

Creating and Governing Commons within the Neoliberal Realm

The Dynamics of Citizen Initiatives,
the Political Discourse of Citizen Participation
and Neoliberal Governmentality in the Netherlands

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'Globalization, migration and development'
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For my father,

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Acknowledgements

First of all, special thanks go out to my supervisor Arnoud Lagendijk for his patience. In the process of finding a suitable subject matter, I pitched multiple thesis possibilities before getting to the point. All of these were granted his attention and he never spared effort to understand and help. I am grateful for the space he has given me to explore the theoretical field and to develop my understanding of societal transition.

Secondly, I want to thank all the people of the eco villages. During my field study I met the most hospitable and kind people. Without their openness and collaboration this thesis would not have been possible. In addition, I have learned a lot from our encounters and I am inspired to participate in or even initiate an eco-friendly community-based housing project in the future.

Last but not least, I want to thank my girlfriend, friends and family for their support. The illness and subsequent death of my father was a difficult process, but due to their warmth and comfort I was able to overcome this difficult process and finish my thesis.

Nijmegen, March 2016

Abstract

This master thesis examined how institutions for collective action (ICAs) in the Netherlands relate to and conflict with both neoliberal governmentality and the political discourse of citizen participation. A literature study was conducted on incorporation of neoliberal governmentality in the political discourse of citizen participation. It concluded that the political discourse of citizen participation contains recognizable aspects of neoliberal governmentality (i.e. austerity on public commons and creation of competition in social domains); however, through the promotion of citizen initiatives it opens a window of opportunity for ICAs to conceive new forms of creating and governing public commons.

In addition, the thesis investigated how three eco-friendly housing projects in the Netherlands accomplish their goals through using specific rationales and frames. These rationales and frames prove to align well with the political discourse, as well as with the neoliberal governmentality, despite the fact that they use a different mode of operandi.

Keywords: *neoliberalism, governmentality, political discourse, citizen initiatives, institutions for collective action, commons, rationales, framing.*

Introduction & theory

Over the past few years, there has been an upheaval in society about new citizen initiatives that create their own public commons; in this thesis this concept is indicated as institutions for collective action (ICAs). These initiatives start when a group of individuals that share the same interests find a way to institutionalize. They are citizen-organized, local, bottom-up organizations that create and govern public commons in new ways. These institutions are not state-led, nor are they a product of the market. They are constituted by groups of citizens that organise new options to govern commons together. The sharp increase in collectives is referred to as the third wave of cooperation (de Moor, 2013ⁱ)¹. In the past collectives have proven to make an impact on the social-economic domain in the Netherlands. This trend has also been picked up in the political sphere. Citizens are seen as mobilized, connected and socially active, leading to the conclusion that citizens can partly take over public services and commons that were traditionally arranged by the welfare state (Rutte, 2014ⁱⁱ). To control the state's budget deficits that arose after the 2008 financial crisis, the government is taking austerity measures and is withdrawing out of government provided services. Besides austerity, new reforms are introduced to decentralise and give way for citizens to create and govern public services and commons themselves. The term for this political discourse has become *citizen participation*. This new trend in Dutch politics wants to reduce the rising costs of the welfare society through citizen participation. Local bottom-up initiatives as the answer for financial problems of the top-down functioning national government: interesting, to say the least!

Introducing the research question

In academic literature as well as in societal debates, the shift towards austerity and a withdrawing state is referred to as a neoliberal doctrine that is focussed on competition and privatization of public

¹ The first and second are respectively the constitution of guilds in the late middle ages and the 19th century cooperation of citizens that led to well-known Dutch companies like Rabobank, FrieslandCampina and Achmea.

commons. This current in theory stems from Foucault's work on the disciplinary acts of institutions (Foucault, 1977ⁱⁱⁱ; Foucault, 1980^{iv} & Foucault et al., 1991^v). *Neoliberal governmentality* is used as a concept to understand the current mode of thinking in institutions and corporations². While the above mentioned citizen initiatives seem to be formed on the bases of collective action and collaboration, academic literature describes the neoliberal governmentality as individualistic and based on competition (Larner, 2000^{vi}; Bourdieu, 2000^{vii}; Faulk, 2008^{viii} & Cotoi, 2011^{ix}). The concept of neoliberal governmentality (which is interchangeably used in this thesis with neoliberal doctrine, neoliberal *raison d'état* and the neoliberal act of government) is defined as the political project that, in pursuit of economic growth, is working towards a radical free market utopia through political decisions that include ultimate privatization of public commons and deregulation of the market. The radical free market utopia is based on the neoclassical economics that recognises only rational individuals (Bourdieu, 2000) and revolves around the need for a competitive market as the breeding ground for economic growth.

Privatization, reduced government spending and deregulation of capital flows are focus points of neoliberalism (Faulk, 2008, p.587). The essential difference between liberalism and neoliberalism is that the focus moved from exchange to competition (Foucault, 2010^x). Where governments in liberal, *laissez-faire* economics let the market do the work of exchange in the market place and intervened as little as possible, the neoliberal act of government steers towards creating competition within all domains of society. Where the government lacks in intervening in the market, the more it interferes with the technical, juridical, demographic and social domains to create forms of competition (Foucault, 2007, in: Cotoi, 2011). In its conviction that competition between individual actors creates the most economic growth neoliberalism restructures all domains of society through

² The author is conscious of the scientific difficulties that surround the term neoliberalism. The literature on this theme has a huge range and seems to be used in many different contexts and different meanings. Boas and Gans-Morse (2009) conclude in their meta-analysis of 148 articles on neoliberalism that there are three problems to the scientific use of the term neoliberalism: the term is most of the time not (clearly) defined, it is used unevenly across the ideological spectrum and the term is used to illustrate a broad range of phenomena, making it an academic catchphrase. Through providing a clear and neutral definition of neoliberalism, combined with the specific focus on the aspects of competition, austerity and privatization, the author hopes to evade the common pitfalls for academics in their use of this concept.

practises of privatization and deregulation of the market (Bourdieu, 2000). Neoliberal politics have become influential in the cultivation of the social welfare system of (former) social democratic countries (Larner, 2000, p. 15). Since only rational individuals are recognized in the utopian theory of a radically free market system, public commons are rendered to the market through privatization; are exposed to expenditure cuts; and citizens are instructed to create their own alternatives that can make up for the retreating welfare state. The latter is partly constituted in Dutch politics through the term of citizen participation. However, the new citizen initiatives that are sparked by this political discourse seem to create new commons that are not privatized. In addition, as an antagonist to the neoliberal competition driven market, they have communality as one of their focal points and cooperation as their main mode of operandi. The research question of this thesis builds on the apparent discrepancy between the neoliberal governmentality and the new citizen initiatives movement: *how do institutions for collective action (ICAs) conflict and/or relate to the political discourse of citizen participation and the governmentality of neoliberalism?*

Neoliberalism & citizen participation

Before zooming in on the citizen institutions, the relation between neoliberal governmentality and the political discourse of citizen participation needs to be clarified. As stated above, the neoliberal doctrine is incorporated in the political discourse, however, to what extent is not completely clear. In addition, the discourse took an important role in Dutch political policies and sparked a broad societal debate. Therefore it is of societal interest to scrutinize on the dynamics of this political discourse. The first sub question is: *what does the political discourse of citizen participation entail in the Netherlands, in the light of neoliberal governmentality?*

Political discourse is defined in this thesis as a macro element in society that is created through a dynamic play of networks of ideas and actors in the democratic field. It can be grasped by analyzing texts, language and communication-through-action of politicians, political analysts,

scientific journalists, citizen initiatives, activists, pressure groups and other actors that perform political agency. The focus of this thesis is on the political move towards active citizenship and participation. For the past few years the idea of citizen participation roamed the political and societal spheres in the Netherlands. The recent financial crisis fostered the already growing belief that the welfare state cannot be sustained without huge state deficits and the time was right to implement a new political discourse. Citizens are projected as being mobilized and connected enough to sustain public services in places where the government is withdrawing. Bottom-up initiatives are seen as the answer to austerity plans on the public services and commons. This is a relatively new aspect in the political discourse of the Netherlands and resembles the rationale of the neoliberal act of government. Although the political discourse seems to align with the neoliberal doctrine of austerity, the focus on the creation of citizen initiatives leads to less privatization of public commons, but instead gives way for institutionalized citizen initiatives to create and govern commons. Therefore, the extent to which the neoliberal governmentality is included in the political discourse of citizen participation is to be seen.

Citizen initiatives

The lead role in this thesis is preserved for the citizen initiatives, which are described in the academic term institutions for collective action (ICAs). These institutionalised groups of people work together to accomplish common objectives. Shaken by the privatization of the past few decades and the recent social and economic crises, social initiatives for collective action have been on the rise (de Moor, 2013). The diversity of these institutions is immense: they range from energy to health care, and from community centres to local agriculture. The number of ICAs in the Netherlands mushrooms. Austerity measures on social benefits and healthcare make sure that there are increasingly more ICAs that focus on health care (especially in providing elderly residencies and day-care). Other initiatives operate to produce and govern locally grown food or initiatives that bring about affordable health insurance for freelancers (i.e. Bread Funds). Moreover, there are groups of

people who form ICAs that set out to build eco-friendly living communities, so called *eco villages*. These villages combine multiple new innovations in energy, eco building and agriculture to form new ways of living together in their self-build neighbourhoods. Eco villages are the object of inspection in this thesis.

ICAs are found by bottom-up practices and operate on a local level, but can have a global network or share ideas with communities in other parts of the world. They operate by creating public facilities (e.g. housing, energy supply, food supply, education, etc.) or setting up rules and infrastructure to manage the public facilities more just. The definition of ICAs that is used in this paper is *institutionalised local bottom-up groups that constructively build an organization and infrastructure in order to produce and govern commons* (which is different from other definitions³). The concept of collective action is different from ICA since this refers to social groups that strive to accomplish common objectives through intense and short-lived events (e.g. general strikes, massive public gatherings, demonstrations and revolts). The purpose of the ICA is to unite individuals and perform actions and practices that bring along the groups goals.

Institutions for collective action create and govern commons. These commons can be described as the needs every human being wants to see fulfilled like: the need to drink, to eat, to shelter, to love and to be loved. In most literature on commons, it refers to forms of resources (e.g. water, food, air, land): physical goods that form the basis for living (Ostrom, 1990^{xi}; Badin & Noonan,

³ Elinor Ostrom is one of the leading scholars on the subject matter of institutions for collective action; her efforts in researching the ways in which communities handle common resource pools are more than noteworthy. In her book *Governing the Commons* (1990) she uses cases from all over the world to describe how people work together to handle commons more just. Ostrom's conception of ICAs is, however, different from the one of this thesis: according to Ostrom, ICAs are (voluntary) organizations that manage common pool resources (CPRs). CPRs are typically physically resources that are available in limited quantity and should be governed in order to not overexploit. For this research the exclusive focus on CPRs is too narrow because it does not take the possibility of creating new commons into account, nor does it recognise social relations as commons.

1998^{xii}; Thoen et al., 2002^{xiii}, p. 17-18). Moreover, I want to further elaborate the concept of commons by adding social relations between individuals as forms of commons, taking care of each other, compassion (caring about other people) and culture are common goods that come from social relations. But also collaboration (in finding solutions for common problems) is a common good that comes from social relations. ICAs are thus organizations that create and manage (parts of) the basic necessities for a human being.

By creating new forms of creating and governing commons these citizen institutions are modifying and restructuring the building blocks of the social-economic domain. In this endeavour they create new social structures that organises social relations and distributes resources and services in the form of commons. Accordingly, to organise, maintain and reproduce their organisation and practices, they develop practical rationales and frames. Practical rationales and frames are the objects of research in respectively the second and third research question.

The rationales of ICAs

Practical rationales are the sum of basic assumptions that underlie the ICA's practices, stories and the way of coordinating within society. It contains the reason why they do the things the way they do. These assumptions rest on the inherent knowledge that is shared between members of the ICAs or is built up through practices. This knowledge contains the reason why the practices are effective. This knowledge and rationale touches the concept of collective learning, which is in anthropology considered as an essential trait to human beings. Collective learning makes it possible to transfer knowledge from one individual to the next without a great loss in content. Symbolic language makes it possible for us to learn from other people through digging in the collective memory that is stored in individuals or written sources. The expression 'standing on the shoulders of giants', which is used by Google Scholar, lyrically visualises this concept. Connerton (1989^{xiv}) states that ceremonies and other practices are a crucial part of the collective memory of a society. Practices embody a rationale that is passed on to others through experiencing or participating in these practices. Social group

practices in which collective learning takes place are referred to as communities of practice (Wenger 1998^{xv}; Wenger 2011^{xvi}). Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern and learn to do things better through interacting with each other. The collective learning takes place through the practices that are performed by the group and add to the collective memory. Through acting as a group and finding ways to create and govern commons, essential truths and assumptions are formed on how groups can interact and create in coherent ways. In this thesis this concept is used to identify ICAs as communities that embody (and create new) rationales and knowledge through practices. Henceforth, the second sub question is: *what rationales do ICAs use to create and govern commons in an alternative way?*

The frames of ICAs

In order for an ICA to function, it must attain the group goals through collaborating as a group of individuals. However, it is not an endogenous effort, the groups do not form a sealed-off cult, but reach out to work with other parties. They need (and want) to involve outside actors to accomplish their ambitions. In their endeavours they create frames that they use to organize their actions and involve third parties. Creating frames is a dynamic multi-factor process that produces and reproduces. Frames form a layer on top of the practices and rationales that label and signify the group. A frame is the label that gives identity and shape to the ideas and actions of the ICA. Internally the frames help the groups to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action (Snow et al. 1986^{xvii}; Benford & Snow, 2000^{xviii}). Externally the frames are useful in communication, which for instance feed the ICA in its capacity to gain support. A clear frame makes it easier for outsiders to perceive and label the ICA, which helps in the communication to the outside (Johnston & Noakes, 2005^{xix}). Creating frames can also be a strategic action that is performed to convince other parties to join in their efforts (Fisher, 1997^{xx}). Having a well-designed frame helps in, for example, gaining financial capital (via crowd funding, government subsidies or private investors) or creating social capital in the form of public support in the local

governments, communities and businesses. Using the right type of frames can even attract third parties that might not share the same rationales. In finding an answer to the research question, the third sub question is posited: *what frames do ICAs use to create and govern commons in an alternative way?*

Research question:

How do institutions for collective action (ICAs) conflict and/or relate to the political discourse of citizen participation and the governmentality of neoliberalism?

Sub questions:

- a. What does the political discourse of citizen participation entail in the Netherlands, in the light of neoliberal governmentality?*
- b. What rationales do ICAs use to create and govern commons in an alternative way?*
- c. What frames do ICAs use to create and govern commons in an alternative way?*

Conceptual framework

As mentioned before, ICAs are the centre of attention in this thesis. Their relation to the political discourse of citizen participation and neoliberal governmentality in general is the focus of the research question. The conceptual model that is shown in figure 1 visualises the factors and relations that are taken into account in this research. The different coloured spheres represent the three sub questions that together represent the research question.

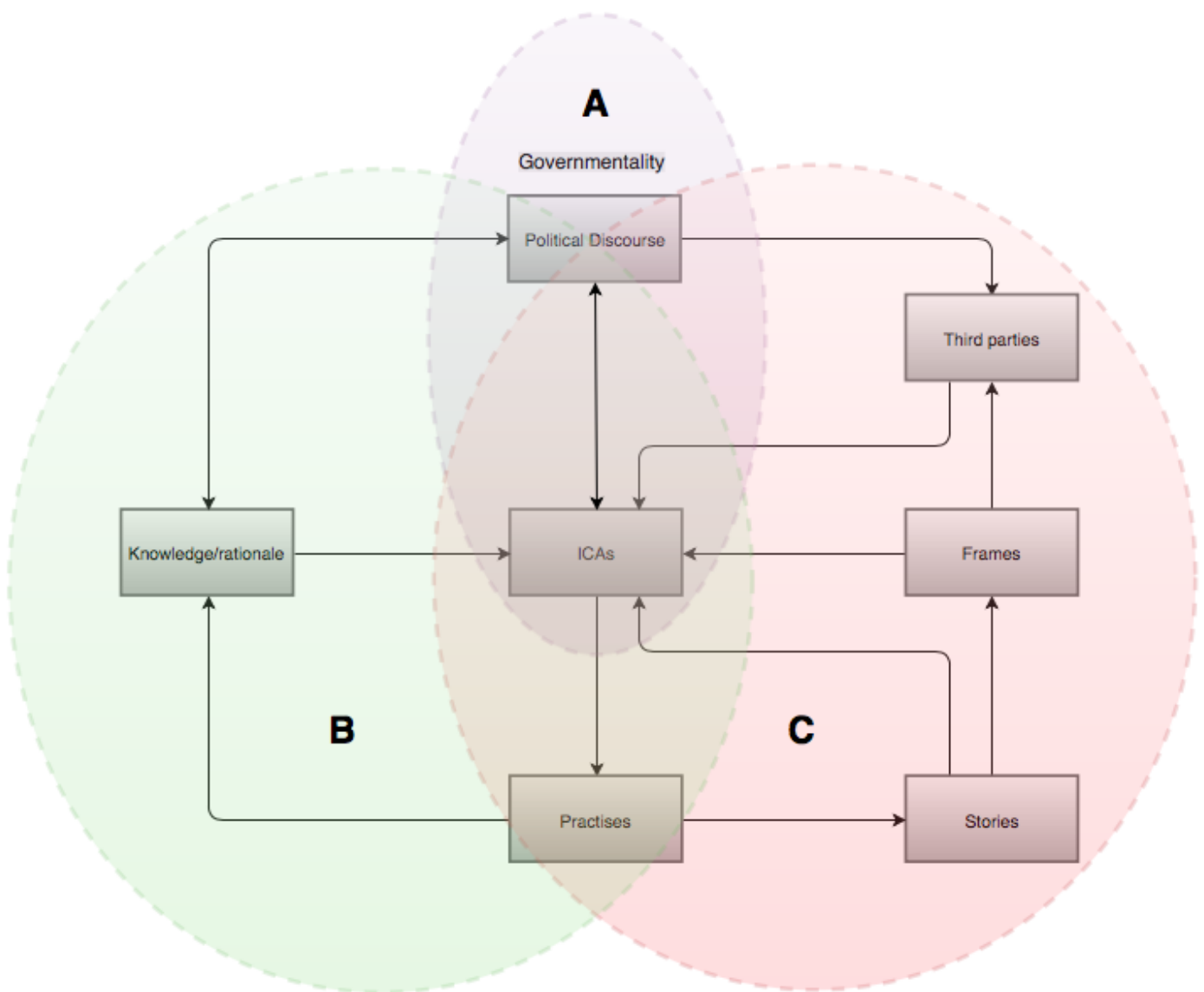


Figure 1: conceptual model

The first sub question attends to the concepts of neoliberal governmentality, the political discourse of citizen participation and institutions for collective action (sphere A). The focus is on how the neoliberal doctrine is incorporated in the political arguments of the discourse. This shines a light on the collision or alignment of the rationales of the ICAs with the political arguments that stem from the discourse of citizen participation, which are under inspection through answering the second sub question. In addition, a closer examination reveals how third parties are influenced by the discourse. This helps unravelling how ICAs use frames to get benefits from third parties, which is under scrutiny in the third sub question.

Sphere B refers to the second sub question. It contains a circuit of knowledge and rationales that are produced and reproduced within the ICAs through practices. The circuit is an analytic tool that contains three factors: ICAs, practices and knowledge/rationale. Special attention goes out to finding the rationales and knowledge of the ICAs and find out how these are produced and reproduced. Before grasping the dynamics of the knowledge/rationale circuit, the nuance must be made that there is a division in already existing rationales and knowledge and newly created rationales and knowledge. The already existing rationales can be found in the essential assumptions of the ICA. They are the underlying knowledge (e.g. 'the earth is warming up', 'fossil fuels are unsustainable', etc.) that drives towards creating an ecological ICA in the first place. These first rationales are easy to recognise and typical open doors. However, during the process of creating a functioning ICA, new rationales and knowledge are produced that are specific for the type of commons that a particular ICA creates. The knowledge/rationale circuit starts with an ICA performing practices. These practices create practical knowledge effectively creating commons and organizing a self-governing ICA. Through trial-and-error, assumptions are constructed on how an organization (and in extrapolation: a whole society) can be formed and reformed. This becomes knowledge that fundamentals future thought and action processes. The practical knowledge is used within the ICA to create more effective practices and organizational structures. The new assumptions that form into a

rationale are reproduced within the ICA and sustain themselves through producing more practices based on this rationale.

After auditing the inherent knowledge and rationales the research moves towards answering what rationales of the ICAs conflict or align with the political discourse. The knowledge/rationale circuit of the ICAs is in a complicated relationship with the political discourse. Rationales are created within the context of the political discourse and thus, to some extent, align or collide. This works both ways: the already existing inherent knowledge and rationales conflict or align with the political discourse and the political situation influences the production of new assumptions and knowledge of the ICAs. For instance, ICAs might see themselves as part of the citizen participation discourse and take up rationales used in the discourse. In reverse, or at the same time, they might resent some assumptions of the discourse and oppose the political arguments. Conflicting with the institutional forces might complicate the creation of commons since ICAs have to function on a practical level, which is only possible with enough support from third parties. ICAs can also influence the political discourse. This works through putting the rationales in coherent and structured frames that fit the political discourse. How these frames are constructed is discussed in the third sub question.

The third sub question (sphere C) deals with the creation of frames. ICAs create frames through labelling and signifying of the performed practices and shared stories. Frames form in the first stages of the ICA, but are also subject to change. Moreover, new frames are created in the process. Before the creation of frames a cycle of stories and practices takes place. The cycle starts with a group of people that share stories. Stories relate to the drive and desire of the people who are part of the ICAs. They convey the moral aspect of the accomplishments or perceived future accomplishments of the ICA. Stories are the narratives that contain the moral codes that must be achieved through the practices of the ICA. They are rough guidelines for the actions of the group. Every ICA starts with a story, a belief for a project held within an individual, but usually within a group of individuals. The moral value of the project and the perceived future accomplishments are

conveyed in these stories. Through spreading information (via presentations or mouth-to-mouth advertisement), new individuals join and an ICA is constituted.

Individuals who are united in an ICA start performing actions inspired by the shared desires and hopes for future accomplishments. The actions of ICAs create change and transition in the form of new commons (e.g. permaculture garden, housing units, cultural centre), or new ways to govern the created commons (e.g. creating taskforces within the ICA, devising a social decision system, etc.). Through practices of the ICAs the stories are reinforced and reproduced. Accomplished practices then feed into the fulfilled desires of the group. In this cycle of practices and stories frames are created. In the first stage ICAs produce a vision, a social decision system and documents that form the core frame. This core frame forms the basis for the ICA and is used to present to external parties. Only in much later stages physical commons are produced (e.g. shared housing facilities, permaculture garden, a green rooftop). These practices result in stories that represent the desires and drive of the ICA. In addition, they create a sense of togetherness and increased relations within the ICA. The stories tell the tale of how their togetherness spawned material and immaterial wealth. These stories are mostly positioned within a certain theme (e.g. communality, ecology). The complete package of practices and stories is then turned into a frame through labelling it in a way that people (from inside and outside the ICA) can easily determine and identify the complex process that is signified. Frames are used by the ICA to boost the inner cohesion and communicate with and get gains from third parties.

Heading over to the method section

How the citizen initiatives relate to the political discourse of citizen participation and the governmentality of neoliberalism is questioned in three steps. First, the political arguments of the citizen participation discourse are analysed for their alignment with the neoliberal doctrine. Since the neoliberal idea of competition is so opposed to the collaborative characteristics of the citizen initiatives, the political drive towards a bottom-up welfare system seems contradicting. Next, the

basic assumptions of the ICAs are questioned: how do these rationales form the ICA and relate to the political discourse? Lastly, I focus on the frames of the citizen initiatives that are used to internally and externally signify their stories and practices. Together the analyses of these steps answer the research question: *how do institutions for collective action conflict and/or relate to the political discourse of citizen participation and the governmentality of neoliberalism?*

Methods

The previous chapter presents the conceptual framework of how institutions for collective action create their frames and rationales. This chapter presents the methodological approach on how to measure and analyse the concepts. It builds up in accordance to the three sub questions:

- a. *What does the political discourse of citizen participation entail in the Netherlands, in the light of neoliberal governmentality?*
- b. *What frames do ICAs use to create and govern commons in an alternative way?*
- c. *What rationales do ICAs use to create and govern commons in an alternative way?*

This study takes a qualitative approach. This choice grants a more dynamic engagement with the empiric field and leaves room for the researcher to test and adapt during the study. The empirical data comes from two different sources. Since the first sub question requires an overview of the political discourse in the Netherlands, a literature study is executed. The second and third sub question require data on eco villages. This is collected through selecting cases and retrieving data from their sites and via interviews with participants.

Research focus

This part describes the criteria that dictate how the results are interpreted. It presents the expectations for the three sub questions.

- a. *What does the political discourse of citizen participation entail in the Netherlands, in the light of neoliberal governmentality?*

To research the first sub question a literature study is performed on the character of the discourse. The focus is on how the neoliberal doctrine is incorporated in the political arguments of the discourse. The expectation is that *the neoliberal doctrine is incorporated in the political arguments*

for citizen participation (H1). The extent to which this is true, has an effect on the collision or alignment of the rationales and frames of the ICAs with the political arguments that stem from the idea of citizen participation. If the two major aspects of neoliberalism (1. focus on competition of rational actors; 2. austerity on and privatization of public commons) can be found in the citizen participation discourse, this expectation is funded.

b. What rationales do ICAs use to create and govern commons in an alternative way?

The second sub question relates to the suspicion that ICAs contain assumptions and practical rationales that conflict with the neoliberal doctrine and the discourse of citizen participation. Therefore, the hypothesis is that *the basic assumptions of the ICAs conflict with the political discourse of citizen participation (H2)*. However, if the political arguments of citizen participation do not match with the neoliberal governmentality, this hypothesis is likely to be rejected as well. The criterion for H2 is that the majority of assumptions and practical knowledge of the ICAs need to be in conflict with the political discourse.

c. What frames do ICAs use to create and govern commons in an alternative way?

The third sub question has two hypotheses: *the frames of the ICAs align with the political discourse of citizen participation (H3)* and *the frames of the ICAs help in gaining in-kind or financial participation of third parties (H4)*. The criterion for H3 is that all the frames must align on a basic level with the participation discourse. The frames might lean on rationales that conflict the discourse, however, these differences are masked through framing. To affirm H4 all the frames that the ICAs use must be effective in gaining in-kind or financial participation of third parties.

Literature study

This study takes the Netherlands as its research field. The citizen participation discourse and neoliberal governmentality are the subject matters. The political discourse in the Netherlands

coincides with the neoliberal governmentality. The literature study must clarify how this macro element is constructed through societal debate in the media and the political realm. The long list for this study consisted of all government statements about the participation discourse, all semi-government research group reports on citizen participation, all opinion articles of the top three quality newspapers in the Netherlands on the matter of neoliberalism and citizen participation and all the discussion on these topics on online societal discussion platforms. The short list consists of a selection of articles that were found in the four fore-named groups. This selection is based on the notion of *added value of additional article*. This means that per group, the research stops if additional articles do not give any more additional value to the data bundle.

The analysis of the data retrieved in the literature study is carried out through scrutinizing on how the citizen participation discourse is rationalized in the light of the neoliberal governmentality. This is executed through focussing on how the austerity measures are enforced after the recent financial crisis and interact with the citizen participation discourse. Effort is put in deconstructing the political discourse that is built up of dynamic networks of ideas and actors. First, the government view is gathered through statements about participation of citizens and analyzing the semi-government research group reports on citizen participation. After analyzing the government point of view, the critique on the participation discourse is collected in opinion articles of quality newspapers and internet discussions on high-end blogs.

Case selection

The ICAs that are engaged in the eco village movement are interesting for this thesis. The projects must be local and bottom-up in order to pass the criteria on being an ICA. Sustainable housing can also be done by top-down organized housing cooperatives, but these projects would not fit the description. The area of research is the Netherlands. These criteria created a long list of 50+ projects over the whole of the Netherlands. To get a short list, the projects that already lived together in a

neighbourhood and then started a project to get more sustainable were left out. Also the early stage plans that did not have a location yet were left out. This gave a short list of five initiatives that were suitable of research. The decision to take the three cases that were used in this thesis derived from the amount of useful information on their website.

The cases: a short introduction

IEWAN: My first case is the ecological commune IEWAN, a housing cooperative that has its principle in the ecological aspect of living. They are situated in Lent, close to the city of Nijmegen. The project is made up of 24 social housing units, a working space and a lot of common areas that are used for leisure, growing crops, activities, etc. The construction of the project is realised by the residents with the help of more than 200 volunteers. After years of gathering and planning and one year of building, the project was officially finished.

Ecodorp Boekel: The second case is the eco village in Boekel, a small town in the province of Noord-Brabant. The project has a broad spectrum, it entails: creating housing units, a community centre, working spaces, sustainable entrepreneurship and a sufficient home-grown supply of energy, food and water. The permaculture garden is already in place, but the rest of the project is in the process of building.

Aardehuizen Olst: The third case is the first eco village in the Netherlands based on the earthship-design⁴. It is located in Olst, a small village with +/- 5000 citizens in the province of Overijssel. Their mission is to live in harmony with nature and each other and be an inspiration to the world around them. This community just moved into their houses (23 houses in private property and 3 social housing units) after a long period of building with the help of over one thousand volunteers.

⁴ The earthship is an architectural concept of Michael Reynolds, more information on www.earthship.com



Photo: IEWAN (Source: www.hetkanwel.nl)



Video stills from drone flight over Eco village Boekel (Source: www.ecodorpboekel.nl)



Photo: Aardehuizen Olst (Source: www.hetkanwel.nl)

Collecting and coding

Collecting data on these cases is carried out in a two-stage encounter. First the websites and additional documents like articles and documents of the ICAs are collected. After this, a lot of the basic questions on the frames and the rationales of the eco villages can be answered. However, to gather the additional data (which is needed to zoom in on the rationales of the eco villages) interviews are carried out on participants of the ICAs. The in-depth interviews are semi-structured with some prefixed question to guarantee essential information. The flexibility of this setup allows the researcher to respond immediately to new information, and gives the participant the opportunity to elaborate in more detail on their initiative. The interviewer visits the projects and interviews the initiative takers or other participants and records the interview. After that the recordings are transcribed. The interview gathers information on: how the project started, political arguments, practical rationales, stories and produced change. To answer the sub question on the frame of the ICAs, the interviews is structured in a way that tries to expose the frame structure, the practices of the project, the stories that describe their desires and how the frames are used to benefit the groups.

The interview proceeds towards finding the rationales and inherent knowledge of the ICA to answer the third sub question. Societal statements on privatization of public services and the call on citizens to take over some roles of the state are proposed and discussed. The questions contain elements of new politics regarding citizen participation and the neoliberal implementation of competition and austerity measures on public services. The interview asks for their personal opinion, and their view on what the position of the project is within this political debate. The interviewer focuses on how these rationales relate to the political discourse.

After collecting the data of the websites, documents and interviews, the researcher codes the data. First he searches and codes all the practices, stories, rationales, political discourse and change. Some parts have more than one code. After that code the type of practices, stories,

rationales, political discourse or change these first codes consist of. For example, in the first round a statement of a participant is coded as story. Then in the second round the code is specified according to its content (e.g. social, political, ecological). These codes form the feeding ground for the analysis. In the analysis the framework that is constructed in the theory section is tested on its fit with the empirical evidence. The results follow from the theory and are the outcome of this operationalization.

Results & Analyses

This chapter presents the results and the analysis of the empirical data. This chapter confirms or rejects the hypotheses on the basis of the empirical data and the proposed criteria. First, the literature study on the neoliberal characteristic of the citizen participation discourse is discussed. This answers the first sub question on the essence of the discourse at hand. After that, the chapter presents the results and analyses on the citizen initiatives. This part is split into two sections, one on the rationales of the ICAs and one on the frames that are used to signify activities and stories.

Literature study

To answer the first sub question (*What does the political discourse of citizen participation entail in the Netherlands, in the light of neoliberal governmentality?*) this paragraph presents the results of the literature study on the government-induced citizen participation discourse and three types of critique on this discourse. The spotlight is directed at political arguments of the discourse and the possible neoliberal characteristics. Last, the incorporation of neoliberalism within the discourse is analysed.

Moving towards citizen participation

The approach of this literature study is to give a brief overview and context to the move towards the citizen participation discourse. The approach is to, first, put the government's move towards citizen participation discourse in the spotlight by focus on government statements and semi-government think tanks reports. Second, the critique of the civil society on the discourse is reversed. After this the underlying rationale and assumptions of the citizen participation discourse is based on are revealed and analysed.

Over the past few years there has been a societal debate on the transition of the welfare state towards a state where citizens are self-reliant. This debate sparked on the web and in the

newspapers in 2013 after King Willem-Alexander's speech from the throne announced that society moved towards citizen participation. However, the shift towards a new look on the government's public provision started a few years before. When the financial crisis of 2008 hit the Netherlands, it was a pivotal point in the language on the welfare state. The realization that the welfare state was untenable over time was already present (in 1991 minister Wim Kok noted that the welfare state needed adjustments in order to persist⁵), but the recent crisis gave a financial reason to perform budgetary cuts and privatization on public services to reduce the state budget deficit. Under the pressure of privatization and cutting away on governmental spending a new rationalization of this process formed on the comforting assumption that civilians were now mobilized, active, socially connected, and thus able to take over the public services of a withdrawing state. This society of participating citizens was the new rationale in the way towards austerity measures. From left to right there was a political appeal that the welfare state cannot be sustained unless citizens start taking care of each other, in other words: citizen participation is used to save the welfare state. Prime Minister Rutte (2014^{xxi}) remarks, in a letter to the House of Representatives, that the Dutch society is progressing in terms of higher education, advanced communication facilities and more social initiative. He identifies active connected citizens as the answer to the rising costs of the welfare state. The individual needs to use its social network to acquire help before he can count on the help of the government (WMO, 2015⁶). The consequence of this political view ranges from budgetary cuts, privatization, a withdrawing government and the change from citizen rights to citizen duties (Verhoeven & Ham, 2010^{xxii}). Within citizen participation a central notion is that citizens are responsible for the quality of their social existence, this is new chapter in the provision of the welfare in the Netherlands (de Boer & Van der Lans, 2011^{xxiii}).

Another interesting point in the government-induced move towards creating a society in which participation is stimulated is chiefly focussed on the provision of health care and financial

⁵ <http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/1991/09/30/passages-uit-toespraak-van-partijleider-kok-6981965>

⁶ Found on: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/zorg-en-ondersteuning-thuis/inhoud/wmo-2015>

budgets for citizens who are in need for special attention. Especially the WMO law that was passed mainly has consequences for the (temporary) unhealthy citizens. It does not really affect the young, healthy and economically viable citizens. This is remarkable since the idea was that the stronger people should be cut from the welfare benefits.

In the search for answers on what this new way of governing might entail, semi-government research institutes contributed. The changing relationship between citizen and government appears to be at the centre of these documents. The Scientific Counsel of Governance policy (WRR, 2012^{xxiv}), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (2013^{xxv}), the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG, 2013^{xxvi}) and the Counsel for Public Governance (Rob, 2012^{xxvii}) all start their contribution on the notion that society is changing (the latter even opening with the Bob Dylan-quote 'The times they are a-changing'). These changes induce that the hierarchical management of the government conflict with the network culture that arises in society. The network culture is signified as highly versatile networked citizens that take constantly changing functions in society, creating new initiatives through dynamic groups, cooperatives or associations (VNG, 2013). The researchers have the shared conviction that the old hierarchical culture⁷ is not fully equipped to deal with these new developments. The hierarchical management of the government is in contradiction to the network cultures that has arisen in civil society. Local governments have to deal with citizen initiatives that take over services that used to be provided by the state, therefore needing to change their approach towards citizens. The reports state that the biggest problem is that civil servants have problems in letting go of control and trusting citizens.

Critique on the citizen participation discourse

Of course, the wish for social participation is difficult to criticize. It forms the basis of civil engagement, responsibility and even the feeding ground for a well-functioning democracy

⁷ The term 'hierarchical culture' refers to the top-down organized government institutions.

(Uitermark & van Beek, 2010^{xxviii}). However, there is a lot of discussion on the implementation of this citizen participation discourse and the underlying reasons for this turn in politics.

End of the welfare state

The first critique on the citizen participation discourse is that it is not an alternative welfare state, but an alternative *for* the welfare state. Tonkens (2014^{xxix}) states that the citizen participation discourse definitively left the idea of the welfare state for a state that leaves the welfare to the informal institutions. She describes the response of the government to the changes in society (as described by the semi-government research institutes above) as moving from the formal to the informal. Using the new citizens initiatives as a hideaway for the financial and bureaucratic problems of the formal welfare state. Tonkens recognized some problems to this deformalizing aspect of the participation discourse: the contra-emancipating effects on gender (women are more inclined to do informal care, which leads to a lesser degree of work participation), the strengthening of inequality in class and ethnicity (due to a difference in social capital), the stability of public services (informal institutions cannot take up all the services that the formal institutions used to do) and the strain it puts on the people dependent on the formal welfare state (immobilized home-bound citizens must now ask their neighbours to shower them). In her opinion, this does damage to the civilized character of our society. This concern with the washing away of the welfare state is present in a lot of the resistance against the discourse of citizen participation. Mostly so when it is in line with austerity measures on public services.

As a solution, Tonkens pleads for the increased interaction between formal and informal relations, instead of retreating from formal relations towards informal. The informal sector should be an innovative nursery for better public services, but cannot be a refuge for the problems in the formal sector.

Mingling and monitoring by the government

The second critique is that the current citizen participation is ruled and organized by professionals who steer and control. The top-down character of the (local) government is non-compatible to the network character of the citizen initiative movement. This creates friction when governmental actors want to control and monitor, while citizens want to participate in a relatively procedure and rule free zone. In accord with the semi-government reports, there is a whole current of thinkers and doers that state that citizen initiatives are hindered by (local) government attempts to govern top-down. Citizen initiatives get, through subsidiary tracks and rules, totally emptied of their initial spirit.

The way in which the state approaches citizen participation is top-down. It is seen as a government effort to let citizens participate. This leads to the paradoxical point that citizens' power to organize and control is hollowed out and the civic responsibility is reduced (Uitermark & van Beek, 2010). An extreme example of this is the state-led initiative to let citizens participate in the work field. In multiple municipalities work reintegration projects are arranged under the umbrella of citizen participation. These projects were constructed to help people find work. However, multiple studies showed that it only created jobs in the form of bureaucracy, but the actual contribution on helping unemployed citizens is close to zero (Stellinga, 2008, p.46; Kas, 2008; Doorduyn, 2008: in Uitermark & van Beek, 2010).

On the positive side, there are a lot of very successful citizen initiatives that are set up and structured by citizens. These initiatives sometimes have the support of the (local) government, but remain totally autonomous. Remaining autonomous is needed for them to hang on to their own discourse that is built up of rationales, values and desires that do not always align well with those of the (local) government.

Government as controlling power

The third critique is based on the Foucauldian idea that the government is increasing its grip by forcing citizens to participate, making them into productive, efficient citizens that can easily be

managed through monitoring⁸. The freedom of choice is used as a governance tool, on a local and national level. It uses the concept of freedom to put a responsibility to participate in the citizen (Schinkel & van Houdt, 2010^{xxx}). This relatively recent governmentality translates freedom in taking responsibility and combines this with an emphasis on community building. This critique carries the concern that the government is changing from a welfare state to a control state. The government withdraws in public sectors, which is left for the informal institutions, and grows in its controlling and monitoring of citizens and the informal institutions.

However, not every individual feels the negative consequences according to this analysis. Van Houdt and Schinkel (2010) actually state that this governmentality splits the population in two, 'civil' citizens, and 'bad' citizens. The civil citizens are individuals who play a beneficiary part in society through having a job, volunteering, etc. The bad citizens score high on statistical risk factors (e.g. jobless, inactive member of society). The civil citizens meet the facilitating side of the government that is leaving public matters to them, which van Houdt & Schinkel call *facilitative accountability*. However, bad citizens have to deal with *repressive accountability*. This is the pressuring of people or neighbourhoods with a lack of social cohesion to reform by using governance tools (like extensive monitoring, selective surveillance, etc.). Henceforth, people who have the abilities and cooperative initiative are not the ones who have to fear according to this analysis. As long as individuals play a 'participating' part in society, they are most likely to be left unattended by the acts of government.

Analyzing the discourse

The rationale of the citizen participation discourse is difficult to grasp, but some of the basic assumptions are clear. First of all, the austerity arguments are well defined in the literature. The welfare state is not attainable anymore and in order to maintain it we must perform budget cuts on public services. The neoliberal character is clearly evident in the response to the financial crisis. Also,

⁸ <http://www.socialevraagstukken.nl/big-society-of-big-brother/>

the stress on the networked individual and its possibilities to attain its own social care aligns with the neoliberal doctrine. In addition, the result of individuals having to address their social surroundings to get the care they need creates competition over scarce resources (i.e. the caring attention of fellow neighbours or other people in the network of individuals). At first glance, the pressure towards competition seems to be of less importance in the arguments for an alternative welfare state. However, on a deeper level the consequences of a redrawing state mount up to create competition on and scarcity of social resources. The government budget cuts on public health care makes individuals become more dependent on their social capital to acquire health care and social welfare (de Koning, 2014^{xxxj}). Public care becomes informal care and therefore gets individualized and prone to scarcity. The focus on austerity and the indirect creation of competition between individuals is thus present in the citizen participation discourse, which acknowledges the first hypothesis. However, let us not jump to conclusions and inspect the role of ICAs in the discourse. The facilitating side of the citizen participation discourse creates a space for ‘participating’ civilians. These citizens can create and govern commons in an alternative way that includes inherent knowledge and rationale that opposes the neoliberal doctrine (i.e. collaboration and cooperation). This opening in the discourse for citizen collectives is of key interest for this thesis. It forms the space within society where new movements are incubated and where alternative forms of creating and governing commons are conceived.

The political discourse of citizen participation facilitates ICAs that create public commons through collaboration outside of the market place. This is in dispute with the neoliberal idea of creating economic growth through extensive competition and economization of public domains. Instead, it gives way for institutionalized citizen initiatives to create and govern commons that are not part of the market place. This analysis coheres with the critique of Gibson-Graham (1996^{xxxii}, 2005^{xxxiii} & 2008^{xxxiv}) on academia that focus on neoliberalism. Focussing solely on the negative and inhibiting sides of neoliberalism – without seeing other forms and acts of an alternative economy – greatly reduces the ability to pick up the existing spaces in which public commons are created

through collaboration in a representative form. Although the political discourse of citizen participation seems to apply the neoliberal doctrine in its retrenchment of the welfare state through the role of austerity in the political discourse, the growth of citizen institutions leads to less privatization of public commons and new citizen institutions for collective action that create non-market commons through cooperation rather than competition.

The first hypothesis (*the neoliberal doctrine is incorporated in the political arguments for citizen participation*) is only partly acknowledged. The political discourse focuses on competition of rational actors and executes austerity on public commons. However, in its endeavour to support citizen initiatives to take up government roles, it creates a space where ICAs can counter the privatization of public commons through forming new ways of creating and governing commons.

Citizen initiatives

The thesis now moves towards answering the second and third sub question on the rationales and frames of the ICAs. It presents and analyzes the results of the three cases: the IEWAN project, Eco village Boekel and Aardehuizen Olst. A full overview of all the documents, interviews and website texts are presented in the appendix. This also contains the codes that are referred to in the results. For each data source a code as assigned, these codes are used in the result section. The section consists of two parts that are arranged according to the structure of the second and third sub question. First, the rationales of the initiatives are exposed. They are analysed to which extent they align or conflict with the political discourse. Second, the frames of the initiatives are explored to find their function of signifying the goals and practical rationales of the projects.

Practical rationales and inherent knowledge

The second sub question (*What rationales do ICAs use to create and govern commons in an alternative way?*) is answered through analyzing the knowledge/rationale circuit of the eco villages. What are the practical rationales that are present in the ICAs, how do these encompass their actions

and how does this affect their relationship with the political discourse? The practical rationales that are found in the ICAs are difficult to pinpoint to their exact position within the rationale/knowledge circuit. Some of the rationales are deeply rooted in the individuals and the ICA. These are the shared basic assumptions that made it possible for these people to work together in the first place. However, as the group progresses these rationales are (re)produced through practices. The circuit is useful for us to understand this process of production and reproduction of practical rationale and inherent knowledge. In addition, it is interesting to assess how these rationales relate to the current political arguments. This paragraph is purely about what these ICAs do, and why they do things the way they do. The paragraph about framing describes the process of signifying the rationales and knowledge through coherent stories about society.

Collaboration and togetherness

The first and foremost rationale of the ICAs is that people *live in connection to each other*. For the eco villages' residents it is a common practice to live in togetherness with each other. It is one of the assumptions that was present at the start of the projects and over time expressed itself through building and creating the village together. In addition, it is a necessity to work together since they vowed to maintain the commons as a group⁹. The key practice of the creation of commons is the building of eco villages together. Exploring the field on ecological living reveals that a lot of the ecological houses are privately owned top-end family houses with a lot of expensive architectural crafts. With their projects the eco villages hope to open up the ecological housing market with affordable (social) housing. The three projects differ in their approach to this desire, but all of them share the practical rationale that building the houses themselves is an important factor in creating affordable houses (next to the positive effects on the in-group feeling). Through an alliance with a housing cooperative, IEWAN (and to a smaller degree Aardehuizen Olst) created social housing facilities. By building the projects themselves and with the help of volunteers they pressed down the building costs, which resulted in low rental prices for the units. Through sharing only occasionally

⁹ I-1, 2, 3 & 4, W-1, 2 & 3

used facilities and equipment (e.g. washing machines, ironers, vacuum cleaners, dryers, bathtubs, etc.) they reduced the needed private space. The compact units leave more room for communal grounds.

During the interviews the initiatives were just realised or still under construction, so results on long-term togetherness in everyday life are not collected, but it is the residents' shared conviction that they'll continue to live in closer contact with each other than traditional neighbours. This is also a plain necessity since the maintenance and governing of the commons is in the hands of the groups.

Environmental practices

The ICAs possess and gather knowledge and practices that enable their commons to be in harmony with their ecological desires (i.e. living in connection with nature). Creating an eco village requires a lot of knowledge that needs to be accumulated before the project can succeed. This knowledge must be gained through workshops, networks and committees that are actively searching for techniques that help the village become an ecological example for the surroundings.

Permaculture is the design system that is used by all the eco villages to accomplish these desires. This system for ecological and sustainable living integrates plants, animals, buildings, people and communities with each other. The concept builds on working with nature instead of against it. It is mostly used within sustainable agriculture, but it does not limit itself there. It enables users to set up a framework for a way of living that can theoretically persist permanently. In the eco villages it is mainly used for setting up food gardens on the communal grounds. Plants and animals are aligned with the people of the community through connecting them in 'waste'-cycles, maximizing the useful connection between different elements. Permaculture is used to assemble all the elements in a way that they form an ecosystem that maximizes the output without overusing the local environment. The principles of permaculture also materialize in the design of the houses. The multi-functional aspects of the buildings are a good example of this. For example, in the eco villages the roof is not only for shelter, but also for vegetation (e.g. edible plants, more flowers that lead to more pollinating

insects) and for the collection of rainwater. A participant of Ecodorp Boekel explains how the principles of permaculture work for them:

*'Permaculture is something where they try to use as many functions of nature in our life. In nature everything has more than one function: a place can be a hideout for a small animal, a place where a raven sharpen its beak, protection for a tree, it can be anything. In our eco village, we try to give as many functions as possible to any element, so it has the most value and when it falls out, it can be replaced by another element.'*¹⁰

The practices that are used (or planned to be used) by all cases are a water bio-filter, sun collectors and rainwater gathering¹¹. These practices work for the ICAs through different facets. First of all, they are part of the desire to live ecologically and in a responsible way. At the same time they create financial benefits. For instance, solar collectors reduce the bills for energy and the bio filter heavily reduces the admission for the use of the sewage system. The new (and old) ecological techniques that are used also make sure that there is a lot of media coverage on the projects. The average Dutch citizen is used to a certain standardization of housing facilities, so alternative ways of housing get a lot of attention. The media loves to report on people that are using rainwater to flush toilets, human manure to fertilize the garden and straw and cob to build walls¹².

The environmental practices also have the benefit of connecting with the local surroundings. For Aardehuizen Olst this connection with the local economy started with the building of the houses. Following their ecological principles of getting materials and craftsmanship from local sources (to reduce CO²-emissions during transport), they economically connected with the local businesses. When Aardehuizen bought their solar panels, they saw another chance to reach out to their social surroundings. A new trust was conceived to collectively purchase solar panels with a discount.

¹⁰ I-2

¹¹ I-1, I-3 & I-4

¹² <http://www.volkskrant.nl/economie/-off-the-grid-wonen-en-leven-zorgt-voor-een-ander-soort-economie~a4217216/>, <http://www.volkskrant.nl/economie/het-grootste-ecologische-bouwproject-van-nederland-is-een-succes~a4127876/>, <http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/2006/01/10/muur-van-leem-in-modern-huis-11067199>, <http://www.hetklokhuis.nl/tv-uitzending/2888/Aardehuis>

Moreover, the local notary of Olst was invited as director of the board. According to the initiative taker this created a lot of goodwill for their project and an additional 80 houses in Olst now have solar panels¹³.

(Alternative) economic practices and ambitions

The eco villages have the desire to provide a space in which (alternative) economic activity should take place. They envision there to be economic activity for their residents and in extension create an alternative economic reality for the surrounding neighbourhood. This is how the economic aspects correspond with the desire of connectivity with the surroundings. Ecodorp Boekel is still in the phase of construction, but has the ambition create an alternative economic domain in the project. Their plan constitutes entrepreneurial projects on the terrain including a restaurant, an eco store with a plant nursery and an eco-hotel consisting of tree houses¹⁴. The Aardehuizen project is about to finish its community centre and hopes that this will provide some work for residents¹⁵. IEWAN already has a lively space where alternative economic activities (e.g. second-hand book bazaars, workshops and clothes gatherings for refugees) take place that attract residents as well as people from the surrounding neighbourhoods. This community centre is sponsored by the local Rabobank (one of the traditional banks in the Netherlands), which paid for the interior of the centre. This deal was accomplished due to cashing in on the communality frame (which is discussed in the frame paragraph). The activities in the community centre are attended by people outside the project and therefore help spread knowledge about the project and connect with the surroundings. In addition, it creates a space where alternative economic practices can take place in a protected environment.

Transmission of practical knowledge

'You can create your own little perfect society and then stay on that island and shut off from the rest of the world, but we do not want that. Now we've achieved so much, we want to be an example for the things that

¹³ I-4

¹⁴ I-3

¹⁵ I-4

went well, but also for the things that failed. We want to show people what we have done and how we've accomplished this.' - participant of IEWAN¹⁶

All the eco villages have the ambition to use their project to educate others on the ecological hazards that are the consequence of our 'normal' way of living, but more important: how ecological living can be done. Spreading the practical knowledge is a desire that lives in all the cases¹⁷. The eco villages clearly have the assumption that their projects should inspire others to do the same, or even better, create superior projects. The eco villages know that their own project will not have enough ecological impact to stop the degradation of the planet or global warming, but hope that they create a housing trend that will eventually make an impact¹⁸. They hope to inspire people to join up and do the same. In order to help others and make it easier to set up an eco village, they provide information on practical knowledge that they've build up during their course of development.

The educational side manifests itself in tours in and around the projects, networks of eco villages and the use of volunteers. First of all, the tours around the project are intended for (international) eco-tourists. The eco villages attract a lot of tourists from the Netherlands and abroad to their monthly tours¹⁹. In these tours the process and practical knowledge that was accumulated during the creation of the projects is shared. The attendees are filled in on the specifics of the building materials, but also on how the community lives together in a peaceful setting. The monthly tours do come at the price of giving in some of the privacy in the community. Aardehuizen already has a sign in front of their project that visitors should respect the privacy of the residents²⁰ and within IEWAN there has been a discussion on how often (and with how many people) the tours should be given, since the tourist have the tendency to open every closed door during the tours²¹. Opening your house for 40 people every month limits your personal privacy and sense of private

¹⁶ I-1

¹⁷ W1,2&3

¹⁸ I-1

¹⁹ I-1, I-3 & W-3

²⁰ F-1

²¹ I-1

space. All this being said, the people of the villages love to share their practical knowledge with others and hope that their practical rationale is used in new projects.

Another way of spreading knowledge is through the creation of new networks and the re-enforcement of already existing networks. Via these networks ICAs share their ideas and best practices with other projects. For instance, Ecodorp Boekel and Aardehuizen Olst are in the same Global Eco village Network Netherlands network that shares information and inherent knowledge. At the moment the knowledge and practical rationale flows mainly from the already full-grown project to the developing projects. However, it is expected to become a more equal network when more projects reach maturity²².

Thirdly, the construction of the projects takes up a big part of the education through training volunteers in eco-building. For example, IEWAN invited residents in the vicinity of the city of Nijmegen to attend their straw and cob building workshop. This wall construction technique is relatively easy to learn, so volunteers could help creating new homes. Not only did the help of the volunteers make the project economically viable, it also schooled the attendees in building with alternative eco-friendly materials and the possibility to create an eco-friendly living community. Participants get enthusiastic of building with these techniques and by working as a part of a group and a vision. The ICAs have the hope that these practices result in other groups starting their own eco village. This study does not have the data to confirm if this is really happening, however, it can confirm that the eco villages in this study were partly conceived with the practical knowledge that initiative takers gathered in joining practices in other projects. For example, for Paul the possibility of starting a eco village was rendered possible after he went to Sweden to help build an earthship²³. He came back with experience, confidence and the desire to start an eco village in his own town. This was the first step towards the completion of the Aardehuizen project in Olst²⁴.

²² I-3 & I-4

²³ Earthships are an architectural concept of Michael Reynolds (source: <http://earthship.com/>)

²⁴ I-4

Analyzing the practical rationales

Now the rationales and knowledge circuit is inspected and the different forms of practical rationale are exposed the second hypothesis can be evaluated. Do these rationales conflict with the political discourse of citizen participation? Can we acknowledge the hypothesis: *the basic assumptions of the ICAs conflict with the political discourse of citizen participation (H2)?*

The rationale of living and creating in togetherness can be interpreted as a reaction to the portrayed individualization in society. Living in togetherness is seen as a point of departure for the creation of the eco villages and can be found in every action of the groups. The rationale seems to stem from the idea of *freedom in solidarity*, a classic liberal idea with a social addition. It is expressed through letting individuals live the way they want in freedom, as long as they help each other in creating freedom for other individuals in the group. It goes beyond the liberal idea that individuals have the freedom to do what they want as long as they do not harm others since it includes that individuals help each other to sustain the same level of freedom. Thus, collaboration and cooperation is of essential value in the practical rationales of the ICAs. This is a different mode of operandi than the neoliberal doctrine that prescribes economic growth through competing rational actors. Individuals are connected to collaborate instead of individualized to compete. These housing units were not created by individual actors on the competitive market, but were constructed through collaborating citizens. The eco villages' practical approach does however align with the citizen participation discourse since it encompasses citizens that create their own public commons. This creates a lacuna between the neoliberal doctrine and the political arguments for citizen participation.

Next, the ecological rationales are scrutinized. The ecological practices are based on the idea of being in harmony with nature. Working with nature instead of working against nature is the key aspect in this endeavour. These rationales are not per se in contradiction to the neoliberal doctrine nor the political discourse since they do not explicitly deal with eco-problems. However, using neoliberal rationales would point to another direction in solving ecological problems (i.e. through

economizing the ecological problems by creating a competitive market with rational entities). Trade in CO₂-emissions is a good example of this. The ICA's approach the ecological problems in an entirely different way (i.e. using collaboration as mode of operation), but the practices itself do not conflict.

The alternative economical practices are materialized in common spaces (e.g. community centres). These facilities are maintained by the project and are open for everybody. This creates a protected space for an alternative economic reality that is different from the neoliberal idea of market competition. It does not directly conflict with it, but can exist alongside it. It de-economizes the public space by creating a communal space that is used in an alternative economic way. It does not conflict with the political arguments of the citizen participation discourse, nor does it necessarily conflict the neoliberal doctrine. However, it does create an alternative realm where new forms of economy can be tested and experimented with.

Considering the empirical evidence, the second hypothesis (*the basic assumptions of the ICAs conflict with the political discourse of citizen participation (H2)*) is rejected since none of the practical rationales really conflict the political discourse. The discrepancy between the neoliberal doctrine and the practical implications of the political discourse of citizen participation results in unexpected outcomes. The practical rationales of the ICAs do not follow the *raison d'état* of neoliberalism in the sense that collaboration, as mode of operandi, is opposed to the competition-oriented neoliberalism. The two can however exist harmoniously alongside each other. The citizen participation discourse promotes initiatives of citizens: the ICAs are granted a free space where alternative forms of creating and governing commons can flourish. Within these spaces new commons are created that oppose the neoliberal market idea, but exist alongside it without conflict.

Constructing frames

In order to answer the second sub question (*What frames do ICAs use to create and govern commons in an alternative way?*) this section analyses the frame circuit of the eco villages. ICAs produce a frame through practices and stories that is then used in their benefit. The dynamics of this frame

circuit are explained in the section on the conceptual model. This paragraph analyses the frames and exposes the gained benefit of their use. At this point in the thesis, the expectation was that the ICAs had to frame their conflicting practical rationales and inherent knowledge in such a way that it coheres with the political arguments. However, the previous results indicate that the rationales of citizen initiatives do not conflict with the political arguments of citizen participation. This is unexpected, but does not undermine the importance of framing. In order to get approval or gains from third parties it is essential to signify and label your practices and stories in coherent ways. Having non-conflicting rationales does not cancel out the importance of framing; it only makes it less complicated.

Construction of the core frame

At the start the initiatives create a frame that coheres with the goals and desires of the whole group. This is core frame. There are a few steps in this process. First, a group forms, this group gathers to speak about their shared dreams and plans for the project. Hereafter, the group starts to organise itself and takes up certain goals to achieve. The group starts to act out and perform practices. These practices are inspired by their shared beliefs and desires and create something new. The first practices are in word and letter: visions on how the project should unfold, presentations that can be used to find investors or other important external parties (e.g. local government, housing corporation, architect, contractor) and a website with updated information on the project. These practices are essential for the framework of the ICA. Writing down a vision and launching a website for the world to see constitutes the foundation for future endeavours.

These first practices also test the group's social decision system for the first time. The group as a whole must back up the vision and the way the group wants to portray itself to the outside world. It must echo the shared desires of all individuals in the group. Having a well-functioning social decision system assures that every voice is heard and every individual has agreed, otherwise arguments can split up the group. Each eco village has their own particular democratic system.

Fulfilling the first practices, the first frame circuit is finished and has produced the first and most fundamental frame of the ICA, the *core frame*. This frame contains the core desires of the group that are shared by all participants and points out the direction of the group. This core frame is actually built up of multiple implicit stories that unfold over time as the group matures. The core frame of the eco villages is *living in connection*. It contains the connection to nature, the connection to each other and the connection to their social surroundings. Each eco village has their own way of working around this core.

Reaching out

After the creation of the core frame, a new cycle starts. The group starts to reach out to other parties that might be interested. The choices for contacting external parties depend on obvious factors, like: the core frame (which parties are usual suspects to work with?), the collective network of the group (who do they already know?) and the width and the scale of the project (who and what is needed?). However, to create an eco village, external parties are essential to the realization of the project. The essential parties that are named in the interviews are: a local government, an architect, volunteers and a contractor²⁵. To get access to land to build on and get permission for alternative building the approval of a municipality is needed. It is an essential partner in realizing the project for all three cases. The cooperation of the municipality is described as key to the success of the project. Coming back on the literature study on the citizen participation discourse, we can conclude that in order for a municipality to accept the ICA, it needs to cohere to the *raison d'état* of the citizen participation discourse. The other third parties are less of a hassle, since they are paid for delivering goods or services. The architect is needed to make building maps and artist impressions of the project. The contractor and the volunteers are then needed to actually build the village. Most groups have little to no experience with building and combined with the new ways of building, it is important to have enough man power and practical knowledge to successfully fulfil this part of the process. In addition,

²⁵ I-1, 3 & 4

projects that lack financial capital need to search for an investor. The projects that want to build social housing units find that an investor in the form of a housing corporation.

In the previous results on the first two sub questions, the political turn towards a citizen participation discourse is analyzed as an opportunity for citizen initiatives. The initiatives seem to get recognised and supported by the municipalities and national government in their endeavours to create a new sort of organizing rationale. The coming paragraphs analyze the frames that enhance the chances of ICAs to gain support from public and private actors. Reaching out is essential to materialize the project and is done through framing the project. These frames cloak the practical rationales and knowledge. Using the right type of frames result in the cooperation of third parties that might not always adhere to the same rationales.

From stories to frames

The stories within an ICA are important for the social cohesion of the group; having shared stories strengthen the ICA through feeling united. Through collaboration and cooperation the valued goals are accomplished. Realization of change through practices fortifies old stories and constitutes new stories. The stories convey the desires that are satisfied through creating together and the hope for future change. Within this process of creating the practical rationales are inherent; they are always underneath. The rationale and the stories are signified and simplified into an easily recognisable frame to enable third parties to identify the core values of the ICA. The next paragraphs explore the process of 'story to frame' in the eco villages are explored.

Communality / Social cohesion

'I think that if you ask any eco village what the most important aspect is, they will say communality.

When a community is falling apart there is a big problem.' - participant of Ecodorp Boekel

The desire to live in harmony with the other people is the social story of the eco villages. It builds on the core frame of feeling connected. Feeling togetherness is important, if not the most important

feature, for the eco villages. The communality frame states that there is freedom in solidarity and builds on the idea of a social form of liberalism. Only when people work together in a group they can be free, so every individual is free to do what he or she wants as long as they help their neighbours. Stating it this straightforward, one might say that it coheres to the traditional biblical norm of loving thy neighbour. 'Being social' is a concept that nobody can really oppose and has the benefit of direct connection with the discourse of citizen participation.

The participants of the eco villages desire to live together in closer contact than average neighbours. They value knowing each other and, to a degree, having some sort of interdependency. Their shared desire leads to having communal spaces (e.g. communal garden, multifunctional rooms, community centre, shared household facilities) that are enjoyed and maintained together. Next to a desire of creating and governing collectively, it is a practical necessity. Without completing shared goals and working together, the project would fall apart and fail. Their communality building starts way ahead of the constructing and actual living together. Before one eco-friendly wall is constructed, a group must be formed that is committed to each other and to the goals of the project itself. The residents have mutual guardianship over the management and maintenance of the project, 'this increases the liveability and social cohesion²⁶'. 'Together we are responsible for the maintenance the rent administration, the shared gardens and the initiatives that make it fun to live together.'²⁷ The sharing of facilities also coheres with the practical rational of consigning knowledge: sharing tools and materials makes it easier to transmit know-how and dexterity that is needed to do the maintenance. Having a well-functioning social decision system is a definite condition for an ICA that is highly social, takes into account everybody's desires and is capable of creating frames. A lot of initiatives die when individuals are set apart by arguments that cannot be resolved in a satisfactory manner²⁸. Therefore, all projects have put major thought into the functioning of the democracy in their organization. The three villages have different forms of decision-making, but all of them are

²⁶ D-1

²⁷ D-2

²⁸ I-3

based on the idea that every member of the group should be heard, can make a contribution and has a voice in important decisions. The projects put a lot of effort in making sure that nobody feels left out. The eco villages are bottom-up initiatives with one or more initiative takers and are organised in the flattest way as possible. Decisions are made on the basis of intricate social systems that make sure that everyone gets a say, but does not continually delay the decision-making.

The building process is the most important challenge for the group's social cohesion. The frequency of meetings is increased and the groups go into the most intense period of the ICA. Plans are made for the commons that they want to create (e.g. shared housing facilities, permaculture garden, multifunctional spaces). The project is scheduled and volunteers are invited to help. Depending on the eco village, the order of plans can vary. For IEWAN it started with the erecting of the inner walls, which they created from straw and cob. Aardehuizen started with erecting walls and ground floors of sand and used car tires. Ecodorp Boekel started with creating a permaculture garden. This process consumes a lot of time and energy. Volunteers help the group in reducing the individual workload and strain. Classes are formed in which they learn the methods of working with tools and materials. Building together, when done right, can contribute tremendously to the bonding of a coherent group. It is an intense experience that the groups go through and makes up for a good ground for friendships. In order to fully grasp how this works, we must become part of the experience. A participant of Aardehuizen Olst explains:

*'Pioneering is difficult. Especially this project, which is the first large-scale eco building project that works through a vision, a group. Of course there are eco-friendly housing projects, but that is something else than what we are realizing here. We are more, well if you build together, then you automatically form a community.'*²⁹

The communality story is turned into a frame that is used internally to strengthen the social cohesion of the group. The ICAs signify their organization as having great communality and

²⁹ I-4

functioning with a flat organization. The ICAs use this frame to govern their community. In addition, it is used externally. The social frame resonates with the citizen participation discourse, since it implies citizen self-help. An intricate discussion started when the researcher questioned their role in the citizen participation discourse. Some ICAs see themselves as part of it others do not³⁰. In general the ICAs have the same responses to the discourse of citizen participation³¹. They agree that the repressive side of the participation discourse does not stimulate people to take care of themselves and their surroundings, but pressures them to do this. This is seen as unworkable (for people should work from internal motivation) and unfair (since people with little opportunities and a small network are disadvantaged). The participants of the eco villages explicitly state that they feel that the participation discourse is taking a wrong direction when it is used to force citizens to participate in order to be a valuable asset to society. They do frame themselves as part of the citizen initiatives movement, which is used as leverage in getting support from third parties. Municipalities that are burdened with the task to provide public services to their inhabitants are obviously interested when an ICA plans to supply public needs through citizen collaboration.

Through this frame, the ICAs also try to surpass laws or difficulties that impair building with alternative materials. For example, the law forbids building with waste materials and in order to build with cob you need additional fire safety reports. Also alternative filter systems, like wetlands filters (that are used in the IEWAN and Aardehuizen project) first need to undergo testing before you are allowed to use it³². Both IEWAN and Aardehuizen state that without the great cooperation of the municipalities their projects would be close to impossible. Ecodorp Boekel has good ties with the local government, but also tries their luck on a national level, receiving a free pass for radical innovation through being declared a 'rule-free'-zone³³. This gives them the opportunity to use

³⁰ IEWAN states that that do not want to put forward as an example for the citizen participation society (I-1), while Ecodorp Boekel explicitly states to be part of it (I-3).

³¹ I-1,2,3&4

³² I-4

³³ I-3

innovative materials like ‘hempcrete’³⁴. The frame of communality is also successfully applied to gaining financial support from private actors to create commons. For instance, the Rabobank is sponsoring IEWAN through their contribution to the interior of the community centre³⁵. The Rabobank is liable for the communality frame since they feel that they have the societal responsibility as a bank to contribute to the social cohesion.

The frame of communality is thus used for internal and external relations. First of all, as the fundamental social glue of the group that follows out of shared desires of feeling connected and the necessity of operating as one. Secondly, it is adopted to gain benefits from third parties. The communality frame is definitely coherent to the citizen participation discourse that promotes citizen initiatives for their contribution to social participation and cohesion. The effectiveness of this frame shows us that the current political discourse forms an opportunity for ICAs to frame their projects in a way that they can effectively receive support from private and public actors.

Ecology

The eco villages share the desire to live in an ecologically responsible way. The projects want to open up the possibility to live in a sustainable and connected way. They want to be an example of how eco-friendly housing can be done in the here and now and contribute to the search for sustainable future housing. These desires result in commons that are built with the most eco-friendly building materials, use as little energy as possible (and the energy that is used is generated themselves), make minimal use of non-renewable resources (especially fossil fuels or oil-based products) and produce as little waste as possible (e.g. using ‘human waste’ as fertilizer for plants and rain water to flush toilets). The idea of living in a sustainable way is deducted from the core frame of feeling connected. The ecological frame is exceptionally well thought out and elaborated. It has the benefit that it aligns with the current explosion of sustainable initiatives in the academic, governmental and entrepreneurial field. The growing consciousness of the negative impact that human society has on

³⁴ Hempcrete is a bio-based mixture of hemp and lime used as construction and insulation material for building houses.

³⁵ Rabobank Dichterbij Magazine zomer 2015

the environment was of help to the starting eco villages³⁶. The frame can thus adhere to the idealistic feeling of creating a 'better' world, which is abreast throughout society. It evokes utopian ideas of society and the desires for a cleaner way of living. However, although most public institutions support this idea, they cannot base their help on desires. Desires for a better world cannot be the sole reason for third parties to associate with or contribute to the initiatives, since it does not fit the governmentality of the bureaucratic institutes. The governmentality of neoliberalism directs towards making decisions on rational reasons. Desires are not backed by facts, so they cannot be the ground reasons for joining in. However, it can be the honey trap for eco-conscious individuals within organizations that make them stick with the ideas. That being said, the ICAs do need practical and rational arguments and practices to give these individuals (we might call them gatekeepers) within bureaucratic organizations the possibility to help them. In harmony with the rational side of the neoliberal governmentality, the ecological frame is therefore often advertised in a very rational and practical way. The eco villages use the ecology frame to be financially or politically backed by municipalities, but also to get a rule-free zone in which new innovations can be tested³⁷. For instance: green roofs collect the excessive rainwater –that is caused by global warming – before it touches the ground and is used for flushing toilets. This prevents the sewage systems from overflowing during heavy rainfall – which will be more common, because the temperature of the seas and oceans is rising, thus creating more clouds through condensation. Therefore, investing in the project can reduce water damage on the infrastructure of the municipality. In addition, new ways of filtering dirty water through bio-filters are tested, which can be a future answer to filtering water locally, reducing the societal costs of water purification. In this way, the ecological practices fit in the *raison d'état* of politicians and government officers.

Within the ecology frame an ICA and a local government can work together when the project contributes in a practical rational way. An example of this is that the municipality of Olst grants

³⁶ I-4

³⁷ I-1, 3 & 4

Aardehuizen the possibility to design a communal strip of green next to the project. The municipality shares the idea that more functional communal strips of green would benefit the social and ecological environment, so they give Aardehuizen the chance to create a new eatable green landscape based on permaculture. This gives the project an excellent chance to expose their knowledge of sustainable landscaping and inspire others with their actions. Municipalities love to be sustainable; it shows their citizens that they are responsible. The ICAs use their ecological frame (and fame) to create goodwill for the local government and in return are granted favours.

The ecology frame is rolled out a little different when talking to housing cooperatives. The significance for the ecological practices is presented in economical arguments. The first argument is that fossil fuels are becoming less available and therefore more expensive. This assumption leads to the idea that energy will be an increasing part of the costs for living. Only by building energy efficient housing, the public housing sector can continue to produce affordable housing. Using the ecological frame in such a direct and practical way, the ICAs persuade housing cooperatives to invest in eco-friendly social housing³⁸.

Analyzing the frames

The results above present two frames that are loosely used by the ICAs to give significance to a broad range of practices, stories and rationales. The communality frame is used as a tool to provide magnitude to the idea of working and living together as a group, which seems to work as a great hook for public and private third parties. The frame has the benefit of aligning well with the political discourse of citizen participation. The frame is also employed for internal usage to signify the importance of togetherness within the ICA and bind the participants. The ecology frame is used as a way of creating public display for their ecological practices and clutch to the sustainability hype. Being 'sustainable' is becoming more important for government institutions as well as for private actors. The ICAs use this momentum to gain benefits.

³⁸ I-1 & D-1

In order to answer the third sub question the two hypotheses on frames are answered. First, the third hypothesis: *the frames of the ICAs align with the political discourse of citizen participation (H3)*. Following the criteria that all frames must align with the participation discourse on a basic level, hypothesis H3 is acknowledged. The two frames of communality and ecology align with the political discourse. However, to nuance this hypothesis, I must add that only the communality frame really connects to the citizen participation arguments, the ecology frame is not conflicting, nor really connecting.

Second, the fourth hypothesis: *the frames of the ICAs help in gaining in-kind or financial participation of third parties (H4)*. Following the criteria that all the frames must be effective in gaining in-kind or financial participation of third parties, the hypothesis is acknowledged. The ICAs clearly receive benefit from both the frames. The communality frame causes the municipality to support and invest in-kind in the projects. In one case the Rabobank financially supports the community centre. Eco villages use the ecological frame to help municipalities see themselves as sustainable and use it as a unique selling point to convince housing cooperatives to invest in their projects.

Conclusion and discussion

This chapter converges the theory and the analyses of the empirical data into a final conclusion on the research question: *How do institutions for collective action conflict and/or relate to the political discourse of citizen participation and the governmentality of neoliberalism?* In the previous chapter the sub questions are answered step by step. Now these answers are summarised and formed towards building a concluding answer to the research question. In addition, this chapter reflects on the indiscretions in this research and possible future questions that need to be solved in the field of citizen participation and common creation in relation to governmentality and political discourse.

The research starts with a literature study on how the neoliberal governmentality is incorporated in the political discourse of citizen participation. The neoliberal doctrine subsists within the political discourse of citizen participation. It enhances competition in the social domain and presses towards privatization of, and budget cuts on, the public commons as a response to the financial crisis. To stop the expending state budget deficits, austerity is enforced on public commons and the state is withdrawing from public services. The withdrawal of the government has two consequences: a. corporate private actors take over the public commons and public matters are consigned to the market (i.e. public commons are privatized); b. citizen initiatives get more agency in the provision of public commons (which is in line with the neoliberal ideal of self-help), thus creating space for citizen initiatives to design and govern public commons themselves. The extent to which public commons are becoming privatized or taken over by ICAs due to austerity and a withdrawing state is not answered in this research and forms an excellent research question for a quantitative study. A nuance in the analysis of private versus public provision of commons is that this division is not that straightforward. For example, there are social responsible private actors that have public goals at their core and are structured in a representative bottom-up manner that provide commons for their stakeholders, making them actually more like public actors. Visa versa there are public institutions that act more like private actors.

Examining the Dutch social-political domain we can conclude that the political discourse of citizen participation does follow the neoliberal doctrine of austerity and economization of public commons; however, it is additionally creating a space in which citizen movements can provide public commons in alternative ways. The neoliberal doctrine can thus be found in the new political discourse of citizen participation. However, as Gibson-Graham (1996, 2005 & 2008) articulated in their critique on academia that focus on neoliberalism and its consequences without seeing other forms and acts of an alternative economy, spaces exist in which public commons are created through collaboration in a representative form. Instead of focussing on austerity and economization, let us open up our perspective and inspect the spaces where new initiatives evolve that structure alternatives to the contemporary form of governmentality.

The studied eco villages in this thesis have rationales and frames that are used to create and govern commons. Their core principle is based around *living in connection*: this contains a social side (which is based on the social liberal idea of *freedom in solidarity*) and an ecological side (which has as its cornerstone *permaculture*). The social side manifests itself in helping each other to help themselves; through collaboration and cooperation they provide for themselves and for each other. They are interdependent for the achievement of their project; only through working together they can succeed in providing commons. This interdependency sparks new forms of governing that requires every individual to be heard and to have a vote. The ICAs have different forms of democratic social-decision systems whose dynamics deserve a follow-up study. The ecological side manifests itself in an organic way of creating and governing commons. Permaculture is used as the basic principle for the materialization of their housing projects, as well as for their collaboration processes.

The ICAs achieve their group goals through different forms of practical rationales and frames that obtain the support of public and private actors in the field. The practical rationales and inherent knowledge of the ICAs are carried out through practices of collaboration, ecology, alternative economy and knowledge transmission. The frames of the ICAs are adopted to signify and label the

practices and stories for internal and external use. The eco villages have two frames: the frame of *communality* and the frame of *ecology*. The communality frame is the social glue of the ICA that follows the desire of feeling connected and the practical necessity of operating as one organism. In addition, it is pointed outwards to benefit from public and private actors that wish to stimulate social cohesion and self-help in society. The frame perfectly fits the political discourse of citizen participation. The ecology frame is based on the strong desires of living in harmony with nature. It can honey-trap individuals in public and private organization into supporting the cause of the ICA. With practical and rational arguments on the significance of implementing new eco-friendly techniques in society the institutes are then drawn in to contribute in-kind or financially.

In conclusion, *how do institutions for collective action conflict and/or relate to the political discourse of citizen participation and the governmentality of neoliberalism?* Although the ICA's ways of operating differ from the neoliberal doctrine, their rationales do relate to the political discourse of citizen participation and the neoliberal aim to move towards self-helping citizens and a slim state. The citizen initiatives are not explicitly an antipode to the neoliberal act of government. Although they create spaces in which new forms of creation and governing of the public commons takes place, neoliberal goals are achieved (i.e. self-help and a slim state). The citizen participation discourse grants the ICAs a free space where practical implications of alternative acts of government and creation of public commons can flourish. The citizen initiatives and citizen participation discourse (in which the neoliberal governmentality is incorporated) are thus in a complicated relationship in which it is not completely clear who is the Trojan horse of whom. The ICAs realise the neoliberal agenda of a slim state and citizen self-help, but at the same time create an alternative space in which modes of operandi are adopted that conflict the neoliberal idea of creating economic growth through competition. The ICAs form a discrepancy between the neoliberal doctrine and the practical implications of the political discourse of citizen participation, which results in a social realm that bears alternative outcomes. The citizen institutions thus seem to be creating space for new forms of governing commons within the neoliberal realm. The eco villages already used this new window of

opportunity to create and govern housing projects in an eco-friendly, democratic and collaborative form.

Reflection

The drive and the joyous energy of the eco village initiatives have had a major positive impact on my motivation to work and complete this thesis. Before turning to the field of research I was stuck in definitions on neoliberalism and the political discourse of citizen participation. Focusing on the eco villages was the only way to see the meaning of terms like ‘governmentality’ and ‘political discourse’ in the right context. The eco villages have taught me that change can be gradual and planned. Only by creating and governing together these new ways of living in connection with nature and each other can be realized. The people of the initiatives inspired me to bring theory into practice and to ‘create and reflect’ rather than to ‘analyze and contemplate’.

Regarding the theory of this thesis I would like to dedicate a few words to the separation of frame and rationale. In theory it seemed a constructive way to deconstruct the citizen initiatives. However, in practice the distinction of the two proved more difficult than expected. In a lot of cases the codes for frames and rationales overlapped and it was difficult to separate the empirical data in two isolated sub questions. If I were to repeat this research, I would not discard one of both since the terms have distinct features and each of which is valuable for the analysis. Instead, I would join the two terms in one sub question in order for them to overlap and complement each other.

From a methodological point of view I must add that performing qualitative research is as exciting as it is difficult. Executing interviews can be a great excuse to meet new inspiring people and zooming in on the social context of the projects can spark insights on how alternative societies take shape. The other side of the medal is that performing a valid research can be tough and provides sufficient difficulties. As a researcher schooled in quantitative research this thesis was a considerable

challenge. Executing this thesis augmented my perspective on different forms of research and confirmed my intuition that qualitative and quantitative research are subsidiary to each other.

Appendix

Interviews

- I-1: Mare-Nynke, initiative taker of IEWAN, 21st of August 2015
- I-2: Luder, resident of IEWAN, 18th of September 2015
- I-3: Ad, initiative taker of Ecodorp Boekel, 26th of November 2015
- I-4: Paul, initiative taker of Aardehuizen, 14th of December 2015

Documents

- D-1: External vision IEWAN
- D-2: Internal vision IEWAN

Website texts

- W-1: Website IEWAN (www.iewan.nl)
- W-2: Website Ecodorp Boekel (www.ecodorpboekel.nl)
- W-3: Website Aardehuizen Olst (www.aardehuis.nl)

Field notes

- F-1: Field notes taken by the researcher during visits to the eco villages

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