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RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY: THERE IS MORE TO IT THAN THE RIGHT TOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Results-Based Accountability: there is more to it than the right tools
Craftsmanship in social intervention, as with all craftsmanship, entails more than merely developing
and using a set of tools. It is also about choosing the right tool at the right moment, about
knowing the possibilities and limitations of each tool and about quickly finding another tool if
the results are not as expected. In this article, we reflect on our experiences with a particular tool,

Results-Based Accountability (RBA). The context is the neighbourhood regeneration process in Katendrecht. This peninsula neighbourhood is located in the centre of what used to be a lively harbour area of Rotterdam (the Netherlands). We claim that adopting a proven method of citizen participation is no guarantee of results if the local context is not taken into account and if local decisions are not related to decision-making processes at higher policy levels.

We will focus on three topics. Firstly, we will discuss the merits of the Results-Based Accountability participation method in its own right. Secondly, we will draw attention to the limitations of procedures that rely heavily on decision-making, such as RBA, and to complement this method, we will suggest the development of a shared story or narrative. Finally, we will focus on the relevance of the policy environment for neighbourhood regeneration. Having elaborated these issues we will then be able to assess the value of RBA in neighbourhood regeneration processes.

Keywords

participation, neighbourhood regeneration, RBA, community, narrative, symbolism, decision-making, social intervention, shared story, storytelling

SAMENVATTING

Goed gereedschap: half werk?

Zoals voor alle ambachten geldt, behelst goed vakmanschap in sociale interventiepraktijken meer dan het ontwikkelen en toepassen van gereedschap. In interventiepraktijken is het immers ook van belang om op het juiste moment de juiste "gereedschappen" te gebruiken en over te schakelen op een andere werkwijze als de gehanteerde benadering niet werkt.

In dit artikel worden de praktijkervaringen besproken die zijn opgedaan met één specifiek gereedschap dat in sociale interventiepraktijken wordt gebruikt: de *Results-Based Accountability* (RBA). Deze ervaringen zijn opgedaan in de Rotterdamse wijk Katendrecht, in het kader van de stedelijke vernieuwing. De auteurs claimen dat een bewezen methode als RBA alleen succes zal hebben als rekening wordt gehouden met de context waarin een interventie plaatsvindt en als centrale (op stedelijk niveau) en decentrale besluitvormingsprocessen (op het niveau van de wijk en de interventie) rekening houden met elkaar. Drie onderwerpen passeren daarbij de revu. Allereerst wordt ingegaan op de positieve aspecten van de methode RBA. Vervolgens wordt gewezen op de nadelen van methoden die sterk leunen op besluitvormingsprocessen, zoals RBA. De auteurs stellen voor om als aanvulling op de methode het "verhaal" van de buurt te reconstrueren. Ten derde wordt de beleidscontext waarin de interventie plaatsvindt belicht, waarna

het artikel wordt besloten met een oordeel over de waarde van RBA als gereedschap in
de stedelijke vernieuwing.

Trefwoorden

participatie, stedelijke vernieuwing, RBA, buurtreminiscentie, symboliek, besluitvormingsprocessen,
sociale interventie, gedeelde verhalen

INTRODUCTION

Background

Katendrecht has always been a notorious neighbourhood of the city of Rotterdam. In the late
nineteenth century this small, independent village became a part of Rotterdam to accommodate
the ever-growing Rotterdam harbour. The new city neighbourhood soon became very lively and
started to attract many illegal activities such as prostitution, gambling and trading in stolen goods,
along with many boarding houses and pubs. In addition, until the Second World War, Katendrecht
was home to the largest Chinese community in Europe. Indeed, the neighbourhood is still quite
famous as a harbour district among sailors around the world.

Since the 1960s, harbour activities in Rotterdam have started to move to the periphery of the city,
although they still have not quite disappeared from Katendrecht. It was only towards the end of
the 1970s that prostitution was banned from the neighbourhood due to the persistent action of
the residents. While prostitution was involved with other criminal activities, strangely enough, after
winning the struggle to ban prostitution, the problems were not resolved. It seems that the "code
of silence" towards the police, connected to a prostitution subculture, lingered on. Even now
calling the police is more or less against the rules for many residents.

Today, Katendrecht is still a notorious area due to armed and other robberies, murder, youth gangs,
rape and other criminal activities. These problems can be related to the disappearance of jobs and
to the influx of low-skilled immigrants due to the weak position of Katendrecht on the housing
market, but also and probably mostly due to the marginal culture mentioned above. In sum,
despite its long-standing position on the policy agenda, Katendrecht has far from overcome its
problems and still has to deal with its bad reputation.

The population of the neighbourhood can be divided into three groups: (1) the indigenous
Dutch households who have lived in the social housing dwellings from the start, (2) the
immigrants who have arrived since the late 1970s (Surinamese, Antilleans, Turks, Moroccans

and the Cape Verde Islanders), and (3) the new, middle-class homeowners, most of whom come from other parts of the city. Katendrecht can thus be described as a heterogeneous neighbourhood in all senses.

Urban restructuring policies

In the Netherlands, Rotterdam is renowned for its ambitious urban restructuring plans and often provocative ideas about fighting crime and poverty. Within this context, much effort is put into the improvement of both the physical and the socioeconomic environment. In Katendrecht, old social housing dwellings are being replaced with new owner-occupied houses to attract more wealthy households to the area. Most of the new houses have been built along the waterfront. Furthermore, the traditional centre of the neighbourhood, Deliplein, has been refurbished and new and trendy businesses brought in. One flagship project is the return of the SS Rotterdam, a large former cruise ship. The ship is being transformed into a hotel as well as a leisure centre (although the future of this project is a matter of public debate).

However, the story of Katendrecht is complicated and problems cannot be solved overnight. In addition, interventions that were successful in other neighbourhoods have not been successful in relieving the problems in Katendrecht. An explanation can partly be found in the fact that the inhabitants of Katendrecht were rarely consulted during the restructuring processes. Despite all the interventions in their neighbourhood, residents still lack trust in the authorities and have remained sceptical about the future of their neighbourhood. Policymakers have become increasingly aware that improvement of Katendrecht would not be possible without the support and the efforts of the residents themselves.

Current discussions

Giving the residents a more central position in restructuring policies fits well with the current discussion in academia concerning social work. Boutellier & Boonstra (in press) argue that community development in the twenty-first century should not be seen as a method, but rather as "a perspective on social policy". Since the mid-1980s, social work in the Netherlands has increasingly become aware of the accountability aspect and questioned its own legitimacy (what is our contribution to society?). At the same time, the Dutch welfare state has shifted from a focus on a socioeconomically stable situation for all citizens, towards a focus on individual development and upward mobility (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid [Scientific Council for Government Policy] [WRR], 2006). Regarding the poor response to previous policies, it became

clear that Katendrecht would need interventions that were developed in response to the following concern: How can we respond to individual needs and resolve individual problems while at the same time improving the whole neighbourhood? Boutellier & Boonstra (in press) state that community initiatives are often likely to fail if they are institutionalized, for example, through social work intervention, because it means residents have to fit into a top-down process which mainly focuses on the results to be achieved – more or less working around residents rather than empowering them. From this, we can conclude that for Katendrecht, any social programme that is to be carried out thus needs to be transparent and the residents' perspective must take the lead.

RBA as an instrument for a sense of community
In 2007, the local government (Feijenoord sub-municipality), the largest housing association in Katendrecht (De Nieuwe Unie) and the SS Rotterdam joined forces. Together they formed a three-party consortium, the so-called steering committee, and decided to adopt the American RBA method. With this they hoped that they would gain greater understanding of the ideas and expectations of the residents and would be able to increase resident participation.
The project was implemented under the name of the "JES project" undertaken by Huiskens Kaygun & Partners, an organization involved in community development projects, in collaboration with the Verwey-Jonker Institute, a Dutch institute involved in research into social issues. Wherever we use the pronoun "we", this refers to the team made up of Huiskens Kaygun & Partners and the Verwey-Jonker Institute.

Results-Based Accountability and its merits

RBA stands for "Results-Based Accountability". In the Netherlands it is mostly known through Mark Friedman's work *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough* (2005). The method emphasizes the importance of local involvement and is characterized by a collective approach: problems have to be defined collectively and have to be addressed as such. To do so, all those involved need to understand each other and develop mutual trust. The empowerment of residents is therefore one of the central goals in the RBA method, as well as clear communication (transparency) among all of the actors involved (Meinema, 2000). Moreover, an integrated approach among the many professionals working in and/or on behalf of the neighbourhood is believed to be necessary for successful interventions. In addition, RBA provides indicators with which residents can frequently monitor achievements. In these respects the method appears promising, enhancing participation and providing measurable results.

Stages in decision-making
The entire decision-making process can be divided into several stages, leading to a "neighbourhood agenda".

1. Determining the actors
The first stage consists of determining who needs to be involved. In Katendrecht, the steering committee made this decision. An important precondition for the success of the process was that all three groups of residents had to be involved from the start (indigenous residents, immigrants and new owner-occupiers). At first, these groups were involved separately, and were only confronted with each others' ideas later in the process. From the professional side, almost all of the institutions and organizations that were approached responded positively to this request for participation by the steering committee.
The two primary schools in the neighbourhood had a prominent role in the process, clearly supporting the project and offering their classrooms as locations for neighbourhood meetings. The only rejection of the invitation to participate came from the social workers in Katendrecht, who were in the midst of a reorganization process and could not plan far enough ahead to consider implementing the RBA method. By not involving the social workers, the tenant organization KBO was also, almost automatically, excluded. At a later stage, this would frustrate the process because the KBO felt left out and turned against RBA rather than joining forces with those already involved in the process.

2. Determining the goals to be achieved
In the second stage, the three groups of residents were invited to a meeting and common goals were defined. In addition to Friedman's original questionnaire, which he used to set up RBA, a few questions about the neighbourhood were added, in order to emphasize neighbourhood attachment and the common identity of Katendrecht. On the basis of the group discussion we prepared a draft version of a neighbourhood agenda. Three meetings were organized with the participants of the group sessions, as a result of which participants agreed on three key issues: (1) liveability and neighbourhood attachment, (2) a lively neighbourhood with plenty of shops and public transport, and (3) social safety (including traffic safety).

3. Creating measurable indicators
These main issues were further elaborated during a "neighbourhood conference" which was held in the Chinese restaurant in the heart of the neighbourhood. The third step also comprised the "translation" of the desired results into measurable indicators. All participants were divided into small groups, each discussing a few matters, to gain greater insight into their specific ideas about

how to counteract the problems observed. An indicator of attachment to the neighbourhood, for example, was, according to the participants, the average rent on the peninsula. Furthermore, residents wanted to prevent the area from becoming socially and ethnically segregated by striving to maintain the mixed character of the two primary schools in the neighbourhood and prevent them from turning into "white" and "black" schools. With respect to shops and public transport, the most important improvement for the residents would be an ATM at the entrance to the neighbourhood. Other goals to be achieved were to have shops in different parts of the neighbourhood so that people would start walking through the neighbourhood again, and flexible opening hours for shops so that people would be on the streets during both the day and the evening. In addition, a desire was expressed for a few pubs to be located in the neighbourhood to encourage social life back into the area. With respect to public transport, the frequency of the local bus was to be increased. The most urgent of the three issues, social safety, concentrated on youngsters and youth gangs. The authority of and respect for adults in general would have to be restored. Furthermore, the reporting of problems by residents needed to be improved, something which would initially result in an increase in reports and an improvement in the chance of catching offenders, followed by a decrease in reports as result of a decreasing crime rate.

4. From indicators to a neighbourhood agenda

All of the ideas for solutions were constructed in the fourth, fifth and sixth stages by asking five questions: (1) How can we explain the current situation (what went wrong in the past)? (2) How are we doing at the moment? (3) How will we be doing if we do not intervene? (4) What is needed to counteract the undesired situation? and (5) What can we do about it ourselves? Explanations of the current situation arising during the fourth stage were, for example, that the entrance to the peninsula had become unsafe when the factories had closed down. The fifth stage then focused on questions such as, Who is going to do something about youth gangs? and Who is going to safeguard the mixed character of the two schools? Finally, a neighbourhood agenda was agreed upon by all participants, which was called "De Deal" (The Deal). The agenda contained tasks and responsibilities as well as ways of measuring the nature of improvement and its pace.

LIMITATIONS OF DECISION-MAKING PROCEDURES

Beyond rationality: towards a shared symbolism

RBA aims at developing shared agendas and organizing accountability. However, in Katendrecht this focus on rational and concerted decision-making turned out to be insufficient. Looking back,

we can conclude that resident involvement in neighbourhood regeneration should not be limited to purely rational procedures. Problems are complex and solutions never straightforward. The many stories of the individual residents and neighbourhood organizations were not done justice to in the process. While many problems and solutions were mentioned, there were underlying problems that did not come out into the open because of mutual distrust between groups of residents and fear of talking in public.

In order to bridge the gap between different social groups and gain or regain trust among the residents, we related the rationalist interventions to a shared symbolic universe. By this we mean a narrative that would encompass the different and often conflicting meanings that residents attach to their neighbourhood and to the people living there. Each resident has a story to tell which goes beyond the usual pointing of fingers, and the same is true for groups of residents. As a consequence, what may be a solution for one social group may often cause problems for other groups. For example, residents indicated that immigrant children hanging around until late in the evening was a huge problem, but their parents denied the fact that their children caused trouble and stated that the residents were just being intolerant and should not complain. Finding a rational solution presupposes a shared frame of reference concerning what constitutes a problem and what constitutes a solution in the neighbourhood. As the interests of groups of residents often conflict, such a frame of reference can hardly be found using only rational procedures. Instead, a shared "story" would be necessary, in which every resident plays a part. Conflicts and challenges, differences of character and struggles with these differences are, of course, part of any story. In such a story, all residents become members of the same symbolic universe, despite conflicts of interest or problems in the past.

Stories: the underlying patterns

In order to gain more insight into the story of Katendrecht, the team organized an elaborate set of group sessions with different social groups in the neighbourhood. Residents were very keen to participate, so instead of the 20 group sessions planned, we ended up with 30. We also conducted 10 individual interviews with local entrepreneurs. In fact, the number of sessions and interviews could have been more limited from a methodological point of view. However, for us the issue was not just about collecting information, we also wanted residents to engage in each other's stories, so that a start could be made on an "emergent" shared story of Katendrecht.

Apart from the typical RBA topics (see the description of the method in the first section) we asked participants to explain in what way they felt attached to Katendrecht. Using a map of the neighbourhood, we also asked them to place hearts on their favourite spots and lightning bolts

on places they most disliked. The resulting discussions were very lively and led to an exchange of experiences and feelings with regard to different locations in the neighbourhood. The significance of the neighbourhood and the way participants spoke about it turned out to be very diverse. The traditional residents often elaborated on the fact that they had been living in Katendrecht for a long time or were born there. They felt strongly attached to the neighbourhood and explained that it was very much like a village community where everybody knew everybody. The story told by this group also valued the waterfront and the harbour activities positively and often referred to the difficulties they had faced when they were trying to ban prostitution. Newcomers, on the other hand, highlighted the rough history as one of the interesting aspects of the neighbourhood. They often contrasted the liveliness of Katendrecht with other regenerated areas, such as Kop van Zuid across the river. They dreamed of living in a lively neighbourhood where you could sense the rough history it had been through, with lots of small shops and "the bakery around the corner". These stories, especially those of the newcomers, were often related to individual circumstances and life events: "This is the first house I personally own" or "We are finally going to live together".

Beyond money: towards a different kind of energy

Friction between individual stories and that of the neighbourhood is not the only reason we suggest complementing the RBA method. Neighbourhood regeneration requires a lot of energy. As for rational decisions, money is a good way of enlivening the process, with material interests certainly encouraging residents to invest energy in neighbourhood processes. However, it is often not enough. In the end, it is always the community itself that has to change, and residents are not professionals. Money cannot provide for their passion and enthusiasm. A shared narrative of the neighbourhood creates a shared feeling of belonging, mobilizes emotions and thereby adds a very different kind of energy to the process. For instance, reconciliation is often a very emotional process which requires engaging directly with the person with whom you have a problem. An illustration from the Katendrecht case may help to clarify our point.

A very persistent problem in Katendrecht are the children in the streets who reject any criticism or even reasonable comments from adults, harass passers-by and engage in vandalism. Indeed, some of these children have been accused of participating in group rape and armed robbery. While there are different ethnic groups involved, a significant number of them are of Antillean descent. Causes and effects are hard to separate here, but it is understandable that the relationship between the original Katendrechters and the Antillean population suffers as a result of this behaviour. During our implementation of the RBA method, we tried to involve all groups, including the problematic young

Antilleans. We set up a group interview with them and invited them as well as their parents – mostly mothers – to the "neighbourhood conference" where the neighbourhood agenda was to be formulated.

Thus we succeeded in involving all groups. However, although the children did come to the conference, they behaved badly, much to the dismay of many others who attended. As a consequence, prejudice seemed to be reinforced rather than overcome. In the follow-up to the conference, the Antillean mothers proposed that the children should be taken on a trip to an amusement park. The RBA workers considered the idea very inappropriate, considering the behaviour of the children. They subsequently visited the women separately and discussed their frustrations with them, arguing that the children were a disgrace to the Antillean community and should not be rewarded for this. In the end the women agreed and suggested they would have the children prepare an Antillean feast for the whole neighbourhood. In addition, the women offered to take responsibility for the neighbourhood's participation in the famous Rotterdam Summer Carnival parade with a float on which they would present and enact the beauty of Katendrecht.

As they presented this last idea to the group of active residents that had formed during the RBA meetings in the neighbourhood, they made it clear that the presentation involved a lot of work and that they would need the support of other residents. Instantly, some of the traditional Katendrechters offered their help. Of course this was a moment of great symbolic significance, a handshake as it were between two different social groups in the neighbourhood. Precisely because of the difficult relationship between the groups, all participants appreciated the moment for what it was: a breakthrough![1] Clearly, this success would not have been achieved if we had just stuck to the RBA method.

From bonding to bridging: bringing the groups together

Although we paid much attention to the symbolic component of neighbourhood experiences by introducing the narratives, we still believe it was not enough. If you want to change a neighbourhood, residents should feel some kind of a bond with other groups of residents. To whom do you consider yourself to belong to when you mention "sense of belonging"? Is it just "your own people" or is it the neighbourhood community? Is it the territory, or your own personal life history? Although we started out collecting different stories and perspectives on Katendrecht, we had not brought them together systematically or confronted them with each other. As a result, relationships between different social groups remained difficult and often one group considered another to be part of the problem rather than the solution.

As a consequence, concerted reflection and decision-making was still difficult. At the same time, this was also a kind of taboo subject, because everybody wanted to have a positive relationship with the other groups. Thus, it was difficult to discuss group relationships, and as a result of these relationships it was also difficult to come to an agreement about the actions that should be taken.

Accessible meetings

Another, more familiar limitation of RBA is the emphasis it places on deliberation and discussion. Although the method aims for action at an early stage, participants must also go through sessions in which they discuss the results they want to see, analyse the development of problem situations and design strategies to attain the desired results. All this is much closer to the deliberation end of the spectrum than to the action end. It was not easy for the poorly educated Antillean women mentioned above to join the other residents in a discussion. Indeed, if they had not been accompanied by a professional worker with whom they were familiar, they would not have come to the meetings at all.

The conclusion, then, is that RBA is limited if you wish to make a difference, not to mention a breakthrough, in complex neighbourhoods and problem situations. The symbolic and cultural component in particular must be dealt with and there must also be some kind of consensus among different groups in the neighbourhood. However, the question is whether there is any single method that would be suitable for such a complicated assignment. Complementary methods might be necessary, which are able to address the symbolic component, as well as the relationships between different social groups. There is, however, another category of complication that also has to be dealt with: the policy context of the intervention. We will elaborate on this issue in the following section.

THE UNDENIABLE FACTOR: THE POLICY CONTEXT[2]

Neighbourhood change is a complex process. The ensemble of neighbourhood, professionals and relevant policy arenas tends to behave like a complex system, as if resilient towards new impulses. Any one-dimensional intervention will disturb the status quo, not only affecting the problematic parts but also other existing relationships and the interests of various actors and parties. Usually these will continue to act in the way they used to, and partly react in ways that counteract the effect of the intervention. Thus, the existing neighbourhood as a system tends to reclaim the problematic "territory lost" by the intervention.

To illustrate this notion, we will return to "the story of Katendrecht", with an example of the power of daily routine. Part of the deal with the local council was that the agenda of the residents would determine the actions of the whole spectrum of professionals who were active at the neighbourhood level. Of course this implied that things were going to change for professional workers and their organizations. After the first tentative formulation of the neighbourhood agenda, a meeting of representatives of neighbourhood service providers was organized. Unfortunately, only some of the invited organizations showed up. Moreover, although the invitation aimed at middle management, most of those who attended the meeting were professionals working at the operational level. As a consequence no clear picture arose concerning what neighbourhood professional organizations had to offer the resident's agenda. This was consistent with the existing routine-like attitude towards neighbourhood change. A second meeting was planned to discuss the situation, however, it became clear that only a small number intended to come to the meeting. Officials from the local council then decided to call off the meeting because support was insufficient. This was consistent with its normal way of operating. However, we disagreed with their interpretation, as, in our view, the lack of interest was to be expected because the parties involved were not used to this way of operating and apparently considered the meeting inconsequential. The professionals invited thus lacked the necessary sense of urgency and part of the focus of our project was precisely to overcome this attitude. However, to do this we would have had to attach consequences to the behaviour of the participants, otherwise their behaviour would not change and they would not contribute sufficiently to the necessary changes required in the neighbourhood. Moreover, they might even work against the chosen method. Thus, although we succeeded in formulating a common agenda for the residents, the behaviour of the rest of the system did not change. This undermined residents' trust in the project and thus counteracted the process of change that had been instigated.

As well as the power of routine, the lack of continuity also presented a problem. It is important to bear in mind the geographical and departmental environment of the project. The city of Rotterdam consists of 13 city districts (sub-municipalities). Katendrecht, together with seven other neighbourhoods, is located within the district of Feijenoord on the south bank of the river Meuse. At the highest administrative level, the city of Rotterdam itself is struggling to improve the position of the city. The social problems of the city are considered – almost traditionally – the most serious of the larger Dutch cities. Within the city, the southern districts historically lag behind, while the northern districts are more dynamic and more open to the world, and this is where the high-skilled Rotterdammers live. The residents of the southern districts, on the contrary, are often referred to as "peasants from the south".

To turn the tide in the southern districts, local governments and housing corporations have signed a very ambitious agreement ("Pact op Zuid") to achieve the necessary change, involving an investment of one billion euros. Partners are the local government and a number of housing corporations. A strategic steering committee at the city level has been made responsible for the execution of the agreement, and because it concerns the regeneration of the areas located in the sub-district of Feijenoord, the local government at the sub-municipal level also participates.

The initiative for the RBA project originated from this steering committee. Its aim was to complement the predominantly physical approach in Katendrecht with a social approach. A project group at the level of the city district was formed, in which the sub-municipality and the housing corporation participated, as well as the SS Rotterdam, as mentioned above. Responsibility for the social component was added to the list of responsibilities of the project leader for the physical component.

After the initial phase, the focus shifted from a municipal and strategic perspective to a sub-municipal and operational perspective. Unfortunately, the initial project leader moved on to another assignment and a new, more operationally oriented project leader without the equivalent professional status was appointed for the social component. As a consequence, strategic "backup" diminished, along with, for a large part, support for the workers on the front line of the project, and miscommunication started to arise between the workers and the project group. Also, the impact on other professionals in the neighbourhood diminished, and familiar – and ineffective – professional routines regained territory. The coherence of the project started to fall apart. The initial understanding that the agenda of the residents should be leading was undermined and trust between parties broke down. The workers in the project invested heavily in additional activities in an attempt to safeguard the necessary results. However, by the time the turning point in the neighbourhood had almost been reached – largely because of the RBA method adopted – the project was cancelled by the project group.[3]

Future policies: lessons and limitations

The main problem confronted by the project was the shift from a strategic to an operational perspective in the partnership, triggered by a lack of continuity in relation to personnel at the highest levels. This is not a new problem (see Van Ewijk, 2007). A lack of continuity in the professionals who are involved may be a serious hazard for any project attempting to achieve complex change (see e.g. Van Marissing, 2008). As it is impossible to demand that people stay in the job until the project is finished, there is no straightforward solution to this problem. We find that some form of support at a strategic policy level is imperative to protect the goals of a project

such as this, otherwise the strategic goals tend to be replaced with operational goals and fall back into more or less standard procedures and routines. We believe that frontline workers (Hartman & Tops, 2005) play a crucial role here. In addition to their responsibility for the execution of the project, they should also constantly strive to maintain the attention of the policymakers operating at higher levels and keep them focused on the project. Of course, this also requires additional skills and support.

CONCLUSIONS

As an instrument for formulating a neighbourhood agenda RBA was successful in Katendrecht. Many more people were involved than usual, a neighbourhood agenda was formulated that was supported by all groups of residents, and a team of residents was formed to implement the agenda. In this article, however, we focused especially on the limitations of RBA. Although Results-Based Accountability as a method may work well in various situations, it proved to be insufficient to accomplish the changes necessary in Katendrecht. We believe that this was due to too strong a focus being placed on interventions that stem from rationalist-based decisions. The symbolic component of the life-world of residents was particularly overlooked. During the process, we became increasingly convinced that developing a shared story is essential for regeneration, especially if the neighbourhood has to deal with complex problems. We therefore argue that finding such story would be a necessary complement to RBA as described in Mark Friedman's book. This recommendation possibly does not apply to more homogeneous areas where there are no tensions or misunderstandings. Most of the Dutch problem neighbourhoods, however, can be described as heterogeneous.

To find a shared story, the professionals involved in the RBA method must be able to see beyond the strict ideas of impartiality and rationalism: if it is necessary to concentrate more on specific groups, the precise number of meetings proposed by Mark Friedman becomes less important. If the researcher senses that people do not dare to be open to residents from other groups, it is more than warranted to put more effort into listening to the stories behind the standard complaints about social safety and housing quality and to work actively towards a climate of trust and openness. In this way residents will end up speaking openly about their fears and frustrations and about their visions of a better future, and a shared symbolism will begin to charge the process with a valuable impetus and emotional involvement.

As a suggestion for future action we would thus recommend further investment in a shared story of Katendrecht, and recently different methods to achieve this have become available. One example is the concept and method of "neighbourhood branding", in which residents come

together and develop a collective "brand" for the neighbourhood (De Meere, Van der Graaf & Fortuin, 2005). Branding usually creates a sense of togetherness across different sections of the community, so that new dynamics become possible. Of course, the notion of a "brand" is a more or less static concept and it is conceivable that residents would rather compose a story than create a brand, as it is a much more dynamic way of thinking (Glasgow "Dreaming City" Project, 2009, www.glasgow2020.co.uk, accessed June 27, 2009).

Of course listening to residents, having them decide what needs to be done first, even if it conflicts with standard routine procedures, can have repercussions for the relationship between local government and residents. Not only does the work at hand change, but also the way results are assessed and evaluated. Here RBA definitely has an advantage because evaluation is a shared responsibility among all stakeholders. This also means that so-called objective measures can be complemented with measures to which residents attach value. A very persistent problem in Katendrecht, for example, was the perceived lack of social safety. Although the crime rates had fallen significantly, the sense of threat remained extraordinarily high, mainly due to a few violent incidents that had a profound impact on the community. Rather than the figures reducing the feelings of insecurity, the effect was that residents questioned the official statistics. As such, positive statistics can also lead to a decline of trust in the local government. Residents do not consider robberies and murders as incidents, but rather catastrophes that disrupt their world. If statistics do not reflect these feelings, so much the worse for the statistics. RBA creates a platform to collectively assess and evaluate changes and thereby contributes to a firm basis for concerted action.

Empowerment methods such as RBA can only succeed if all actors in the system commit themselves to the process. The ideas at the district level may be revolutionary, but if the people who work in the neighbourhood do not understand and support the new way of operating, they will counteract the change. Professional frontline workers have a role to play in establishing the necessary partnerships, which is no easy task, and they are still being underestimated. In order to take their work as a departure point for policy another kind of steering is necessary. In this regard, in the Netherlands, the concept of "frontline management" (Hartman & Tops, 2005) is becoming increasingly popular, referring to the capacity of political and government leaders to facilitate or create effective professional activity on the "work floor". Bringing together frontline workers and policymakers, however, remains difficult. It requires the combination of traditional steering activities and frontline steering. Here local politics and higher management have a responsibility. However, we believe the process has to move in two directions. Professionals also need the skills and the competence to organize their own support from local government and to commit officials to the task at hand.

NOTE

1 Later we also discussed a much-debated television programme with the group of residents – *PremTime* – in which the reporter is harassed by Katendrecht children <http://player.omroep.nl/?aflid=7032961>.

2 At this point it is important to stress that we are not describing the process from a policy standpoint. Our perspective is at the level of the professional intervention. If we pay attention to the policy context it is because it is part and parcel of the necessary change.

3 It should be clear that we cannot claim to be impartial. The role of the authors as researchers was to support the RBA procedure with insights, knowledge of the methodology, by developing a measurement instrument and by collecting and presenting data. As such, we were part of the project team. Apart from that our role was to analyse and report the experiences (good and bad) and their implications for further interventions in the area, but not to present an objective evaluation of the entire programme.

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