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# MP4 WP4.1 Retroactive evaluation of on-the-ground benefits

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Evaluation report:  
Barger  
Compascuum,  
The Netherlands

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**The Interreg IVB  
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## Introduction to the pilot project

Emmen is a municipality with a population of around 109,000 inhabitants, which makes it the largest in the province of Drenthe, in the North East of The Netherlands, on the border with Germany. It is also a large municipality in the context of the Netherlands in terms of surface area, with over 35,000 Ha., of which 76.9% is cultivated, 4.8% is wooded, 6.4% is uncultivated (primarily moorland nature reserves and heath), and 11.9% is built up. About half the population is concentrated in the city of Emmen, with the remainder distributed across a series of settlements, with populations ranging from 12,000 to 800 and under.

The village of Barger-Compasuum (BC) is at the lower end of the population range with approximately 2000 inhabitants. It is a deprived community/village located within the larger growth region of Emmen. Barger-Compasuum is located to the East of the city of Emmen, next to the border with Germany, on a junction of two roads. This junction forms the centre of the village, and before the pilot projects were implemented it was based on a traditional road design which gave priority to vehicles.

The two pilot projects in Barger-Compasuum were centred around the roads, using the transformation of these as an instrument to bring about also increased community engagement. These were:

- Barger-Compasuum 'living centre' – This was intended to deliver facilities and services in the village centre for all inhabitants through a landscape-based approach, reflecting the transition of the surrounding landscape from former moorland, to open farmland to a mixed suburban use for recreation and agriculture. This included implementing the idea of 'shared space' across the existing road. This 'living centre' would act as main focal and meeting point for the village inhabitants and visitors, and would be used for all kinds of events and activities as well as a source of information. It was expected it would provide improved spatial quality and add character to the village, ensuring future viability. This stronger identity and community engagement was expected to bind citizens to their community compared to work carried out by the municipality alone. Thus, it was foreseen that the investment would deliver long-lasting effects in the community and far beyond, by setting an example of community engagement for other stakeholders in Emmen and elsewhere.
- Barger-Compasuum entrance gateway – This project was based on developing and implementing open space improvements at highly visible 'gateway' locations, to demonstrate how these can be built and maintained to be inviting to visitors, helping to improve community image and cohesion. It was expected that this project would improve the quality and character of the public realm in Barger-Compasuum, and help create a sense of ownership, as well as excitement amongst local citizens actively engaged in this major trans-national cooperation. This could serve as an example for similar experiences in community engagement, replicated in other deprived parts of the North Sea Region (NSR) growth regions, engaging local citizens and entrepreneurs in other locations.

## **Context and the aim of the project**

The Barger-Compasuum Village Council (see Glossary) had been involved in an initiative to develop a village development plan (Dorpsontwikkelingsplan DOP) for the village, setting up a specific group of resident representatives that was established to engage in the process (DOP Group). Through the Emmen Revisited (ER) organisation (see below for description), staff who were working with the group to further such a plan, and in collaboration with the Municipality, sought MP4 funding in order to help address what had been identified as the main three problems of Barger Compasuum:

1. Social and living climate in the village of Barger Compasuum needs improving.
2. A broad stakeholder involvement (including residents) in planning public spaces in Barger Compasuum is difficult to achieve.
3. Active participation in management and maintenance of public space is not yet commonplace in Emmen, and needs to be addressed.

The pilot project's aims and objectives were therefore designed to alleviate these problems. These aims and objectives were as follows:

1. To develop, implement and maintain a new central village square and highly visible 'gateway' locations which are inviting to visitors and help improve community image and cohesion.
2. To achieve wide stakeholder involvement (including residents) in planning Barger Compasuum village entrances and 'living centre' and transfer lessons from this process to other communities.
3. To maintain and manage these new open spaces with local involvement. To transfer some place-keeping aspects from the municipality to the village community (council, volunteers).

Thus, these three objectives respectively addressed the challenges of improving the social and living climate in Barger Compasuum via place-making and place-keeping, involving residents and other stakeholders in the development (place-making), and strengthening community involvement in relation to place-keeping.

The three objectives above have community cohesion at their core. The last two objectives are also intended to enhance community cohesion:

4. To develop community activities in the central village square.
5. To achieve a strong identification of the community with the new village entrances and 'living centre'.

### The specific place-keeping approach

The Village Council, in conjunction with the Municipality, decided that the **place-making** aspect of the project would make use of the regeneration framework that had already been tried and tested in the region, namely Emmen Revisited (ER). ER is a public-private joint-venture organisation between Emmen Municipality and the Housing Corporations operating within the municipality. ER aims to improve the social and living environment in urban districts and villages within the Municipality of Emmen. It seeks to achieve this through brokering collaboration among the municipality, housing corporations, and local residential groups; receiving input from the social affairs unit as well as other organisations involved in the urban regeneration programmes and projects, such as the police, water board, (health) care organisations, etc. It acts as a facilitator in the production of regeneration programmes, helping establish and run two levels of resident groups in each locality where the process is implemented (village or district): (a) a District Team (5 to 7 people representing residents and relevant public bodies), which meets monthly and has a role in overseeing the process and implementation of regeneration programmes within its district; and (b) a District (or Village) Platform (20-25 people), which is formed as a local consultation body when preparing programmes, and consists of professionals and volunteers including residents with an interest in the development of the area and representatives from the police, schools, etc. Responsibility for delivery of each of the components of the regeneration programmes defined through the ER process rests with the relevant participating agency, and implementation of the programme is monitored by the District Team. This model is an example of a strongly participatory process in decision-making for place-making, in which the local community is given an effective platform for discussing and defining its priorities. The structure and role of ER – facilitatory, democratic and non-hierarchical – appears to be an important factor in the success of the process.

Two elements, however, distinguish the Barger Compasuum (BC) project from other regeneration projects that had applied the ER model in the district:

- Firstly, the BC project has been the first implementation of ER with external partners (and therefore also the first time a ER project has been evaluated externally).
- Secondly, the ER model had previously had only limited experience with shared responsibilities in long-term **place-keeping** of open spaces beyond those established legally for public bodies. The village and regional decision-makers intended to explore the scope for the ER process to include wider sharing of place-keeping responsibilities during the course of the MP4 project.

In the initial stages of the project it was anticipated that the Municipality of Emmen would manage and maintain the site, with residents and stakeholders (businesses, owners, schools, NGOs) participating in decisions regarding place-keeping. It was hoped that some aspects of place-keeping may be transferred to the village community (Village Council, volunteers, community participation).

With regards to potential place-keeping challenges, it was anticipated that coordinating multiple stakeholders may be difficult, as well as encouraging community participation in the management of open spaces.

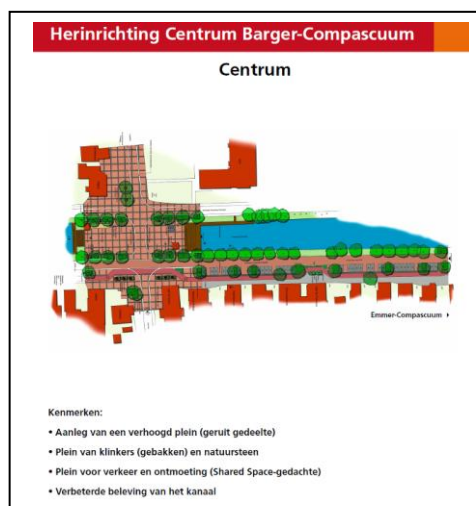
## Place-keeping and place-making: looked at from five dimensions – findings

### 1. Partnerships

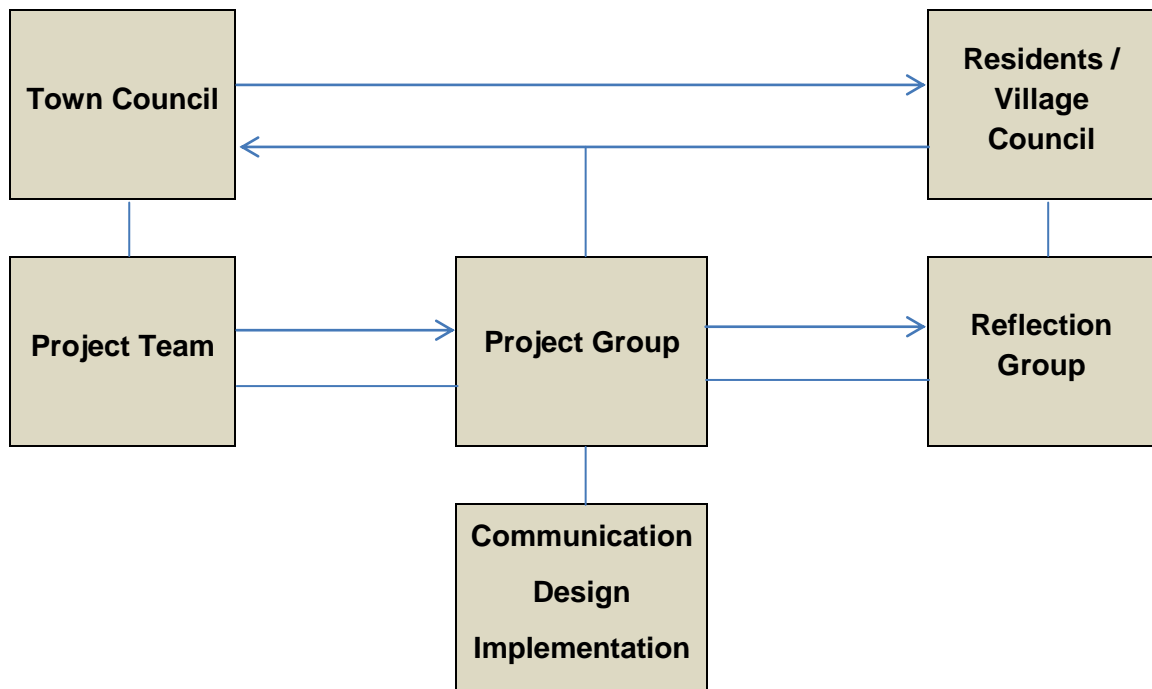
Place-making partnerships have been set up in accordance with the ER model, with the municipality and resident groups cooperating, but also with input from the social affairs unit, water board, (health) care organisations, the Province, etc.

The key partnership was that set up between the municipality and residents' representatives via the Project Group, which brought together local authority professionals on one side (Project Team), and members from the Village Platform on the other, with their cooperation being supported and facilitated by ERA. Although this partnership built on the already existing collaboration around the DOP programme, there was mutual distrust that had to be overcome. According to Barger Compasuum residents who participated in the evaluation, this distrust pervades the relationship between residents and the local authority across the municipality of Emmen. The partnership in Barger Compasuum worked successfully in making decisions, leveraging funding (see Finance section 3 below) and overseeing the implementation of place-making. The project manager from the municipality was required to change working methods, from the conventional project requiring the achievement of fixed objectives, to a plan that changed with inputs from the community.

Two elements of this shift in approach (from municipality-led to community-led) are worth emphasising. Firstly, at the design stage residents were asked what activities they would like to do in the new space. This helped create an atmosphere of equal partnership and trust (apart from an obvious benefit of leading to a design that is liked by the community). Secondly, ER has taken an approach where resident's wishes take priority and can only be rejected by ER if they are in conflict with the law or too expensive.



### Project Organisation



**Figure 1. Emmen Revisited project organisation in Barger Compasuum**

Other examples of partnership working revolved around specific aspects of the project, including:

- A discussion between the Municipality and the Water Board led to changes in dimensioning the water culvert/pipe under the square, sharing the costs.
- A discussion with the Province Government on traffic management led to the Province handing over responsibility on the cross-roads/square to the town council, allowing Emmen to proceed with applying the ‘Shared Space’ principle. The Province’s rules did not allow for ‘Shared Space’ principles to be applied on cross-roads involving their main roads, but the Province (both staff and politically) was willing to see the advantages. Therefore they decided to hand over the ownership of a small section of the road. Partnership working at the decision-making stage allowed the identification of a solution which, somewhat paradoxically, was based on a non-partnership-based approach – i.e. transferring responsibility.
- Since 2010, the Municipality and restaurant/bar owners pay jointly for energy/lighting points on the square (to electricity available for events etc.).

At the beginning of the project, there was less certainty about the shape and form of place-keeping partnerships than about place-making ones. It was envisaged that the overall management and maintenance would be carried out in a joint public-private manner under the ER partnership, but the Municipality’s ambition was to transfer some aspects of place-keeping from the Municipality to the village community (Village Council,

volunteers). What has been established in practice is an improved version of an approach already used in other communities around Emmen. A Joint Maintenance Group (including representatives from the Village Council and Village Platform, the Municipality's Maintenance Department and the organisation working with unemployed) was formed in 2010/11 to discuss place-keeping of public areas. One of its earliest tasks was organising the opening event. The Joint Management Group identifies priorities in relation to place-keeping and allocates tasks and responsibilities to relevant bodies/individuals (Province, Water Board, Unemployed Peoples' Organisation, landowners). It is gradually achieving improved coordination, and it is beginning to be consulted by agencies such as the Water Board. The partnership approach taken by the Barger Compasuum Joint Management Group has started to influence other joint management groups elsewhere in Emmen.

#### Lessons learnt / implemented

The experience – with regards to cooperation on place-making issues between village groups and professionals – has proved valuable in establishing a permanent Joint Management Group.

*A major obstacle to establishing an effective municipality-residents partnership was the need to overcome distrust between the two sides. This required a change in attitudes on both sides, which is not easily replicable elsewhere as it depends on individuals.*

*Combined meetings of citizens and professionals led to more knowledge about each others' possibilities, greater understanding and therefore better shared responsibility and better shared solutions.*

*The process of discussing place-keeping required much more time than expected, due to uncertainties about roles and responsibilities with some of the stakeholders.*

*It is important to make clear from the early stages what choices the stakeholders have and what the expectations are.*

*Creating a 'level playing field' for discussion helps achieve clarity over roles and avoid unrealistic expectations.*

*Each stakeholder works at different levels in a project, and sees it within different timeframes and from different perspectives. Allowance needs to be made for this to happen, and for different stakeholders to participate at different times.*

*Differences in knowledge need to be recognised and addressed. The municipality used technical knowledge that the local community was not proficient in. Future projects will include training for local community members in skills such as plan-reading, etc.*

*The ER participatory model, previously applied mainly in urban districts, worked equally well in a village environment. Certain characteristics of a village setting (smaller number of residents, long-established tradition of self-reliance, etc.) made certain aspects of the model easier to implement than in a large urban district.*

*As a part of the project the private grounds of entrepreneurs were paved with materials as a part of the public area. Contracts were signed and the result is that entrepreneurs now take part in the maintenance of the public area. For example, some shop owners have made a terrace/seating area partly on public grounds, which they maintain themselves.*

*The improvement in partnerships with the Water Board and the Province achieved in the BC project has triggered similar improvements in other areas where ER operates. Co-ordination has improved across the municipality as a result of the BC project.*

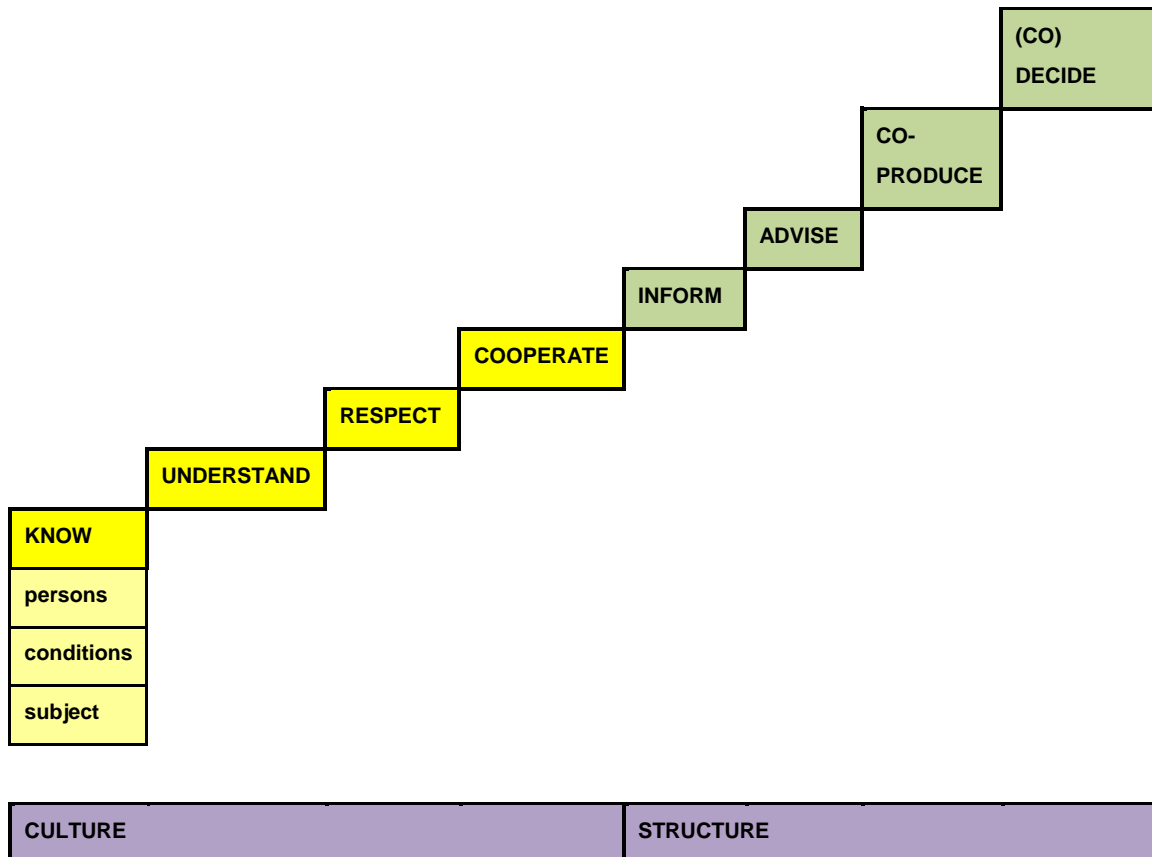
*Since the Municipality began treating the Village Council as an equal partner, people in the village respect and value this residents' organisation more than before. Linked to this, the organisation has recently gained three new members.*





## 2. Governance and Engagement

The general approach to governance on this project has been influenced by Arnstein’s ladder of participation (1969). This ladder was adapted by the practitioners at ER, who identified a set of steps that needed to be taken prior to the first rung on Arnstein’s ladder in order to build trust. These first steps work in the realm of ‘Culture’ – with Arnstein’s ladder being seen as ‘Structure’ – and consist of: knowing, understanding, respecting and cooperating. During these steps the following elements are considered: people, conditions and subject.



**Figure 2. Emmen Revisited ladder of participation leading to co-operation<sup>1</sup>**

In Barger Compasuum the approach to governing place-making was to work with the organisations that were already working on the pre-existing DOP plan, creating a Project Group drawing on the Municipality’s Project Team and an expanded version of the existing residents’ DOP reflection group. Through advertising in the newspaper and other means, a wider invitation was extended to Barger Compasuum residents

<sup>1</sup> Knowing ‘conditions’ comprises, for example: how big is the budget; are citizens able to attend meetings at daytime; are professionals able to attend evening meetings. Knowing the ‘subject’ regards whether stakeholders understand the anticipated outcome in the same terms. Understanding will lead to respect; respect will lead to co-operation. Culture is based on trust.

and business people to join the existing reflection group and form a Village Platform (within the ER method) consisting of 15-20 individuals.

Working with these groups, ER facilitated the identification of the conditions (people's availability, resources, etc.) and initially used the concept of 'shared space' as the subject on which to build trust. A lot of discussion was needed in the Project Group, and during wider events, to air the different views on what 'shared space' means and to gain mutual understanding and respect – the concept, introduced by the Municipality as a result of its participation in another transnational project, had never before been used at a crossroads. Early discussions included a workshop with residents in the Project Group and Village Platform in which they were asked to identify the uses and activities they envisaged in the new shared space, rather than focusing on the form of the space. This information was used by the designers to produce an initial draft plan, which was discussed at a second workshop (combined with an exhibition) to which all residents in the village were invited, with feedback being used to further refine the design in an iterative process. The wider workshop open to all residents was convened once funding for the project had been secured (see Finance). Feedback to residents on what suggestions had not been incorporated in the design and why, was made publicly available for 6 weeks at the local convenience store.

Through participating in this ER-facilitated process, the members of the Project Group agreed a set of objectives, and then oversaw the implementation of activities and measures. These were also monitored by ER. The process was underpinned by administrative support provided by ER for the Project Group (see Glossary for note on the governance of ER).

This process helped to overcome a number of barriers:

- Initial lack of trust between the residents and the municipality – this was built up through the working of the Project Group, which brought together representatives from both, and which helped change attitudes both in the community and among council staff;
- Initial opposition to the idea of 'shared space' on a road junction by the Province – this was overcome by handing over ownership of the junction to the Municipality;
- Lack of engagement of the Water Board with residents' organisations – initially the Water Board was not interested in engaging, but got involved when it emerged that the culvert pipe was broken, and involvement over this issue led to more continuous engagement.

From the beginning of the project it was anticipated that the governance of place-keeping would be modelled on the governance of place-making (above), in that local participation (residents and entrepreneurs) would be encouraged. During the process it was foreseen that schools and organisations with rural land management responsibilities such as the Province and the Water Board were going to be involved in addition to ER partners. The ER team were open to test new ways (and formal contracts) of cooperation on place-keeping between stakeholders.

This approach to place-keeping has proved effective as members of the Village Council reported a sense of co-ownership owing to their close involvement (as fully accepted partners) in the project. In practice the schools were involved only in training

around the use of the new shared place. A key agency in the governance structure for place-keeping is the Joint Management Group that has been established as a continuation of the Project Group that oversaw the project's implementation. This directly involves village representatives, a representative from the Municipality's Maintenance Department, and a representative from the social services organisation working with the unemployed, in meetings every two months. Bodies such as the Province and the Water Board are not permanent members of this Joint Management Group, but can be called on by it to undertake open space maintenance tasks.

The engagement of local businesses has also worked well both in place-making and subsequently in place-keeping, with contributions being made in cash and kind (see Finance below).

The Joint Management Group has a rule that if a task can be done by citizens, they are asked in the first place. If citizens cannot or do not want to do the task, the Group then asks the Unemployed People's Organisation, followed by the Municipality.

#### Lessons learnt / implemented

ER's approach to the governance process is the same in general terms wherever it is implemented, but *the specifics of each local situation affect how it develops*.

*Scale can make a difference to the governance process*. In a small village such as Barger Compascuum it was easier to find individuals who were willing to take on responsibilities within the process than in large (e.g. urban) districts.

*The age of the settlement can also be an important factor*. In the experience of ER staff, in long-established villages people are more used to a tradition of managing their space.

*The role of the ER staff in the process was seen as highly important in helping achieve the project objectives*, through both its administrative support and its facilitatory role. ER's flexible approach to existing structures and procedures was seen by ER staff as contributing to its success.

*Attitudes among staff in local and other government organisations, as well as among residents, need to change if wider and more inclusive place-making and place-keeping processes are to be developed*. In Barger Compascuum a shift in thinking in the local government helped change the residents' perception of the Municipality and their attitude from opposition to collaboration.

*Initial stakeholder analysis could have been more comprehensive*. This would have identified stakeholders such as the Water Board, the Province, local associations (e.g. the carnival association), and other departments within the Municipality, and could have involved these in the early stages of the planning.

*Eagerness among the stakeholders to prepare and implement the project helped to overcome minor problems* – there was trust.



### **3. Finance**

#### ***Place-making finance:***

The initial sketch idea for the gateways and the village centre (shared space) was estimated as costing over € 1.3 Million. The Municipality of Emmen secured approximately € 400,000 directly through the successful bid for the MP4 project, € 150,000 of which was European Union funding, with the additional € 250,000 coming from the Province of Drenthe. The remaining € 900,000 was allocated to ER for the project from a € 7 Million fund that the Municipality of Emmen had established to stimulate employment-creating projects, as a response to the economic crisis of 2008. Other funds were identified later in the process. For example, the culverting of the canal required more extensive work than initially estimated, and the Water Board contributed to this. In addition, the shop-owners around the village centre contributed € 12,800 for making the village centre/square attractive (benches, flower pots, energy/lighting points).

Owing to a large part of funding from the Municipality's employment generation fund, it was possible to implement an innovative procurement process which restricted invitations to tender to four local contractors who were required to employ locally-based staff, and to include some members of the Unemployed Peoples' Organisation on the project. Another innovation for the Municipality of Emmen was that a design & build contract was used. The invited contractors attended a briefing and a short course on the plan, on the design and build contract, and on the procurement process. Evaluation of bids was based on two parts: 30% on certain conditions to be met (required by the residents), including uninterrupted access to the shops and generally (important given that the central square site is the only link between the two parts of the village otherwise divided by the canal), and very good ongoing communication between the contractors and the residents during the works; 70% based on the price, which was considered after examining how the conditions were to be met. The contract was not awarded to the lowest bid.

#### ***Place-keeping finance:***

The first major outlay for place-keeping was to cover the opening event that was held in July 2011. A substantial amount of funds, time and voluntary work were contributed by local stakeholders: 6 organisations, such as sports clubs, private companies, and the Village Council, funded € 20,000. The Village Council has an annual budget of € 10,000, allocated by the Municipality, which it used to contribute to this. It is expected that the funding model is going to be overhauled in the near future with town and village councils being given larger budgets and more freedom in choosing what to spend the money on. According to the representatives who participated in the evaluation visit and workshop, the BC Village Council envisages using some of this local budget for place-keeping, as well as for future projects.

Ongoing maintenance and management is overseen by the Joint Management Group that was established as a continuation of the Project Group. It does not have a budget of its own for such purpose, but it identifies priorities and tasks, and calls on the relevant bodies and individuals to perform such tasks using their own resources. A key resource it draws on is the scheme for unemployed people run by the Municipality's social services. The aspiration is for funding and other resource inputs

(e.g. volunteers) to reflect the joint public-private ownership and management of village centre that is planned. Arrangements are still in progress. ER's view is that the level of engagement from local inhabitants will grow organically.

The impact of the place-making project in the village centre has highlighted the need for higher levels of maintenance along other parts of the canal. The Joint Management Group expects to get agreement from the Water Board and the Province to fund such maintenance for the areas of canal and canal side for which they are respectively responsible.

#### Lessons learnt / implemented

*The ER method of involving local residents and entrepreneurs in discussing the design and future use of the village square and their role in this, led to additional small investments by both residents and shop-owners in the square, as well as to participation in place keeping.*

*Higher cost-effectiveness may have been achieved through organizing a smaller group of municipal professionals.*

*Providing initial training in the Design and Build method for prospective building contractors helped to reduce the risks in this form of procurement of the construction works, which had not been used in Emmen before. This appears to have contributed to the success of the process.*

*Involving the Water Board in an earlier stage of the project would have helped give this organisation a greater sense of shared responsibility and probably would have led to a higher financial contribution from them.*

*Procurement of funding for place-making and place-keeping happened along different timescales. The need to deliver place-making at short notice led to a different timing of place-making and place-keeping, setting back place-keeping issues, and therefore the securing of sources of funding and other resources for this.*

*Having a plan ready and the commitment of the local community helped ER to persuade the Municipality of Emmen to allocate funding to the project.*

*Time input required from the project manager was higher than anticipated.*

*A more thorough risk analysis at the outset would have been advisable, though unforeseen major problems did not emerge.*

#### **4. Policy**

The pilot projects in Barger Compasuum built on a planning process that was already happening in the village in the development of a village development plan (Dorpsontwikkelingsplan DOP). The ER approach had developed as part of a regeneration policy adopted by the Municipality of Emmen and the Housing Corporations which centred on area-based interventions, with ER as facilitator of district- and village-wide programmes.

Master planning and design of investments in Barger Compasuum had to be approved at Municipality and Province levels, and links were made between the project and the Dutch Government Service for Land & Water Management (DLG).

In 2009 the Municipality of Emmen decided that ‘the public space domain’ (both place-making and place-keeping) is a joint responsibility of the Town Council and citizens/residents. This led to the creation of Joint Management Groups in all districts and villages in Emmen. Practical aspects of the implementation of this policy included issues such as insurance cover for those involved, with the Municipality of Emmen covering such liability for all volunteers involved in the process. Shared responsibility is not fully implemented yet, but implicitly it has started to happen in Barger Compasuum through its own Joint Management Group and through ad-hoc place-keeping arrangements explained in the Critical Appraisal section below.

#### **Lessons learnt / implemented**

The project in Barger Compasuum led to a new ER approach on villages (where residents and ER professionals are represented on basis of equivalence), which has now been copied and is being implemented throughout all districts and villages in the municipality.

The policy of the Town Council and residents being jointly responsible for both place-making and place-keeping of ‘the public space domain’ proved difficult to implement quickly. Achieving broad support for this joint responsibility took time, which has led to some delay compared to the project’s planned timing.

According to ER staff involved in MP4, the process of implementing this policy has gained substantially from MP4 workshops and the report on model agreements.

In ER staff’s view, some municipal and provincial policies were supportive to the project while some constrained it. For example, ER wanted the tenders to be evaluated using the formula ‘70% quality, 30% price’, but this has been changed to ‘70% price, 30% quality’ due to municipal policies.

## 5. Evaluation

At the beginning of the project it was anticipated that the ER team would work alongside local people to assess benefits to the community and businesses.

Monitoring was employed throughout the process of **place-making**. Over 2010 and 2011 three face-to-face discussion meetings were organised between the mayor, an alderman and 8 village representatives. In these meetings the residents replied to questions posed by mayor and alderman, but also were allowed to bring in their own points. Hence the residents could experience the involvement of the town board/council with their village, and the mayor and alderman could learn more about the process, and the influence the residents had on this.

Place-making was also monitored via the number of complaints from residents and businesses during construction. Complaints served as an indicator of how successfully the conditions set by the residents were being met. The level of complaints was extremely low.

Additionally, the ER coordinator had meetings with parents of young children and the elderly regarding safety issues, as well as with entrepreneurs (use of the new public area/square), and only received positive feedback. People's attitudes towards the place have become very positive: they are happy with the new traffic situation (Shared Space, so less rules and more responsibility for themselves) and with the new meeting place in the middle of the village.

With regards to **place-keeping**, since completion of the works, the Joint Management Group – which is composed of two members of the Village Council, one representative from the Municipality's Maintenance Department and one person from the social organisation in charge of the unemployed – meets every two months to monitor the state of the public realm and identify actions that need to be taken to ensure appropriate levels of maintenance are maintained. In addition, twice a year the level of maintenance of public spaces is checked against a municipal standard based on a photographic scale.

Initially, some municipality professionals have been concerned that the quality of maintenance provided by citizens could potentially be sub-standard. ER staff involved in the BC project feel comfortable, however, that this is not going to happen, as the quality is monitored by the Joint Maintenance Group. The Group uses the image-based indicators of quality provided by ER.

### Lessons learnt / implemented

*Recording the meetings involving the mayor, alderman and village representatives has helped promote the approach in other villages, as it showed that residents wish to participate as long as they are regarded as equal and their input is taken seriously.*

*ER staff felt that the MP4 transnational peer review helped the discussion on how to evaluate place-keeping in Emmen. This happened via events (e.g. the Spatial Planning Workshop in Emmen in June 2011), reports (e.g. the report on place-keeping model agreements and online discussion).*



*ER has found it useful to carry out the evaluation with input from an external partner: 'The practitioner side on its own is not objective'. With hindsight, ER believes they should have taken a baseline measurement.*

*Quantitative data could be of use for ER and the Municipality, for example to prove that the shared space is safe.*

## Critical appraisal of the pilot project

There are two elements in this critical appraisal:

Firstly, actions that were planned in the initial stages of the project are compared with the actions that were actually completed throughout the life of the project. This gives an indication of the extent to which the project has been successfully implemented.

Secondly, the project's aims and objectives are examined against information collected via the critical reports and the evaluation visit/workshop.

### **A. Have actions planned at the beginning of the project been carried out?**

The first six of eight actions planned regarded mainly the place-making phase.

1. *Stakeholders (local citizens and businesses, MP4 project partners, etc) involved in the initial planning and design of gateways and community centre work together to identify best practice and jointly develop requirements for these, with heavy engagement of the community.*

A Reflection Group / Village Platform was established, which provided initial inputs to the design of the gateways and the community centre through focusing on the question of what activities they would like to see happening in the village centre once the works were completed. The designers were involved, and used this as a basis for the initial plans.

2. *Beside the village council and platform already active, other working or activity groups involving all relevant stakeholders, who plan activities (and take care of management/maintenance) in the new village centre are being stimulated.*

Building on the work of the already existing DOP Group, specific future projects were identified (e.g. a canal lock, a pond, the cemetery, activities for young people and the elderly). For each of these projects a group has been created, led by someone from the DOP Group. As part of the actions to 'stimulate' groups, three editions of a newsletter were sent to all 1600 residents.

3. *Discussion and decision in the municipal council.*

The project was officially approved by the Council and the municipal funding to implement the works was allocated.

4. *Final planning and design of community centre, feedback by the village council and platform.*

The initial plans were exhibited and were the subject of a workshop to which all village residents and businesses were invited. Feedback was provided to the community on what suggestions had been taken forward or not in the design.

5. *Procurement of investments.*

The project was tendered to four locally-based contractors, who underwent short training in 'design & build', and was allocated to the contractor who offered the best

combination of response to pre-established conditions and price (rather than simply to the lowest bid).

6. *Implementation of the village gateways and village centre as a living community centre.*

The works were completed in 2011, with the official opening taking place in July that year.

7. *Maintenance/management discussed with and partly transferred to local parties/volunteers.*

A Joint Management Group has been established involving local residents, the municipality and the social organisation in charge of unemployed. They identify maintenance/management tasks and refer these to appropriate agencies and individuals. Discussions over maintenance responsibilities are still in their early days, as the focus was initially on the place-making, and place-keeping is more complex.

A group of unemployed people organised by a social organisation provide cleaning. Every 6/8 weeks municipal workers maintain the green spaces. In between these visits local residents provide any interim maintenance required.

Various *ad hoc* arrangements have emerged, including:

- individual businesses taking on place-keeping roles e.g. shop/cafe owners taking responsibility for upkeep of external space used for tables, shopkeeper emptying waste bins and physiotherapist monitoring parking on shared space;
- holders for festivity flags attached to street lighting, provided and maintained by carnival organisation;
- grass cutting provided by relevant landowners, including weeding/maintenance of canal-side path being handed over to residents;
- organisation of the opening event, plus five other events between the opening in July 2011 and the evaluation visit in April 2012, all organised by local organisations who pay an administration charge for the municipal permit and take responsibility for cleaning up after the event. A fair has been held on the shared space for the first time (it used to be held in a field outside the village centre), with the fair operators taking responsibility for replacing temporarily removed paving stones.

The success of the village centre and gateways projects has raised the interest of the Water Board and the Province in maintaining the northern side of the canal, where boats have been attracted to moor. However, the image of the canal on the southern side is less appealing and residents want the Water Board and the Province to improve this.

8. *Documentation of process and results and dissemination of these via other communities in Emmen and Drenthe, nationally through the Government Service for Land and Water Management, and through MP4 transnational events.*

This has been partly achieved, through contacts with other municipalities and village councils. Representatives from other municipalities visit Emmen to learn about ER, and they are shown Barger Compasuum as a practical example.

**B. To what extent has the project been successful in achieving its aims and objectives?**

**OBJECTIVE 1:**

*To develop, implement and maintain a new central village square and highly visible 'gateway' locations which are inviting to visitors and help improve community image and cohesion.*

The stakeholders involved in the site visit reported that the residents are happy with the improved village entrances and the new village centre. Community and local authority participants in the evaluation visit reported that the number of visitors to the village has increased, including users of boats which moor at the canal side, and cyclists, who previously did not stop in the village. The perception among the community and local authority participants in the evaluation visit is that the image that people elsewhere have of the village is much improved, with other villages talking about the developments in Barger Compasuum and expressing an interest in having shared spaces as well. The new village programme in Barger Compasuum includes an aim to further improve the external image of the village.

It was reported that the traffic calming measures in the design of the 'gateway' locations have reduced speed, particular in larger vehicles. The in-situ paving replicating old brickwork was seen as a successful design in terms of construction cost, appearance and long-term maintenance, and it was reported that other villages are now asking for the same type of solution. Barger Compasuum residents were reported to be happy with the results by the evaluation visit participants.

As requested by the community, access was secured during the entire construction process, with only 1 or 2 complaints. According to the participants in the site visit, everyone was happy with how the contractor undertook the building work.

Initially parking in one area of the shared space made access to the school difficult, leading to complaints, but this was solved through discussion among the residents, who found an alternative parking arrangement that became established within 3 weeks, monitored by a local business.

The pilot projects are therefore perceived as having positive social and economic impacts.

**OBJECTIVE 2:**

*To achieve wide stakeholder involvement (including residents) in planning Barger Compasuum village entrances and 'living centre' and transfer lessons from this process to other communities.*

Participants in the evaluation visit reported that historically Barger Compasuum had been a 'fighting' village against the city of Emmen, with the local community being seen as poor and the city as rich. This made many people in the village sceptical about achieving cooperation with the Municipality. However, the planning process for

the pilot projects was seen as a success, which has fostered further interest within the community in being involved in planning. The fact that the key ideas came from the village rather than from the Municipality was seen as the main factor leading to success. The process did take time, including for the local and municipal stakeholders to get to know each other. It was made easier by having what was described as the right people in the right places. According to the information provided by the ER team, the following levels of stakeholder involvement were achieved:

- Local community group/council: 20 persons
- Information/participation meeting on plans (2009): 120 persons
- Opening/start of building event (June 2010): 90 persons

The project manager from the Municipality, as well as 4 other colleagues, studied the process and are trying to develop similar processes in other places within Emmen, but are finding that the local conditions affect how easily these can be transferred. A key challenge is building trust where this doesn't exist. Overcoming this barrier elsewhere doesn't appear to be easy, as the participants in the evaluation workshop noted that the success of the process depends on people's willingness to change their attitudes and look beyond established boundaries, both among residents and among municipal staff.

Taking actively engaged residents from Barger Compasuum to talk to other communities was seen as having potential to encourage trust building elsewhere, but entrenched attitudes and perceptions of such residents as having been co-opted are still a barrier.

Nevertheless, similar processes are being established in other villages such as Zwartemeer and Nieuw Dordrecht.

### **OBJECTIVE 3:**

*To maintain and manage these new open spaces with local involvement. To transfer some place-keeping aspects from the municipality to the village community (council, volunteers).*

According to the stakeholders who participated in the evaluation visit, prior to the project people in Barger Compasuum already had the habit of cutting the grass on the strip of public land between private gardens and the footpath. This is not standard practice across the municipality, as it depends on the openness of the respective municipal staff to such practices, as well as on the willingness of the majority of the population in each village or district. This has created areas of conflict between local residents and the municipality over maintenance of green areas, including in Barger Compasuum, where the municipality contracted out the maintenance of green spaces without discussion with the local residents' organisations. Another example of varying practice across the municipality is in the emptying of dustbins, which in some places is done more often than the municipal standard thanks to contributions from the village or district council budget. Generally, however, the maintenance of public space in Emmen has been undertaken, or arranged, by the municipality. The practical implications of the policy of making public space a shared responsibility between the

municipality and the citizens recently adopted by the Municipality of Emmen are still being worked out.

Against this background, In Barger Compasuum a Joint Maintenance Group has been established with local involvement, which identifies maintenance tasks and those responsible for addressing these. It was reported that the individuals and groups who are identified take on the tasks willingly. The group of unemployed provide some of the maintenance services, with the municipality taking ultimate responsibility. An overall agreement with the municipality over place-keeping responsibilities within the new spaces and beyond is still to be reached. The Village Council would like to be able to directly manage maintenance funds allocated by the municipality. Around the new village centre some ad-hoc locally devolved place-keeping responsibilities have emerged, including businesses taking care of cleaning of public external spaces they use, etc, as detailed in subsection 7 within the actions above. There is a perception among the project team that the blurring of property lines in the physical design of the central open space encourages private involvement in its maintenance.

#### **OBJECTIVE 4:**

*To develop community activities in the central village square.*

Daily usage of the village centre has increased. Young people who used to congregate on a bench on a street now gather in this space. Both elderly and younger people use the space. Cyclists (tourists) now tend to stop and use the local facilities. The village centre has become a destination for canal boats which used to bypass Barger Compasuum on their way to and from Emmen – future plans include providing water and electricity connections for the moorings. A van selling fish is now stationed in the shared space once a week – this did not happen before. The van uses the electricity connection that was co-financed by local businesses for events. Events are now held in the village centre rather than in a field outside the centre, using the new space and the electricity, water & beer connections provided.

The opening event was a major milestone in increased usage of the space, with over 1000 residents taking part. In addition, since its opening event this space has been used for a fair, the carnival, a twice-yearly open air market, and a local event with music. Some of these activities used to be held in a field outside the village. Transferring these to the village centre has helped raise the profile of the events and of the village, as they are more visible to passers-by (and locals) and attract more participants, as well as benefitting the local businesses. In addition to these events, a local boules/petanque group has been formed, which makes use of the central square. The number of activities has therefore increased since the implementation of the pilot projects, and is continuing to do so.

### **OBJECTIVE 5:**

*To achieve a strong identification of the community with the new village entrances and 'living centre'.*

Local community participants in the evaluation visit reported that the community identified with the implemented projects, and that after some initial problems related to poor parking people have got used to the shared space.

## **Recommendations and Outlook**

Having seen the results of their combined efforts together with the Municipality, the residents believe that they can do more. The success of the village centre and the two improved village entrances in the eyes of local residents has resulted in the formation of a local group now looking at extending the work to the remaining village entrance. In 3 years the Village Council will have € 45,000 available to allocate to priorities it identifies in the village, which could include such further village entrance improvement.

There are plans to improve facilities for the new phenomenon of visiting boats, with the Municipality providing electricity points, and the proceeds from the use of these going to the community.

While the improvements are already attracting more visitors to the village, discussion during the evaluation visit identified potential actions to strengthen this effect by signposting existing and new facilities in the village at key points such as the junction in the canal where boats decide whether to bypass Barger Compasuum or not, and the nearby theme park, which closes early and could provide custom for local catering businesses.

The project team reported that their involvement in MP4 made them think more about place-keeping, and about the shift from responsibility for public open space resting with the municipality to it now being shared with the local community. Looking to the future, the team envisages working towards making the transfer period from working with the Municipality to the post-project stage more self-governed by the local community. Areas where there is particular scope for further transnational learning include how to cooperate with tenant associations, such as in the example of Gothenburg.

The research team recommend that more robust evaluation is carried out in future ER projects. In particular indicators should be set out in specific terms. One way of achieving this would be to employ slightly modified 'SMART' criteria (usually used for goal-setting): indicators should be Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Resourced and Time-bound.

## Glossary

**DOP:** DorpsOntwikkelingsPlan, ie village development plan.

**Emmen Revisited (ER):** an independent organisation jointly established by the Municipality of Emmen and the Housing Corporations in the late 1990s with the objective of facilitating and overseeing the regeneration of old housing areas. It is governed by a Steering Group with representatives from the Municipality and the Housing Corporations. It has a Programme Office that provides administrative support, and District Teams working in each of the districts and villages in the municipality where ER is active.

**Engagement:** is a cross-cutting issue which describes successful models of working with communities and encouraging appropriate use. Engagement is an aspect of governance particularly relevant in forms of participatory governance and is intrinsic to the concept of 'governance' as defined below.

**Finance:** describes financial models for efficient long-term management.

**Governance:** relates to the relationship between and within government and non-governmental forces. The term implies wider participation in decision-making than representative democracy or other forms of government, recognising a wider range of actors other than the state, and allowing for varying governance contexts and processes.

**NGO:** non-government organisation.

**Partnership:** is defined as agreed shared responsibility between public, private and community sectors. It is a relationship which, in this context, is normally formed between governmental and non-governmental sectors – i.e. it is a manifestation of governance relationships.

**'Place-keeping':** relates to maintaining the qualities and benefits – social, environmental and economic – of places through long-term management. The management required to maintain these qualities and benefits, the approach adopted and the timescale will depend on the 'place-making' aims, the available resources and the life span of the 'place'.

**'Place-making':** creating high quality places that people want to visit, experience and enjoy. It implies a people-centred approach which emphasises designing spaces that promote health, wellbeing and happiness. Such spaces engender a sense of belonging and connection for those who use them.

**Policy:** is discussed within the context of embedding best practice into spatial planning and other policy.

**Valuation:** describes the economic impacts of improvements to open spaces, but also relates to wider socio-economic and environmental benefits.

**Village Council:** describes the residents' representative body at the level of each of the villages that form part of the Municipality of Emmen. Both urban districts and villages within the Municipality have such resident organisations, which receive the name in Dutch of either *Plaatselijk Belang* or *Dorps Raad*. They are legally constituted, with an elected board, and geographically the entire area of the Municipality is covered by such bodies.

## Notes on this report

This report forms part of the output from MP4 Making Place Profitable – Public and Private Open Spaces, a project funded by the EU through its Interreg IVB North Sea Region programme 2007-2013.

This report is based on qualitative methods including: documentary evidence (six-monthly critical reports, model agreement assessments), meetings with project staff (pre- and post-evaluation meetings on 18 and 19 May 2012), and site visit and workshop on 19 May 2012 with project staff (from Emmen Revisited and the Municipality of Emmen) and community representatives (two DOP Group members, one local businessman involved in the Project Group, and a representative from the social organisation for the unemployed).

## Websites of the Barger-Compasuum 'Living Centre' and 'Entrance Gateways' projects

<http://www.mp4-interreg.eu/page/17/Emmen+%27Living%27+Centre+.html>

<http://www.mp4-interreg.eu/page/18/Emmen+entrance+gateway.html>

## Other sources

<http://www.emmen.nl/en/english/a-large-dynamic-municipality.html>



<http://www.emmen.nl/en/english/the-organisational-structure.html>

**Additional Dutch language websites**

[www.emmenrevited.nl](http://www.emmenrevited.nl)

[www.bargercompasuum.com](http://www.bargercompasuum.com)