

CASE STUDY

Amerfoort: designing a collaborative city administration

URBACT II



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URBACT II Capitalisation, April 2015**

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FOREWORD

This case study is part of a bigger capitalisation initiative set by the URBACT programme for 2014–2015 with the objective to present to cities local good practices about:



New urban economies



Jobs for young people in cities



Social innovation in cities



Sustainable regeneration in urban areas

These four topics have been explored by four URBACT working groups (workstreams), composed of multidisciplinary stakeholders across Europe such as urban practitioners and experts from URBACT, representatives from European universities, European programmes and international organisations working on these issues.

The case study on Amersfoort (The Netherlands) is one of the concrete results of the URBACT workstream ‘Social innovation in cities’, after collection of data, a study visit, and interviews with local stakeholders.

It explores the practice the city put in place to engage with citizens and optimise public services, actions implemented, achievements and challenges, success factors, and conditions for transfer to other cities. The first part of the case study summarises the key points of the practice, while the second part (analytical template) provides more details for those interested in transferring the practice to their local context.

We hope this shall be an inspiration for you and your city!

The URBACT Secretariat

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AMERSFOORT: DESIGNING A COLLABORATIVE CITY ADMINISTRATION

 By François Jégou*

How can a city engage with social innovation to address increasing constraints and budget cuts? In 2014, Amersfoort started the Year of Change, a complete change process of its administrative practices which is working towards shared responsibility and collective leadership, a shift from command and control to a brokering role and a user-driven approach, a collaborative city administration and a responsible process of 'letting go' to citizens.

The top-down procurement logic of the established public sector and the welfare state is being challenged by acute public sector budget shortages in many parts of Europe. City administrations suspect that social innovations emerging from citizens' movements, bottom-up initiatives and grassroots projects may be a strong asset in the current situation. However, they still seem locked into top-down administrative practices and unable to engage efficiently with citizens.

The case of Amersfoort presents a remarkable reaction against this blockage. City leaders have decided to take social innovation seriously as an opportunity. They have started a complete process of experimentation and change of their administrations' practices in order to build more

collaboration with citizens and deliver better-designed and more cost-efficient public services.

PUBLIC ACTION IN DIFFICULTY

Fleur Imming, one of city's five aldermen (or Vice Mayors) says: "Society is changing fast and the city government should change to reconnect with it."

In Amersfoort the reasons for launching a major change in the city's administrative practices were multiple and developed progressively in the 2010s.

The city was experiencing increasing constraints: The Netherlands has transferred more administrative competences from the national level to cities at the same time as reducing their budgets. These budget shortages arrived after a long period of relative prosperity and are paralysing traditional top down modes of public action. The city leaders acknowledged that the municipality could no longer provide the level of services seen in the past. Annual surveys conducted by the city administration showed that citizens were becoming more and more dissatisfied with its performance. Past decades of rather good economic conditions had generated an all-encompassing welfare state with too many rules and policies, which were slowing down innovation initiatives. Faced with the degradation of the social situation more citizens were getting involved in bottom-up mutual help

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initiatives and were reclaiming the right to act in their city. Increasing unemployment meant that more people were disempowered and wanted to do something useful with their time. The spread of information technologies was enormously increasing the population's capacity to self-organise. Against this growing citizen empowerment, the city administration was looking slow, behind the times and inefficient.

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A NEW MODEL OF COLLABORATION WITH CITIZENS

Beyond this disempowered city administration, citizen-driven initiatives were blooming. Amersfoort's leaders started to see this social empowerment as a new asset, and envisaged the possibility of re-engaging the administration in delivering public services in collaboration with citizens.

Let's take a closer look at two 'flagship initiatives' in order to better understand how they have inspired a new model of collaboration between the city administration and the population.

Citizen-led urban development

"We, as citizens, got the assignment from the administration. But we did not do it their way. We did it our way," says Lia Bouma, one of the key citizens engaged in the Elisabeth project.

The old Elisabeth hospital is scheduled for demolition in the coming year. After a long debate in the city, the council decided to redevelop the site as a green area. Local residents mobilised and started an energetic discussion on the design of this new park, so the city administration decided to step back and experiment by putting the project in citizens' hands. A citizens' project group was formed and received an official assignment with a dedicated budget, which handed them the responsibility of organising themselves and coming up with a plan to develop the new green area and maintain it over the next 10 years. The process started in April 2013 and the plan was delivered before the elections that autumn.

What is different in the way citizens manage the project? The citizens' project group was left 'open' with some participants leaving and joining during the process. All draft documents were published on the project website in complete transparency and contrary to usual administrative practice. The core group felt empowered, although, at times, stressed by the assignment and the responsibility put

on their shoulders. Altogether, the citizen project group put in 1,400 hours of work (excluding the architect's time), which added up to a significant investment of voluntary effort. It performed well and developed a complete project plan for the park. General Director of Amersfoort municipality Nico Kamphorst acknowledges: *"The process was quicker, less expensive and achieved a wider consultation than when normally done by the municipality."*



The plan of the Elisabeth Park is one of the inspiring flagship projects, self-developed by the citizens.

Source: Strategic Design Scenarios

Social empowerment for sustainable food

The second initiative, based on a series of different bottom-up actions, events, projects etc. focussing on regional sustainable food, also inspired a new collaboration between the city administration and citizens. A new street market in 2011 for local food products was one of the first in this series of initiatives towards sustainable food. After the success of this initiative, the citizens involved in the market formed a group together with other food activists and bid for the Dutch *Capital of Taste* award. The process required enormous effort from the citizens' project group in putting the bid together, seeking funding and organising 80 events throughout the



The sustainable food movement shows another example of grassroots initiatives supporting the engagement of the city in this field.

Source: Sofie op de Wallen (left), Cor Holtackers (right)

year – all with the limited budget raised among private and public sponsors and voluntary effort. This effort paid off when in 2012 Amersfoort was selected as the Capital of Taste. In the same year Amersfoort also applied to take part in the URBACT *Sustainable Food in Urban Communities* network.

This series of citizen-driven initiatives also showed the city administration new ways in which it could act. It took up new tools and practices: match-making between actors started with a *pecha kucha* night, and the proof of concept for the seasonal market was achieved thanks to the Inspiration Week in 2011, a hands-on collective makers' event. However, this collaboration was only possible because some of the citizens leading the projects already had contacts within the city administration. One of them, Cor Holtackers, says: “*The administration looks like a wall. Most people don't know which door they should knock at.*” The city administration assumed a new position of ‘backing up’ social

innovation: it leaves the floor to social innovators, doesn't monopolise the projects and limits itself to removing barriers – or at least avoiding creating new obstacles. Participation in an URBACT network provided a leveraging effect

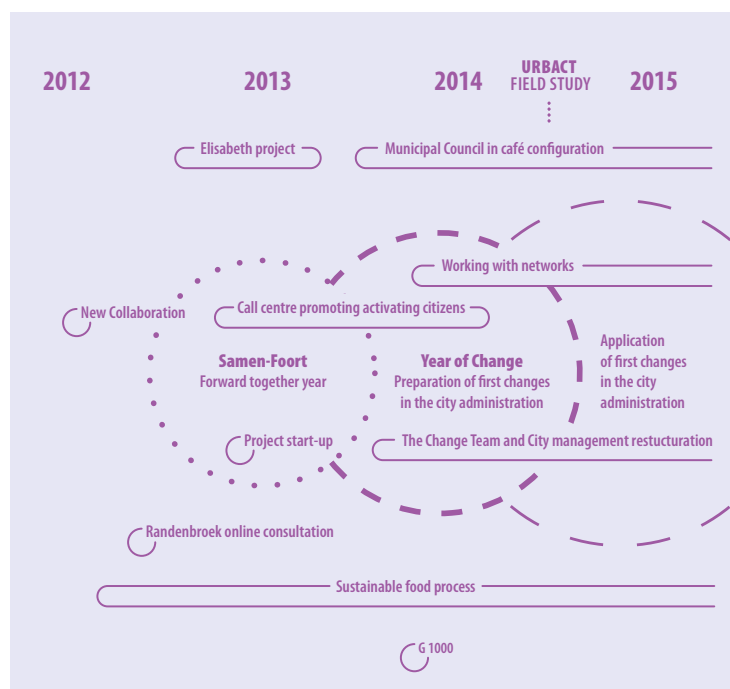
The city administration assumed a new position of ‘backing up’ social innovation: it leaves the floor to social innovators, doesn't monopolise the projects and limits itself to removing barriers.

and structures for informal grassroots movements to engage in the city in food strategy development and action planning process.

THE YEAR OF CHANGE

Inspired by popular empowerment and engagement in unusual citizen-driven projects, Amersfoort city leaders saw an opportunity to develop a new model of collaboration with the population. In 2013 they promoted *Samen-Foort*, (‘Forward Together’), a year of reflexion with multiple experiments in participation and bottom-up pilot projects including collective innovation forums, exchange initiatives between citizens and the city administration, new participative processes, etc.

The success of all these initiatives and the growing recognition of the interest that all stakeholders in the city showed in them pushed Amersfoort's city leaders to declare 2014 as the Year of Change. The Year of Change is a year of collective rethinking and preparation of the reorganisation of the city administration's practices and management structure, which is being implemented progressively from 2015 onwards in order to facilitate this new model of collaboration between the city's population and its administration.



The diagram above shows the organisation over time of the different elements we refer to in this case study. It shows different experiments, projects, practices, etc., outside and inside the city administration that constitute an organic and diffuse change process which is moving towards the construction of a more collaborative city administration.



In particular it shows:

- **events, experiments, initiatives** (e.g. the New Collaboration conference, the G1000, Project Start-up) showing the growing collaborative culture in Amersfoort;
- **citizen-driven projects** (e.g. the Elisabeth project, the Sustainable Food process) inspiring new forms of collaboration between the population and the city administration;
- **formal transformations** (e.g. the Municipal Council in café configuration, the city management restructuring) implementing new governance practices.

The originality of this change process is that it is not a planned and articulated one. It is more distributed and systemic: it should be compared to a process of acupuncture where a series of new practices are emerging progressively in the city and in the administration. These new practices interact together and progressively produce a systemic change in the city.

The city authority created a Change Team, which consisted of five people: the Advisors in Communication and Human Resources, the Head of the Social Development Department and the Finance Controller, all assisting the Town Clerk and the General Director with internal change, reorganisation and the related internal communications. For them the main goals of the change were shifting from a 'power role' to one of a 'learning administration'; fostering multidisciplinary and collaboration between the different departments; promoting transparency in public action; being less expert and more able to connect; making interdependent and integrated policies; fostering responsibility beyond silos; and learning how to learn from failures.



The Change Team in Amersfoort. Source: Municipality of Amersfoort

Build trust and let-go

The two flagship initiatives presented above (Elisabeth park and the Sustainable food process) showed that citizens can manage complex projects by themselves. *"In the administration, we often tend to overact,"* says Eric van Duijn, the Head of Advisers in the Department of Urban Maintenance. *"Sometimes it's better to listen and do nothing. But as a civil servant, it's difficult to refrain from taking over."* The city administration should be able to turn away from its former model of command and control. For Herman Wiersema, Adviser on Strategic Communication: *"We should stop designing plans and documents. We should make a new policy only when people ask for it."* Public action should be more based on trust. General Director Nico Kamphorst advises: *"Give a mandate to citizens and civil servants and let them get on with it."* Rather than being prescriptive, the city administration should listen and behave as a facilitator. Mayor Lucas Bolsius declares: *"Rules are, by definition, obsolete in a rapid changing society. The difficulty is to moderate this big social conversation."*



Civil servants are encouraged to work more on the field and get in contact with the citizens. Source: City of Amersfoort (left), Cor Holtackers (right)

Reconnect administration with the city

The city administration should open itself up, and civil servants should get out of their offices and play a more active role in the life of the city. In his New Year's speech at the start of the *Year of Change*, General Director Nico Kamphorst challenged all city administration employees to become 'free-range civil servants'. Like free-range chickens, they should move around freely, decide where they go, gather information here and there and bring back useful knowledge to the city administration. They should spend more time in the field, interacting with the citizens, instead of sitting behind their desks. This new proactive posture is reflected in



the key qualities expected from civil servants in the Amersfoort administration's new mission statement: **curiosity, being close and accountability.**

Enhance collaboration with elected members

Within the new model of co-operation with the population, the city council is also experimenting with new settings for its meetings. Usually, in formal council meetings, citizens can only make short statements, and very few of them dare to contribute. In order to be better informed and to connect with citizens, the council is organising since 2014 a new City Café, in which councillors meet citizens for half a day sessions to talk informally and without time restrictions. For Jos van Winkel, Head of the Strategy and Governance Department: *"There is an evolution in the role of elected representatives from decision-makers to ensuring fair participation."*



The City Council experienced a new informal setting for its meeting: a City Café to facilitate contact and exchanges with citizens.
Source: City of Amersfoort

CHALLENGES FOR THE ADMINISTRATION'S NEW POSTURE

The change of posture of the city administration in Amersfoort is challenging and prone to pitfalls. For Carla van Dorp, Head of the *Together Sustainable* team and of the Centre for Nature and Environmental Education: *"Letting go doesn't mean turning away from the problem or denying it. It means listening and exploring together."*

Better define the new mode of collaboration

The first challenge for the city administration is to find the right balance between too much control and disengagement. The *New Collaboration*, a large public conference, was organised by citizens in 2013 to discuss the democratic system and explore how to organise these new modes of collaboration between citizens and the city administration. Council members and civil servants took part in these citizens' groups, which formulated recommendations to the board of Mayor and aldermen. Bertien Houwing, Alderman for Governmental Development, Regional Collaboration, Education and Diversity, is working to get a consensus between citizens, city administration, council and board in order to write a new policy on how the city administration should facilitate citizens' initiatives.



The New Collaboration, a large stakeholder conference organised by citizens, who invited the city administration and elected representative to discuss and construct new modes of collaboration with citizens.
Source: City of Amersfoort

Keep participation fair and balanced

For Jos van Winkel, *"the challenges are not to overload citizens and to guarantee that all voices are heard."* Citizens do not all participate, and this may induce a democratic bias. Inspired by the G1000 experience in Brussels in 2011, Amersfoort started in 2014 a similar process aimed at discussing the city's future. The G1000 is a process aimed at achieving more representative participation: the city chose a panel of 1,000 citizens randomly and invited them to a deliberative event. Around 600 people (including civil servants and elected representatives in their status of citizens) got together, discussed perspectives for Amersfoort, and selected and developed 10 project plans out of more than 100 ideas. Beyond these outputs, during the interview sessions the G1000 process was routinely identified as a promising way to make silent voices audible and to balance the inequalities that are created



when it is always the same 'usual suspects' who take part in deliberative and participative activities.



Amersfoort experience a G1000 process to inviting citizen randomly to a collaborative conference in order to get a more representative mix of participants. Source: Harm van Dijk, G1000 Amersfoort

Scale up the new collaborative model

Nico Kamphorst believes that: *"Every citizen should be a civil servant part of the time, doing something for the city and for the public good."*

Two citizens, Lia Bouma for the Elisabeth project and Cor Holtackers for the Sustainable Food process, played key roles that went far beyond the usual involvement of citizens. They catalysed the creation of project support groups, motivated other less involved citizens, and ensured the continuity of the process, overcoming difficulties when they arose. To do this successfully, they needed a set of key assets and skills: professional capacities both in project management and in the sector of the project; a personal interest in the place or the topic; a good knowledge of city administration and connections with key people there; personal social and communication skills; and personal interest in experimenting with an alternative citizen-based project development process.

They are what can be called 'lead citizens', who initiated and organised the two flagship projects. But when the city administration asked them if they wanted to lead another similar project, they both declined. They had put in a lot of time and effort without any reward beyond the pleasure of completing the project and the social recognition they gained from other participants. It is therefore easy to understand why they refused to run more projects. Yet, this questions the idea of replicating and scaling up public action such as these flagship projects which depend heavily on citizen participation. To address this issue, the city administration started a joint capacity-building programme in which citizens, civil

servants and elected members are learning together about integrated problem-solving, working with networks, collaboration and fluid communication.

Build shared responsibility

The change process was launched during the period of the field visit for this in-depth case study, so no robust analysis or evidence of results can yet be put forward. When asked about the monitoring and evaluation foreseen for this important change process, Town Clerk Herke Elbers clearly says there is none at that moment: *"We are experimenting and we are looking for circumstantial evidence along the way."* This position is certainly debatable. On the one hand, it is surely risky to change administrative methods and spend public money in a period of budgetary restrictions without establishing a robust policy assessment process. On the other hand, the process of change is a reaction against over-assessment within the previous period of working to New Public Management principles. The position expressed above by the Town Clerk seems clearly to be an attempt to try another path, based on openness, gradual improvement and shared responsibility among all city leaders and civil servants. Mayor Lucas Bolsius seems even more radical: *"If we want responsibility at all levels of the administration, we don't need to set up another control process. We want people to think and assess each different situation."*

LESSONS LEARNT FOR CITY ADMINISTRATIONS

The Netherlands is known as a country in which citizen participation is well-embedded in the culture of public and private organisations. The level of engagement of the population in community action is higher than in many other countries. Amersfoort is also a medium-sized city with a slightly younger, better-educated and richer population than the national average – all of which are factors known to favour citizen participation. Even without evidence of good results yet, the smooth development of the change so far is in part due to this favourable context. It is also due to a collective and innovative change process from which a series of lessons can be drawn which are useful for other cities.



The key messages emerging from this Amersfoort experience can be summarised as follows:

'Letting go' responsibly

One of the assets of public administration is to ensure continuity and stability in society despite fluctuations in the socio-economical context. Behind the scenes, inertia often inhibits the capacity for adaptation and innovation. Changing city administration from command and control to a brokerage role is a matter of the city leaders letting go, trusting the citizens, reducing administration and rules, transferring responsibility to stakeholder groups and letting them take action. It requires leaders to really try, to take risks, to refrain from monopolising problems, and to experiment with innovative solutions and methods within a delineated risk-frame.

A collective leadership

The Year of Change is a process formalised by the leadership of the city administration, but the change dynamic is shared and organic across all the administration and the city. It was set in motion more than one year beforehand, with a mesh of bottom-up and top-down initiatives coming from inside and outside the administration which progressively established a collectively agreed positive mindset on the need for change. Fluid communication across administrative silos and also between citizens, politicians and civil servants results in a high level of co-responsibility and a form of collective leadership in the city.

A broker role

Facing more constraints and a lower budget, the city administration shifted from command and control to a role of facilitation between local stakeholders. City leaders and the entire city administration have improved their listening capacity. Advisory groups are systematically organised. The city administration sits with citizens as equal participants and refrains from acting before all stakeholder voices have been heard. The city leaders agreed a new role for their administration which is to behave as a broker, ensuring that all parties are around the table, encouraging them to take part and sharing with them the burdens of public action.

A modest ambition

The city administration is showing a form of pragmatic modesty. It prefers to start by picking the low-hanging fruit. Then it builds on its initial successes to try more difficult steps but always keeps the level of ambition high. It recognises that it faces difficulties, delay and mistakes but still aims to achieve the best results. The public administration doesn't feel weaker because it acknowledges its problems. On the contrary, its ambition seems empowered and at the same time realistic. A fresh feeling of liberation from the mistakes of the past seems to encourage civil servants to go forward.

Intense and fluid story-telling

Amersfoort's administration is showing a structural capability to generate simple and explicit communication. The internal and external dissemination of the change process does not come from an extra layer designed by the communication department but seems to expand naturally. An effort at good story-telling ensures that information is shared in a friendly and easily-accessible format with all the stakeholders in the city. It reports successes and failures in a lively way, maintains coherence and rebuilds a strong identity for the city administration.

A user-driven approach

The city administration initially took a step back when faced with financial constraints and the national transfer of legal responsibilities. Stimulated by a series of citizen-driven projects, city leaders committed their administration to increased collaboration with the population in a somewhat opportunistic way, benefiting from citizens' participation to deliver public services at lower cost. This strategy, though based on economic motives, in fact engaged the administration in a user-driven approach. Both internally and externally the change process is systematically based on stakeholder advisory groups, exchange with the population, experimenting with new ways of collaborating with citizens, and taking risks by giving them assignments. Thus, the city administration is reconnecting with citizens and restarting from users' needs. It therefore finds itself in a better position to come up with more appropriate administrative mechanisms and design more user-friendly and cost-efficient public services. ●

ANALYTICAL TEMPLATE OF THE CASE STUDY



BACKGROUND INFORMATION	
NAME OF CITY	Amersfoort
REGION AND COUNTRY	Utrecht Province, Netherlands
GEOGRAPHIC SIZE	160,000 inhabitants

1. PRACTICE DESCRIPTION	
ONE-LINER DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE	<p>How can a city engage with social innovation to face increasing constraints and budget cuts? Amersfoort started the Year of Change, a complete change process of its administrative practices which is working towards shared responsibility and collective leadership, a shift from command and control to a brokering role and a user-driven approach, a collaborative city administration and a controlled 'letting go' to the citizens.</p>
MAIN REASON FOR HIGHLIGHTING THIS CASE	<p>The top-down procurement logic of the established public sector and the welfare state is being challenged by acute public budget shortages in many parts of Europe. City administrations assume that social innovations emerging from citizens' movements, bottom-up initiatives and grassroots projects may be a strong asset in the current situation. However, they seem locked into top-down administrative practices and unable to engage efficiently with citizens.</p> <p>The case of Amersfoort presents a remarkable reaction against this blockage. City leaders have decided to take social innovation seriously as an opportunity and started a complete process of experimentation and change of their administrations' practices in order to build more collaboration with citizens and deliver better-designed and more cost-efficient public services.</p>
OVERALL OBJECTIVE	<p>The overall objectives of the Amersfoort city leaders in starting a transformation process of its administration are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To adapt to the new budgetary constraints by delivering results in a more efficient way;• To update an administration that feels a bit backward compared to the evolution of the city and the society;• To meet the demands of a population which is suffocating under over-regulation and is reclaiming its capacity to act for its own city;• To improve the poor image the city administration has in the eyes of its citizens. <p>The expected results are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To build on citizen participation to deliver high-quality public services which are both more cost-efficient and better adapted to users' needs;• To invent new and more efficient methods of collaboration between the citizens and the city administration;• To implement a new posture for the city administration as a facilitator between the population, civil society, private stakeholders and the public sector.



1. PRACTICE DESCRIPTION (CONT'D)

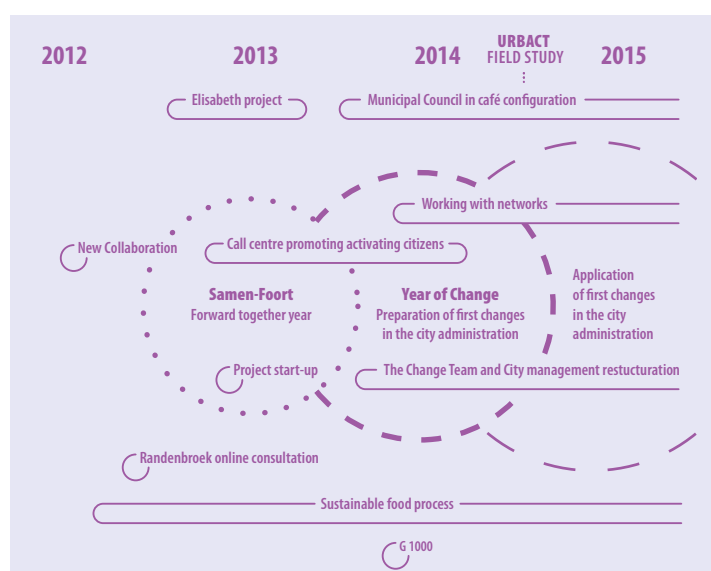
DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

The year of change

Inspired by popular empowerment and engagement in unusual citizen-driven projects, Amersfoort city leaders saw an opportunity to develop a new model of collaboration with the population. In 2013, they promoted Samen-Foort, ('Forward Together'), a year of reflexion with multiple experiments in participation and bottom-up pilot projects including collective innovation forums, exchange initiatives between citizens and the city administration, new participative processes, etc.

The success of all these initiatives and the growing recognition of the interest that all stakeholders in the city showed in them pushed Amersfoort's city leaders to declare 2014 as the Year of Change. The Year of Change is a year of collective rethinking and preparation of the reorganisation of the city administration's practices and management structure which is being implemented progressively from 2015 onwards in order to facilitate this new model of collaboration between the city's population and its administration.

It is to be noted that the change process described here is not following any action plan set a long time in advance. The change process is to be seen rather as an ongoing experiment calling for participation, flexibility and reactivity.



The diagram on the left shows the organisation over time of the different elements we will refer to in this study. It shows different experiments, projects, practices, etc. outside and inside the city administration that constitute an organic and diffuse change process which is moving towards the construction of a more collaborative city administration.

In particular, it shows:

- events, experiments, initiatives (e.g. the New Collaboration conference, the G1000, Project Start-up) showing the growing collaborative culture in Amersfoort;
- citizen-driven projects (e.g. the Elisabeth project, the Sustainable Food process) inspiring new forms of collaboration between the population and the city administration;
- formal transformations (e.g. the Municipal Council in café configuration; the city management restructuring) implementing new governance practices.

The originality of this change process is that it is not a planned and articulated process. It is more distributed and systemic: it should be compared to a process of acupuncture where a series of new practices are emerging progressively in the city and in the administration; these new practices interact together and improve; and they progressively produce a systemic change in the city.

In consequence, the grid used here is not perfectly adapted to report the particular characteristics of this case: i.e. non-linear change process; not planned in advance; collectively decided; with no clear start and end; etc.



1. PRACTICE DESCRIPTION (CONT'D)	
INTEGRATED APPROACH	<p>The topic of an integrated approach has never explicitly emerged as a particular goal of the change process. However, the change process within the city administration is driving greater collaboration between its silos and promoting a more integrated approach between departments.</p> <p>The process also aims to increase collaboration between the municipal administration and external stakeholders: citizens first but also the private sector and civil society.</p>
TARGET AUDIENCE	<p>The change process is in fact questioning the idea of a target audience. The new model of collaboration between the citizens and the city administration tends to blur the traditional distinction between the public sector as service provider and citizens as passive beneficiaries. It redefines the roles and relationships between more empowered beneficiaries (citizens, local players, etc.) and more open and collaborative providers (city administration, public services, etc.). They both collaborate in new forms of partnership.</p>
MAINSTREAMING OF GENDER EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION	<p>Gender equity and non-discrimination is already a matter of concern which is well addressed in the Netherlands and within its public administration. Therefore, these questions are integrated within the change process started in the city administration of the city.</p> <p>As a possible but clearly limited indicator, of the 33 people met for the in-depth study (including Mayor, Alderman, Members of the Municipal Council, Head of the municipal administration and of different services, external stakeholders and citizens), 14 were women and 19 were men.</p>
TIMEFRAME OF THE PRACTICE IMPLEMENTED	<p>In 2013, the city of Amersfoort had a year called Samen-Foort ('Forward Together'). Many discussion sessions were held within the administration about the need to change.</p> <p>At the New Year's reception in January 2014, city leaders announced the Year of Change.</p> <p>In August 2014, recommendations for change were made on the basis of the work achieved since January.</p> <p>In September 2014, the management of the city administration worked on the new organisation structure.</p> <p>In October 2014, the changes were communicated to the Heads of Department.</p> <p>The new management structure of the administration was planned to start officially on 1st April 2015. However, various pilots have started before that date, to test the new recommendations.</p>



2. POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND CITY FRAMEWORK

The Netherlands is known as a country in which citizen participation is well embedded in the culture of public and private organisations. The level of engagement of the population in community action is higher than in many other countries.

Amersfoort is a medium-sized city with a slightly younger, more highly educated and richer population than the national average – which are all factors known to favour citizens' participation.

The culture of the city administration is different and shows a very top-down and directive posture linked in part with the recent territorial development. In the last decades, urban development in the Netherlands has been framed and driven by precise planning. For instance in 1980 about 80,000 lived in Amersfoort. The city was then selected by the national government as a 'city for growth' within the national urban planning strategy. The city rapidly expanded northwards through a process of modern architecture and city planning and now houses approximately 160,000 people. It offers accommodation on the edge of the dense and wealthy triangle formed by Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht.

Beyond urban planning, the city administration has always been driven by strong planning processes. The administrative organisation echoes the strong Dutch tradition of pragmatism and process-orientated capabilities. The evolution in public administration induced by New Public Management has reinforced administrative rigidity. Management by objectives, regular monitoring controls, systematic assessments, etc. have generated over-organisation and bureaucracy.

The recent decades of relative wealth in the city saw the development of a powerful city administration characterised by a top-down posture, a command and control attitude, and civil servants with comfortable means to deliver public services.

2.2 THE PLANNING CONTEXT

The 'Year of Change' does not respond to any national plan for restructuring municipal administration. It is neither a plan nor a programme in itself. It is rather a 'change-in-progress': *"We don't have any predefined vision of where we want to go,"* says Jos van Winkel, Head of the Strategy and Governance Department. *"We are looking for new routes. Like in flash mobs we are trying temporary arrangements."* Bram Roggeveen, external adviser in the same department adds: *"We readjust the direction and decide the next step according to the result of the previous one. We don't have a vision, but we have ambition: that is why the process needs to move forward, that is the most important thing."*

Considering this strong tendency for planning both in terms of territorial development and process organisation (see 2.1 National, regional and city framework), the affirmation of a work-in-progress posture, developing from progressive experience without clear targets, represents an even more important cultural shift.



3. DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 PRACTICE DESIGN AND PLANNING

Main reasons to start the change process

In Amersfoort the reasons for launching a major change in the city's administrative practices were multiple and interwoven. The city was experiencing increasing constraints: The Netherlands has transferred more administrative competences from the national level to cities (in particular concerning youth care and home care) at the same time as reducing their budgets. The specific legal tasks on health care transferred from national level get a 25% budget reduction. The specific legal tasks on health care transferred from national level get a 25% budget reduction in comparison to the budget that the National government had for this. The total reduction of the local government budget is 10% per year over the past 4 years (so 40% reduction in total for the period 2011-2014). In the coming three years another €15 to 20 m of budget reduction will have to be implemented at a total budget of a €550 m.

No particular directive or help has been given to cities in order to cope with these new constraints. According to the municipality of Amersfoort, the local administration had to find solutions alone, by either making economies or reducing the services delivered. These budget shortages have occurred after a long period of relative prosperity and are paralysing traditional modes of public action based on 'command and control'. The city leaders acknowledged that the city administration could no longer provide the level of services seen in the past. Surveys conducted every two years by the city administration showed that citizens were becoming more and more dissatisfied with its performance. Past decades of rather good economic conditions had generated an all-encompassing welfare state with too many rules and policies which were slowing down innovation initiatives. Faced with the degradation of the social situation more citizens were getting involved in bottom-up mutual help initiatives and were reclaiming the right to act in their city. Increasing unemployment meant that more people were disempowered and wanted to do something useful with their time. The spread of information technologies was enormously increasing the population's capacity to self-organise. Given this growing citizen empowerment, the city administration was looking slow, behind the times and inefficient.

Finally, some of the city leaders also mentioned budget difficulties during the construction of the Eemhuis cultural centre as one of the triggering factors that kicked off the change process. The budget for constructing the Eemhuis, a new cultural centre for Amersfoort, was heavily overspent due to the lack of transparency, trust and collaboration between the silos of the city administration. The mindset of the public administration before this incident was to be a 'self sufficient organisation'. When a problem occurred, civil servants were used to addressing their hierarchy saying: we have a problem but we already have a solution for that problem. With overspending for the construction of the Eemhuis, "*We had a problem but no solution,*" according to Herman Wiersema, Adviser on Communication. City leaders then recognised that the Eemhuis case was emblematic of dysfunctions in the administrative processes and that a structural change was needed.

3.1 PRACTICE DESIGN AND PLANNING

A new model of collaboration with citizens

Amersfoort's city leaders started to see this social empowerment as a new asset and they envisaged the possibility of reengaging the city administration in delivering public services in collaboration with citizens.

The change process in the municipal administration is built on a series of pilot projects developed 'with' or rather 'by' citizens. Two of them were afforded more space in our fieldwork process. They are presented here both because they are significant of the growth of bottom-up stakeholder participation and because they are emblematic of the new collaboration with the population that the city administration would like to promote.



3. DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION (CONT'D)

3.1 PRACTICE DESIGN AND PLANNING (CONT'D)

The Elisabeth project

The old Elisabeth hospital is scheduled for demolition in the coming year. It is situated in a large and pleasant park in a central position in the city. What to do with the site has been fiercely debated at political level and among citizens. The decision has been taken to abandon plans to sell it to build new housing and instead to redevelop it into a green area. Debate was still going on between local inhabitants as to what kind of green area it should become, ranging from a biodiversity preservation zone to a park for social and recreational activities.

Given this strong bottom-up mobilisation in the neighbourhood, the city administration decided to step back and to experiment by placing the project in the hands of the citizens. A contract was signed officially passing the responsibility to the citizens to organise themselves and come up with a plan to develop and maintain the new green area over the next 10 years and giving it a dedicated budget. The process started in April 2013 and the plan was duly delivered before the elections in the autumn.

The key elements emerging from this project, which inspired the city administration to imagine a new model of collaboration with city population, were:

- The inhabitants formed a Core Group including eight citizens, two civil servants and a landscape architect all taking part as equal members. Besides this, a larger Skills Group was formed to represent all different stakeholders. Both groups were 'open' with some participants leaving before the end of the project and newcomers entering the group during the process;
- The city administration tried to guide the project development process at the start, but the Core Group decided not to follow the classic administrative procedures. Since they had an official contract, they decided to develop the plan according to their own method;
- The whole process and all documents in progress were published on the project website in complete transparency and contrary to usual administrative practices;
- The Core Group feels empowered but also stressed by the assignment and the responsibility put on their shoulders;
- The Core Group spent around 1,000 hours on the project and the Skills Group around 400 hours. The total of 1,400 hours, excluding the architect's time, is certainly a major effort for volunteer participants. They performed well, carrying out a wide public consultation and developing a complete project plan for a green area;
- The participants leading the process behaved in a very professional and responsible way (e.g. refusing to organise 'official meetings' before the official approval of the assignment, counting their hours on timesheets etc.);
- The participation process has been a great success (e.g. more than 200 citizen ideas collected; only one critical remark received on the project from the Cyclists' Union). However, it is to be noted that the critical decision to use the area as a park instead of housing had previously been taken by the Municipal Council, and the participative process concerned less weighty issues (e.g. what kind of facilities in the park: biodiversity regeneration area, sledging hill, urban gardening, fire pit, etc.)

The point of view of the municipal administration on the final development project delivered by the Core Group was very positive. *"The project was much cheaper, delivered in less time and involved a much larger public consultation that we would have achieved,"* says General Director Nico Kamphorst. *"The plan was maybe not what the administration would have delivered, but it is a good plan."*



3. DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION (CONT'D)

3.1 PRACTICE DESIGN AND PLANNING (CONT'D)

Sustainable food process

The Sustainable Food process is a growing series of different initiatives focusing on sustainable food, converging on Amersfoort being Capital of Taste in the Netherlands in 2012 and taking part in the URBACT Sustainable Food in Urban Communities network. One of the first steps was to organise a local street market (2011). The city administration welcomed the idea as a plus in the attractiveness of the city. Owing to conflicts with existing food street markets, the initiative only got approval to take place as a seasonal market four times a year. The success of this market initiative, together with other initiatives from food activists in Amersfoort, catalysed the idea of bidding for the Dutch Capital of Taste challenge. The city administration approved the initiative, and Amersfoort was awarded the title in 2012. The processes required enormous effort from the citizen project group in making the bid, seeking funding and organising 80 events throughout the year with a reduced budget of €100,000 (about the third of what similar events require). In 2012, Amersfoort also applied to join the URBACT Sustainable Food in Urban Communities network. The initial local project group enlarged and formed the URBACT Local Support Group.

The key elements to be noted from this process that inspired the city administration to envisage a new model of collaboration with city population were:

- The first match-making between individual actors took place at a *pecha kucha* night in Amersfoort, showing, if this is still necessary, the key catalytic role of such collective speed presentation processes in bringing together energies to take action;
- The first proof of concept of the local market took place during a hands-on collective event called Inspiration Week in 2011 where ordinary participants helped each other without payment, following the principles of the new sharing economy, to implement their ideas and showcase the local food market. Such quick low-cost participative experiments are also a key step in testing the concept, adjusting it and at the same time showcasing it and bringing together a first project support group;
- The initial conflict created by the idea of a local food market competing with existing food street markets in the city brought the promoters of the project into a hard negotiation process with the city administration. The project promoters had the capacity to 'knock at the right door' in the city administration, i.e. liaise with the civil servant managing street markets, show how a local food market was an asset for the city, and reach the aldermen and the mayor to overcome the resistance and frostiness of the public administration;
- The city administration takes a 'back-up posture' regarding social innovation: it 'leaves the floor' to social innovators, doesn't monopolise the subject and tries to adapt as quickly as possible to innovations and trends. Admittedly, this places a heavy burden on the shoulders of the grassroots participants, who say they are exhausted by the enormous effort they had to make. However, the administration tries to facilitate the process, albeit sometimes with some delay, by trying to remove barriers or at least to avoid creating new obstacles.

Participation in an URBACT network provides a leveraging effect to create a space within the city administration governance process for an emerging issue such as sustainable food in urban contexts. It also helps to strengthen an informal grassroots movement, to structure it and to initiate a policy-making and action-planning process.



3. DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION (CONT'D)

3.2 MANAGEMENT

The Change Team

Since the launch of the Year of Change in January 2014, both the Town Clerk and the General Director have been directing the change process of the city administration.

They created the Change Team in order to support them through the change process. The team consists of five people: Advisers in Communication and Human Resources, the Head of Department of Social Development and a Finance Controller. They assist the Town Clerk and the General Director with the internal change and reorganisation. At the beginning of the interview the Change Team claimed to be in fact a 'development team' balancing the two roles of embodying change and gaining acceptance for this change throughout the administration. Its role is to assist the development of the changes and to ensure fluid communication both within and outside the administration. In particular, one of its main tasks during the Year of Change in 2014 was to organise collective work on the reorganisation of the management.

Nine different 'domains' have been researched by two heads of departments each:

- Living environment
- Urban space, economics and culture
- Social domain
- Provision of services
- Administrative operations (facilities)
- Management development
- Lean management
- Directing the way of working (municipality as ordering party, working together with other parties to implement city policies and/or implement legal tasks)
- Flexible effort (the Flexpool)

Every duo had an advisory group of civil servants from different departments, to think and give input from the shopfloor perspective. Each duo reported their recommendations for change. At the time of the field investigation, the Town Clerk and General Director were working with the Change Team on a new organisational management structure for the departments based on horizontal teams, which was to be implemented at the beginning of 2015.

It is difficult to estimate how much working time the changes in progress represent, as all civil servants from the bottom to the top of the city administration are concerned. Considering only 2014 as the Year of Change, a large part of top management is primarily focused on discussing, co-elaborating and implementing the change process. Large groups of civil servants took part in consultation groups, to think along with the duos responsible for each domain. It probably represents an effort of between 50 and 100 person-months of involvement of the management of the city administration.

**3. DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION (CONT'D)****3.3 MONITORING
AND EVALUATION
SYSTEM****Self-responsibility rather than monitoring**

As the change process of the city administration is only at its start, no robust analysis or evidence of results can yet be put forward. When asked about the monitoring and evaluation foreseen for this important change process of the city administration, Town Clerk Herke Elbers clearly said there was none at that moment: "We are experimenting and we are looking for circumstantial evidences along the way." This position is certainly debatable. On the one hand, it is surely risky to change public administration and spend public money in a period of budgetary restrictions without ensuring a robust policy assessment process. On the other hand, the process of change is a reaction against over-assessment within the previous period of working according to New Public Management principles. The position expressed above by the Town Clerk clearly seems to be an attempt to try another path, based on openness, gradual improvement and shared responsibility among all city leaders and civil servants. For instance, the request from the URBACT workstream 'Social innovation in cities' to conduct an in-depth case on Amersfoort and its municipal administration change process was very welcome. The Board of Mayor and Aldermen approved it right away as an opportunity to get an external point of view and a reflexion on the ongoing process.

Mayor Lucas Bolsius expressed an even more radical point of view: *"If we want responsibility at all levels of the administration, we don't need to set up another control process. We want people to think and assess each different situation."*

No quantitative targets

The process of change is a reaction against over-assessment within the previous period of working according to New Public Management principles. It is also certainly due to a certain understanding at all levels of the city administration that the expected change is of a qualitative nature that has to do with changing the mindsets and behaviour of the people involved. Forcing it into a quantitative measurement straitjacket is likely to ignore non-measurable changes and will have a reductive effect on the final results achieved.

Positive attitude to change

Although no monitoring or assessment reports are available, an interesting indicator may be the shared enthusiasm among all the civil servants, administration managers and elected representatives. While in the large majority of cases public administrations may be expected to resist change – especially in a period of financial austerity – the city of Amersfoort seems to have created a certain internal appetite for change.



3. DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION (CONT'D)

3.4 GOVERNANCE: PARTNERSHIP, PARTICIPATION, MOBILISATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Building a culture of participation

Before and during the Samen-Foort ('Forward Together') year in 2013 a series of initiatives took place experimenting with and fostering a better collaboration between the city administration and the citizens. These initiatives were either driven by the citizens and civil servants or organised by the leadership of the city. They increase trust and collaborative practices.

Discussing and defining collaboration

The New Collaboration started with a large public conference organised by citizens to discuss the democratic system and explore new methods of collaboration between citizens and the city administration. This new collaboration was intended in terms of participation but also of co production. After the conference, four discussion groups were formed on: the way the City Council works; initiatives from the city and from the neighbourhoods; participation projects; and the Elisabeth Green collaboration. Council members and civil servants participated within these citizens' groups. Recommendations were presented to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

Enlarging fair and equitable participation

Inspired by the G1000 experience in Brussels in 2011, Amersfoort started a similar process in 2014. A panel of 1,000 citizens was randomly chosen and invited to discuss the future of the city. Around 600 participants (including civil servants and elected representatives in their status as citizens) got together and discussed, selected and developed 10 project plans out of more than 100 ideas. Beyond these outputs, the G1000 process was often pointed out during the interviews as a promising process for making silent voices audible and balancing the inequalities that are created when it is always the same 'usual suspects' who take part in deliberative and participative actions. For instance, the fact that participants received personal letters of invitation was often described as important in making them feel concerned and in encouraging them to attend.

Experimenting with online consultation

An online voting process was tested as a participative way of assessing project proposals in Randenbroek park in the southern part of Amersfoort. Signs were installed in different places in the park to explain the process and invite users of the park to express themselves on 11 redesign projects in different spots of the park. More than 4,500 votes were recorded over a period of two months, which allowed a reasonably consistent consultation to be carried out at low cost.

Promoting active citizens

The municipality's internal call centre receives around 16,000 calls per year, mainly questions or complaints. Citizens rarely call to express their satisfaction, but around 1% of the calls are suggestions. This led to the idea of encouraging more participation: "We changed the answer we give to citizens," says Willem van der Stelt from the Department of Urban Maintenance, "from 'we'll fix it in a minute!' into 'what would you do about it?' and thus promote active posture among citizens."

Encouraging collaboration between citizens, civil servants and elected representatives

When discussing training initiatives, one particular course was quoted several times by the different interlocutors interviewed. The title of this course is 'Working with networks'. The focus is perfectly aligned with city administration's new mission statement and aims to build capacities in the new role of 'free actor', leading the process of multi-stakeholder networks, and the brokering and match-making role the city administration has assigned to itself. But the topic of the course was not the key element quoted first by the participants. They underlined in particular the mix of participants including citizens, civil servants and elected representatives. This aspect emerges as key: it is emblematic of the new way of working together across silos and between the inside and outside of the administration. These are also new skills that are learned by all stakeholders to enable them to work together better.

**3. DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION (CONT'D)****3.4 GOVERNANCE:
PARTNERSHIP,
PARTICIPATION,
MOBILISATION
AND
EMPOWERMENT
(CONT'D)****Building a culture of participation (cont'd)**Developing stakeholder processes

The Project Start-up process is short stakeholder process recommended as a good practice to kick-start new projects both internal to the public administration and involving external partners. The methodology is based on a collaborative stakeholder process: 10-12 stakeholders meet for half a day to share their knowledge and their different points of view on the assignment in order to reach a common understanding.

Beyond the methodology the main interest of this example is the willingness of the municipality to disseminate Project Start-up as a standard compulsory practice to do before starting any kind of project in which the city administration is involved.

Changes in governance

The municipal administration acts under the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and the Municipal Council. Both are supportive of the change process of the municipal administration.

Bertien Houwing, Alderman for Governmental Development, Regional Collaboration, Education and Diversity, is working to get a consensus between citizens, municipal administration, Municipal Council and Board of Mayor and Aldermen in order to write a new policy on how the city administration should facilitate citizens' initiatives.

The City Council has also experimented with new settings for its meetings aligned with the new model of cooperation with the population.

In the usual, formal meetings of the Council, citizens can only give short statements: each citizen has just two minutes to present a request or a suggestion. They need to register to do this beforehand and councillors cannot ask the citizen any questions. Discussions and deliberations take place in a second session for elected members only. This procedure gives limited time for citizens to speak and is only used by people who feel comfortable with such 'elevator pitches'. In order to be better informed and be more connected with citizens, the Council now organises a City Café. Here the City Council meets citizens in a configuration in which citizens can talk to Council members in an informal setting without time restrictions.



4. INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS AND NOVEL APPROACHES

Build trust and let go

The citizen-driven projects (such as the Elisabeth project and the Sustainable Food process) showed that citizens can manage complex projects by themselves. *"In the administration, we often tend to overact,"* says Eric van Duijn, Head of Advisers in the Department of Urban Maintenance. *"Sometimes it's better to listen and do nothing. As a civil servant, it's difficult to refrain from taking over."* The city administration should be able to turn away from the former model of command and control. For Herman Wiersema, Adviser on Strategic Communication: *"We should stop designing plans and documents. We should make a new policy only when people ask for it."* Public action should be more based on trust. Nico Kamphorst, General Director advises: *"Give a mandate to citizens and civil servants and let them get on with it."* Rather than being prescriptive the city administration should listen and behave as a facilitator. Mayor Lucas Bolsius declares: *"Rules are, by definition, obsolete in a rapid changing society. The difficulty is to moderate this big social conversation."*

Reconnect the administration with the city

Civil servants take part in citizens' projects as the representatives of the public administration, but they are equal participants. They bring their professional competences to the table but they cannot pretend to have more authority or responsibility than the other participants. They are open about their agenda and interest in participating.

The city administration should open up, and civil servants should leave their offices and play a larger role in the life of the city. In his New Year's speech at the start of the Year of Change, General Director Nico Kamphorst challenged all officers of the city administration to become 'free-range civil servants'. Like free-range chickens, they should move around freely, decide where they go, gather information here and there and bring back useful knowledge to the city administration. Civil servants should spend more time in the field, interacting with the citizens, instead of sitting behind their desks. This new proactive posture of the city administration is well reflected in the key qualities expected from civil servants in Amersfoort administration new mission statement: curiosity, being close and accountability.

Promoting a new role for the city administration as a broker

The new mission statement presented by the city administration management includes listening and facilitating: *"The political board helps the people and partners in Amersfoort to seize opportunities and solve problems. We know what is happening in the city."*

According to the Change Team this new posture of the municipal administration results in:

- Making policies only when people ask for them;
- Shifting from a 'power role' to a 'learning organisation';
- Fostering multidisciplinary and collaboration between the different departments of the administration;
- Fostering a management with an 'helicopter view', with fewer experts and better able to connect;
- Making interdependent and integral policies;
- Fostering responsibility beyond silos;
- Learning how to learn from failures.

From the top-down command and control posture, the municipal administration intends to assume the role of a broker, listening to all parties in the city and helping them to collaborate and find synergies.



5. FUNDING	
5.1 FUNDING	<p>A negative-budget</p> <p>The change process is an internal municipal process involving many if not all civil servants. It is therefore difficult to consider the change process as a specific project with a dedicated budget line.</p> <p>The broader financial framework is the shrinking budget of the municipal administration (10% per year over the period 2011–2016).</p> <p>The change process should result in a substantial economy: more than a budget, the change process observed here could be considered as being a ‘non-budget’ or a ‘negative budget’.</p>
	<p>The change process is supported only by the city administration. It has not benefited from any EU funding and nothing in that line is foreseen.</p>
	<p>No private funding is involved in the change process: it is supported only by the city administration.</p>
5.2 OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME	Not relevant
5.3 MANAGING AUTHORITY (MA – IF RELEVANT)	Not relevant
5.4 COHESION POLICY OBJECTIVE (IF RELEVANT)	Not relevant
5.5 LINK TO EUROPE 2020	<p>The change process of the city administration in Amersfoort addresses governance issues with innovative projects that contribute to economic, environmental and social goals consistent with Europe 2020 strategy. In particular improved collaboration between the city administration, citizens and local stakeholders in general fosters forms of co-responsibility across the territory. On the one hand it is likely to reduce cost of delivery of public services through participation, and on the other hand it is likely to facilitate synergies and partnerships between economic actors, public authorities and the population.</p>



6. PROJECT ASSESSMENT

6.1 ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Lead citizens and scaling up

In the citizen-driven projects identified by Amersfoort (e.g. the Elisabeth project and the Sustainable Food process), a small number of highly-involved citizens seem to play a very determinant role. In the two projects investigated in greater depth, Lia Bouma for the Elisabeth project and Cor Holtackers for the Sustainable Food process played a key role in catalysing the creation of a project support group, motivating other less involved citizens, ensuring the continuity of the process, overcoming difficulties when they arise, etc.

Lia and Cor can both be described as typical examples of lead citizens and usual suspects of successful participative processes. Among their key assets and skills we can certainly list:

- Professional capacities both in project management and in the sector of the project (i.e. Lia is involved in many participative citizen projects; Cor is a professional consultant in food security and his wife works in a consultancy specialising in corporate social responsibility);
- Personal interest in the project (i.e. Lia lives near the Elisabeth area and feels particularly concerned about children's access to urban green space; Cor is an amateur cook);
- A good knowledge of municipal administration and connection with key people there (i.e. Lia carefully bridges the administrative procedures of assignment, meetings, delays in the stakeholder process, etc.; Cor gets in direct contact with aldermen and civil servants in charge of food markets to unlock the development of his project);
- Personal social and communication skills and a natural facility in liaising with people, telling the story of their projects and attracting audience interest;
- A personal interest in experimenting with an alternative citizen-based project development process.

Although they only represent two specific cases, it is interesting to look at their profiles both because observers recognised them as having a key leading role and also because when asked by the city administration if they wanted to lead another similar project, they both declined. They have both dedicated a lot of time and effort without any reward other than the pleasure of completing the project and the social recognition they have gained from other participants. It is therefore entirely understandable that they refuse to run more similar projects. This also questions the replicability and scaling up of such flagship projects which depend heavily on citizen participation: on the one hand, from the rapid analysis of their respective profiles above, it is clear that they share a large number of skills and assets that are not frequent in the population. On the other hand, it is also clear that their special skills and assets are critical to the success of such participative projects. In conclusion, and taking into account the obvious limits of discussing only two cases, we can wonder if this flagship project model is likely to be scaled up.



6. PROJECT ASSESSMENT (CONT'D)

6.1 ISSUES AND PROBLEMS (CONT'D)

Participation fatigue and imbalance

The change process was being implemented at the moment of the case study fieldwork. No results have yet been achieved or assessed. The development of a new collaboration between citizens and public administration seems very promising and all parties are enthusiastic about it.

The only points of concern that have emerged so far have already been raised in the terms of scaling-up (see section 4):

The success stories discussed through the flagship projects are based on a model that requires the keen involvement of citizens. At the moment a combination of factors (long period of rich welfare state and relative passivity of citizens; more time available and frustration due to increased unemployment; etc.) are in favour of active citizenship. The risks are both of overestimating citizens' willingness to take part in public life and services, and of witnessing an inversion of some of the favourable factors (i.e. participation fatigue; reduction of unemployment subsidies; etc.).

In particular citizens involvement requires the involvement of 'lead citizens' (see section 4), i.e. charismatic, motivated and skilled citizens who organise other citizens' participation. On the one hand, these experienced 'lead citizens' said they were exhausted by their participation in their projects and were not ready to take on more (at least in the small sample met during the fieldwork). On the other hand, their specific profile is not likely to be so easily renewable within the population.

Participation is uneven among the population. For many different reasons (e.g. time availability, language spoken, personal and social culture) it is always the same 'usual suspects' who take part and lead the participative processes, creating a strong bias in the democratic process. The risk here is that more participative groups will drive project development in their own interest, creating inequity among groups that are less able to participate.

6.2 PROJECT OUTPUTS & RESULTS

A large and collective change effort deployed

As already reported, citizen collaboration in the delivery of public services is likely to be more cost-effective, as the efficient, quick and cheaper development of the Elisabeth projects tends to show.

However, what triggers particular interest in the Amersfoort city administration is the collective change effort deployed so far by city leaders to improve its capability to collaborate with citizens. In particular, what is certainly remarkable is:

The listening capacity of the public administration

The city administration was able to listen to weak signals coming from the citizens (e.g. the New Collaboration conference and the success of citizens-based projects like the Elisabeth park and the Sustainable Food movement) and responded positively, acknowledging that stepping back was not the only thing they could do, and admitting that a structural change in the municipal administration was compulsory, etc.).

The collaborative nature of the change

Both internally and externally the change process is systematically based on stakeholder advisory groups, exchange with the population, experimenting with new forms of collaboration with citizens, etc. Beyond the city administration the change process progressively opens up to and influences the entire city population.

The intensity of the change foreseen

The change process clearly goes beyond the capacity to interfere with citizen-based innovation dynamics. It tackles a whole range of issues in public administration including breaking silos, flattening the hierarchy, simplifying procedures, reducing control, stimulating internal innovation, and fostering trust and autonomy.



7. SUCCESS FACTORS, LESSONS LEARNED AND CONDITIONS

7.1 SUCCESS FACTORS

A favourable context

Amersfoort is a medium-sized city with a slightly younger, more highly educated and richer population than the national average – which are all factors known to favour citizens' participation.

A culture of participation

The Netherlands is known as a country in which citizen participation is well embedded in the culture of public and private organisations. The level of engagement of the population in community action is higher than in many other countries.

7.2 LESSONS LEARNT

A responsible 'letting go'

One of the assets of public administration is to ensure continuity and stability in society despite fluctuations in the socio-economical context. Behind the scenes, inertia often inhibits the capacity for adaptation and innovation. Changing the city administration's role from command and control to brokerage is a matter of the city leadership letting go, trusting the citizens, reducing administration and rules, transferring responsibility to stakeholder groups and letting them take action. It requires city leaders to really try, to take risks, to refrain from monopolising problems, and to experiment with innovative solutions and methods within a delimited risk-frame.

A collective leadership

The Year of Change is a process formalised by the leadership of the city administration but the change dynamic is shared and organic across all the administration and the city. It started more than one year beforehand with a mesh of bottom-up and top-down initiatives coming from the inside and the outside which progressively established a collectively agreed positive mindset on the necessity of change. Fluid communication across administrative silos and also between citizens, politicians and civil servants results in a high level of co-responsibility and a form of collective leadership in the city.

A broker role

Facing more constraints and a lower budget, the city administration shifted from command and control to a role of facilitation between local stakeholders. City leaders have improved their listening capacity. Advisory groups are systematically organised. The city administration sits as an equal participant with citizens and refrains from acting before all stakeholder voices have been heard. The city leaders have agreed a new role for their administration in which it behaves as a broker, ensuring that all parties are around the table, encouraging them to take part and sharing with them the burdens of public action.

A modest ambition

The city administration is showing a form of pragmatic modesty. It prefers to start with the low-hanging fruit. Then it builds on its initial successes to try more difficult steps, but always keeps the ambition levels high. It has recognised its difficulties, delays and mistakes but still aims to achieve the best results. The public administration does not feel weaker as a result of acknowledging its problems. On the contrary, its ambition seems empowered and at the same time realistic. A fresh feeling of liberation from the mistakes of the past seems to encourage civil servants to go forward.

Intense and fluid story-telling

Amersfoort's city administration is showing a structural capability to generate simple and explicit communication. The internal and external dissemination of the change process does not come from an extra layer designed by the communication department but seems to expand naturally. An effort at good story-telling ensures that information is shared in a friendly and easily-accessible format to all stakeholders in the city. It records successes and failures in a lively way, increasing coherence and rebuilding a strong identity for the city administration.

**7. SUCCESS FACTORS, LESSONS LEARNED AND CONDITIONS (CONT'D)**

7.2 LESSONS LEARNT (CONT'D)	<p>A user-driven approach</p> <p>The city administration initially took a step back when faced with financial constraints and the national transfer of legal responsibilities. Stimulated by a series of citizen-driven projects, city leaders committed their administration to increase collaboration with the population in a somewhat opportunistic way, benefiting from citizen participation to deliver public services at lower cost. This economic strategy in fact engages the city administration in a user-driven approach. Both internally and externally the change process is systematically based on stakeholder advisory groups, exchange with the population, experimenting with new forms of collaboration with citizens, taking risks by giving them assignments and so on. The city administration thereby reconnects with citizens, restarts from users' needs and finds itself in a better position to think up more appropriate administrative mechanisms and design more user-friendly and cost-efficient public services.</p>
7.3 TRANSFER	<p>A local initiative</p> <p>The different people met during the field study confirm that the current change process launched in the municipal administration was not inspired by any other similar project. On the contrary, some interviewees criticised a certain lack of information and external inputs that could have inspired or guided the change process. The change process is also too new to inspire a transfer at this stage.</p>
7.4 TRANSFER CONDITIONS (TRANSFERABILITY)	<p>It is difficult with a newly-launched process to think in terms of conditions of transfer.</p> <p>The change process is taking place in the city administration, is emerging from it and is supported at the political level. But in fact it seems to be a joint process between the citizens, the city administration and the elected representatives. This situation depicts the conditions of transferability: a joint willingness to escape from shrinking public services and to collectively reinvent the relationship between the citizens and the city administration.</p>



ANNEX

FURTHER INFORMATION

BIBLIOGRAPHY

About the Year of Change

The change process is an empirical action-research process. It started within the city without reference to similar processes before or elsewhere. In particular it is reacting against a style of public administration that generates too many notes, reports and planning documents. Therefore, little documentation has so far been issued:

On 'SamenFoort'

e-magazines with final conclusions, report:

<http://www.samen-foort.nl/magazine-1-januari/cover/>

<http://www.samen-foort.nl/magazine-nr-2-juli-2013/cover/>

<http://www.samen-foort.nl/magazine/>

Interne Nieuwsbrief Samen-foort 4 juni 2013

SamenFoort Agenda Poster november 2013

On the Year of Change

Projectplan 2014 Jaar van de verandering

Organisatieontwikkeling 2014 Jaar van de verandering 14 nov 2013

Collegevoorstel organisatie ontwikkeling 2014

Link to the survey that Amersfoort municipality does every two years to survey a lot of aspects and one of them is the trust of inhabitants in their local government. 'Relation between government and citizen 2013' was the last survey. Next survey is scheduled in 2015.

<http://www.amersfoort.nl/4/feitenencijfers/Publicatiesonderzoek/Dienstverlening-en-Communicatie/Relatie-tussen-overheid-en-burger-2013.html>

About the Elisabeth project

First citizen project website: www.buurbook.nl/plan/elisabethproject_2090

New project website: www.elisabethgroen.nl

Cooperation agreement: <http://www.elisabethgroen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/samenwerkingsovereenkomst.docx>

Elisabeth project plan: http://www.elisabethgroen.nl/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/inrichting-en-beheerplan_elisabethterrein1.pdf



ANNEX

FURTHER INFORMATION (CONT'D)

BIBLIOGRAPHY <i>(CONT'D)</i>	<p>About the Sustainable Food process</p> <p>Amersfoort Capital of Taste: http://www.weekvandesmaak.nl/hall-of-fame-hoofdsteden</p> <p>Final report of Capital of Taste: http://smaakvandestreek.nl/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/130108-eindverslag-HvdS-definitief.pdf</p> <p>Sustainable Food process Twitter account: https://twitter.com/echtetenmetwerk</p> <p>URBACT Sustainable Food in Urban Communities mini-site: http://urbact.eu/sustainable-food-urban-communities-complete-overview</p> <p>Blog: http://www.sustainable-everyday-project.net/urbact-sustainable-food/</p> <p>Other references</p> <p>G1000 Platform for democratic innovation: http://www.g1000.org/en/</p>
CONTACT	<p>Name: Anne de Feijter</p> <p>Function: Adviser in Sustainable Communication, Municipality of Amersfoort</p> <p>Address: Stadhuisplein 1</p> <p>Telephone Number: +31 (0)33 469 5207</p> <p>E-mail address: A.deFeijter@amersfoort.nl</p> <p>Website of organisation: http://www.amersfoort.nl</p>
NAME AND CONTACT OF EXPERT WHO DID THE 'CASE STUDY'	<p>Name: Francois Jégou</p> <p>Organisation: Strategic Design Scenarios</p> <p>Address: Rue Dautzenberg, 36-38, BE-1050 Brussels</p> <p>E-mail: f.jegou@gmail.com</p> <p>Website: http://www.strategicdesignscenarios.net http://www.sustainable-everyday-project.net</p>

→ URBACT II PROJECTS

PROJECTS	ISSUES ADDRESSED	LEAD PARTNERS
1ST CALL PROJECTS (2008–2011)		
Active A.G.E.	Strategies for cities with an ageing population	Rome – IT
Building Healthy Communities*	Developing indicators and criteria for a healthy sustainable urban development	Torino – IT
CityRegion.Net	Urban sprawl and development of hinterlands	Graz – AT
CoNet	Approaches to strengthening social cohesion in neighbourhoods	Berlin – DE
Creative Clusters	Creative clusters in low density urban areas	Obidos – PT
CTUR	Cruise Traffic and Urban Regeneration of port areas	Naples – IT
EGTC	Sustainable development of cross-border agglomerations	Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière – FR
FIN-URB-ACT	Small and medium enterprises and local economic development	Aachen– DE
HerO*	Cultural heritage and urban development	Regensburg – DE
HOPUS	Design coding for sustainable housing	University La Sapienza, Roma – IT
JESSICA 4 Cities	JESSICA and Urban Development Funds	Regional government of Tuscany – IT
Joining Forces	Strategy and governance at city-region scale	Lille Metropole – FR
LC-FACIL	Implementing integrated sustainable urban development according to the Leipzig Charter	Leipzig – DE
LUMASEC	Sustainable land use management	University of Karlsruhe – DE
MILE*	Managing migration and integration at local level	Venice – IT
My Generation	Promoting the positive potential of young people in cities	Rotterdam – NL
NeT-TOPIC	City model for intermediate/peripheral metropolitan cities	L'Hospitalet de Llobregat – ES
Nodus	Spatial planning and urban regeneration	The generalitat of Catalonia – ES
OPENCities*	Opening cities to build-up, attract and retain international human capital	Belfast – UK
REDIS	Science districts and urban development	Magdeburg – DE
RegGov*	Integrated policies and financial planning for sustainable regeneration of deprived areas	Duisburg – DE
REPAIR	Regeneration of abandoned military sites	Medway – UK
RUnUP	Strengthening potential of urban poles with triple helix partnerships	Gateshead – UK
SUITE	Sustainable housing provision	Santiago de Compostela – ES
UNIC*	Promoting innovation in the ceramics sector	Limoges – FR
URBAMECO*	Integrated sustainable regeneration of deprived urban areas	Grand Lyon – FR
Urban N.O.S.E.	Urban incubators for social enterprises	Gela – IT
WEED	Promoting entrepreneurship for women	Celje – SI
2ND CALL PROJECTS (2009–2012)		
Active Travel Network	Promoting walking and cycling in small and medium-sized cities	Weiz – AT
CASH*	Sustainable and affordable energy efficient housing	Echirolles– FR
ESIMeC	Economic strategies and innovation in medium-sized cities	Basingstoke and Deane – UK
EVUE	Electric Vehicles in Urban Europe	Westminster – UK
LINKS	Improving the attractiveness and quality of life in old historical centres	Bayonne – FR
OP-ACT	Strategic positioning of small and medium-sized cities facing demographic changes	Leoben – AT
Roma-Net*	Integration of the Roma population in European cities	Budapest – HU
SURE	Socio-economic methods for urban rehabilitation in deprived urban areas	Eger – HU
TOGETHER	Developing co-responsibility for social inclusion and well-being of residents in European cities	Mulhouse – FR
3RD CALL PROJECTS (2012–2015)		
4D Cities	Promoting innovation in the health sector	Igualada – ES
CityLogo	Innovative city brand management	Utrecht – NL
Creative SpIN	Cultural and Creative Industries	Birmingham – UK
CSI Europe	Role of financial instruments (Jessica Urban Development Fund) in efficient planning	Manchester – UK
ENTER.HUB	Railway hubs/multimodal interfaces of regional relevance in medium sized cities	Reggio Emilia – IT
EUniverCities	Partnerships between cities and universities for urban development	Delft – NL
Jobtown	Local partnerships for youth employment opportunities	Cesena – IT
My Generation at Work	Youth employment with focus on enterprising skills and attitudes	Rotterdam – NL
PREVENT	Involving parents in the prevention of early school leaving	Nantes – FR
RE-Block	Renewing high-rise blocks for cohesive and green neighbourhoods	Budapest XVIII District – HU
Sustainable Food in Urban Communities	Developing low-carbon and resource-efficient urban food systems	Brussels Capital – BE
URBACT Markets	Local markets as drivers for local economic development	Barcelona – ES
USEACT	Re-utilizing existing locations to avoid land consumption	Naples – IT
USER	Involving users and inhabitants in urban sustainable planning	Agglomeration Grenoble Alpes Metropole – FR
WOOD FOOTPRINT	Local economic development through the (re)use of brownfield and buildings of the wood furniture sector	Paços de Ferreira – PT
PILOT PROJECTS (2013–2015)		
Diet for a Green Planet	Cooperation to align eating habits for an ecologically sustainable development	Södertälje – SE
ESIMeC II	Economic strategies and innovation in medium sized cities	Basingstoke and Deane – UK
EVUE II	Electric Vehicles in Urban Europe	Westminster – UK
Gastronomic Cities	Promoting gastronomy as a key urban development	Burgos – ES
Genius: Open	Creating innovative solutions to city challenges via an on-line collaborative platform	York – UK
Healthy Ageing	Cities' action for an active and healthy ageing	Udine – IT
PlaceMaking 4 Cities	Useful public spaces instead of nice public spaces	Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council – IE
Roma-Net II	Integration of Roma populations	Budapest – HU
TUTUR	Temporary use as a tool for urban regeneration	Rome – IT

*Fast Track Label

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting integrated sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, re-affirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal changes. URBACT helps cities to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT II comprises 550 different sized cities and their Local Support Groups, 61 projects, 29 countries, and 7,000 active local stakeholders. URBACT is jointly financed by the ERDF and the Member States.

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