and citizen initiatives. However, other authors have stressed the risks and disadvantages of this, such as Tonkens, Trappenburg, Hurenkamp & Schmidt (2015), who conclude that the do-democracy offers opportunities primarily for active, highly-educated citizens who possess the necessary management skills. They stress that the problems of less-equipped citizens also require attention, and argue that local government should make basic provisions in order to guarantee these services.

In this article, we focus on the projects that Freehouse has initiated in the Afrikaanderwijk, including the Afrikaander Cooperative, which is an example of the do-democracy. We address two questions: 1) What are the effects of the Freehouse projects on the economic position of the residents of the Afrikaanderwijk? and 2) Which insights do our results provide into the possible effects of local government policies that rely on citizens playing an active role? In order to answer these questions, we first provide an overview of the results of a study into the effects of the Freehouse projects. Subsequently, two themes will be discussed that are important to answering the second question, namely the initiative of citizens, and local government policy in relation to this initiative.

THE EFFECTS OF FREEHOUSE

Methods

Our article is based on empirical research that formed part of a PhD project investigating the effects of Freehouse and the Creative Factory (Nijkamp, 2016). The effects of the projects initiated by Freehouse were investigated from the perspective of the project stakeholders, including Freehouse co-workers, local residents and local entrepreneurs. The projects were investigated by means of an ideographic case study. Data were collected between May 2013 and October 2014 using a literature review, document analysis, in-depth interviews, participatory observation and informal conversations. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with 18 people involved in the Freehouse projects. These participants were selected by means of snowball sampling. The interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data research program, was used to code and analyse the transcriptions.

Results

As noted above, Freehouse commenced its activities in the Afrikaanderwijk in 2008 with the "Tomorrow's Market" project, which aimed to rejuvenate the Afrikaander market. Over a two-year period, Freehouse made more than 300 small-scale interventions in the market in order to showcase local production and creativity. These interventions included the restyling of market stalls, the development of new products, and the addition of services and performances. In each of these interventions, an artist or designer was linked to a market trader. Freehouse regularly encountered market regulations when implementing this market project. The regulations, part of a local government policy enacted in 2002 that aimed to make Rotterdam cleaner and safer (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2002), had been tightened considerably during preceding years. Consequently, a market stall cannot offer two or more different products or services, for instance selling fruit and vegetables and also making these into smoothies.

In one of the sewing projects, in which a designer worked with local residents to produce fashion products such as bags, these strict regulations also had an impact. The original intention was to sell these products at the same market stalls where the fabrics from which they were made could be purchased, allowing customers to choose a pattern in combination with the fabric. However, market traders were only allowed to sell the fabric and not the bags, because otherwise they would compete with bag sellers. Eventually, Freehouse bought its own market stall, which was

placed in front of the Neighbourhood Studio, facing the market. Since the strict regulations were hampering creative solutions, in 2008 Freehouse requested an experimental market status for a period of several years. The intention was to increase the flexibility of the regulations during this period, allowing increased experimentation with new products and services. Freehouse spent several years working on a legal framework that would make this possible. In the course of this process, it consulted market traders, the local council, the borough of Feijenoord and other relevant stakeholders. However, in 2012, when the framework was almost complete, local government elections took place in Rotterdam, and the new City Council drew up plans to liberalize Rotterdam's markets (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2012a). This meant that this Freehouse initiative came to a halt.

The Neighbourhood Kitchen is housed in the *Gemaal op Zuid*, a former water pump station that faces the Afrikaander square where the market takes place twice a week. In the Neighbourhood Kitchen, groups of local residents, mainly women from various cultural backgrounds, prepare meals. The Kitchen runs a catering service and meals are served in the *Gemaal* on market days. At the time of the interviews, the Kitchen employed approximately 10 neighbourhood residents who worked on a regular basis and other residents who worked occasionally. The Neighbourhood Studio was drawing on approximately 15 neighbourhood residents to fulfil its orders. These residents worked as volunteers, receiving volunteer compensation for their efforts. Most volunteers had a low level of education and had a significant distance from labour market participation. A large percentage of the volunteers were therefore living on social benefits. The compensation that the volunteers received was a maximum of €120 per month. At the time of the interviews, this was the maximum amount of money that could be earned without affecting the social benefits they received. Since its establishment, Freehouse has aspired to offer the volunteers at the Kitchen and the Studio paid employment. However, the volume of orders being received by the Neighbourhood Kitchen and the Studio was insufficient to employ permanent staff at that time. Although the economic effects were limited, the Kitchen and the Studio had a significant social effect on the residents involved. The Kitchen and the Studio offered residents the chance to engage in activities outside their homes and to meet other people, as well as the opportunity to develop their skills and share their talents. Moreover, since the volunteers had diverse cultural backgrounds, it was necessary to communicate with each other in Dutch; therefore, the Kitchen and the Studio also offered them an opportunity to improve their language skills.

In 2013, Freehouse founded the Afrikaander Cooperative, which undertook a number of new activities in order to involve a larger number of local residents. It also established several

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projects aimed at affecting a wider group of people. One of these projects was "Home Cooks Feijenoord", which recruited neighbourhood residents for training at the Neighbourhood Kitchen to become home cooks. These home cooks were subsequently matched with clients of the welfare organization Dock who were no longer able to care for themselves, to cook for them on a voluntary basis. The clients paid a nominal fee for this home-based meal service. A prerequisite was that these clients would invite someone else to share dinner. A direct impetus for this pilot project was formed by the decision of the City of Rotterdam to economize on the welfare budget (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2011), which implied that the boroughs, which were responsible for welfare services, also had to economize. Previously, Dock had supplied many kinds of welfare services to its clients, including a meal service, but it saw its budget reduced due to the budget cuts. One way of retaining as many services as possible with a smaller budget was to use volunteers rather than professionals to deliver various services, such as the meal service. The intended social effects of the project "Home Cooks Feijenoord" involved both the local volunteers who cooked, as well as the local residents who received the meals. For these residents, the project offered a home-based meal service and a way of combating loneliness. For the volunteers who prepared the meals, the project provided a meaningful daytime activity and an opportunity to participate in society.

In addition to these projects, the Afrikaander Cooperative developed new services for entrepreneurs of the Afrikaanderwijk, including the collective purchase of energy. A co-worker from the Cooperative visited entrepreneurs in order to convince them of the advantages of (free) membership of the Cooperative, including participation in the collective energy contract arranged by the Cooperative, which offered these entrepreneurs an opportunity to reduce their costs. However, even though many entrepreneurs had difficulty covering their expenses and would therefore benefit from reducing costs, it took a great deal of time and energy to win the entrepreneurs' confidence, convince them to become a member of the Cooperative and make use of the opportunity to reduce their energy bills.

CITIZEN INITIATIVE REQUIRED TO STIMULATE CITIZENS' INITIATIVES

The second question that we address in this article asks which insights our results provide into the possible effects of local government policies that rely on citizens playing an active role. In answering this question, two themes are relevant: citizen initiative and local government policy in relation to this initiative. In this section, we discuss citizen initiative.

It was difficult to involve the entrepreneurs of the Afrikaanderwijk in the Cooperative, because individually they did not feel a need for this Cooperative, even though membership would benefit them financially in the form of lower energy bills. The entrepreneurs felt a responsibility only towards their own business, not towards contributing to the general interest. Important reasons for this were that the initiative for the foundation of the Cooperative had not come from these entrepreneurs, and they had not been extensively involved in the plans from the beginning. This meant that they did not have any sense of ownership in the Cooperative. An important success factor for citizens' initiatives such as the Afrikaander Cooperative thus appears to be that the initiative should come from the people that are the target group, giving them a sense of ownership and responsibility. This initiative was also the starting point of *wijkcooperatie.nl*, an organization that has supported the founding of a number of neighbourhood cooperatives in Dutch cities, including the Afrikaander Cooperative (*wijkcooperatie.nl*). *Wijkcooperatie.nl* aims to create links between existing potential in neighbourhoods and generate paid employment and entrepreneurship opportunities without grants by offering work to neighbourhood residents that would otherwise be performed by enterprises from outside the neighbourhood. As explained on its website, *wijkcooperatie.nl* only provides such support if residents or entrepreneurs are willing to take the initiative. Despite this policy, *wijkcooperatie.nl* did support the establishment of the Afrikaander Cooperative, even though the initiative for this cooperative was not taken by residents or entrepreneurs, but by Freehouse.

In order for the Afrikaander Cooperative to contribute successfully to the socioeconomic development of local residents, it requires the input of sufficiently qualified residents with sufficient management skills to be able to function as staff members (cf. Tonkens *et al.*, 2015). This work involves initiating activities and building social networks. Paradoxically, in a deprived neighbourhood such as the Afrikaanderwijk, many residents are insufficiently qualified and unable to take the initiative themselves. It is precisely because these residents have not managed to obtain access to education, paid employment or entrepreneurship independently that Freehouse established the Afrikaander Cooperative to help residents in these areas. In order to provide the Afrikaander Cooperative with staff members from the local neighbourhood, a year prior to the establishment of the Cooperative, Freehouse began to train and coach several neighbourhood residents. After the establishment of the Cooperative, Freehouse continued to invest in building capacity. At the time of this study, these trained local residents were performing coordinating tasks within the Cooperative. In this way, Freehouse was directly contributing to the social development of these residents and indirectly to the social development of other neighbourhood residents, as the trained residents initiated activities that had knock-on effects for other residents.

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At present, local governments deliver fewer services in the social domain than they used to. The current policy paradigm is that citizen initiatives such as neighbourhood cooperatives should take charge of these services. However, in deprived neighbourhoods such as the Afrikaanderwijk, many residents are insufficiently qualified to make a meaningful contribution to these initiatives. What this policy paradigm requires from these residents resembles the actions of Baron Munchausen, who had to save himself after he rode into the swamp by pulling himself up by his own hair. Since it is highly unrealistic to expect these neighbourhood residents to act like Baron Munchausen and pull themselves up out of the swamp of deprivation, it is clear that they need support from elsewhere. If local government does not provide this support, it is crucial that other organizations such as Freehouse do.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD FACILITATE CITIZENS' INITIATIVES

In this section we discuss the second theme that is relevant to our second question: local government policy in relation to citizens' initiatives. Although most of the residents involved in the Neighbourhood Kitchen and Studio only received volunteer compensation, the organization had enough revenue to pay a number of residents as freelancers. At the time of this study, several residents who had worked in the Kitchen and Studio were indeed being paid as freelancers. However, when residents receiving social benefits start working as a freelancer, they would lose their social benefits and allowances, such as housing benefit. This would also be the case if the income as a freelancer was lower than the amount of benefits and allowances residents previously received. Although in principle residents can earn more as freelancers, this income depends on the number of orders they receive and is therefore unreliable. Due to this potential income insecurity as well as personal circumstances (such as children or health problems), many residents did not dare take the step of becoming a freelancer when given the opportunity. They deemed the risk that they would not earn enough as a freelancer to be too great. They therefore opted to continue receiving social benefits and work for the Kitchen or the Studio for volunteer compensation.

Since the establishment of the Neighbourhood Studio and Kitchen, Freehouse has conducted various behind-the-scenes conversations with the municipality of Rotterdam regarding the desirability of supplementing the incomes of local residents who decide to work as freelancers and thus no longer receive benefits. Freehouse wanted to guarantee that if these freelancers received less income than they would otherwise have received with benefits, they would continue to be entitled to supplemental benefits. During this period, both the Dutch national government and local governments, including the municipality of Rotterdam, were increasingly trying to

reduce social assistance costs and encourage those who receive benefits to undertake paid employment. Furthermore, in order to facilitate people finding paid employment, the national government implemented a policy aimed at increasing the flexibility of the labour market, so that it would become easier to work with a flexible or temporary labour contract or as a freelancer. Hence, an arrangement that enabled residents receiving benefits to work as freelancers for the Neighbourhood Kitchen or the Studio and to receive supplemental benefits if their income falls short would help to reduce social assistance costs for the municipality of Rotterdam and be consistent with national and local government policies. However, discussions between Freehouse and the municipality of Rotterdam did not bear fruit.

In addition to the problem of income insecurity, a second bottleneck also prevented volunteers working for the Kitchen and the Studio from becoming freelancers: the administrative obligations that are involved in freelance work. For most of the volunteers, these obligations were an insurmountable obstacle. At the time of this study, Freehouse was working on enabling local residents to join the payroll of the Afrikaander Cooperative in order to address this challenge. To this end, the Work Cooperative was founded as a sub-cooperative of the Afrikaander Cooperative. The intention was for neighbourhood residents who had become members of the Afrikaander Cooperative to be employed by the Work Cooperative and subsequently remunerated by, for instance, the Neighbourhood Kitchen or the Studio, or by other businesses in the neighbourhood in need of temporary employees. Joining the payroll of the Work Cooperative is in many respects comparable to the way a temporary employment agency works. However, an important difference is that if the Cooperative makes a profit, it does not go to shareholders or the management of the agency; rather, it remains in the neighbourhood. Fifty percent of any profit will be divided between the members, in proportion to the work done. The remaining 50 percent is invested in developing new services and financing sociocultural activities that benefit the Afrikaanderwijk.

An important advantage for the payrolled residents is that the Work Cooperative takes care of the administrative obligations. Moreover, the Work Cooperative offers coaching tailored to the needs of individual residents, who are often entering the labour market for the first time. However, when residents who work for the Neighbourhood Kitchen and the Studio are payrolled through the Work Cooperative, this implies, as it does for residents who work as freelancers, that the number of orders they receive – and hence their income – is uncertain. To date, these residents cannot receive supplemental benefits when their income falls below the benefits and allowances that they had previously been assured of. Hence, payrolling by the Work Cooperative does not yet offer a

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solution to the income insecurity bottleneck. For this reason, Freehouse is continuing its efforts to make arrangements with the municipality of Rotterdam concerning supplementing the incomes of neighbourhood residents when their income falls short.

Today, a small number of neighbourhood residents are payrolled through the Work Cooperative. Although the Work Cooperative is a small-scale initiative, it offers opportunities for a number of neighbourhood residents to move from social assistance into paid work, which is consistent with national and local government policies. However, for the Work Cooperative to contribute as effectively as possible to helping local residents into employment, it is essential that the municipality of Rotterdam facilitates the initiative of the Work Cooperative rather than hindering it through obstructive regulations.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this article, we have focused on the projects that Freehouse has initiated in the Afrikaanderwijk and addressed two questions. The first question regarded the effects of the Freehouse projects on the economic position of the residents of the Afrikaanderwijk. Our study shows that for most of those involved, the economic effects are limited to volunteer fees. These residents could not be employed by the Neighbourhood Kitchen or the Studio because the flow of orders has been insufficient. Although being paid as a freelancer was an option, most of these residents considered this too great a risk, because it meant they would then lose their social benefits and allowances. The same problem applies when residents who are on benefits are added to the payroll of the Afrikaander Cooperative, because they cannot receive benefits if their income falls below the amount of benefits and allowances they previously received.

The second question asked which insights our results provide into the possible effects of local government policies that rely on citizens playing an active role. As the withdrawal of local government has led to the establishment of various citizens' initiatives, including neighbourhood cooperatives, the expectation that citizens are able to take more initiative and responsibility when the municipality withdraws is at least partly justified. However, an analysis of the Freehouse projects has shown that this expectation is much less realistic for residents who are at a distance from labour market participation. Our study reveals that citizens' initiatives such as the Afrikaander Cooperative can support these residents in obtaining work. It also shows that in order to do so successfully, these citizens' initiatives require the assistance of residents who can take the initiative and function as staff members. However, many residents from deprived neighbourhoods are

insufficiently qualified and require support to be able to contribute to such citizen initiatives. If local government does not provide this support, it is very important that other organizations such as Freehouse do so. Moreover, in order to function successfully, these citizens' initiatives must be facilitated by local government and not be hindered by obstructive regulations. More flexible regulations are therefore required.

Our analysis of the projects initiated by Freehouse reveals a mismatch between local government and citizens, or, as described by Bouttelier & Klein (2014, p. 11), a friction in "the market for citizenship." Local government seeks citizens who participate in society, preferably through paid work. To that end, a policy has been instated that stimulates citizens to take an active role and to take responsibility; this includes the policy of flexibility in the labour market with the aim of making it easier for people receiving benefits to find paid employment. Driven by local government budget cuts, various kinds of new citizens' initiatives have indeed been established, including neighbourhood cooperatives such as the Afrikaander Cooperative. In accordance with the policy of flexibility in the labour market, the Afrikaander Cooperative creates opportunities for local residents who are receiving benefits and who are at a distance from labour market participation to work as freelancers or join the payroll. However, in this respect, the Afrikaander Cooperative and the residents involved face municipal regulations which state that when citizens earn income through freelancing or payrolling, they lose their benefits. Regulations that are tailored to the needs of the residents involved and that provide income supplementation if employment-related income is insufficient would reduce the risk of accepting paid employment, and therefore make this more easily achievable. The fact that local government is withdrawing from various policy areas and shifting responsibility for many of these areas onto citizens should imply that a change is occurring from citizens participating in local government initiatives to local government participating in citizens' initiatives (cf. Bouttelier & Klein, 2014; ROB, 2012).

Our study shows that citizens' initiatives like the Afrikaander Cooperative can be seriously hindered by inflexible and demanding regulations put in place by national and local government. In recent years, Dutch legislation concerning social security has been tightened, and it was further tightened by the 2015 Participation Act. This Act obliges local governments to impose numerous obligations on citizens who are entitled to benefits, including applying for employment, participating in reintegration programmes and attending courses. Municipalities can also require these citizens to do something in return, such as working as a volunteer or providing informal care. This is also the case in the municipality of Rotterdam (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2012b). Furthermore, the boroughs of Rotterdam were abolished in 2014, meaning that their responsibilities concerning policies for the

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local economy and welfare were transferred to the municipal authority, as the area commissions that replaced the boroughs did not take on most of these responsibilities (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2013). Thus, despite the policy change that aimed to reduce the regulation imposed by both national and local government (Tweede Kamer, 2014–2015), in practice the amount of regulation imposed by the local government has increased, especially in Rotterdam. Although the same legislation applies to each municipality, some municipalities enforce this more strictly than others. Currently, initiatives are being implemented within various municipalities that aim to increase the flexibility of the rules that apply to benefit recipients. Policy makers in these municipalities realize that excessively strict rules are counterproductive, because citizens who receive benefits are penalized instead of encouraged (De Graaf, 2015). Moreover, some municipalities have recently expressed an interest in experimenting with replacing the benefits of long-term unemployed citizens with a basic income in order to by-pass the obligations that the Participation Act imposes on those receiving benefits (Stellinga & König, 2017). Nevertheless, in other municipalities including Rotterdam the rules have not been relaxed and there is as yet no question of any such initiatives arising. However, if a citizen's own initiative is considered important, we would argue that allowances should be made for this initiative.

Conclusion

Currently, citizens and their organizations are expected to take responsibility and initiative for various tasks in the social domain that were previously the responsibility of the local government. Although citizens' initiatives such as the Afrikaander Cooperative can contribute to performing these tasks, these initiatives require input from residents who can function as staff members. It is important to realize that many residents from deprived neighbourhoods need support in order to be able to contribute to such citizens' initiatives, and cannot be expected to be like Baron Munchausen, pulling themselves up out of the swamp of deprivation by their own hair.

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