



The Confusion of Tongues by Gustav Doré (1865)

**Can the Evolution of a Concept Create a Tower of Babel:
Distinguishing Different Types of *Participation* in the Netherlands through
an Integral Lens**

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1. Introduction

The Netherlands has a traditional interest in the *participation* of civilians, and even more is being expected from this approach as an answer to societal problems and issues since the turn of the 21st century. Including people in society is one of the main objectives of the new Dutch government.

In this article, I follow the development of this “*participation track*” and connect it with my knowledge of integral theory. In the preparation, I co-operated with my colleague Roma Long and a group of community workers from Rotterdam. This exchange of experiences was very important for me to be able to write this article.

Dutch society is said to be on the edge of the evolution of consciousness (Don Beck). What is happening here, may be useful for other countries. I therefore want to share our experiences, the successful ones as well as the mistakes we’re making. I believe that, in general, Dutch policymakers expect far too much of the results of the *participation* they are promoting, at risk of becoming disappointed. Their expectations are often based on their *own* frames of reference and don’t take differences in people’s worldviews into account. Using Spiral Dynamics may help to distinguish different strategies (‘canals’) for social inclusion and individual development.

The focus of the article will be on Dutch society as a whole (16 million inhabitants) and on the local communities, especially in the big cities. Our population has changed dramatically. One third of the inhabitants in the big cities are non-western immigrants and about 9% are western immigrants. In general, about *one fifth* of the whole Dutch population consists of rather new immigrants. Although, throughout history, the Netherlands always has been an immigration country, at this moment the gap between different groups in the population is widening. In public opinion, politics and the media, mainly the special position of Islamic and dark coloured people is emphasized. However, living together with many different cultures is a daily experience for many residents. On one hand, you can see polarisation, but on the other, there *is* cooperation in schools, working places and neighbourhoods. People lead separate lives, but *also* have contact with each other, and work and live together. It’s a complex picture.

The article will start with an overview of the evolution of the concept of *participation* in Holland (2). This document deals with a very Dutch phenomenon and the many subtleties around this topic can be compared to discussing snow with an Eskimo. The Dutch use a lot of different words connected with different forms of participation and at the same time use the term *participation* almost for any situation involving cooperation. I believe that using the integral AQAL model (3) will lead to a better understanding of what is going on and gives us a new vocabulary to discuss the ways of including people in society. In the last part (4) the issue of non-participation will be discussed. Despite the attention it gets from policy makers, and the many good professional and civilian initiatives designed to stimulate involvement and responsibility in society, it is said that too many people do not *participate* (enough). This is experienced as ‘a problem’, leading to a search for new approaches. The question is: is this really a problem, and if it is, for whom and why is it so? Answers to these questions allow the search to become more focussed and innovative.

2. The concept of *participation* has come to mean different things in policy making since it was first introduced in the 1950’s.

Historical roots of participation

The tradition of cooperation and consensus is deeply ingrained in Dutch culture. It is the base of what is referred to as the “[polder model](#)”, the name given to the way that the government, employers and trade unions sit around the table to reach a consensus on labour agreements. A large part of the Netherlands, particularly in the west and north, was once covered by water. The inhabitants of these regularly flooded areas made living possible by building churches and farms on artificial hills, constructing dikes, digging drainage canals and by reclaiming the land from water. This first started on a small scale and became more widespread in the Golden Age (17th century, in which areas like the Haarlemmermeer and Beemster were reclaimed). Technological advances in the previous century allowed such spectacular accomplishments as the closing of the [Zuiderzee](#) and completion of the [Deltaworks](#). The historical collective effort to control water made effective communication, reaching agreements and solving conflicts absolutely necessary. Cooperation was vital. The first constitutional forms of governance developed were the “Waterschappen” en “Hoogheemraadschappen”, both originally designed to manage water.

The 1960's and 70's saw a rise of human rights and liberation movements in the western world as a protest against traditional and repressive forces, as well as the exploitation of 3rd world countries. The Netherlands proved to be fertile ground for these movements. Students and labourers made a stand to have more influence in businesses and neighbourhoods. “Together we are strong” became an important motto in the old neighbourhoods threatened to be demolished by ambitious city councils. This movement impacted the way local authorities thought about city planning; the voice of the people could no longer be neglected. This resulted in various forms of *participation* focused on involving people in planning procedures, and has even been embedded in the Dutch legislation.

Because these forms of participation were often carried out as a formality, combined with the growing desire to influence neighbourhood policies, new ways of working together were created. A new wave of professionals and policy makers that embraced participation began to enter the ranks. Residents started to become upset if they discovered that something had been decided without their consent. Gradually, a wide range of *participation* forms were developed, from thinking along with the process, to co-producing and co-deciding in processes.

Current definitions of participation

Participation (‘taking part in’), in a broad sense, appears to have become a magic word in this time. Many reports, bills and advices have recently appeared in the field calling for *participation*. A recent report “Vertrouwen in de buurt” (Trusting the neighbourhood) illustrates how everyday issues of organisation, safety, education and social infrastructure can best be addressed in partnership with citizens, civil servants and institutions such as schools, social work, police and housing corporations. A new law (WMO – Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning) which came into effect on January 1st 2007, pays a lot of attention to stimulating and designing the *participation* of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with a physical or mental handicap and families with multiple problems. Local government has been made responsible for designing these processes. *Participation*, in this sense, refers to creating conditions which allow these groups to be engaged in society.

The new cabinet, Balkenende IV, seated in February 2007, accentuates the need for social cohesion and *participation*. It is one of the pillars of their policy. A new ministerial post has been created for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Integration, and at the local level, all systems are “go” for the implementation of “neighbourhood approaches”. The “neighbourhood approach” combines the restructuring of local government and an intensive partnership between the officials, residents and professionals working in the neighbourhoods.

So a wide range of interpretations of the concept of *participation* have been evolved in the Netherlands like:

- being a part of (the neighbourhood, an organisation, a group, society, ...)
- being consciously involved in social processes
- influencing policy making of government and institutions like housing corporations and schools
- self realisation, identity building, empowerment
- getting a job, being successful at school, building a career
- getting together, sharing
- being engaged in all kinds of activities as a participant or volunteer
- active citizenship: taking responsibility for your fellow citizens
- integration
- educating (your) kids such that they fit into Dutch society

I believe the evolution of the numerous definitions of *participation* has created a “Tower of Babel” for policy makers and those working in the field. How can we get some more clarity?

3. The integral AQAL model can be used to identify and define essential properties of *participation*

Spiral Dynamics integral can help make distinctions between the definitions, by providing a fundamental coherent scale to allow one to identify the perspective from which the concept is being used. It can *also* be used to create new forms of *participation*, to involve and communicate with those worldviews that may *not have been taken into account* during the development of the concept. Using the Wilber’s *Integral model* gives us another way of organising the definitions and practices of *participation*.

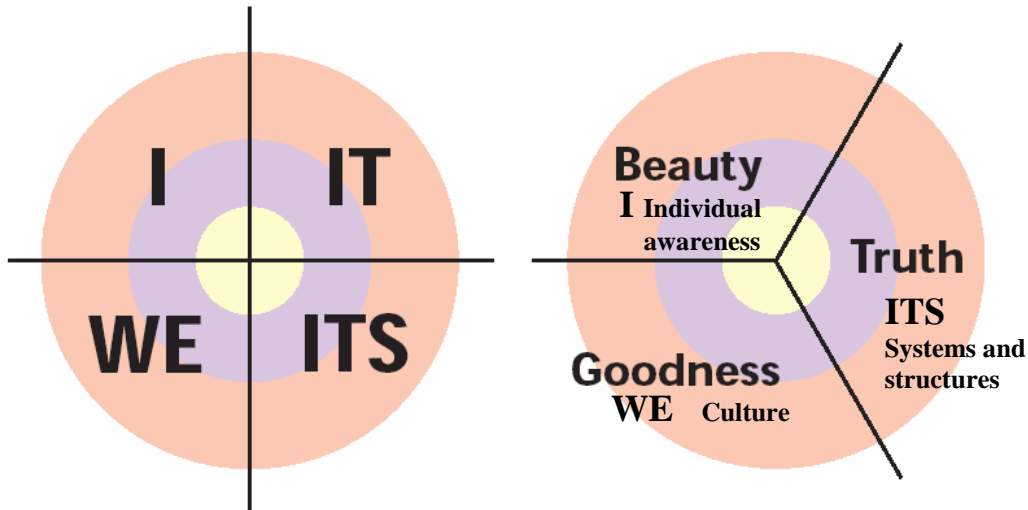
Three main types of participation and Wilber’s quadrants

People may participate in groups, in their neighbourhoods and in society at large. They may contribute by performing paid work or volunteering. In neighbourhoods, people may be involved with housing planning, designing playgrounds, traffic, green provisions, youth facilities, and so on. Being involved in these activities can contribute to social cohesion and integration. In practice, we can distinguish three main categories of *participation*:

- Horizontal participation refers to stimulating social contact between people living in communities, social cohesion and social inclusion. It is focused on involving different (groups of) residents and increasing the interaction between these.
- Vertical participation refers to taking part in the formal decision making processes of (governmental) institutions and to the contact between (groups of) residents and workers of these institutions. Effective vertical participation is built upon well-organised horizontal participation. If residents don’t know each other or don’t cooperate, they cannot elect representatives to speak in their common interest.

- Individual development. Many interventions and policies are meant to stimulate the individual participating in society by following courses about child care, being supported in financial problems, interconnecting people (becoming a “buddy”), attending school, having a job, visiting meeting places, learning Dutch, and so on.

In fact, this classification, developed in practice, reflects Ken Wilber’s quadrants when reduced to three dimensions: the “ITS”, the “WE” and the “I”.



Generally speaking, using Wilber’s quadrants may cultivate a new perspective on the often one-sided quantitative reporting of the effects of *participation* (how many people have been present), which unfortunately leave out the qualitative data (the people’s stories and felt experiences). The Integral approach communicates the sensibility of the development of individual awareness and competences (the I), as well as new systems and structures (the ITS) as well as a culture (the WE) in which *participation* can flourish. When people are asked to take part in designing a playground (procedure), they need to learn how to do that (individual development) and how to work together in an effective and creative way (development of the we).

A Spiral definition

Participation is about being consciously involved in constructive processes in the community or society you live in. Life circumstances and related value systems determine one’s perceived possibilities for *participating*. The more complex the value system, the greater the degrees of freedom for *participating* appear to be. Each value system has its own perception of *participation*. Underneath you find our interpretation of *participation* in the different valuesystems or vMememes:

SurvivalSense (Beige):

Is not aware of conscious *participation*

KinSpirits (Purple):

Participation takes place in one’s own family/group, with roles and duties being largely fixed.

PowerGods (Red):

Participation means connecting oneself to people, groups and organisations that can benefit, or increase power or pleasure for the individual. Interest is lost as soon as the attractive advantage or excitement falls away. It deals with impulsive and expressive involvement.

Truthforce (Blue):

Traditional forms of *participation* fit into this value system. One is involved in civil society in institutions like church, clubs, associations or political parties and fulfils one's duties.

StriveDrive (Orange):

Participation is connected with education, work, making a career and cultural activities. People enjoy challenges and change but no long-term commitment. *Participation* has to lead to an individual gain, albeit a win-win.

HumanBond (Green):

In this value system *participation* means being active as a volunteer in your neighbourhood, but also for the environment or humanity at large. As a world citizen you want to contribute to the bettering the world.

FlexFlow (Yellow):

This system desires to create order in complexity through creating distinctions within, and new connections between systems, such that the whole system benefits. Through its awareness of the interdependence of systems, it sees that constructive *participation* can potentially take place within all levels and contexts in society.

In my opinion, each individual *participates* in his/her own way in society and gives his/her contribution to societal life, be it in constructive or destructive ways. For an effective functioning of society and the world, especially the constructive contributions are needed. The content, form and direction of *participation* will be coloured by the perspectives/value systems people use. In Holland, different local governments try to introduce a green interpretation of *participation* (for instance in The Hague in a policy paper called *Together, we are the City*). The risk of this approach is that they will overlook the people who want to contribute from other vMememes.

When you look to the history of *participation* in the Netherlands through a Spiral lens it becomes clear that *participation* was first introduced in the Blue value system (1950), and boosted under a Green impulse in the 1960s (but stayed in fact in Blue because it was embodied in procedures), moved into Orange in the 1980s, and acquired a more authentic Green character in the 1990s. Now, I hope the stage is free to move to Yellow... Because at this moment to become effective in finding solutions for the actual problems, our country needs a varied approach including all forms of participation.

4. *Participation* initiatives are currently not reaching the whole population: non-participation is seen as a big problem

People in Holland are *participating* in society in many different ways and for different reasons. Nevertheless, it is said that non-participation is a big problem. Let's look what is meant by this.

Who are the people who don't participate, for whom this is problematic and why?

Not-*participating* is generally not experienced as a problem if those involved are self-supporting and do not create annoyances or tension in their environment. Although initiatives call on their *participation* and effort to contribute f.i. to local community, not doing so is in fact no reason for concern.

More worrying are the cases in which people are no longer self-supporting or threaten to become isolated. Modern urban life has weakened traditional family bonds. This, combined with the closing of many residential institutions which cared for psychiatric patients and the

elderly, makes a number of groups potentially vulnerable to isolation and neglect. The Dutch government sees itself as being responsible for these groups. Since adequate professional care has become increasingly expensive as the population ages, and the economic base to support this has become narrower due to a decline in the average birth rate, more solutions are looked for in areas of *participation*, such as community meals and contact with volunteers in “buddy projects”.

But *non-participation* is currently mainly felt as problematic when it concerns citizens who think and act from specific value systems, especially the Family (Purple) and Power (Red) systems. The (assumed) problematic aspect of the first group (Family) is a “lack of integration” into Dutch society. Issues around “social disruption/communal annoyances and criminal offences” are being connected with the second group (Power).

These concerns are often – certainly in recent public and political opinion – linked to themes of ethnicity and religion in a one-sided fashion. In my opinion, this view does not fully honour an Integral perspective on the matter. Value systems emerge as a reaction and answer to life circumstances; and in this sense, one’s history *is* important. *But value systems are more fundamental and universal to human experience than culture and ethnicity.* Seen this way, there is not so much difference between villagers in the Dutch province Limburg, or say in a rural Turkish village - or between Christian, Jewish or Islamic fundamentalists. Any ethnic group may have – depending on the formative life conditions present – people in all value systems. People may forget that most citizens with a foreign background are well integrated into society and may overlook Dutch natives who are not. Using Spiral Dynamics, you are able to speak about the development of people irrespective of their ethnicity or religion.

The problematic side of non-participation

Nonetheless, there are a number of problems. In a (post-)modern society it is essential for children to be able to internalise common (group) rules and learn to be self-disciplined (Blue vMeme). The most important places to learn these Blue rules are at home, and later on, at school. Children raised in families with dominant Family or Power value systems can have problems internalising these Blue rules. They’re more used to obeying *external* authorities than acting according to *internal* rules.

Land of the free...

The Netherlands as a whole has become a (post-)modern society (orange/green). In the profit sector the orange vMeme is still rather dominant. Professionals in education, healthcare, social work and those employed by local government, often work within the values of the sensitive (Green) system. In general Dutch culture embodies values like respect for those with other views, and the sharing of experiences, views and opinions. On the outside, it may appear to be a free world where everything is permitted. “Gedogen” (to tolerate/permit) is a typical Dutch term. However, behind this image of freedom, all kinds of rules and values exist. These are transferred to most children during their socialisation. For instance, a standard of “free sexuality” (sex prior to marriage) implies an understanding of one’s own responsibility and respect for others and their integrity.

In addition to the family, the process of common rule internalisation can take place in a nursery, (pre)school or children’s club, but also in religious - or when necessary, corrective institutions.. Numerous projects like youth security teams, or playing music in a brass band,

stimulate the development of this value system. Only once a person has learned to internalise rules and is able to function without an external authority being present, can he/she start releasing them and perhaps adopt new values that serve more individual needs. Happily, the concern for these children is growing. They really need support to be included in society. Rule internalisation generally seems to be more difficult for boys than for girls. This may be because females tend to develop more strongly through “collective” value systems (the “cool” Spiral Dynamics colours) and pass through the “individual” value systems (the “warm” colours) more swiftly.

In the present, rather negative, atmosphere with respect to Islamic people, it is important to realise that becoming dedicated to religious rules (Blue) for youngsters living in a dominant Red vMeme, may be a very positive step in their further development. In fact, many rules of the traditional culture (Purple) are more conservative than the Islamic rules (Blue). From there on, the road opens to develop a more individual version of one’s belief.

Another problem is the gap between the rich and poor, often correlating with the level of education. The poor in the Netherlands consist of all nationalities and ethnicities, but in highly urbanised areas, people of foreign descent outnumber the poor natives. Many of the Moroccans and Turks who were invited to the Netherlands to perform manual labour, came from rural areas and had relatively little education. Under benevolent circumstances, climbing up the social ladder can take one or more generations. Under bad circumstances, when groups become stigmatized, have difficulties integrating into the dominant culture, have no regular jobs and live in poverty, the risk of creating an underclass becomes all too real.

In recent years, a broad range of support measures to stimulate people to improve their position has been offered to them like courses, schooling, traineeships, language lessons and integrated programmes. It could be interesting to inquire till what extent this gap is viewed in an integral way and if new interventions will emerge when doing so.

5. First findings for practice

Looking at non-participation through a Spiral lens leads to a new way of evaluating existing practices and to more insight on how to reach those that have previously been considered ‘difficult to reach’. So, if you want to involve people, it is essential to connect to their specific worldviews or dominant value systems. It also implies that many different methods and forms of *participation* are needed to meet different (groups of) people where they are.

Together with a few community workers I did a first search to find out which methods reach whom. Underneath are some of my tentative findings:

SurvivalSense

People centred in Survival (Beige) need food, shelter and care. The social boarding houses that are opening in Dutch cities for homeless, provide well for this group.

KinSpirits

In the lives of the majority of people that are hard to reach, family ties are central. Traditions are upheld like distinct roles for men and women. People only really trust members of their own group and they have their own support systems. For migrants living in this purple value system care extends to supporting their family in the homelands. People often appear to be withdrawn from dominant society. A large part of these citizens also have access to the

purpose value system (Blue) in which religion may play an important role. To be clear about this, this story applies to migrants as well as to native Dutch citizens. One may recognize these patterns in migrant Moroccan families, for example, but native Dutch families are to be found in these value systems as well. These families are often best reached by people from their own social group who have developed into other value systems, thereby being able to serve as a mediator, bridge and role model.

PowerGods

Generally Dutch society has difficulties to deal with people that live in a closed/negative Power value system (Red). At the moment the concern is focused especially on part of the Moroccan boys, but of course more people (f.i. radical skinheads, many involved in the drug scene or underworld) may be caught in this worldview. The approach for dealing with them drifts between palliation and demanding hard punishment. People often feel helpless in dealing with these groups, because this value system (Red) is not bothered by guilt or shame.

Spiral Dynamics can be used to structure an intervention plan. An individual's awareness usually resides in three value systems. Based on this idea, someone in negative Red needs four things:

- strengthening of the Purple base (lots of attention for the home life and basic needs)
- quick and clear punishment of negative Red
- involvement in positive Red (room for expression and action with short term results such as can be found in doing sports)
- development of Blue (by stimulating and giving structure and purpose by taking part in projects such as security teams, brass bands, going to school, or being active in an organisation)

Talks with community workers in Rotterdam also revealed that using the word *participation* primarily spoke to people with dominant Blue and Orange value systems. The term "active citizenship" primarily engages people with a dominant Green value system. Reaching people in dominant Purple and Red value systems requires different concepts such as "identity", "action" and "mastery". In addition to this distinction we found in practice that:

- Home visits can be used at all times, for all groups
- The greatest number of the used methods of *participation* are effective for people in Blue and upward such as: meetings, newsletters, a platform, the "Campaign method", consultation, courses, Internet, neighbourhood mediation,
- Methods like a Debate, Dialogue or open house days seem to best connect to sensitive (Green) values
- Öpzoomeren (a specific way of street improvement), the Street Inc. game, and other "reward for action" initiatives may especially reach entrepreneurial Orange
- The more physical and creative methods such as: theatre, sports, games, exhibitions, art projects, art fairs, festivities, informal gatherings, street activities and food, appear to be effective for all value systems. However, the form has to be modified to meet the interests of different groups (see example).

Example of activities using sports and games:

Family:	gatherings for the whole family with games for children and adults
Power:	challenging sports requiring bravery, testing one's strength
Structure:	tournaments, club activities, a quiz
Entrepreneurial:	competition stimulating the drive to be a winner
Sensitive:	cosy gathering with a friendly game of ...

The discovery that activities that involve “doing” may be the most effective (in contrast to activities that perhaps accentuate thinking or talking), provided they can be delivered in variable forms that have an emotional and cognitive impact, perhaps offer a way to involve the ‘non participating’ groups in new ways of participating.

Integral leadership

The core of this article is that social inclusion of all groups in a society is crucial for its future. All people deserve the opportunity to move a step further and attain a respectable place in society (and of course, this implies that individuals will also have to do what’s necessary to achieve this). The importance of this theme lies in the recognition that we, as a society, can only survive if we enhance its sustainability, cultivate an awareness of responsibility, and create avenues for social inclusion. This requires bridging apparently opposing views through an integral analysis, and approaching the problems that hamper the cohesion and development of society as a whole.

What does this mean for the people who have to decide and to act in this field? For the politicians, the officials, the policemen, the social workers, the housing employees, the volunteers and all other professionals/people who are concerned with the problems and opportunities in a specific area? What does it mean for the needed leadership competencies and attitudes?

Of course, this is not an easy question, but beneath you will find some considerations that may help us to get a more clear view into the potential answers:

- *Cooperation* between the different actors in the field is an important condition. Nowadays problems are so complex that it isn’t possible to find a solution only looking from one perspective or discipline. In the Netherlands it is quite common now to have multidisciplinary teams working in local social policy. Still, specific interests of the different organisation often overrule the common focus on problem solving and development.
- Regularly, an overall vision is missing. The parts of the puzzle are put together, but an *integral framework/* perspective is lacking. So, it is important to create such an integral vision that can be used to include, to integrate and to synnervate the different separated contributions.
- The different vMemos include specific types of leadership:
 - Purple: the Ancestors, the Wise Elderly People, the Father-person or the Mother-person; focused on belongingness, identity, security, traditions and rituals
 - Red: the Man or Woman of action, the Absolute Leader, the Boss, the person who is able to deal with PowerPlay; also the Expressionist who challenges us to do what we want without shame
 - Blue: the Official or Priest, those who know where we are going, what is right and wrong to do and set and keep the rules
 - Orange: the Rational Scientist who uses the power of Logic or the Entrepreneur who sees the Opportunities for success; they show us the possibilities of the expanding world and emphasise the Individual responsibility
 - Green: the Communicator and Cosmopolitan who stress the Equality of all citizens and our Common responsibility.
 - Yellow: the Integral Leader who recognises the Need for a comprehensive view and sees the Patterns and the Connections between the separated Parts

- Turquoise: the Connector who is able to Join us to take an Innovative, New, Integral Holistic Path to the Future

All types of leadership, when executed in an open and healthy way with a positive/developmental intention, *may play an important role* in different situations. If working with a group of youngsters operating from Red value system, a Red-Blue leader can do miracles while a Typical Green Social Worker will be put aside.

- But in order to cope with the complexity of today's society *we need Yellow and Turquoise Leadership* to show a new and inspiring Direction, the give an Integral Analysis and Perspective and to Connect the separated organisations, people and actions.
- I think the need for this kind of leadership is becoming more and more manifest and recognised in the Netherlands.

Finally

Developing and performing Yellow and Turquoise Leadership is still an experimental and pioneering activity. It will be very important in the near future to learn from each other's experiences in this field, because it is a quite new path to follow. I hope this essay will contribute to broaden our insights about what is possible and necessary to save our planet and our souls.

Utrecht, 11 november 2007

Leida Schuringa studied urban sociology and worked as a community worker, as a researcher and as a teacher in Higher Education. She also followed courses in management, energetic work, integral coaching and Spiral Dynamics. In 1992 she started her own business in coaching and training - Leidraad Leertrajecten (www.leidraad.com). Leida has written many articles, especially about community development, and a few books: *Cultures as Neighbours*, *Managing Diversity*, *Project Management*, *Community Work and Roma Inclusion* (this book has also been published in Czech) and *Community Empowerment in a developing country*. She is connected with the Dutch node of the Centre for Human Emergence (CHE) and Synnervate. Her passion is to contribute to bridging the gap between different groups in the population, to the social inclusion and integration of migrants, refugees and Roma people in the Netherlands, and to create a resilient society that is able to find solutions for the very complex (global) problems we are facing.

In 2007 she cooperated with a number of CHE members and community workers to discover the impact of AQAL theory when applied to the area of community development and integration. This article is one of the results.

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