ICEC Newsletter No 2: Notes from the field

Welcome to our second ICEC newsletter! Does participation in neighbourhood initiatives increase interethnic co-existence and individual neighbourhood belonging? If so, how exactly does involvement translate into greater perceptions of attachment? How do neighbourhood interventions foster or hinder larger neighbourhood belonging? These questions are at the heart of the ICEC project. In this issue we describe in more detail how we approach these questions empirically. You will find brief insights into the fieldwork taking place in the three ICEC cities of Amsterdam, Stockholm and Vienna, as well as information on one of the innovative data gathering techniques we are using, the so-called urban living labs. This newsletter is the second in a series that will be sent during the course of the project, designed not only to keep interested persons up-to-date about the project, but also to stimulate future discussion and dialogue. For more comprehensive information, including events, project reports and our latest publications, please visit our website at www.icecproject.com.

Housing block in Bijlmer, Amsterdam (Source: Y. Franz)
ICEC: Our interest in neighbourhood initiatives

Our project aims to gain an understanding of the consequences of (non-) participation in neighbourhood-based initiatives aimed at fostering neighbourhood belonging in super-diverse areas. Our previous newsletter described in detail how we focus on a number of selected neighbourhood initiatives in each of our case study areas. Each ICEC team (Vienna, Stockholm and Amsterdam) has selected initiatives that provide spaces of encounter and focus directly on the neighbourhood or its residents.

The initiatives we have chosen however differ in some key ways, such as initiation (whether it is top-down or bottom-up), the number of participants, financial resources, range, etc. All of the initiatives are already being implemented and include, for example, neighbourhood community centres, local empowerment initiatives or free pre-school. As shown in Figure 1 below, we are interested in the link between people participating in interventions and their sense of neighbourhood belonging and how this varies according to certain characteristics of the intervention in question (e.g. the size of the

Figure 1: Potential effects of participation in neighbourhood interventions on neighbourhood belonging (own elaboration)
ICEC’s data collection:
Notes from the field

ICEC analyses how participation or non-participation in neighbourhood initiatives affects local interethnic coexistence and individual neighbourhood belonging. ICEC follows a case-by-case approach, conducting research in one neighbourhood after the other. In November 2014, all three teams started their fieldwork in the first of their three selected study areas. The main topics for discussion with the interview partners are the neighbourhood in which they live, (perceived) neighbourhood diversity, neighbourhood belonging (place attachment and social embeddedness), as well as the perception of and reasons for engagement or lack of it in local initiatives.

The Amsterdam team has started fieldwork in the Van der Pek neighbourhood. Here the main focus is on two neighbourhood interventions: a multicultural women’s centre focusing on women’s empowerment and generating intercultural contacts and learning, and a starting neighbourhood enterprise intended to create a neighbourhood management structure with local input and needs at the centre. Over the past months, Myrte Hoekstra from the Amsterdam team has conducted interviews with the people running these interventions, participants and other neighbourhood residents (non-participants), and has spent many hours observing in local spaces, talking to local business owners and participating in neighbourhood activities.

In Vienna, five interventions were chosen for in-depth analysis in the first case study area - the Hippviertel neighbourhood in Vienna’s 16th district “Ottakring”. They all provide spaces of encounter and allow for interethnic exchange. The selected group-based interventions are free pre-schools, the adult education centre and the Vienna housing partner association which provides services for residents in municipal housing blocks. As specific place-based interventions, two initiatives were identified which aim to improve living conditions and provide low threshold advice and education for the local population in this neighbourhood. The Vienna ICEC team has conducted interviews with the initiators of these organisations in November 2014, followed by in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants. Moreover, interviews have been conducted with non-participating local residents, as well as neighbourhood experts. The part of the fieldwork will be completed by the end of February 2014.

Announcement of activities from a Dutch initiative in the Van der Pekbuurt neighbourhood, Amsterdam (Source: M. Hoekstra)

Puckelboll initiative in Skärholmen, Stockholm (Source: R. Engkvist)
The Stockholm team started their fieldwork in autumn 2014 with neighbourhood visits, in which first interviews were conducted with the initiators of most of the selected initiatives, as well as with local key informants. In November 2014, the Stockholm ICEC team started to focus on their first case study area - the Rågsved neighbourhood in Stockholm. The first round of interviews were carried out with the staff of the Open Preschool initiative operated by the Enskede-Årsta-Vantör Public District Administration. For a long time open preschools in Sweden have been a complementary concept for childcare. The open preschool in Rågsved is a meeting-point for parents/guardians from the local community where they, together with their children, are encouraged to engage in group activities led by professionals. The initiative can be seen as an effort to create a meeting point for those people with limited access to the wider society. The concept of the open preschool in Rågsved provides easy access to the public network of institutions, as well as to the neighbourhood. Following the first interview, participant observation was conducted during a number of days at the open preschool whereby ICEC researcher Sandra Karlsson attended the daily activities, as well as engaged in informal conversations with the participants/visitors. At present, interviews with participants of the selected initiatives are held.

In all three cities, interviews are not only held with participating or non-participating residents, but also through interaction via so-called ‘urban living labs’.

Interested in how ICEC conceptualizes Urban Living Labs?


As well as collecting relevant information for our ICEC project, the Viennese urban living lab serves as a space for processes of co-creation between researchers and participants, i.e. a common activity as an outcome of intensive exchange and interactions between the two parties involved in the space of encounter. In the Viennese case, for example, ICEC researcher Yvonne Franz participated in the weekly sewing class on a regular basis. Through her participation in an activity in the urban living lab, she was not only able to gain first-hand information from the local community participating in the initiative on the topics relevant to ICEC, but she also learned about the needs of this particular group of participants and local residents.

As a consequence, researchers and residents developed an empowerment activity, i.e. a guided excursion into the city centre. Although not far away from our case study neighbourhood, many of the local participants had never visited the centre before. The sewing course organisers are currently considering opportunities to promote participants’ sewing skills taking a step further in economic empowerment.

In Amsterdam, our ICEC partners considered the neighbourhood itself and the community places of initiatives within this neighbourhood as spaces of encounter and which therefore serve as urban living labs. Within these spaces of encounter, the researcher and the respondent meet and exchange about perceptions of these local initiatives and neighbourhood belonging. Through walking interviews, regular interviews, informal conversations, participatory observations and additional observations an understanding of neighbourhood belonging is created between the researcher and the local resident. The latter is put centre stage as a local expert on neighbourhood perception and individual identification through engagement in local activities.

The ICEC partners in Stockholm perceive the urban living lab as a toolbox of methods that come together and create a comprehensive understanding of neighbourhood identity. After identifying activities and how they affect individual neighbourhood belonging, the Stockholm team took a further step by creating focus groups. By doing so, they gain rich insights on the effects of participating or not-participating in local activities.

We define Urban Living Labs as a space...

...of encounter within a neighbourhood where the community can meet, learn and collaborate as part of their daily life.

...in which researchers engage with the community to gain an insight into how the community perceive local policy measures, neighbourhood identity and neighbourhood embeddedness.
By the end of February 2015, all ICEC teams will have completed their interview and observation phase in the first study area. Consequently, we will move on to the second neighbourhood of interest in each city. These neighbourhoods are Gumpendorf in Vienna, H-buurt (Bijlmer Centrum) in Amsterdam and Skärholmen in Stockholm. The second fieldwork phase will last until late summer before we continue our observations and data collection in the third neighbourhood of each city. With the beginning of the second fieldwork phase, new and locally adopted implementations of urban living labs will be used. We hope to be able to provide further updates on the new ULLs in the second neighbourhoods on our webpage. Make sure to not miss it.

**Meet the ICEC team**

In spring and summer 2015, ICEC team members will present first findings from the field work at academic conferences. To begin with, Myrte Hoekstra will present a paper on «Neighbourhood participation in a super-diverse context at the Super-diverse! The challenges of a new paradigm for research and practice» at a conference organised by the Haagse Hogeschool (The Hague, The Netherlands). Other papers and abstracts have been submitted to international conferences at the intersection of migration research, geography and sociology - such as RC21, EUGEO or the German Congress of Geography. Please visit our webpage on a regular basis to for the most up-to-date information about future talks and presentations.

**Looking ahead: ICEC’s fieldwork in the remaining neighbourhoods**

ICEC working papers at the JPI Urban Europe Kick-Off Event in Brussels, 2014 (Source: Y. Franz)