

Community assessment, Sloterveer

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Global health

DG_LG15-3GH2

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Words: 1948

04-03-2016



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Appendix 1: Transcription of conducted interviews

Introduction

For our community assessment my group got assigned to investigate the neighborhood Slottermeer in Amsterdam West. Even though I am Dutch, I didn't feel like I was very biased before going in this neighborhood. I am not from Amsterdam and honestly, I always get the areas mixed up. I had no idea where I was going and had to hear from my classmates that it does not have a good reputation.

A weakness of mine in this assignment could be that I grew up in a very protective, very white environment with very little ethnic diversity. Because I realize this I always try to keep an open mind, so in that way it can be seen as a strength.

We will be looking for patterns and be descriptive about them. We'll use maps, drawings, charts, interviews, governmental documents and put all of this information together to get a whole picture. By mixing qualitative and quantitative data we'll try to get the perspective of the community.

By analyzing and collecting information we identify needs and prioritize them. The strengths and weaknesses of a community as well as our own.

Outline of the neighborhood

The first day of the community assessment was a cold but very sunny day. On the way from the bus stop to the BOOT center where I would meet my classmates I saw no people passing at all, even though it was already 10 o'clock. Nevertheless, I was in a good mood and everything looked friendly. I had no idea of the high crime rate and integration problems. This became clear during the introduction at BOOT. Not only the statistics but also the stories of people we met on the street and at BOOT.

For example; before the BOOT location was used as such there was a physiotherapist with bars in front of the windows and cameras everywhere. Furthermore; The first person we met when entering the area told us about XTC labs and regular shootings. And as I heard these stories and looked closer to the houses, infrastructure and the streets I started noticing things.

The houses are very close together, it is almost impossible not to interact with your neighbors. Alongside roofs are spikes to ensure no-one climbs on top of the roofs. There is dog poop and trash lying everywhere. Front gardens are almost always poorly maintained. I started to see things I did not notice in the beginning.

My observation video is uploaded on youtube.

URL: <https://youtu.be/mWpqQTOrtvl>

BOOT

As I already mentioned a lot of our project research was done in and around BOOT. BOOT stands for buurtwinkels voor onderwijs, onderzoek en talentontwikkeling (neighborhood shop for education, research and language development). The objective is to connect students from the HVA to focus districts where language barriers and general metropolitan problems are bigger than in the rest of Amsterdam.

Students develop activities and programs based on the needs of the inhabitants of their particular neighborhood. For example; legal help and language courses but also children and family support.

Analysis of interviews and problems

Community problems can be complex and hard to solve. I conducted my interviews along with two fellow students. The topics we addressed are; communication, environment, politics, recreation and food supply.

A transcript of all our interviews is enclosed.

Communication

Most people we spoke to said they felt comfortable in their neighborhood, despite negative things they heard on television and radio. Most of the people we spoke to got their information on public affairs on the internet or tv, almost no one reads newspapers.

The most striking thing we learned was that even though everyone told us it was a social neighborhood, no one really knew their neighbors and some of them had never even spoke to them. They would greet when they run into each other, but if you're not familiar to them they wouldn't open the door for you.

This also reflected in the interview with Kelly from BOOT. She told us that a lot of problems that occur are due to lack of communication and compassion for one another.

Communication from municipality to citizens will be discussed in the topic politics.

A communication system that is available in the area is a local newspaper. Furthermore, there is a place called 'buurtslager' which is used as a meeting area where people can come in for a cup of coffee. In the buurtslager you can take part in various activities such as language courses or workshops.

Politics

This was definitely a topic that most people were very passionate about, in a negative way. Without exception everyone we interviewed did not feel represented in the municipality. They were very distrustful towards the government in general and don't feel taken seriously.

What strikes us is that most people don't vote. They feel that there is no use and the government is distant and unknown.

Since there are not a lot of people involved in politics, there are little political systems or groups. Someone told us that the municipality sometimes organizes gatherings to talk about certain issues but they never really start real projects. This indicates that there is little public support.

From our interview with the government worker we learned that in the last years some of the smaller neighborhoods were merged into one large district, called new west. The purpose was better collaboration between the areas. It resulted in an increase of bureaucratie and a higher workload for the governmental workers.

Environment

Walking around the area you immediately notice the trash all over the street. People place their trash bags next to the container instead of inside the container. Most people we talked to didn't really seem to notice, the only people that did notice were either volunteer workers or the street cleaners themselves. They told us that there were a lot of mice, rats but also birds picking in the trash.

They also said that people were careless and sometimes rude, throwing stuff on the ground right after they just cleaned it up.

Citizens in general didn't seem to see it as a problem.

According to a lot of citizens the housing corporation is also part of the environmental problem. Houses and environment are not taken care and this results in neglected maintenance problems such as mound, broken fencing and poorly maintained playgrounds.

Food supply

The restaurants and food stores are just outside of the boundaries of the community at plein 4045. The only stores that are in the actual neighborhood is a Turkish bakery shop that sells mostly sweets and a little coffee place.

Most people we talked to get their grocery's at Aldi or Albert Hein. The closest store is the Tanger market which is a local supermarket specializing in north African product and fresh produce.

Most restaurants are not very healthy, almost everything is fast food.

On plein 4045 in a fresh market five days a week.

Around the area and even around plein 4045 alcohol is sold nowhere. You have all the way to the city center to get a bottle of wine or a beer.

Recreation

There are many recreation places for children such as football fields and playgrounds. As discussed in our Previous topic 'environment' these playgrounds are poorly maintained.

There are not a lot of recreational options for adults, but as it is a quiet residential area, there is not much demand for it either. For recreation adults go outside the area.

CAIBL

	Important asset	No effect	Problem/deficit
Communication systems reasons;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local newspaper (westerwind&echo) NRC&Parool - satellite dishes - Buurtslager - BOOT 		
Political systems reasons;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gatherings/meetings 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of public support - Centralization government and more bureaucratie
Environmental systems reasons;			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing corporation
Recreational systems reasons;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Playgrounds - soccer field 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - poor maintenance
Food supply Reasons;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plenty of stores just outside the area - diversity 		

Reflection ethnographic methodology

Situation: We had to immerse ourselves in the community; do what they do, go where they go and really make an effort to see things from their perspective. The challenge was to be as objective as possible.

Task: The biggest challenge was to get to know the community as good as possible in the little amount of time we had and make useful recommendations to the people of BOOT, who obviously knew the community way better than us. The goal was to grasp the citizens point of view and get to know the community.

Action: We conducted qualitative research as well as quantitative research. The qualitative research was mostly done in the form of interviews; finding out what the citizens thought was the biggest problem in their neighborhood. Besides the citizens themselves we also interviewed health professionals as well as government representatives, police men and BOOT employee's. The challenge here was to leave out our own expectations and interpretations. The other part of this assessment was the quantitative research. These were found either by simply counting and looking around in the area or through the internet. Municipality websites and OIS Amsterdam were very helpful.

Result: As a group we made some useful recommendations which will hopefully be used by the people of BOOT.

Reflection: The first day I went into the community I had no idea what I was in for. Looking back the real challenge was not to be objective in the beginning, but to stay objective after you've made first contact. When you get to know the area, you start to see more and more problems and it is hard to understand that people don't see the same problems as you. I would definitely mark that as a learning point.

In the beginning I was very worried that we would not be able to do useful recommendations to the people at BOOT. But it turns out I am pleased with the results. I found out that sometimes, when you've been working in a certain place for a long time, you can't see it as clear as people that just came in. I think that is where we could make a difference.

Reflection group process

Situation: Working in a new group always takes some adjustment. Especially when you are in a group with different disciplines and different nationality's. You have to get used to each other and find your place within a group.

Task: To make a useful contribution to the group, work together in a harmonious way and get the best possible result on our assessment.

Action: Overall I am very satisfied with our group process and collaboration. We had one problem with a group member that didn't contribute as much as everybody else and did not communicate. As a group we talked to him and gave him a job to do at home. I thought that this was a good solution.

Result: We made some good recommendations to the people of BOOT and made a valuable group project.

Reflection: I think I made a good team member and made valuable contribution to the team.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to attend all meetings due to health problems, but I tried to compensate that by doing more of the written and background research.

Generally, I think we had a really great group and worked very well together.

In a group project there are always some people that do more than others. I think I was somewhere in the middle, which is a good place to be.

Conclusion

Over all I found the assessment challenging and much more fun than I thought in the beginning. Even though it was a little hard for me to step up to people and start asking questions I really enjoyed it at the end. I got the idea that some people really appreciated that we took an interest in them. Of course there were less pleasant encounters but most people were friendly and very eager to help. It was also a great opportunity to make a small start in ethnographic methodology and put things we learned in theory at the lectures in practice. I am very excited to implement some of the things I learned into my fieldwork abroad.

Appendix 1: Transcription of conducted interviews

1. Two guys working for panter, one Surinam and one from Pakistani

One guy that does most of the talking lives in a student room around here, but also has a different address somewhere else. Wears different Nikes every day.

Would you say this is a social neighborhood?

People greet you on the street. They won't answer the door if you ring the doorbell and you don't know them. They will shout through the window to go away.

Do you feel you're being represented in the municipality?

Noooo man, I'm rasta -pulls heat off to show his hair-

Nobody does anything for us. I don't feel represented. I don't vote, because it makes no difference. everything is unfair. I work very hard and earn 1600 euros a month and 1300 after taxes. Others get 1500 euros a month social welfare. no programs or anything to make life better around the neighborhood.

How is the environment?

People are disrespectful. After cleaning the street Moroccan youngsters throw away their trash right in front of you.

2. Ali, Turkish man

How do you like your neighborhood?

I like it very much, it is comfortable and not too busy. I have lived here for five years. There are people from many different nationalities and they live very good together.

Do you have children?

Yes, I have one daughter. she went to school here. There are many recreational areas and after school programs for kids. The education is very good.

3. Turkish girl, about 25 years old, working at the Turkish coffee place.

Would you say this is a social neighborhood?

A little, I live in a flat and I don't know my neighbors but we do greet. I feel very safe and at home in this neighborhood.

How is the food supply around here?

There are a lot of fast food restaurants. A lot of people don't eat healthy. It could be better organized.

Do you feel you're being represented in the municipality?

I do vote, but I don't think they do a lot. I never notice anyway.

4. Two volunteers from the Amsterdam Municipality

There seem to be some problems around the area, do you feel you're being represented in the municipality?

We don't feel like we are being heard. There have been a lot of conversations about topics like recreation and environment, but nothing really happens. They just have meeting about everything and don't come up with physical plans.

There is very little recreation around here. This neighborhood is being seen as Bos and Lommer, and all the money and effort go there instead of slotermeer area.

How do you feel about the environment?

It is very dirty everywhere. People put their trash next to the container instead of in it which attract rats and other small animals. We try to educate people, but they are lazy. If they see their neighbor do it, they don't bother with it either and it has been like this for years. people kind of give up

5. Kelly Mathijssen, BOOT employee

Group: What's your role here in BOOTS and in the community?

Kelly Mathijssen: So, I coordinate the programs "kitchen&table" and "school work support". It's a program where kids come to another place but home, maybe a school or community center, and they get helped with their language development, dutch. That's because we have a lot of Morocco and Turkish children. The "kitchen&table" is a program that pedagogy students go to the homes of families to implement a learning environment, I coordinate the programs with the project leader, and they supervise the students that are interns with us. I am also involved in other programs. What I love about my work, is working in the neighborhood, with the people who live here. Because they are so different, so many different people, I often help with the consultation hours, and people are so thankful and nice! That's makes working here so challenging and interesting.

Group: What is your background?

Kelly Mathijssen: Pedagogy at the HvA, and I've worked with kids for 4 or 5 years after graduating and then I started at BOOT.

Group: So, how does the project works?

Kelly Mathijssen: The students go to the houses, and they are coordinated by a 3rd year student, interns. And I am the one who supervise those students. They go to their homes, and do school work, they do the tables, games and mostly playing education games.

Group: Do they need?

Yes, it's an extra support. That's mainly because the parents don't have knowledge of the dutch language, and they often struggle with it. They speak Moroccan, Arabic or Turkish at home and so the children don't learn Dutch. In schools they perform often under average, and the parents are involved with their kids, and they want the kids to evolve, to go to college, but they know that the language is a barrier to them.

Group: Wouldn't it be good to give dutch lessons to the parents?

Yes, we had a project called language with parents, and now we have a partner that gives lessons to the parents, but usually they don't know the way to support or they are busy with other things. They don't think it's a priority, and they don't think it's their job to teach their children. They also blame the school for their kids performance. Not every parents, but it happens.

Group: And usually, how many years does the children stays with you?

BOOT does from 3rd grade to 6th grade, with schoolwork program running from 2008. After that, we refer to other organization.

Group: They have a follow up, them?

Yes.

Group: What about the other cultures?

At our programs we see them, but not very often. We don't know why other ethnics don't ask for support. Looking at the data, is mainly morrocan and Turkish, and barely polish. But I have no idea why this happens. Maybe they don't experience many problems with dutch language.

Group: People here says they don't feel represented by the government/municipality. How does BOOT represent them? And BOOT takes finance aid from where?

People in the neighborhood, of course, don't know who finances us. But we have finance aid pro HvA and a part from the government. These are the financial resources. Also, the students are here because of a minor or an internship, so the bond with HvA is more educational than financial. So we need the funds from the government. If we did get the aid, a lot of programs wouldn't exist. There is so much going on here, a lot of initiatives, so I think is funny that they don't feel represented. A lot of the people have social security also, and a lot of requests are often being denied. Because they don't apply for a criterion, maybe that's why they are feeling this way.

6. Turkish 27 year old male on the street

Group: How do you get you monthly food supply?

Well, usually I go out to the Tanger Market by the Plein 40'-45'. It's very near to the neighborhood.

Group: And do you go out to restaurants? It is there options available?

Yes, there are 3 main and good Turkish restaurant by the same street, I like Meran West and Serifoglu Café I sometimes go there with my family to have dinner or lunch.

Group: Do you eat at home most nights? And is it food affordable?

Yes, I think Tanger Market But on weekends I usually take my family to the restaurant. The local market is not expensive and you can eat very good food in the restaurant for a good price. I think comparing with the rest of Amsterdam, food here is less expensive here.

Group: Do you feel represented by the government?

Not really, there is (sic) this Marrocon guy who represents our community in politics, I think he tries, but I don't think he has a strong voice. But I don't vote either, so I am not really involved in politics.

Group: And, what do you do mainly here for recreation? Is the options available?

On the weekends I like to play soccer with my son, on the soccer fields available here on the community. So, I think there are options available.

Group: Do you have children then. Do you think they have good places to play?

Yes, my daughter likes to play on the streets and on the recreational parks. She likes has a mini electric scooter and she enjoys using it on the streets. My son is more like the soccer player, so he enjoys the soccer fields more.

Group: Thank you for your interview!

7. Female, 22 years old, Turkish, in the restaurant

Group: How do you get you monthly food supply?

Well, usually I go out to the Albert Hein.

Group: Why do you not chose the local market, Tanger?

Because I have always gone to AH and I feel they have more complete and healthy options.

Group: Do you feel that food here is affordable?

Yes, I think it is.

Group: And do you go out to restaurants? It is there options available?

Yes, there is this restaurant here, that I always come. And the others besides them are also very good.

8. Male, 49 years old, in the Community Common Room

What do you think about politics in your neighborhood?

I vote, but I don't like to put my head so much in politics. But before I vote, I must know what the politics stand for.

And where do you get this information?

On the internet, because I don't have a television, only a computer.

And what about news?

I don't read the newspaper, so just the Internet. I like to hear about politics in the internet.

Do you go to politics meetings?

Yes, they organize some meetings in the area. Last year, they had a nice one. We discussed about the garbage on the street, safety, home-watch..

Do you feel that they are trying to do the best for the community? Do you feel represented?

Yes, they do! And they give good information, about safety. There are community-police also, they can give good information.