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Panel: Community resilience in the Urban Context

**“Community performances in a multicultural crisis in Amsterdam: tacit moves
from Resistance to Resilience”**

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Abstract

This paper describes and analyses a local process of resistance and resilience in the face of an urban crisis where one group gets excluded and marginalized from local decision-making and scapegoated in the national media. An ethnographic description of the four days after the tragedy reveals how the interplay between local government, media, and the Moroccan community forces the latter to move from a mode of resistance to tacit forms of resilience. The analysis provides insights into the performances of an urban community that occupies a marginal position and is able to improvise ways to cope with the challenges of being excluded in a moment of crisis. They tacitly adapt their strategies within the limited margins local authorities provide and thereby create a space for agency. The strategies of local authorities to manage an urban crisis prevent further escalation. But do they also manage underlying tensions and grievances? The empirical details demand to rethink the notion of resilience as bottom-up process that gets constructed in the interplay between actors and institutions. I argue that when we take a close look at tacit forms of resistance and resilience, these performances could inform the repertoire of crisis management in local governance.

Introduction

At around 7:00 p.m. on Monday the 17th of January 2005, on a street in Amsterdam East, two young men on a motor scooter snatched a bag from the backseat of a car and drove off. The owner of the car reacted by driving her car in reverse. The sequence that followed ended with the two young men and their scooter pinned between the car and a tree. One of the young men jumped off the scooter and ran away, the other died. This incident unleashed a trail reactions, actions, and debates that crosscut levels from the

personal tragedy of the family to national debates on youth criminality and migration in Western Europe.

Policy-practitioners, the media, residents of Dutch descent, and members of the Moroccan community in Amsterdam East got caught in a week of crisis management full of emotions, treat of escalation, and polarized debates. Narrative interviews with different people who had to act in the crisis, ethnographic observations in the neighbourhood, and analysis of different newspaper articles are the basis for insights onto the actions and storylines that people constructed to make sense of the unfolding events.

Before we dive into the period of crisis we need to get familiar with the neighbourhood. “Amsterdam East” as we call it, is known as a multi ethnic neighbourhood on the east side of Amsterdam. The city of Amsterdam is divided into administrative boroughs that each function as an administrative entity with its own mandate. Each borough has its own borough president and civil servants who make decisions about day-to-day problems, developmental plans, social services, etc. In 2003, one year before the incidents in this case study took place, the population of East was 57.666. The borough of Amsterdam East is known for its diverse population, there is a large community of people with Moroccan descent, but also people with Surinamese, Turkish, eastern European descent make up for the population (www.oost.amsterdam.nl).

The borough had become famous two months prior to the crisis analysed in this case study when Theo van Gogh, a famous Dutch cineaste and journalist, was murdered by an Islamic fundamentalist of Moroccan descent on his way to work on Tuesday morning November 2nd, 2004. Van Gogh was famous for his critical expressions on Islam and the Islamic community in the Netherlands. The assailant shot Van Gogh and pinned a note to his chest with a knife. In the note, the assailant decried a recent film Van Gogh had made that was critical of Islam’s treatment of women and threatened to kill Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Van Gogh’s partner in the film and a member of Parliament, for her critique on Islam. The murder of Van Gogh shocked the whole nation and escalated in violent attacks on Muslim schools and mosques over the following week. In line with earlier debates on multiculturalism, the murder was quickly linked to the failure of “soft” integration policies (Hajer & Uitermark 2008; Hajer 2009).

Mayor Cohen, who was often targeted in critiques of multiculturalism, had to respond to the violence; he chose an unconventional approach. At the press conference he announced a 'lawaaifestatie' or a 'manifestation of noise'. A manifestation of noise was a reversal of the usual response to acts of senseless violence in the Netherlands. Conventionally people walk a march of silence to commemorate the victim and protest against senseless violence. The Manifestation of noise would invoke this precedent in a protest on the Dam Square and through noise show support for freedom speech, which many felt was threatened by the murder.

On the evening 2 November, the same day as the murder, 20,000 people came together on the Dam Square to make noise. A podium had been quickly erected that afternoon and stood tall in the middle of the square and Mayor Cohen and the Minister of Integration, Rita Verdonk, who had earned the nickname Iron Rita for her uncompromising policy towards immigrants, gave speeches. The murder of Theo van Gogh and the memory of a manifestation of noise strengthened the idea that integration had failed in the Netherlands and linked one specific community of immigrants – people of Moroccan descent – to the challenges of multiculturalism. The tensions between the discourses of multiculturalism and its critics are important in order to understand the unfolding narratives in the case study of the Bag Snatcher.

The incident with the bag-snatcher was immediately understood in reference to the death of Van Gogh, not only because of the physical proximity of the two tragedies, but also because of the relationship to the role of the Moroccan community in the Netherlands. The reference to Van Gogh indexed the incident into the realm of a national public debate that questioned the growing number of Muslims in the Netherlands, expressed fear for terrorist attacks, and loss of the Dutch identity. Consequently, one could say that the developments after the death of the purse-snatcher shaped a traumatic event for both the Moroccan community and Dutch society.

The study of resilience in social sciences has usually been applied to natural disasters and resilience in the face of climate change and threatened urban stability (Paton and Johnston 2001; Norris et al. 2007; Cutter et al. 2008; Gleeson 2008; Walker and Cooper 2011). Others have spoken about resilient practices in contexts of on-going violence (Davies 2012; Ahmed et al. 2004). None of these circumstances can be ascribed to this case study, there is no threat to the lives of community members and individuals do not

face on-going violence in the streets of their neighbourhood. The episode, however, does create a traumatic event that I will define as a moment of crisis.

Scholars of resilience speak about disasters as a 'potentially traumatic event that is collectively experienced, has an acute onset, and is time delimited' (Norris in Norris 2008: 128). The case of the purse-snatcher created a trauma for the Moroccan community as well as for the local policy practitioners and residents from Dutch descent. One could say that the crisis had even national repercussions that lasted long after the incident. A key term in the understanding of traumatic events is 'vulnerability' (Paton and Johnston 2001; Norris et al 2008). The crisis made the Moroccan community vulnerable for social exclusion and discrimination. At the same time it violated the experience of safety in the relatively safe Dutch urban context. This trauma roots in the death of Van Gogh, but gets new meaning through the developments after this incident and has continuous effect because of polarized and discriminating public debate.

I define crisis as a moment that escalates very quickly and that demands immediate response of policy-practitioners as well as residents. A crisis is a critical moment that disrupts everyday life in a neighbourhood and surfaces underlying tensions. A crisis creates a moment or a period in which policy-makers, professionals, and residents are bound to react and interact. These interactions are marked by smaller critical moments in the period of crisis that disrupt and change the sequence of events within the period of crisis management. Thus crisis is the framework in which we will seek to understand the practices of resilience and resistance.

The multitude of studies on resilience did not provide a consensus on a definition. From a psychological perspective resilience is 'the ability to impose a sense of coherence and meaning on atypical and adverse experiences' (Tobin in Paton and Johnston 2001). This is interesting because it implies that each person can be resilient in his or her own way. The case study will show that the resilience of the group was very much dependent on the ability of a few leaders to act in that coherent way on an atypical moment. But Norris et al argue that community resilience is much more than the sum of things (Norris et al 2008: 128). In their account community resilience is closely related to the psychological wellness of the group as a whole (ibid: 133). They develop a set of capacities that help communities be resilient. Their definition of resilience is therefore much more focussed on the process, 'a process linking a set of adaptive capacities to a positive trajectory of functioning and adaptation after a disturbance' (ibid: 130). This definition is interesting

for this case study because it allows looking at the practices of being resilient in a particular period in time. It also makes the distinction between resistance and resilience clear. Both are processes, but where resilience is heading towards a positive change, resistance seeks to re-establish post-event functioning (ibid: 131). But can we really make such distinction and predict whether resilience creates positive change? The empirical data demand a more open-ended definition. I therefore find Diane Davis' definition most useful, she 'resilience as the ways that actors and institutions at the level of the community actually cope with or adapt to chronic urban violence' (Davis et al 2012: 5). This definition brings together the focus on individuals, institutions, and communities, it addresses actual practices of these parties, and it is open-ended about the result. Where she refers to 'chronic urban violence' I would like to say in 'urban crisis'.

This paper addresses the development of local resistance and resilience in the face of a social crisis. One could say that the case shows a form of 'tacit' resilience. My understanding of tacit knowledge draws on Scott's understanding of 'metis' that he describes as practical knowledge that is embedded in concrete situations and develops intuitively in interaction with institutions and other actors (Scott 1998: 316). The resilience in this case does not aim at economic or physical security after a disaster but on safeguarding the social belonging of a minority in a hostile environment after a multicultural crisis. In this paper I propose an ethnographic take on resilience as a practice. I argue that the practice of resilience takes shape through the interactions with authorities, organizations, and other forces that circumscribe the context of dealing with crisis. When we look at the resistance and resilience that is developed tacitly and shaped through the interaction with government, these practices can inform crisis management.

The case study sets an example of how a close look at empirical details allow us to rethink the practices of crisis management of local governments. The tacit practices of resistance and resilience could inform local policy practitioners into constructive governance after a crisis. But therefore we must hand them tools to 'learn through interaction'. Usually the management practices of governments are aimed at de-escalating the situation and preventing further violent incidents. How can we look closely at the practice of tacit resilience? What is the story behind resistance? And what forms of resilience can be developed when a community loses its opportunity to voice their story and take part in the public debate?

Tuesday; the first day after the tragedy

Three stories

In the first day after the incident the common tenor was confusion. People tried to make sense of what had happened, and each group did that by constructing a distinct story. The stories of the death of the purse-snatcher were polarized from the very beginning. Three stories were established in the day after the incident that crosscut the levels of the neighbourhood and in the national media. People from Dutch descent expressed an on-going fear for and anger about youngsters of Moroccan descent who commit petty crimes and frame the incident as 'the boy's own-fault'.

Door die Marokkanen met hun scooters loop je hier rond met je hart in je keel. Nou, dan kan je wachten tot het moment waarop iemand zegt 'nu pik ik het niet langer!' (Volkskrant, 18 januari, 2005)¹

The Moroccan community, on the other hand, referred to their on-going experience of being marginalized in Dutch society, they question whether death is the right response to robbing a purse and the incident reveals to them that they are again discriminated.

Sommige belangrijke figuren uit de Marokkaanse gemeenschap beargumenteerden dat de jongen expres was doodgereden, dat er een Marokkaan was doodgereden. Vooral vrienden van de jongen zeiden dat soort dingen. (locale ambtenaar)²

The local authorities had to negotiate between these two opposing problem definitions, they tried to ally with both understandings and framed the incident as 'action-reaction'.

Er was een kleine groep in de omgeving van de jongen die vonden dat ze oneerlijk werden behandeld. Maar anderen, ook mensen die de jongen kenden, vonden dat hij zelf de oorzaak van zijn dood was, dat het actie - reactie was.

¹ *Because of these Moroccan guys on their scooters you walk around with your heart pounding in your throat. Well, then you can wait for the moment that someone does not take it anymore. (Volkskrant, 18 January, 2005)*

² *Some of the important Moroccan figures in the neighbourhood immediately stated, this boy is killed on purpose. They killed a Moroccan. These were mostly friends and others from the Moroccan community. (Local civil servant)*

*(lokale ambtenaar)*³

These different stories led towards different responses. The Moroccan community's first response was to gather at the site of the incident to commemorate their loved one. They lay flowers near the tree, lit candles, and hung a picture of the boy on the trunk of the tree where he had died, a common Dutch practice of commemorating.

The council chairman who was present at the site explained;

*Ja, de avond dat het gebeurde stonden er al veel mensen, met name de vrienden en kennissen uit de buurt kwamen hiernaartoe en die raakten er wel heel erg opgewonden van het gebeuren. Die waren wel gefrustreerd. En je moet je ook realiseren, het was ook pas twee maanden na de moord op Theo van Gogh, dat was ook hier gebeurd. En dat er ook onmiddellijk, van een aantal sleutelfiguren uit de buurt kreeg ik ook te horen van: wat er ook aan de hand is, die jongen is moedwillig doodgereden. En er is een Marokkaan doodgereden. (Stadsdeel voorzitter, mei 2007)*⁴

The gathering at the site was a great contrast to the manifestation of noise a few months earlier. The death of a Moroccan youngster attracted media and residents from different backgrounds, but nobody seemed to feel the need to protest against injustice this time. The small and local commemoration did, however, create a parochial realm where strangers meet in a network of interpersonal connection outside of their private lives (Lofland 2007). The use of the public space allowed the community to mourn publicly and give public meaning to the tragedy they encountered.

Wednesday: two days after the tragedy

Flowers removed

³ *There was a small group in the environment of the boy who thought they were treated unfairly. But many people, also people who knew the boy, thought that he was the cause of his death. I mean, action- reaction. That was pretty clear. (District council chairman)*

⁴ *The evening after it happened there were already many people, mostly friends and family members from the neighbourhood came to take a look and became very excited when they found out what happened. They were pretty frustrated. And you have to realize it is only two months after the deaths of Van Gogh in this neighbourhood. And that some of the key figures from the neighbourhood told me; whatever happened, that boy was killed on purpose. A Moroccan is killed on purpose. (Local Council Chairman, May 2007)*

On Wednesday morning the improvised commemoration was brutally disrupted when civil servants cleaned the site and removed the candles and flowers the community had placed at the site. The local public works department saw their actions as balancing the use of the site as a place of grieving against other considerations.

Die plek is misschien prachtig voor jullie als een soort monument maar er zitten daar wel tegenover 200 kleine kindjes op een basisschool. Dus je moet continu belangen afwegen, continu keuzes maken. En dan maak ik die keuze, dan wil ik dat er netjes opgeruimd wordt. Dat is niet om iets te verdoezelen maar er zitten daar 200 kinderen op een school die nog geen twee, drie maanden daarvoor continu te maken kregen met emoties op de plek van Theo van Gogh. Dat heeft er wel gezorgd dat je er heel scherp moest zijn. (woordvoerder politie)⁵

The district council chairman reflected on this action;

Wat ook wel weer pijnlijk was dat tijdens een bepaalde ochtend alle bloemen en kaarsjes waren opgeruimd. Dat plekje is wel weer teruggekomen, dat daar de aandacht voor mocht zijn. Dat was op woensdag, dat was een ongelukkig moment. Dat is gedaan door de reinigingsdienst, maar wie daar opdracht voor heeft gegeven is nooit helemaal duidelijk geworden. Dat wil je gewoon niet hebben. Zo'n ritueel moet toch gebeuren. Dit is in het kort mijn visie daarop. (stadsdeelvoorzitter, mei 2007)⁶

These reflections show how on-going communication problems among the different departments in the district got enrolled in the crisis. The police department was concerned with safety issues; they referenced the emotions around the murder of Theo van Gogh. Memories from that period gave them a reason to be strict. The police officers

⁵ We said: 'this might be good for you as a memorial, but on the opposite of the street there are 200 little children playing at a primary school'. Thus continuously, we had to balance what was most important. And then we chose to clean things up. This was not to cover up the facts, but there are 200 children at a school who three months in advance had had to deal with the emotions around the site of Theo van Gogh. I think that this made us stricter, and then we had to be. (Local official from police department)

⁶ What was painful was that in the morning all the flowers and candles were removed. That spot also returned afterwards, it was important that there was attention for that. That was on Wednesday, that was unfortunate. The municipal sanitation department did that, who gave the assignment to do that remains unclear. That's something you really want to prevent. Such a ritual is necessary. That is my opinion in short. (district council chairman, may 2007)

argument describes clear concerns and a well-considered decision. The statement of the council chairman, however, denies the removal of the flowers represented a considered decision. He refers to that act as a painful moment and emphasizes that “the little spot” was re-established in the days that followed. He used the word “ritual” to describe what took place at the site and said that such thing is “necessary to happen”.

Neither policy-practitioners speaks of this moment as something critical in the unfolding course of events. For one it was a necessary procedure and for the other it is a mistake that could be compensated for by allowing for new flowers afterwards, . Neither acknowledges the meaning this act had for the Moroccan community.

In the eyes of the Moroccan youngsters, these actions were more evidence of the nature of the incident and the response.

Het was moord met voorbedachten rade, en nu de paaltjes weg waren kon niemand dat meer bewijzen. (Volkskrant, 19 januari 2005)⁷

The clean-up of the memorial reinforced their storyline and deepened their framing of the incident as murder. Cleaning the site was a means to remove evidence. By saying this, the boy reveals his underlying experience of marginality, he expects Dutch policy-practitioners to ‘remove evidence’; now ‘they cannot prove it anymore’. By interpreting the removal of the flowers as a removal of evidence the storyline of the Moroccan community finds justification. The removal of the flowers legitimized the understanding of being marginalized. This seemingly unimportant incident in the course of events creates a critical moments that forced the Moroccan community to turn resistant.

Thursday: Three days after the tragedy

Call for protest

The loss of the tacit commemoration site created a need for action at the site of the Moroccan community. Amidst the media attention and turmoil at the site of the incident, the boy’s friends and family decided to call for a march to protest against the inequality they experienced. The march was supposed to be held on Friday that week. They planned for a walk that would start at Central Station, in the centre of Amsterdam, and

⁷ *It was murder and now the traffic poles are replaced, they cannot prove it anymore. (Volkskrant, 19 January, 2005)*

proceed through the city centre to the site of the incident in Eastern Amsterdam. The decision about the march was communicated via informal leaflets and pamphlets that were passed around in the neighbourhood. Family and friends distributed pamphlets to invite people to come and participate in the protest march.

Ze kondigden een protestmars aan op pamfletten in de Albert Heijn. Ik denk dat de meiden die daar werken dat hadden opgehangen. (local civil servant)⁸

The march was communicated only on a local scale, the pamphlet inviting people who identified with the community to participate. The youngsters and friends needed to voice their grievances, but the march had another meaning, one that was directed to a broader audience and referred to the experience of being excluded. The removal of the flowers had impinged on their experience of marginality and indexed the death of their beloved one into a broader experience of not belonging;

En dan van de andere kant, van de Marokkaanse mensen zeg maar, of van de buitenlanders. Die zeggen zie je wel we worden toch niet geaccepteerd. Of je nou hier geboren bent of niet. Je wordt toch niet als volwaardig gezien. Niet als volwaardige landgenoten. Dat gevoel zit er gewoon. Dat kan je altijd zien, zo van ik hoor er toch niet bij. (representative of Moroccan community)⁹

Authorities push back

Local politicians and civil servants responded immediately to the call for a march. A protest march looked risky in the polarized context, liable to trigger emotions, escalate tensions, and perhaps even boil over into violence.

Toen begonnen mensen nogal nerveus te worden. En de gedachte was, wie komen daar wel niet allemaal op af? Als half Amsterdam-West, al die jongeren en Amsterdam Oost-Watergraafsmeer daarop af komen, voordat je het weet heb je

⁸ *They announced a protest march on pamphlets at the local supermarket. I think the ladies who work there hung them up (local civil servant)*

⁹ *And on the other side, from the Moroccan community you could say, or from foreigners. Those people say, see we are not accepted anyway. Whether you are born here or not. You never become a full member. Not like full fellow nationals. That feeling is simply there. You can always see that, that feeling of 'I don't belong anyway'. (representative of the Moroccan community)*

een soort...nou je ziet het met voetbal op het Leidse Plein, dat zijn een heleboel mensen. (lokale ambtenaar)¹⁰

Zeker bij de broers en de zussen van Ali, was er meteen al behoefte om iets op te gaan zetten. Een soort van 'witte tocht' of 'schandetocht' waar je vanuit de perssignalen al kon opmaken dat dat door een groot deel van het publiek anders geïnterpreteerd zou worden. Dat werd toen door Job Cohen gezegd, ik geloof dat ik dat ook zelf heb gezegd, dat je wel het startpunt van die actie in de gaten moet houden, namelijk de diefstal van die tas van die mevrouw, waarop het slachtoffer, of althans, slachtoffer/dader, reageert met 'ik pik dat niet', zo komt dat over. (stadsdeelvoorzitter)¹¹

Both policy-practitioners express their fear of the violent escalation that could develop out of a protest march. The policy makers see the risks of such a march and have to act in an attempt to stabilize the situation. This is the point where the story becomes critical to the policy practitioners because the actions of the Moroccan community have a potential for escalating violence.

How can we understand what happens here? The Moroccan community decides to be resistant and voice their experience of marginality. They use a common Dutch practice, a march moving from one place in the city to the site of the incident. The reaction to protest is a consequence from the earlier interplay between the Moroccan community and actions of the local government. They improvise a protest that seems an appropriate response to a situation where the Moroccan community does not see any other means to voice their story. Resistance here is not a means to return to the post crisis functioning like Norris et al argue. Instead they want to voice a grievance that has been established in earlier experiences and surfaced through the event of crisis and the interplay with

¹⁰ *Than people started to become nervous. They thought, who would be attracted to such a march? If half of Western Amsterdam, and all those youngster from Eastern Amsterdam and Watergraafsmeer (another neighbourhood) would show up, you have a sort of... before you know... like with football matches at the Leidse square, a whole lot of people (local civil servant)*

¹¹ *Especially amongst the brothers and sisters of Ali, there was an immediate wish to do something (from the Moroccan community). Some kind of a "white march" or "a march of shame", but from press reports we could already presume that most people would interpret this in a different way. Also Job Cohen (the mayor) said that we should realize what the starting point of this action was: the robbery of the woman's bag, the consequence was that she said "I do not take this". (District council chairman)*

local authorities in the period after. Thus resistance is developed tacitly – embedded in the local knowledge and repertoires of action.

Also the response of the local government is embedded in the interactions between them, the Moroccan community, and the tense public debate that surrounds the decisions at the site. Their storyline logically leads to a fear for escalation. Their reference to football matches, riots, and the inflammable public debate allows them to have a legitimate fear for escalation. Their response foregrounds physical treats whereas the community faces the social treat of exclusion. Foregrounding the safety concern fixes the frame of ‘action-reaction’ and neglects the storyline of the Moroccan community. The ‘action-reaction’ frame surfaces only the practical implications of the incident; a boy who robs a bag tragically finds death in doing so. That understanding leads to the considerations that a march to protest is an inappropriate provocation by the Moroccan community that could lead to violence.

A useful understanding of resistance draws on Charles Tilly (2007; 2008) who argues that a broader repertoire of resistant performances could be understood as contentious politics because they take place in the realm of the state; they target the government and the government is a party in the negotiation about the protest march (Tilly and Tarrow 2007: 4). The call for a protest march has a political implication, a demand for recognition of the story of a minority. It shows a willingness of a group to take part in the public debate. Such an understanding of the call for protest is important to understand how the relationship between the local government and the Moroccan community deteriorates further. Is the local government able to acknowledge the political cause the community aims at in their improvised call for a march? Or does the local government stay focussed on their safety concerns and in their fear for escalations forget to look beyond risks?

Call for a meeting

On Wednesday afternoon, a meeting took place at the district council office. A group of civil servants participated and the Mayor joined in. This was the first negotiation about the incident, it focused, however, not on the meaning of the incident itself, the relationship with or experience of the Moroccan community, but on the implications of the proposed march. What effects would it have? In the meeting, the risks of a protest march were discussed. The length of the march was a concern. Central Station was a good distance from the site of the collision. The discussions highlighted the way simple

events can trigger escalation in such circumstances: a broken window requires the police to intervene, triggering responses that themselves demand responses. These discussions also highlighted the risk that the event might be perceived as a provocation from the Moroccan community.

Wij waren niet voor een protestmars of 'stille tocht' vanaf centraal station. We dachten dat het een slecht plan was aangezien de spanningen die er op dat moment heersten. Het zou kunnen worden opgevat als een provocatie van de Marokkaanse gemeenschap. Het zou dan namelijk gaan om zinloos geweld tegen de jongen in kwestie, en dus om een ontkenning van het feit dat het begon met een tasjesroof. (lokale ambtenaar) ¹²

Wat voor soort mensen zou deze tocht aantrekken? Dan denk je na over verschillende scenario's. Wat als iemand een raam breekt of een bushokje sloopt? Voordat je het weet zit de ME er bovenop en eindigt het in een chaos en nog meer geweld. (lokale ambtenaar) ¹³

These considerations do not take into account the storyline of the Moroccan community. It actually excludes their story of marginality from any considerations about appropriate actions in the face of crisis. The meaning of the incident remained contested, the storyline of the Moroccan community nor the action of calling for a protest informed the local governments in their decisions about further steps in the management of crisis. The frame of 'action-reaction' remained stable and led them to understand the crisis as an incident with minor public meaning. Consequently, they questioned the legitimacy of a public demonstration. Their storyline does not allow to pay attention to the story of marginalisation that informs the Moroccan community to respond the way they did.

Although the stable storyline, the local government did not want to jeopardize their good relationships with members of the Moroccan community. Local policy practitioners

¹² *We were not really in favour for a protest-March or 'Silent March' from Central Station. We thought it was a bad plan, especially when considering the publicity it would give. That it would turn into a provocation from the Moroccan community. (Local official)*

¹³ *What kind of people would this March attract? What if half of the Moroccan youngsters of Amsterdam come to this March? You are thinking of all these different scenarios. What if someone breaks a window? Before you realize what happened, the ME (military police) starts to hit around and this whole thing turns into chaos and fighting (Local civil servant)*

established a relationship with the community through a network of Moroccan neighbourhood fathers (buurtvaders)¹⁴ proved to be vital to the decisions that were made concerning the march. One policy maker in particular had been able to establish a network of people in the community that would inform the local government on what was going in the Moroccan community;

En heel snel ben ik gaan bellen in de wijk naar belangrijke sleutel figuren, mijn antennes: Wat is het en hoe schatten jullie het risico in dat dit onrust teweeg gaat brengen? Wat vinden jullie wat wij kunnen doen voor jullie en signaleer je knelpunten, zo ja, wat zijn het? En toen hoorde ik inderdaad (...) dat de omgeving van het slachtoffer een tocht wilde organiseren vanaf het Centraal Station. (locale beleids maker)¹⁵

The incident, however, had surfaced differences between the local government and their group of local informants. The different frames challenged their good relationship. The strong communication between the local government and the network of community leaders led the policy-practitioner to be knowledgeable about the need of the Moroccan community to do something.

They organised a follow-up meeting on Thursday with different parties. This posed problems over representation, since the organisers of the March were not the representatives of the Moroccan community with whom the government normally dealt.

Het probleem was dat we niet wisten wie die protestmars daadwerkelijk had georganiseerd. Waarschijnlijk jongeren uit de buurt. Maar het was in ieder geval geen officiële organisatie, of de voorzitter van de moskee, waar je als overheid

¹⁴ 'Buurtvaders' is a local organization of fathers from Moroccan families who seek to cooperate to promote community development. Since 1996 the district council of Eastern Amsterdam is actively building on a network of migrant organizations one of which is the organization of 'buurtvaders'. There is a monthly meeting about the role of migrant organizations in the district (Wolff, Van Heelsum & Penninx, 1999)

¹⁵ *I quickly started calling people in the neighbourhood who I knew were important key figures, my antennas: what is going on and what do you expect to be the risk? What do you think we can do for you and where do you signal problems? And then I heard (...) that the direct people around the victim wanted to organize a march from central station (local policy-practitioner)*

*meestal mee samenwerkt. De vraag was, "hoe moeten we deze jongeren bereiken?"
(lokale ambtenaar)¹⁶*

The local officials finally decided to invite several representatives of Moroccan community and members of the family for a meeting on Thursday to discuss the possibility of a march.

Thursday: Three days after the tragedy

Negotiating the march

The meeting took place at the district council office on Thursday, the twentieth of February 2005, at 2 pm. The participants from the government included the mayor of Amsterdam, the chairman of the district council, and the safety-coordinator for the district. The safety-coordinator of a neighbouring district was invited to act as a mediator because of his good contacts with the Moroccan community (from here on he will be referred to as mediator). The sister of the victim and two of her friends were present, as well as several representatives of the Moroccan community, including the speaker of the Alkabir Mosque and representatives from the Moroccan community organisation and the association of 'neighbourhood fathers'.

Representatives of the police department did not try to intervene in this decision. In their view, this was an issue for the city council to decide. Their task was to provide as much safety and security as they could once a choice was made.

The participants remember that the meeting began with the Mayor of Amsterdam offering his condolences to the sister of the victim. After sharing in her sadness, he turned to the facts of the case, which were immediately indexed within the 'action-reaction' frame. He was quoted in the local newspaper: "I think that it's important to look at all the facts. This boy didn't have a nice past. I understand the emotions. I even understand that, just after such an incident, these emotions can run very high. But people should realize that this all started with a street robbery. That, I hear much too little in the neighbourhood. People who pass over this notion, trivialize this case in a

¹⁶ *We did not know who organized the protest march. Probably youngsters who lived in the neighbourhood, but not an official organization, or the people from the mosque, with whom we worked together. The question was, what are we to do with these youngsters?
(Local civil servant)*

way that I absolutely don't like . . . What happened there has all elements for a rapid escalation" (Het Parool, 20-01).

In the eyes of the safety-coordinator, the Mayor gave a clear signal and everyone around the table agreed. Some remember the Mayor making it very clear that there could be no march from Central Station to the place of the incident.

Die (mayor Cohen) heeft heel duidelijk gezegd: 'Jongens, erg dat dit gebeurd is, want ik kan me voorstellen dat het pijn doet voor zijn naasten, maar, aan de andere kant, er is ook wat gebeurd. Dus hij heeft ook wat gedaan wat niet door de beugel kan'. Ik geloof dat hij (Cohen) ook een soort signaal heeft afgegeven dat ook door iedereen gedragen is. (local policy-practitioner)¹⁷

Thus the statement of the mayor fixed the 'action-reaction' frame, after this utterance of the mayor there was no room left to negotiate the meaning of the incident. This authoritative move established the positioning in the room through the fixation of a dominant storyline and closed the possibility of different interpretations. That storyline legitimized the policy-maker's consideration that the march was an inappropriate response. The local civil servant felt that everyone present accepted that signal of the mayor. They had their network of neighbourhood fathers around the table who shared their concerns about the risks of a march;

Toen we onze zorgen uitten over de risico's van een dergelijke tocht, bedachten de oudere mannen zich direct. Dankzij de mediator was het mogelijk hen duidelijk te maken dat een tocht ook niet in hen belang was. Zij begrepen dat het gevaarlijk zou kunnen zijn een groep jongeren zo'n omstreden tocht te laten lopen. (lokale ambtenaar)¹⁸

¹⁷ *He (the Mayor) made a very clear statement: 'Guys, it is really sad what happened, I can imagine that you are in a lot of pain, but on the other side, something did happen. He did something that was not right as well.' I believe that he (the mayor) signaled something that was shared by everyone. (local policy-practitioner)*

¹⁸ *When we aired our concerns about the risks of such march, the elder man immediately changed their minds. Thanks to the mediator we could convince them that such a march was not in their own interest. They understood that it would be too dangerous to have a group of youngsters walk such a controversial march. (local civil servant)*

The representatives of the Moroccan community who were present remember the statement of the mayor in different terms. As one put it:

De burgemeester zei: "Als je echt je protestmars wil houden, heb je alle recht om dat te doen, maar ik hoop dat we tot een meer verantwoordelijke oplossing komen." (afgevaardigde van Marokkaanse gemeenschap)¹⁹

According to a governmental participant, there was a clear line between those who were pro-march and those who were against it. A member of the Moroccan community stated that the older Moroccan men who were in the meeting had decided upfront that a march from Central Station to the place where the incident happened was not a good plan. They considered it too dangerous and saw the risk of generating negative attention that would not be in the interest of the Moroccan community. Another participant in the meeting felt that the Moroccan men were the bridge in convincing the sister and her friends;

Toen we onze zorgen uitten over de risico's van een dergelijke tocht, bedachten de oudere mannen zich direct. Dankzij de mediator was het mogelijk hen duidelijk te maken dat een tocht ook niet in hen belang was. Zij begrepen dat het gevaarlijk zou kunnen zijn een groep jongeren zo'n omstreden tocht te laten lopen. (lokale ambtenaar)²⁰

All participants, however, seem to share the view that the sister of the young man, the only member of the family and young Moroccan in the room, did not see eye-to-eye with the others. She wanted a march. She continued to try to make them understand that her brother was a good boy. She cried and pleaded that her brother was not the type to rob and threaten. She questioned the story as it had been presented in the media and by the

¹⁹ *The Mayor said, 'If you really want to have your march, you have the right to do that, but I hope we can come to a better and more responsible agreement.'* (Representative of the Moroccan community, neighbourhood father)

²⁰ *When we started to show our concerns about the risks, they started to change their minds. Thanks to the mediator we could put them in the right position, they understood that it would be dangerous if a group of youngsters would give a march through the city about such a polarised issue.* (Representative of Moroccan community)

police and denied the 'own fault' frame. The sister had, at first, tried to question the cause of her brother's death, but it was not possible to open a discussion about his guilt or innocence.

One representative of the Moroccan community later argued that he tended to support the sister because there was no one else on her side.

We hebben ook gezegd, we zijn niet tegen jou of jouw ideeën. Dat is allemaal prima, en de burgemeester zegt het ook, als je daar op staat dan kan je het ook gewoon proberen. Je moest haar toch het gevoel geven dat we haar tegemoet kwamen. Want aan haar kant was bijna niemand. Op een gegeven moment ben je geneigd om haar te steunen. Dat wilden we ook, maar zodanig dat er geen verdere schade zou komen. (afgevaardigde van Marokkaanse gemeenschap)²¹

Thus the neighbourhood father was very conscious of the necessity of acknowledging grievances as well as being attentive to the girl's problematic position in the meeting. She was a young girl, alone in a room with older men who had more knowledge and power. While she was still mourning her brother, she had to discuss policy with a group of men. Moreover, outside, at the site of the incident, a group of friends and young people waited. They wanted to protest and expected the sister to come through with a plan. The storyline that the neighbourhood fathers developed allowed them to bring together the sisters grief as well as the concerns about safety. They referred to a broader responsibility for the community; the incident was something to get beyond.

Je moet het zo bekijken...Het is ook in het voordeel van de Marokkaanse gemeenschap dat er dit soort dingen redelijkheid wordt betracht om dit soort zaken op te lossen. Je kan niet instaan voor die verantwoordelijkheid. (buurtvader)²²

²¹ *We told the sister that we were not opposed to her ideas. That it would be fine if she really wanted a march and that the mayor also agreed. We had to meet with her on a certain point . . . But we made clear that it was not in the interest of the community if there happened something again, we wanted to memorialize her brother. (Representative of Moroccan community)*

²² *You have to look at it this way... It is also in the advantage of the Moroccan community that they expect us to deal with these kind of cases in a reasonable way. You cannot stand in for that responsibility. (neighbourhood father)*

The neighbourhood father refers to the reputation of the Moroccan community as a whole that would be at risk if the march would turn into violence. Framing the march from that broader level of responsibility enabled him to convince the sister and her friends. After everyone had a chance to state their point of view, different stakeholders still diverged in their interpretation of the events. The politicians and civil servants eventually left the sister and several members of the Moroccan community to confer with the mediator about what they should do. In the end they came to share in the assessment of the risks: a march through the city centre would be dangerous. In other words, the safety concern seemed to be shared by all the participants in the meeting, but as we saw before, the protest had also a political meaning for the Moroccan community. The discussion about safety did not appeal to that concern yet.

After establishing the length and route, concerns were aired about the meaning of the march. From the perspective of 'action-reaction' and 'own fault', the meaning of the march as a protest would be out of the question, after all, there was nothing to protest against, the death of the boy was the consequence of his own choices. The neighbourhood fathers who were concerned about the reputation of the Moroccan community understood the controversial meaning of protest. Instead they tactically proposed another form of marching: a silent march. A silent march is a common Dutch practice of mourning that is used to protest and commemorate acts of senseless violence. The noise manifestation, after the murder of Theo van Gogh, was a symbolic counter practice to the commonly used march of silence to underpin the nation's firm belief in the freedom of speech. In line of that tradition of demonstrations, the Neighbourhood fathers proposed a march of silence to protest against the fact that the boy died through someone else's actions. They saw a lack of proportion between the "action" and the "reaction."

Stel je voor dat je tas wordt gestolen. Is vermoorden dan het antwoord?

Jonge jongens halen allerlei soorten rottigheid uit, is dat het waard om voor te doden?! (afgevaardigde van Marokkaanse gemeenschap)²³

Within that perspective a silent march is an appropriate response to this act of senseless violence and would position the Moroccan community – once again – as a community who performed tacit practices of Dutch mourning practices.

²³ *Imagine your bag gets robbed. Is murder an answer to this? Young boys do all kinds of bad things. This is not worthy to kill for. (Representative of Moroccan Community)*

The storyline of policy-practitioners, on the other hand, led them to question the appropriateness of a silent march. A silent march was a special category reserved to protest acts of senseless violence²⁴. It would require (and confer) an official sanction and so would implicate the government in the interpretation it gave to the incident. It also raised questions about categories; did the incident meet the criteria?

We dachten we moeten iets bedenken met die tocht korter of anders. En wat je ook heel erg merkte was dat er heel veel verontwaardiging was vanuit de media. Maar ook bij veel bewoners. Door heel Nederland van...een stille tocht? Hoe kan het? Hij is crimineel? Want toen bleek ook nog eens een keer dat hij net vrij was, dat hij eerder een overval had gepleegd met geweld. Toen dacht men... Een stille tocht voor een crimineel? Waarheen gaan we hier in Nederland? Dus allemaal emotie kwam er los. (local policy-practitioner)²⁵

The chairman emphasizes the 'own-fault' storyline that leads other residents to believe that a silent-march as they know it in Dutch mourning traditions is inappropriate in the case of a criminal. Also the media reported on the controversial meaning of a silent march;

Ik betreur de dood van die jongen, dat heeft hij niet verdiend. Maar een stille tocht houden voor een crimineel gaat toch te ver? Als deze tocht wordt toegestaan, behoort het fenomeen stille tocht tot het verleden.(P. van Dijk in het Parool, 21 januari, 2005)²⁶

These remarks show that a silent march in this instance had an indexical meaning to silent marches in general. The meaning of future silent marches is framed as

²⁴ The Netherlands has a long record of silent marches that are usually initiated by sympathizers of victims of senseless violence. A silent march is publicly understood as strong statement, a protest against senseless violence.

²⁵ *We thought we needed to do something with that march, shorter or something else. And I realized there was much resentment from the media. But also from other residents. From the whole country... they said, a silent march? How is that possible? He is a criminal? Because that information came out that day. And then people thought a silent march for a criminal? Where is it going with the Netherlands? So all kinds of emotions were aired. (local policy-practitioner)*

²⁶ *I regret the death of the boy, he did not deserve that. But a silent march for a criminal goes too far. If this march is allowed, the phenomenon of a silent march belongs to the past.(P. van Dijk in het Parool, 21 januari, 2005)*

questionable when silent marches are held for 'criminals', as if it were a devaluation of the symbolic value of this tradition.

Then one of the local civil servants proposed a solution to the problem of meaning;

Wij zeiden; 'als je wilt rouwen om het verlies van je broer, noem de tocht dan een rouwtocht in plaats van een stille tocht. Want een stille tocht heeft de connotatie van zinloos geweld en dat irriteert mensen, zij vragen zich af: zinloos, hoezo, hij was een crimineel. Maar niemand zou jou het rouwen willen ontnemen'. (lokale ambtenaar)²⁷

A march to mourn would take away the public meaning of a silent march and leave the march in the realm of private mourning. Policy-practitioners saw that distinct and private meaning as a chance to give the Moroccan community a chance to mourn without the connotation to a meaning of senseless violence.

The neighbourhood fathers were disappointed about the way policy-practitioners politicized the meaning of the march;

De familie die was het daar niet mee eens. Die was het er zelfs niet mee eens met het idee van een stille tocht, zij wilde een protestmars vanaf Centraal Station. En dat hebben wij kunnen omzetten in een stille tocht, dat is een middenweg. Maar sommige politici, met alle respect, gaan dat ook politiseren, en dan wordt daar ook weer een slaatje uitgeslagen. (afgevaardigde van Marokkaanse gemeenschap)²⁸

Like the neighbourhood father says, the family made a big step in moving from a march to protest to a short silent-march that they thought was a middle ground. In their perspective even that middle ground was problematized during the negotiation, and

²⁷ *If you want to mourn about the lost of your brother, call it a mourning march, not a silent march. Because the link to senseless violence irritates people, they ask themselves; senseless, he was a criminal? But nobody would denial that you grieve. (Local civil servant)*

²⁸ *The family did not approve a march that would only mean to mourn, they did not even approve a silent march, they wanted to demonstrate all the way from Central station against the injustice they have been put through. At the end we could bring them to the decision for a mid-course, a silent march. But some politicians even did not approve of that, they even wanted to take the advantage of that. (Representative of Moroccan community)*

they said, it is only politicians who 'slaan er een slaatje uit', they get the benefit of that political meaning making.

The Moroccan community expressed their wish for a silent march that would have given them the opportunity to engage in the public sphere through a performance of mourning that was public and voiced a story. Although the community was invited at the local council, the meeting did not leave much room for a negotiation of meaning. The dominant storyline was established early on in the meeting and contradicting understandings were pushed out of the conversation. The result was very limited room for action; the Moroccan community could walk, but only through the neighbourhood and without public meaning.

The underlying need of the Moroccan community was to voice their experience of marginality in Dutch society. They wanted to take part in the public debate through marching the streets in silence, a common Dutch practice. How can we understand that need to take part in the public debate through a protest or a silent march in the streets? A silent-march could have created a space for the Moroccan community to commemorate, but more important, to engage in the creation of the public sphere. Like Hannah Arendt argues, democratic governments are responsible for constituting the public sphere as a place where multiple voices can be heard and a diversity of perspectives considered. It is the health and viability of the public sphere that protects any governance system from totalitarianism (Arendt 1958). But that concern was not weighed against safety and the administrative concerns about long-term consequences of violent escalation. The use of public space is central in constituting a public sphere where multiple voices can be negotiated. In her analysis of protest at a plaza in Latin America, Setha Low argues that by using a central public space for protest, the protest takes on 'layers of historic meaning that are retained through the mnemonics of environmental memory' (Low 2000: 184). Low shows that practices of protest do not only act, but also interact with the meaning of the social environment that constitutes them. 'These meanings, embodied in the space itself, become a subtext for the protest that occurs there, and by placing protest in the symbolic centre of the society, it captures national attention' (ibid: 184). Thus, a protest march would change the meaning of the public spaces along the route it takes.

The city centre of Amsterdam has many public places with such symbolic meaning for Dutch society. A protest march through the city would infer on the meaning of these

places and develop new memories that would become subtexts to these places. Hajer and Uitermarkt (2009) showed how important the Dam square was in the performance of the manifestation of noise. The choice of the Dam square was a way to give the manifestation of noise national relevance because the place indexed the meaning of the event to events like the yearly national commemoration for victims in the second World War. A protest march from central station would move through the Dam square. Thus if we rationalize from the perspective of the policy-makers and politicians, the meaning that this protest march would infer to these places would be inappropriate at the least. If we then pay attention to broader tensions in society, we can grasp the symbolic meaning a protest like this could have and understand the fear for escalation. On the other hand, if we consider these notions from the storyline of the Moroccan community, a march through the neighbourhood does not allow for such public meaning making, there story would be less visible. If we than turn to the notion of a private march to mourn instead of a silent march, the march loses all its capacities to be part of a public discussion.

Low argues that if protest is successful – if it threatens the state – ‘the public space is closed, sometimes gated, and policed’ (ibid: 184). Here policy-practitioners were knowledgeable about the necessity of ‘doing something for the Moroccan community’ (council chairman). The network of neighbourhood fathers informed authorities about the underlying grievances. So instead of prohibiting the protest march – which was in their power because they could withhold the permit to hold a demonstration march – they decided to invite people from the Moroccan community and discuss their safety concerns. But in that negotiation they kept their storyline as the only appropriate interpretation of crisis. They did not look into the contentious actions of the Moroccan community to inform them about their needs and grievances. Consequently the march was deemed inappropriate in both meaning and physical length.

Friday: Four days after the tragedy

The March took place on March 21, 2005, four days after the fatal collision between the boy and the woman in her car. It attracted around 300 to 400 people who walked from the site of the incident through two long residential streets, crossed a big highway to the Weesperzijde where the El-Kabeer mosque is located. The majority of participants were of Moroccan descent.

Tacit Resilience

The neighbourhood fathers organized for everyone to meet at the site of the incident. One father describes how it happened;

De tocht ging zo: We hebben ons verzameld ter plekke. We hebben het georganiseerd en meegelopen. En er kwamen ook allemaal mensen voorbij die gewoon buurtbewoners waren, Nederlanders van origine. En die stonden helemaal van een andere te kijken. Die praatte zo luid dat je wel hoorde waar ze het over hadden. Mensen praten, kijken naar de buurt, kijken hoe het allemaal gebeurd. Ik had het idee dat al die mensen hun bedenkingen hadden. Dat ongeluk, of het incident, hoe dat gebeurd is was toch wel erg merkwaardig. (buurtvader) ²⁹

The neighbourhood father describes how his community gathered around the site of the incident. He speaks about other residents – of Dutch descent – who would stand at the side of the street to watch the march passing by. Also policy-practitioners were present in his recollection, they would not participate, they simply stood there and watched. He argues that he felt as if the people who were watching did not approve of the march. He explains his discomfort with the incident and the way it got interpreted through the different storylines.

Keeping the march within the agreed upon bounds demanded active intervention by the community from the mosque, which presented its own risks. The neighbourhood father proclaimed his responsibility to keep the march from escalating into riots and violence. For him the reputation of the Moroccan community was at stake in this march and his tactic to ensure a peaceful walk was by claiming quietness;

De jongens zijn niet altijd rustig gebleven. Wij liepen in een ordedienst, en wij liepen ook gevaar. Wij konden ook in elkaar geslagen worden. Die risico's neem je. We zeiden, die jongen is doodgegaan en we willen hem gewoon waardig herdenken. Een wens van de familie is dat het rustig gaat verlopen, die aanpak kan risico's met zich meebrengen. Er hoeft maar één groepje iets te roepen en de ander

²⁹ *The march went as followed: we came together at a central spot. We organized en also participated. There were also many other people from the neighbourhood, from Dutch descent. They just watched from the other side. But they talked so loud we could hear them. People talks, looked at the neighbourhood, looked at what was happening. I felt that people had their doubts. About the accident, or incident, is was all very dubious (Neighbourhood father)*

roept iets terug, en dan heb je het al. We hebben door een microfoon geroepen: 'We houden een stille tocht en dat betekent STIL'. (afgevaardigde van Marokkaanse gemeenschap)³⁰

The neighbourhood fathers intuitively decided to performance silence;

De tocht werd bijna verstoord door jongeren die begonnen te schreeuwen en te schelden. Maar toen zeiden wij: 'hou je stil, dit is niet een demonstratie, dit is eens stille tocht voor vrienden en familie om die jongen te herdenken, praten is niet nodig, hou stil en herdenk hem op een waardige manier'. (afgevaardigde van Marokkaanse gemeenschap) ³¹

The father describes the march as a silent march. Whereas the meaning of a silent march was discussed and refused during the meeting at the district council, the neighbourhood fathers tactically used the performance of silence as a means to keep things quiet. Studies on dramaturgy, however, teach us that performances also give meaning to events (Hajer 2009; Goffman 1959; 1963; 1971; Turner 1992 [1987]; Alexander 2004; Burke 1969; Lynch 1991; Benford and Hunt 1992). Performance 'is the way in which the contextualized interaction itself produces social realities like understanding of the problem at hand, knowledge, decisions, and new power relations' (Hajer 2009: 66). The neighbourhood father explained the performance of silence as followed;

Het was moeilijk om de mensen tijdens de tocht te kalmeren. De familie vond dat deze tocht niet genoeg recht deed aan hun geliefde. Zij wilde een demonstratie van Centraal Station naar de plaats van het incident. En dan begint het stadsdeel over een rouwtocht in plaats van een stille tocht! Hoe dan ook, wij hebben een stille tocht gehouden, heel stil, zonder te praten. We dachten dat dit een middenweg was

³⁰ *The boys did not always kept quiet. We walked as controllers, and we were also in danger. We could get beaten. But that's a risk you take. We said, 'that boy died and we want to commemorate him appropriately'. A wish from the family was that the march went quietly, that approach would cause less risks. Only one group could yell something to another, and it goes wrong. We had a microphone: 'We are holding a silent march, and that means SILENCE!' (representative of the Moroccan community)*

³¹ *The march was almost disturbed by youngsters who started shouting. But we said to them: keep quit, this is not a demonstration, this is a silent march to mourn your friend and brother, talking is not necessary, you should keep your thoughts with him. (Representative of Moroccan community)*

om de emoties onder controle te kunnen houden. Maar de familie was niet overtuigd, zij hebben dit gedaan omdat dit het minimum was van wat zij konden doen. (afgevaardigde van Marokkaanse gemeenschap)³²

The tactic performance of silence was a means to keep the march under control. But in doing so he refers to the frustration of the family members about the rejection of a silent march. For the family a march to mourn was not enough, the family felt as if this was the least they could do. The tactic to keep the march under control through silence – ‘in total silence, without talking’ – is a performative tactic. The meaning of a silent march was rejected by authorities, but the neighbourhood fathers were resilient in their performances. Within the parameters of what authorities allowed they performed a silent march and tactically used the reference to safety concerns to legitimize their action. The performance of silence conveyed a symbolic message; we are walking in silence to protest against injustice. The Moroccan community performed a silent march within the boundaries the local government had established for them.

Policy-practitioners – who were embedded in the storyline of ‘action-reaction –explain how they understood the march;

Die rouwtocht heb ik uiteindelijk, nou ja, gedoogd, omdat het wel een goede manier is om, nou, een rouwtocht geld nu ook als een afscheidstocht en niet als een betoging tegen wat die jongen aangedaan is, want daar kun je verschillend over denken. En dat, in mijn ogen en in die van Cohen, moet je dat dus niet de verkeerde lading geven. (district chairman)³³

He uses the word ‘gedogen’, meaning that he tolerated the march. He positions himself as the authority who could have decided to prohibit the march, in doing so he reveals

³² *It was hard to calm people down on the day of the march. The family still found this march was doing wrong to their beloved one. They wanted a demonstration from Central Station to the place of the incident. And then the city council starts talking about a march to mourn, instead of a silent march! But we kept a silent march, really quiet without talking. We thought that was a middle course and a way to keep the emotions under control. But the family was not convinced at all, they did it because it was the minimum they could do. (Representative of Moroccan community)*

³³ *I tolerated the march because I thought it was a way to mourn not as a demonstration against an useless act of violence or against what has been done to the boy, because people could think differently about that. The mayor and I thought the march should not have the wrong connotations. (District council chairman)*

something about his experience of his identity; he is one who could and had reasons to prohibit, but was sympathetic enough to tolerate and give people a way of mourning. As he says himself, he views the march as a way of saying goodbye, not as a demonstration. He also refers to a higher authority, the mayor, who has the same perspective. Thereby he grounds his position in the hierarchic system of government.

About his performance during the march he is very strict;

Er ontstaat dan toch het gerucht dat ik mee gelopen heb. Wat toch echt niet zo is. Ik heb daar ook nadrukkelijk voor gekozen. Ik heb dat ook uitgelegd waarom ik dat niet zou doen. Ik was aanwezig bij het begin en het einde van de tocht, maar nadrukkelijk in een toezichtsrol. (locale ambtenaar)³⁴

Thus the policy-practitioners decided that it would be inappropriate for them to participate in the march, as it was a private endeavour for people who were mourning, family or friend with which they had no acquaintance. Another civil servant explained;

Tijdens de tocht was ik daar, maar uitsluitend van ter observatie. Ik liep niet mee met de tocht, ik wilde zien wat de reacties waren wat wij als overheid met dit soort dingen kunnen doen in het vervolg. (locale ambtenaar) ³⁵

Thus the performance of policy-practitioners during the march underpinned their interpretation of the march itself – a private mourning – which once again re-established the perceived meaning of the incident as a sequence of ‘action-reaction’.

The public performance of the policy practitioners to not participate in the march re-established the dominant narrative. Their reluctance to participate was a logical consequence of their understanding of the sequence of events, but is also signalled their interpretation of power relations and the meaning of the tragedy to the audience in the neighbourhood. By standing at the site they literally divided the street into two public domains, one of the immigrants and one of the Dutch community who is entitled to

³⁴ *There was rumour that I participated. That was really not the case. I choose not to. I explained why. I was present at the beginning and at the end of the march, but only in a supervising role (local policy-practitioner)*

³⁵ *During the march I was there, but only for observation. I did not walk with the march, I only wanted to see what the reactions of people were and what we as a government could do with that. (Local civil servant)*

either allow or deny the group of immigrants to take part in the public sphere. The chairman's recollection of his decision reveals that he understood the outcome of the negotiation as a positive middle ground that facilitated the needs of the Moroccan community. They were allowed to use the public sphere for the mourning of their grievance, but the way in which that mourning took place was monitored and policed.

The Moroccan community, however, tacitly developed a tactic to be resilient against the proclaimed meaning of the march. The fact that the city authorities boldly rejected an official silent march made the symbolic value of the act of silence even higher and the message even stronger. The neighbourhood fathers legitimized their practice with the same logic as was used to shorten the march and prohibit the silent connotation. Silence was framed as a way to ensure safety. Within the boundaries of what was politically possible they invented a way to communicate their story. Paradoxically they voiced their grievance and anger through being silent. Earlier I used Diane Davis's definition of resilience that looks at the ways in which actors and institutions at the level of the community actually cope with or adapt to urban crisis (Davis 2012). The performance of silence is such an adaptation that allows the community to cope within the limited space set out by authorities. Because of the symbolic meaning of silence, the performance of making no sounds at all was in fact a public statement that 'loudly' allowed the community to voice their story in the public sphere.

Despite the symbolic meaning of the performance of silence, the neighbourhood fathers recollect the march as a missed opportunity;

De segregatie binnen de samenleving was heel erg duidelijk. Niet één blanke liep mee met de stille tocht, dat is een schande. 'Maar daar gaat het niet om', hebben we gezegd, de essentie van de tocht was om door te gaan op een goeie manier in de toekomst. (afgevaardigde van Marokkaanse gemeenschap)³⁶

By not participating, the policy makers attempted to keep the march within the realm of the family, instead their absence is understood as a political statement about the role and meaning of the Moroccan community in the neighbourhood and even in the broader context of the Dutch society.

³⁶ *The segregation in the society was very clear. Not one white person walked the march, which is a shame. But is not about that, we said, the essence is how we go on in the future. (Representative of Moroccan community)*

Rethinking resilient practices

The interplay between the Moroccan community and the local government in the context of a polarized national debate, demands to rethink the meaning of resilient practices in moments of crisis. In their set of capacities Norris et al. argue that political participation and the opportunity for collective action of a community are fundamental elements for community resilience (Norris et al 2008: 139). Authentic grassroots leadership leads to credibility that could lead to political participation. Through the network of neighbourhood fathers local civil servants intended to create such leadership, but at the same time they disrupt their empowerment by abandoning the protest march as well as the silent march and only allow for private mourning. Empowerment could be understood as 'inspired and committed leadership and by opportunities for members to play meaningful roles' (Norris et al 2008: 139). The meeting could have enabled community leaders to take part in decision making, but instead the fixed storyline and the focus on safety did not leave room for such engagement.

The strong narrative of the Moroccan community, however, led the neighbourhood fathers to take up a leadership role in the march on Friday. Flexibility and creativity are other important qualities in the set of capacities Norris et al set out as well is a strong communal narrative of how they see themselves and others (ibid: 140). Here the strong narrative of injustice allowed the community to be flexible insight of the boundaries set out by the local government. The Moroccan community tacitly developed a resilient practice that led them to be adaptable to the limited room they had for agency. Through silence they paradoxically voiced their story in the public sphere. The performance of silence creates a strong story for the community to publicly protest their marginal identity and enforces a form of empowerment, no matter how small the space for agency, they allowed themselves to have a space for sharing.

A close look at this tacit performance of resilience allows us to see an opportunity. Although earlier performances of authority established a limited space for agency, here there was a new opportunity to engage the Moroccan community in the public sphere. Despite their honest intentions to engage the Moroccan community, in the face of escalation, authorities were not able understand the story behind the silence from the perspective of the Moroccan community. Local civil servants and politicians decided to publicly refrain from taking part in the march. But their absence was as much an action as if they were present, it voiced a statement. That performance counter-acted the effect

of the resilient practice of the Moroccan community. Their tacitly developed counter-performance publicly underpinned the private meaning of the march and reaffirmed the dominant storyline of 'action-reaction'.

Conclusions

The case study of the bag-snatcher covers a period of crisis after the unfortunate death of a young Moroccan man who tries to rob a bag. Three storylines shape the sequence of events that unfold in the week after the tragedy. The improvised response of the Moroccan community was to commemorate their loved one at the site with flowers and candles. That commemoration got disrupted by civil servants who acted upon the storyline of 'action-reaction'. That storyline was closely related to the dominant storyline that featured in the media and framed the incident as 'own fault'. The Moroccan community, however, had a very different understanding of what had happened and expressed a need to protest.

The continuous reference to the death of Theo van Gogh indexed the events into a meaning of failed integration on the one hand, but also the experience of marginality on the other. The call for a protest could be understood as a form of resistance to earlier experiences of the Moroccan community, but also as a protest aiming at the crisis management of local authorities. If we use theory of contentious politics (Tilly 2007; 2008) the resistance reveals that the protest march they propose had political implications, the Moroccan community seeks to voice a story that they find marginal in the public debate. If we look more closely at the way they proposed to march – a walk through the city centre – that aim for a public demonstration with political significance gets underpinned.

From the perspective of local authorities, however, a march like this created safety risks and could easily lead to escalation. Following Low's analysis of space and protest, we see that the local government uses their authority to close off the opportunity to demonstrate through the historical sites of Amsterdam and thereby safeguard the meaning of public space they found appropriate. If the use of public space is a means to take part in a public discussion, the closing the public spaces of the city centre is a form of exclusion. The response of local authorities to the act of resistance of the Moroccan community does not look at the story behind the act of resistance. It does not acknowledge the underlying need for voicing a marginal story.

Despite the harsh denial of a protest march, local civil servants expressed a need to engage the Moroccan community in the process of crisis management. They invited representatives of the community to negotiate about the march. The transcript of the meeting reveals that the dominant story-line was fixed by the utterance of the Mayor. Within that perspective safety concerns were primary considerations. A local march in the neighbourhood was the result. Interestingly the neighbourhood fathers were able to adapt to that decision by framing a broader responsibility of the Moroccan community. Their aim, however, remained to voice their story of injustice. A silent march would do that despite the length. But even a silent march would have too much public connotations according to the local authorities. The meeting turned out to be a one sided negotiation where authorities used their power position to allow for a private march to mourn through the neighbourhood.

Despite the limited space for agency, community leaders tacitly developed a performances of resilience that allowed them to voice their public story of injustice. They adapted to the situation and made silence a means to take part in the public debate. The meaning of that resilient act gets underpinned because of the symbolic meaning of silence as a form of protest in the Dutch context. Nevertheless the decision of policy practitioners to denial participation in the march downplays that moment of empowerment and re-establishes earlier power positions.

Participation and empowerment of communities are crucial to develop a set of capacities for resilience in crisis. In this case we see a willingness of authorities to engage the community, but when push comes to shove they do not provide a space where that participation could lead to a different solution than the one they provide. Looking at the tacit development of resistance and resilience in the aftermath of crisis, teaches us that in order to learn in interaction, we must interpret performances. The performance of resistance informs about underlying needs that should be the aim of policies that seek to help a community in crisis.

What would have happened if the local authorities were able to read the tacit acts of resistance and resilience more closely? Where the performances of the Moroccan community reveal a set of resilient capacities, the responses of local government unintentionally disrupt these resilient capacities in interaction. If we draw on Hanna Arendt, multiple voices could increase the quality of the public sphere and public protest would create an opportunity to discuss the experience of marginalisation and foster the

democratic state. Consequently, allowing the community to take up a space in the public space of the city, no matter how controversial, would be a crisis management that fosters resilience and acknowledges underlying tensions and grievances. A closer look at the tacit performances of the Moroccan community in dealing with a local crisis could have informed local authorities about crisis managements. Despite the tacit resilience of the Moroccan community, their memory of the event is one of exclusion and a deepened experience of marginality in the Dutch society. In conclusion we could say that resilience does not only get constructed in the interplay between actors and institutions, tacit resilience is also depending on the recognition of authorities to be effective. A closer look at performance, the story behind contentious acts, and a more flexible interpretations of meaning might have enabled policy practitioners to think beyond safety concerns and allowed for an environment where empowerment of a group could have resulted in a blossoming of participation and growing resilience for future moments of crisis.

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