

The rise and development of citizen collectivities as investigated and supported by the Institutions for Collective Action Research Team

Dear reader,

I am part of two national networks of citizen collectivities:

1. The *Landelijke Vereniging voor Kleine Kernen* ('National Association of Rural Communities' or LVKK) is a network of regional associations for rural communities and community centres, financed by the Dutch Ministry of Internal Affairs. It gives tailored advice (through its regional members) to over 4000 residents' associations/resident collectivities, community centre organisations and many local citizen initiatives throughout the Netherlands. Residents' associations focus on many different issues around the quality of life in their neighbourhood and contribute to giving voice to these communities. Within these communities, community centres often play a central role. The boards of these centres are also supported through the LVKK. I have chaired the regional section of VKK Limburg for 12 years and was, as such, also member of the board of the LVKK itself. I am currently the representative for the LVKK at the European Rural Community Alliance.
2. *Nederland Zorgt Voor Elkaar* ('The Netherlands Takes Care of One Another' or NLZVE) is a Dutch network of over 700 citizen initiatives concerned with questions of welfare, care and housing. NLZVE was founded in March 2017. It shares best practices, struggles, solutions and research, and it represents these organisations on a national level. A Help Desk facilitates the exchange of knowledge and supports (new) initiatives. In May 2018 the NLZVE presented an action program to the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, which resulted in acknowledgement and financial support in December 2018. I am one of the board members of NLZVE.

My involvement with both the LVKK and NLZVE is connected with the fact that I am also the chair of a very special care collective: 't LaefHoês, in Horst-America, the Netherlands. This is a care home where health professionals (from a GP to parenting support) work together with several working groups of volunteers who are committed to community care (for instance a community kitchen, repair cafe, etc.). I am also a member of the Network of Care Cooperation's Southern Netherlands supervisory board (*Raad van Toezicht Koepel Zorgcoöperaties Zuid Nederland*).



For both the LVKK and NLZVE our collaboration with Institutions for Collective Action (ICA) has been very fruitful. I would like to explain this by giving some examples.

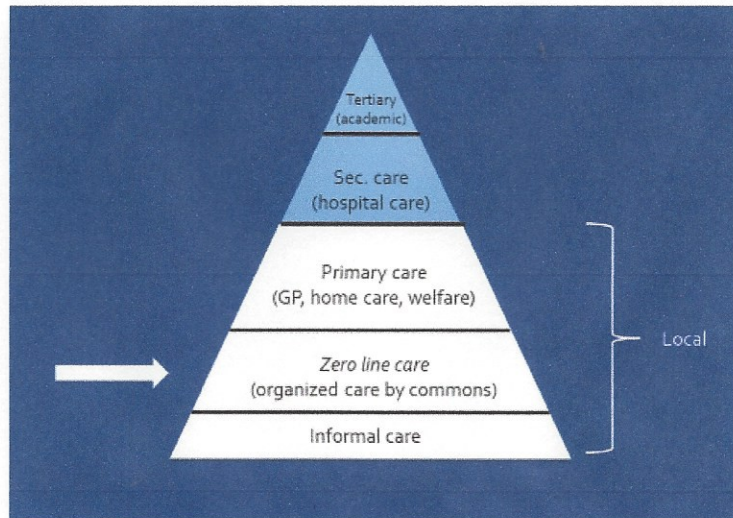
Collaboration LVKK and ICA

In the period 2017/2018 ICA has done research into societal change (in particular the emerge of citizen initiatives) and how this impacted the operations of residents' associations, and what roles they believe they should play. This research was commissioned by the LVKK. More specifically, it answered the following research question: "How can residents' associations reinvent themselves by adjusting to new challenges, presented by the emerging new citizen collectivities?". The research has resulted in a description of four roles these residents' associations can play: a representative (1), advising (2), activating (3) and connecting (4) role. The research has given us greater insights into how and why collectivities come into place and how they can adapt to changes. The report has been translated into a practical tool: a board game called 'het Kleine Kernen Spel'. This board game is a fun and straightforward way for members of residents' associations to think about their values and operations, and in which direction they want to develop. As we speak, the board game is travelling through the country and each association that plays the game gives feedback on a website supervised together with the ICA team. This way, the research is followed up and the development of the associations is tracked. The importance of this development has been acknowledged in the agreement made by the LVKK with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and is integrated in the idea of democratic innovation in the Netherlands.

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Collaboration NLZVE and ICA

The contribution of ICA to NLZVE illustrates how historians contribute to the social debate. Tine De Moor's historical research into the third wave of commons has benefited the emancipation of residents' initiatives in the area of welfare, care and housing (who often choose to unite in a cooperative). The rise of care cooperatives has initiated an important change in the Dutch care system, giving residents or civilians the possibility to provide what is known as zero line care (see figure). In the next three years, NLZVE will further strengthen these new care cooperatives.

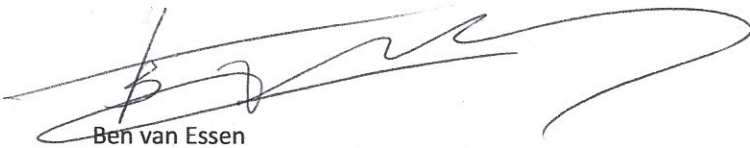


NLZVE's program *Zorgzame Gemeenschappen* ('Caring Communities') is focused on three focal points:

1. Back to Basics: people caring for each other
2. Simplify things for care cooperatives
3. Onto a sustainable and resilient management and organization form for these cooperatives

The work of ICA is important for each of these areas, but particularly valuable for focal point 3, because it is about enhancing the management and structure of commons. NLZVE would like to intensify working with ICA here, to gain more insights in to the governance of care collectivities, their continuity and unique qualities (which should be preserved). Another area of interest is increasing visibility of the societal impact of these care collectivities. How can we develop tools to support them in their search for resilience?

The number of citizen initiatives in the Netherlands is growing. New initiatives emerge on top of, or next to, 'old' ones such as neighborhood associations. Residents may create a care home for elderly or start a cooperation for fiberglass. All of these initiatives are, in the end, created to develop the community and answer to a need in society, in times where society is increasingly focused on the individual rather than the community. They illustrate a new way of (collective) thinking and acting. This new development, and sense of community, can only blossom with sufficient support from academia. For me, it is therefore truly essential to continue to work together with the ICA Team.



Ben van Essen

Sevenum, May 14, 2019