Introduction

Researching inclusion

The January 2015 issue of *Nature* contains an editorial with a remarkable title for a journal that universally epitomises the prestige of natural sciences: ‘Time for the social sciences’. The author refers to big shifts in the governance of research and development currently taking place in many states—shifts towards more integrated forms of knowledge production in which societal challenges are tackled by scientific communities working together across disciplinary boundaries, in close cooperation with societal stakeholders and in dialogue with the larger public. Even when scientists are willing and active in promoting the social impact of their work, whether their findings will actually have impact depends on a diversity of factors. Because of their ability to include multiple perspectives in considerations of collective problems, the author calls on the social sciences to take a more prominent role in interdisciplinary projects of engaged and responsible science. Only by including socio-scientific inquiry in the framing of questions, he states, can answers be found that are anchored in tangible societal needs.

Ideas such as science 2.0, post-academic science, scientific democracy and responsible research and innovation, which draw the contours of the contemporary discussion on science’s position in society, emphasise the importance of interdisciplinary or ‘transdisciplinary’ research, context-dependent knowledge and practice-oriented research (Brand et al., 2013; Gibbons et al., 1994; Krishna, 2014; Nowotny et al., 2001; Owen et al., 2012; Ziman, 2000). Leaving aside debates on the desirability of this conception of science and its future configurations, it is important to reflect on the resources the academic researcher has at her disposal for meeting the complex demands laid on scientific knowledge production from within this perspective. Much work must still be done to conceptualise the distinctive contribution of socio-scientific research and its specific value for the general discourse of transitions in scientific production. The social sciences, which have a long-standing reputation for reflecting on the relation between knowledge and society, can draw on a vast range of methodological approaches, past and present, to guide the search for more democratic/inclusive forms of knowledge production and social engagement. This search is relevant not only for transdisciplinary research but also for the study of society from a purely socio-scientific angle—that is, for satisfying the need for better interplay between research and social change. Reflection on the social scientist’s position in the transition of knowledge production towards more engaged and responsible research has accompanied my own work for several years.

1 Transdisciplinary science is science that integrates practical and theoretical knowledge from a variety of fields.
In this dissertation, this reflection is directed towards the question of how participatory research can contribute to policy challenges associated with including immigrant citizens in society and with the position of grass-roots organisations in the Dutch system of social support. Specifically, the chapters address the contribution of Dutch immigrant organisations to parenting support and youth policy, the inclusion of refugees in the Dutch labour market and the role of participatory research in supporting inclusive practices.

**Socio-scientific research and ‘technologies of humility’**

One conception of the specificity of social sciences is exemplified by Bourdieu’s analysis of the relation between science and politics (1981). Bourdieu (as have others before him) points out that the social sciences are distinctive in that, within the object of social sciences, the nature of that very object is a subject of discussion. The way in which the objects of socio-scientific knowledge are objectified or represented is of interest to the objects themselves—society, or specific groups or actors within it. Social sciences by definition occupy a position within political oppositions. According to Bourdieu, this means there will always be groups contesting the specific representations brought forward by social sciences as well as the legitimacy of social sciences themselves. This issue, which he saw as problematic, should ideally be resolved through self-regulation and methodological rigor: internal regulative mechanisms should increase the objectivity and credibility of social research, striving to purify it from the influences of extra-scientific interests. Bourdieu observed, however, that fully achieving this is impossible in reality. Social sciences produce understandings of social realities that may contribute to changing those social realities; therefore socio-scientific representations of reality will always be an object of political struggle (Bourdieu, 1981, p. 278). In the following chapters, Bourdieu’s observation works as an impetus to search for opportunities connected with precisely that property of socio-scientific inquiry that he saw as a limitation to overcome: that it can participate in creating the social reality it describes and that actors outside the scientific field can engage in this process and become part of it.

To explain what I mean, I will first turn to another well-known voice in the study of the relation between scientific knowledge and social change—one who, however, refers primarily to scientific-technological developments from other scientific fields. One decade ago Sheila Jasanoff wrote a manifesto for the development of science in society in which she called for the development of *technologies of humility* (Jasanoff, 2003). While decision makers mainly appeal to science because of its capacity for prediction and control, it is exactly the large area of uncertainty and ambiguity—obscured by a narrow focus on what *can* be controlled—that Jasanoff claimed should become the object of attention and debate and the target of new social strategies. In a context in which scientific development produces unforeseen consequences and raises questions related to social values and the wellbeing of different groups of people, and while the relation between science and society is itself being heavily debated, the old template of ‘knowledge speaking truth to power’ can no longer express the relation between knowledge production and political action.

Technologies of humility are methods that must counterbalance the command-and-control approach to science that is embodied in ‘technologies of hubris’ (such as cost-benefit analysis, predictive methods and modelling). Through technologies of hubris, scientists provide policy with a foundation of knowledge that claims objectivity and induces confidence based on technical
accuracy. In this way, political discussion is pre-empted because the underlying exercise of judgment, normative assumptions and presuppositions that inform a knowledge quest become hidden behind ‘technical’ expert authority. ‘Expert analytic frameworks create high entry barriers against legitimate positions that cannot express themselves in terms of the dominant discourse’ (Jasanoff, 2003, p. 239), and there is not enough flexibility to include challenges that lie outside of the framing assumptions. Technologies of humility open the space for making explicit the normative behind the technical/methodological and for making it the object of debate.

As strategies that must be located at the interface of science and society more than in the scientific field alone, technologies of humility allow different challenges to be met: they acknowledge the uncertain, the ambiguous, instead of reducing the field of view to what is controllable; they call for different forms of engagement between experts, decision makers and the public; they do not translate into shallow, formal mechanisms of participation but produce ‘an intellectual environment in which citizens are encouraged to bring their knowledge and skills to bear on the resolution of common problems’ (Jasanoff, 2003, p. 227). According to Jasanoff, the following are focal points for thinking about how socially responsible knowledge production should develop: having a more prominent role for frame analysis in the definition of problems (framing); giving individuals a voice in the analysis of their own vulnerability and resilience (vulnerability); and acknowledging the need for plural viewpoints (distribution) and collective learning (learning).

Although Jasanoff does not mention this explicitly, her focal points also open the way for social sciences to have a significant role; in a sense, this is precisely because of that feature of socio-scientific inquiry that Bourdieu saw as problematic, that is, the study of society in a way that is meaningful and has consequences for that society (or groups within it). In line with this view, I think of this dissertation as a quest for ways to capitalise on this property of social research by creating spaces for dialogue with and participation of relevant social actors in the production of knowledge. Jasanoff’s focal points can be seen as overarching challenges, which are certainly not fully met in this work but are at least acknowledged as aims lying on the horizon: devoting large spaces for reflection on the frames that inform dominant perceptions of the practices under study as well as the (initial) research questions; including viewpoints that normally do not enter the realm of defining problems and framing research questions; emphasising people’s own analysis of mechanisms that make them ‘powerless’; and finally, amplifying the social effect of the research process by letting relevant actors engage in forms of mutual learning and reflection, in this way creating a sense of ownership and involvement for actors themselves. The chapters that follow are all based on research conducted at the interface with practice, in close dialogue with practitioners and/or policymakers.

**Diversity, cooperation and inclusive social policy**

This quest takes place around a particular set of social issues. What is at stakes in this dissertation is how to create space for inclusion and cooperation across (ethnic) diversity, with a focus on the limiting or facilitating role of discursive structures within which interactions take place.

Four of the five chapters in this manuscript are (at least partly) based on research conducted between 2010 and 2013 on the role of voluntary immigrant organisations in the Dutch system of parenting support, particularly their relation with professional services providing parenting support.
This research, called Disclosing Cooperation, constitutes the most important basis of this manuscript, although the chapters draw from it in different ways. The study was part of a larger project, the Kenniswerkplaats-Tienplus, a cooperative project of knowledge production involving different research institutes and stakeholders, which focused on enhancing the effectiveness of youth care and parenting support services for members of marginalised groups. In particular, the target of this program was families with an immigrant background and low socio-economic status. Starting from the observation that these families have a relatively high risk of developing parenting problems but a low usage of the preventive and informative provisions broadly available, the program focused on ways to shorten the distance between parenting counselling services and these groups, aiming at increasing both the reach of the services and the effectiveness of the offered support. More background information on the Kenniswerkplaats-Tienplus will be provided below.

Disclosing Cooperation explored the role of voluntary immigrant organisations in creating a more inclusive system of pedagogic support. These organisations provide (mainly informal) support to families in their community and appear to be more easily trusted by those families that are hard for mainstream services to reach. The core volunteers at work in these organisations are mostly well known and trusted within their community and have the same (ethnic and socio-economic) background as the families they help. At first glance these volunteer organisations appear to be able to function as potential bridge builders who can help shorten the distance between professional services and target families from migrant communities. However, although these voluntary organisations appear to be ideally situated to fulfil such a role, the distance between migrant groups and professional organisations seems to reproduce itself on a different level when migrant organisation volunteers and professional parenting counsellors attempt to work together. Despite the good intentions of both and a widespread sense that more connection between them would be desirable, major difficulties appear to hamper the development and growth of cooperative ties, including misunderstandings, low mutual trust, and often fundamentally different views on mutual cooperation (see Distelbrink, 2009; Ponzoni, 2012). Besides aiming to achieve a better understanding of the difficulties that hinder cooperation, the Disclosing Cooperation project aimed at revealing opportunities for voluntary immigrant organisations to make meaningful contributions towards achieving a system of parenting support that adequately and effectively supports immigrant youth and parents. It also aimed to provide conceptual tools for the development of an informed policy view on voluntary organisations’ role in this system.

The manuscript’s first chapter touches on a different social issue—namely, the inclusion of refugees in the Dutch labour market, and is based on a participatory research project undertaken in 2008. This project also functioned as a launching pad for Disclosing Cooperation, for what concerns its methodological approach (as will become clear later). Employment is considered a core component of newcomers’ successful integration in a receiving society, but refugees encounter great difficulties in accessing the Dutch labour market (Klaver et al., 2014; Korac, 2003; Razenberg & De Gruiter 2016). Their entrance into and especially their long-term inclusion in Dutch organisations are difficult, even with organisations that have explicit diversity policies and where the inclusion of particular marginalised groups, such as refugees, is a specific point of attention. The research project discussed in this chapter involved the active participation of highly educated refugees who experienced difficulties in entering the labour market and Dutch representatives of organisations that were making an effort to become more ethnically diverse but appeared to be
achieving low results. These participants were involved in a project centred on both research and education and aimed at providing them with tools to better understand why the inclusion of refugees is so difficult and with ways to counter the dynamics of exclusion. The project started from the idea—based on existing literature—that members of both groups (managers or professionals from the majority group and refugees experiencing exclusion) were caught in a dynamic of exclusion that they could not easily overcome, despite all good intentions—a dynamic connected with the dominance, in Dutch society, of particular images of refugees that hinder recognition and appreciation of refugees’ talents and qualifications. The insight that powerlessness affects members of both majority and minority groups caught within a dynamics of exclusion, later became a starting point for the entire research that is described in this dissertation.

**Inclusion and discursive power**

These distinct research projects share a focus on newcomers’ inclusion into a society and its institutions, combined with a discourse analysis approach. More specifically, the approach centred on the notion that understanding the discursive positioning of actors engaged in intercultural encounters is pivotal to understanding and (possibly) overcoming negative interaction dynamics in which diversity translates into disengagement, conflict or exclusion. In both cases there is a certain divide or distance separating groups of people who, in principle, have much to offer each other—professional counsellors and families in need, volunteers from migrant organisations and representatives of professional services, refugees in search of a job and managers of Dutch organisations pursuing diversity management—but for whom the possibility of fruitful exchange is jeopardised not just by mutual difference (e.g., a difference in social position and an ethnocultural difference) but by difference occurring in the context of power imbalance.

In the case of refugees and representatives of Dutch organisations, this is quite straightforward: efforts to include refugees are made against the background of an (involuntary) exclusion dynamic in which refugees have difficulties entering a space that is naturally occupied by Dutch representatives. In the relation between voluntary organisations and statutory services, it is perhaps more difficult to speak about a clear dynamic of exclusion or inclusion. However, in their efforts to support immigrant families and to cooperate with each other, professionals from statutory services and volunteers from migrant organisations occupy very different positions: The professionals are part of a recognised, institutionalised professional field of practice; they receive salaries for their work and function within the statutory system. The volunteers aspire to greater recognition by politicians and institutions, from which they mostly receive insufficient support.

The volunteers who were considered in this research often act on their own initiative to fill what they experience as gaps in the public system of social support, which seems unable to offer effective solutions to widespread difficulties their communities experience in connection with parenting and growing up. In their attempts to cooperate with professional parenting counsellors, volunteers often feel that their work is not valued, their perspective not taken into account; instead professionals appear, in the eyes of volunteers, to be interested only in the help volunteers may offer in obtaining contact with immigrant families. The volunteers feel they have an important role in assisting and empowering marginalised immigrant families; they aspire to use their knowledge and experience to contribute to ameliorating the quality of services for these groups but do so from a precarious position in the field of pedagogic support, without any official institutional recognition.
Contact with immigrant organisations through all the phases of this research generated a continuous sense that these parties feel like they ‘are not being heard’, despite the fact that they are often invited to conferences, meetings or workshops that focus on connections between formal and informal parenting support.

It is important to note, in this context, that while professionals speak the institutional language and master the rules that dominate the field of parenting support, volunteers mostly do not. For this reason, even when they participate in formal occasions for exchange, it is harder for them to be heard in discussions about immigrants’ parenting experiences and their need for support. When engaging with statutory services, which, in the cases examined here, are mostly staffed by highly educated native women who share a specific professional habit, volunteers from immigrant organisations enter a space in which they diverge from the norm.

The research discussed in the following chapters suggests that, for statutory services that want to work with civil society actors across ethnic barriers to improve parenting conditions in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods, opening up to difference means doing much more than just finding strategies to attract groups of parents that mainstream services find ‘hard to reach’. It entails, first and foremost, becoming reflective about their own practices and learning to listen to novel and unexpected perspectives on how they might fulfil their role in the multi-ethnic neighbourhood; it also involves understanding encounters with grass-roots immigrant organisations as chances to include different ‘voices’ in professionals’ reflective understanding of their work. In this respect, this dissertation connects to studies that interpret diversity and inclusion as ‘polyvocality’ or ‘polyphony’ (Janssens & Steyaert, 2001; Trittin & Schoeneborn, 2015). I will come back to this concept in the conclusion section of this manuscript.

Taking inspiration from the field of organisation studies, in which ‘making space for diversity’ has been an object of extensive study, diversity is approached in this dissertation as a potential chance to improve not just the condition of marginalised groups but also the overall flexibility and learning faculty of an organisation, policy, or service provision. In the context of a society that can be described more and more in terms of ‘super diversity’ (Vertovec, 2007), a sense has developed over the past decades that for an institution to be truly inclusive—when it comes to both organisational management and public policy—it cannot simply respond to the specific needs of a particular category of people; instead it must display a growing ability for flexibility and self-reflection. Since the mid-1980s, the stream of literature called ‘management of diversity’ has focused on how a broader variety of identities (usually defined along sociodemographic attributes such as gender, ethnicity and age) can contribute to enhancing group creativity and performance. Making space for diversity, in this business-driven approach, entails allowing people from different groups inside an organisation and enabling them to contribute with ‘different’ types of knowledge, abilities, skills and perspectives (e.g., Cox & Blake, 1991; Thomas & Ely, 1996).

This, however, is not easily achieved, as years of interventions and instrumental approaches such as workshops, trainings and toolkits for the management of diversity have demonstrated (Holvino & Kamp, 2009; Prasad & Mills, 1997; Prasad et al., 2006, 2011; Zanoni et al., 2010). According to many authors in diversity studies, the direction to follow is a deeper analysis of the conceptual and relational structures that keep exclusion and distance in place (Cavanaugh, 1997; Dick & Cassell, 2002; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Janssens & Steyaert, 2001; Kalonaityte, 2010; Nealon, 1999;
Ogbonna & Harris, 2006; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004, 2015). One assumption of this critical stream is that good intentions are not enough to ‘make space for difference’ and lead to fruitful encounters across difference, because people get caught in (discursive) power structures that preserve distance and keep some groups ‘at the centre of power’ and others ‘at the margins’. The researcher’s role thus becomes primarily one of unravelling the taken-for-granted conceptual order by showing how it keeps imbalance in place and by making visible alternative ways to conceptualise social realities.

Throughout this dissertation, I will build on this idea to understand how public services can construct inclusive connections with immigrant organisations to better support immigrant families, and to understand how participatory research can contribute to creating those connections. Using frame analysis, I examine dominant discourses on the role of immigrant organisations in society and their relation with mainstream youth services as well as these discourses’ impact on immigrant organisations’ ability to contribute meaningfully to enhancing the inclusivity of mainstream services. ‘Frame reflection’ and ‘cross frame discourse’ (Schön, 1983; Schön & Rein, 1994) will be adopted as conceptual tools for theorising how immigrant and statutory services actors could go beyond the limitations of the discursive field, hampering cooperation. As will become clear, the approach to discourse adopted in this work is non-deterministic, acknowledging the possibility for subjects to resist dominant discourses and combine discourses through ‘interdiscursivity’ (Fairclough, 1992). Following this line, research can contribute to the process by making visible new directions for change.

However, the question remains one of how to bridge the divide between these analyses, typically conducted in academic research, and the daily work and experience of practitioners, who need to build further on this knowledge to achieve visible change.

Research in dialogue

The above question has played an important role in the work presented here. In addition, the work that gave rise to this dissertation can be seen as an exploration of particular ways social research can pursue Jasanoff’s technologies of humility. The focal points she indicates—framing, vulnerability, distribution and learning—have been points of attention in all the research underlying this dissertation. Participatory methods were used to make space for different viewpoints in the analysis. The main idea of participatory research, as employed in these studies, is that the production of knowledge (when delivering enabling knowledge and promoting critical reflection are targeted) can benefit from a process of co-production with actors that actually live and experience the social realities under study. This is different from taking an ‘emic’ approach to qualitative research because it entails creating a dynamic exchange of perspectives between researcher and respondents (who in fact become active participants in the research). The dialogue between participants and between participants and researcher becomes the basis for the analysis.

Exploration of these issues began in 2008 with the research project conducted in the masterclass Diversity in Organisations, which provided the material for chapter 1 (as previously mentioned).

2 ‘Emic’ is an anthropological term referring to a research approach that describes behaviour in terms that are meaningful to the subjects under study, in other words, approaching data from the insider’s (or ‘native’) perspective as opposed to the researcher’s outsider perspective.
This project involved participants from the study groups (refugees and Dutch professionals), who were first familiarised with theoretical tools and existing knowledge on the subject of inclusion/exclusion of refugees. The method was designed to employ the research process itself as a site for change, through which the agency of the participants would be fostered. Through the intersection of theoretical input and personal and organisational experiences, the participants gave each other space to reflect upon their positioning, relating it to the dominant Dutch discourses on migration and understanding their constraining effect.

The use of participatory research to generate reflection on discursive structures that foster distance was explored further in the Disclosing Cooperation research. One specific participatory action research project, extensively described in chapter 4, is introduced below. Along with this project, other more limited forms of participatory research were employed (briefly described later). As is explained in chapters 4 and 5, the grounds for choosing (partly) participative approaches were twofold: First, the chances that the knowledge produced might contribute to actual change in concrete situations increase when participants are actively involved and come to embody the knowledge produced as their own learning journey. Second, following a central assumption of the participative action research tradition, actors’ recognition of the research analysis as grounded in their actual experiences and daily dilemmas is considered to enhance the ecological validity\(^3\) and potential relevance of the results. This means the authority over the knowledge produced is no longer the exclusive domain of the researcher but becomes shared with others.

Here, this aspect was combined with the aim of bringing forward voices that are normally ‘difficult to hear’ by using the research as a tool to make silent perspectives explicit. The expressions ‘silent’ or ‘difficult to hear’ refer here to the limitations imposed by dominant discourses. In the case of refugees we see the limiting effect of dominant discourses that picture refugees as victims or as powerless (see chapter 1). In Disclosing Cooperation, dominant ways to conceptualise immigrant organisations’ role in Dutch social policy and their cooperation with professional services where identified. These overshadow other views on the matter, which were articulated in dialogue with participants through participatory research. As will become clear in chapter 4, this process opens a space to reflect critically on research partnerships such as the Kenniswerkplaats-Tienplus, and their critical potential. Operating in a discursive field that makes some perspectives less ‘hearable’ than others, research and development labs like the Kenniswerkplaats need instruments not only to include different kinds of participants, but also to actually make space for the contributions of all these participants. Otherwise, they are at risk of reproducing discourses that can actually keep power unbalance in place.

The participatory techniques used here should not be seen as models but as limited and explorative ways to investigate the potential of knowledge co-production. Nevertheless, these research experiences provide material for reflection on what the challenge of doing research ‘in dialogue’ with practitioners might mean in practice.

\(^3\) See Cohen et al., 2013.
Kenniswerkplaats-Tienplus: Background information

Most of this thesis is either based on the previously mentioned study, Disclosing Cooperation, conducted in the context of the Kenniswerkplaats-Tienplus (from here on referred to as Kenniswerkplaats) or refers to it as a case. Since the chapters based on this study all focus on specific topics that emerged from or were constitutive for the research, leaving limited room to fully explain the overall structure of the research, I will here provide some general background information on the Kenniswerkplaats, the Diversity in Youth Policy research program it was part of, and the project Disclosing Cooperation (see Fig. 1).

The Kenniswerkplaats was one of three academische werkplaatsen (academic research and learning labs) included in the research program, Diversity in Youth Policy, which aimed to provide supporting research for efforts to create a more inclusive and effective system of parenting support and youth care in the Netherlands for families with a diverse ethnic background. This program was set up in 2008 by the Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMw) at the request of the former Ministry of Youth and Family (Jeugd en Gezin) and the former Ministry of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Integration (Wonen, Wijken en Integratie) to help tackle the difficulty of reaching specific groups of families, especially low-income families with non-Western immigrant backgrounds, with mainstream programs of (preventive) parenting support, as data indicated that children and youth from these groups were overrepresented in ‘heavier’ forms of youth care (which become involved when problems are at an advanced state).

In addition to Diversity in Youth Policy, other related research programs were launched in the same period, such as the program ‘Voluntary Work for and by Youth and Family’, which investigated the system of parenting support and youth care from other perspectives. In comparison, Diversity in Youth Policy focused on ethnic diversity and the inclusion of immigrants.

Cooperating partners in the Kenniswerkplaats were research institutes (including the VU University Amsterdam), municipal policymakers, parenting support services, youth care professionals, one educational department for social work and youth care at a major teaching institute (where future professionals in the field are formed) and immigrant voluntary organisations. Disclosing Cooperation was one of the research projects included in the Kenniswerkplaats. Other projects concerned, for instance, the knowledge and skills needed for future youth and parenting support professionals to work in multi-ethnic environments; the relation between school, immigrant parents and children; and the development of a more diversity-sensitive version of the Triple-P program (Positive Parenting Program), the parenting program used by all municipal support services in the city of Amsterdam.

The project Disclosing Cooperation

Disclosing cooperation was carried out from the Department of Governance Studies at the VU University Amsterdam, in cooperation with the other partners of the Kenniswerkplaats. The central queries regarded how local government could encourage mutual reinforcement between professional services for parenting support and immigrant organisations providing informal

4 The original Dutch title of the research project was Verbinding en Governance.
support, and what opportunities and obstacles for cooperation existed. In the Diversity in Youth Policy program, immigrant organisations were referred to as parties that could help formal services reach families that the professionals perceived as ‘distant’ or hard to reach. Families with an immigrant background and a low socio-economic status appeared to make low use of preventive services like parenting counselling but underwent, relatively often, more radical interventions, suggesting they only came in contact with professionals when problems had become serious, rather than at a stage in which light forms of support could still have had results. And the professional support offered to these families appeared to be generally less effective at connecting to their expectations and needs than it was for (higher income) non-immigrant groups. Unfamiliarity with and distrust of professionals in immigrant communities appear to play a role in the problem, as do the cultural homogeneity of professional services staff and their inability to latch on to the specific needs of specific groups. Therefore, immigrant grass-roots organisations, which do have a firm foothold in immigrant communities and can reach families living at the margins of society and in need of support, were seen in the program as actors that could help bridge the divide between professional services and the people those services could benefit.

The Disclosing Cooperation research project was initially set up starting from these assumptions, and aimed at examining cases of successful cooperation between professional services and immigrant organisations in the city of Amsterdam. However, a preliminary exploratory inquiry revealed that cases of effective and fruitful cooperation were scarce, despite a widespread sense, in both professional and volunteer fields, that a connection was vital for delivering effective support to immigrant parents. The research also had, from the start, a participative approach, which was inherent to the spirit of the Kenniswerkplaats: producing knowledge useful to societal actors, while working alongside and with these actors. Specifically, the process entailed recurrent meetings with municipal policymakers, for the purpose of fine-tuning the direction of the research with the type of knowledge they thought would be most enlightening. It also entailed participating in meetings and projects aimed at bringing volunteers and professionals closer to each other and contributing to these occasions by transferring extant knowledge from the academic field.

Given the scarcity of successful instances of cooperation and based on preliminary interactions with interested parties, the initial research approach shifted to inquiring into the reasons for this scarcity and describing conditions for the emergence of cooperation. As is more extensively explained in chapters 3 and 4, the overall structure of Disclosing Cooperation included a component of mainstream qualitative research as well as a participatory component. The mainstream part, described in chapter 3, involved participant observation, policy document analysis, data collection through interviews and focus groups with respondents from immigrant organisations and professional services, and fieldnotes of eleven workshops or conference meetings in which cooperation between those parties was discussed.
Figure 1: The project Disclosing Cooperation
The core of the participatory part involved following a specific case of successful cooperation, called YFC on the Spot, which constitutes the subject of chapter 4 (see below). In addition to YFC on the Spot, the participatory component included one other case of cooperation, briefly described in chapter 5, between a Ghanaian organisation and professional institutes for parenting support in the Amsterdam Zuidoost district, and one attempt at cooperation between a school and Moroccan grass-roots organisations in Amsterdam Nieuw-West, which, however, did not last (see the report *Opvoeden in Diversiteit* (Ponzoni, 2012), which also gives a general description of the entire research project and its results).

The subproject YFC on the Spot concerned the cooperation between two Moroccan grass-roots organisations and one Youth and Family Centre offering parenting support services in the Amsterdam Nieuw-West district. Participatory action research was employed to analyse the ways participants conceptualised the issues that demanded cooperation, the nature of the envisaged cooperation itself, and each other's role in it, with the goal of eventually forging a new, shared narrative of cooperation. The case functioned as a ‘window of understanding’ into the larger research Disclosing Cooperation (involving citywide interviews). This means that both the theoretical framework and (preliminary) results from the larger research were shared with the participatory research participants, who used them to reflect on their own experiences. At the same time, the interchange with participants provided the researcher with new insights for the interpretation and discussion of the larger data set and the translation of general theoretical concepts to the local context. As described in Chapter 4, this participatory project had a crucial role in the research and led to a rethinking of the overall research approach. The initial research framework, as originally provided within the overarching program, Diversity in Youth Policy, was questioned because it assumed that immigrant organisations were primarily to be seen as actors that could connect professional support with families in need of that support.

As will become clear, Disclosing Cooperation’s theoretical approach, which was centred on the analysis of discursive positions (in line with the direction indicated by critical diversity studies), was itself a fruit of the participatory process (see chapter 4).

**Defining ‘immigrant families’ and ‘immigrant organisations’**

Before moving forward with the chapters, some central notions used in this work require clarification. One central notion is that of *immigrant organisations*, or, as they are called in some of the chapters, ‘migrant voluntary and community organisations’5 (MVCOs). These organisations are usually set up in neighbourhoods with a high density of immigrants in low socio-economic conditions, by fellow immigrants who have learned to navigate the Dutch systems, and detect the

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5 The use of different terms to denote these organisations in the chapters is due to the need to adjust the vocabulary to the different styles and audiences of the journals in which they were published. The use of ‘immigrant’ or ‘migrant’ will in this context be used interchangeably. In the Dutch context, the terms ‘migrants’ and ‘migrant organisations’ (migrantenorganisaties) are commonly used when referring to voluntary organisations arising from immigrant groups settled in the host country. For an international audience, ‘immigrant organisations’ is a more clarifying term for these organisations, while ‘migrant organisations’ refers more often to transnational organisations that support the migration process itself.
existence of specific needs or troubles in their neighbourhood. Often these people function as ‘key figures’, role models and trustees, in their neighbourhood and are asked for help or council when problems arise. Although usually set up by immigrants with a common ethnic background and often meant originally for their own ethnic group, some organisations developed so as to include and reach people from different ethnic groups. Various ethnicities are covered by the MVCOs included in Disclosing Cooperation, the most significant ones being Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese and Ghanaian (see Ponzoni 2012). In Amsterdam Zuidoost, the organisations were aimed specifically at Surinamese, Ghanaian and some more generally ‘African groups’ from different ethnicities. In Amsterdam Nieuw-West, the organisations examined were mainly Moroccan or Turkish, but some did reach a broader group, including the women’s organisation that participated in the YFC on the Spot; it reaches women from many different ethnic backgrounds (women from Morocco and Turkey as well as women from Northern African, Eastern European and Middle Eastern countries).

The immigrant parents or immigrant families referred to in this work are, clearly, one specific category of immigrants. The relevant group is not defined by a specific ethnic background but by a perceived ‘distance’ towards statutory services concerning parenting and growing up. Thus, in this dissertation the immigrant families discussed are families that are part of the constituency of MVCOs and are not easily reached by social services that provide parenting support. The existence of this distance was a point of departure for the research project and was already broadly acknowledged by respondents from both the statutory and the voluntary fields at the time of the exploratory investigation. In their experience, there exist communities of immigrants with low socio-economic status, where parenting insecurities or problems often represent an issue, but where parents do not, and will not, turn to statutory support services. However, it is not easy to define this phenomenon precisely. No scientific studies have been carried out to measure or explain this distance in the Dutch context. Although there have been studies showing that immigrant parenting brings along specific challenges (Pels et al., 2006) and that standard interventions are not always equally effective in intercultural contexts (Ince et al., 2010).

**Conceptualising the distance between immigrant families and statutory services**

In the initial research framework provided by the Diversity in Youth Care program, factors that characterised this distance were related either to specific characteristics of immigrant families or to specific characteristics of statutory services. For immigrant families, these factors included insecurity, language barriers, unfamiliarity with or lack of knowledge of parenting services, distrust and prejudice towards professional parenting support, and cultural barriers to voicing difficulties related to family life. For statutory services, the factors were lack of ethnic diversity in the professional staff, lack of knowledge of cultural norms and expectations in immigrant communities, insufficient intercultural communication competencies, and lack of expertise regarding specific issues that arise in families with an immigrant background. The distance was thus attributed primarily to a mismatch between the characteristics of immigrant families and of professional services, which prevented them from finding or matching each other.

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6 The fact that statutory services, including social work and health care, reach immigrants less than they do non-immigrants is confirmed in the international literature (see chapter 3).
A different (or perhaps additional) way to approach this distance is by looking at it from a broader sociological perspective that takes into account the situational position of immigrants in the Netherlands; the marginalising effect of the media and harsh, assimilative integration discourses; and the negative effects all of these have on immigrant parents’ sense of belonging. Many historical accounts of Dutch integration policies as well as analyses of contemporary public attitudes towards immigrants show a sharp hardening of public discourses regarding immigrants over the last twenty years, including a strong shift towards an assimilative approach to integration and the problematisation of cultural difference (see, for instance, Entzinger, 2014; Hurenkamp et al., 2012; Lucassen & Lucassen, 2011). A recent study by Slootman and Duyvendak (2015) points to the negative effects of harsh assimilative integration discourses on the feelings of belonging in young, second-generation immigrants. Strong negative attention on immigrant youth, especially Moroccan youth, has dominated media discourse on immigration in the last decade, and it has recently become even sharper in light of terrorist attacks and radicalisation processes among Muslim youth. Also, paternalising trends combined with a culturalist understanding of emancipation have been found to characterise Dutch policy approaches to immigrant mothers and to be reflected in the dynamics of parenting courses (Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012). Thus, to understand the distance between immigrant parents and statutory services, it seems important to consider the way immigrant parenthood is constructed in public discourse and the specific (conceivably marginal or powerless) position in which this broader context places immigrant parents. As I will explain in the conclusion, this research contributes to rethinking the issue of cooperation, following a similar direction. Also for this reason, the specific ethnic background of the MVCOs is not emphasised in the chapters. For the dynamics of interaction between parents within the MVCOs examined, their shared ethnic background is perhaps less important than their shared immigrant background.

Chapters overview

This section provides a short overview of the chapters. Each of these chapters has been previously published as journal article, with exception of chapter 5 which will be published as chapter in an academic book. Three of the chapters have been co-authored. Chapter 1 has been written together with Prof. Dr. Halleh Ghorashi. In this case, both authors have contributed to the writing process in equal parts. In the case of chapter 2 (with Prof. Dr. Trees Pels) and chapter 5 (with Prof. Dr. Hans Boutellier) I am responsible for the main part of the writing. Chapter 2 has greatly benefitted from the ideas and extensive review work by Prof. Pels, while chapter 5 contains the case ‘The Amsterdam program on security and citizenship’, which has been written by Prof. Boutellier.

Chapter 1 provides an account of the masterclass Diversity in Organisations. By involving refugees and representatives of Dutch organisations in an intensive journey centred on both research and education, this project exemplified the possibility of enabling participants’ agency through critical reflection on how the power of dominant discourses works in the practice of everyday life and, specifically, on how refugees’ difficulties in entering the labour market are related to dominant discourses on immigration. The chapter describes the method used in the masterclass (inspired by the tradition of participative action research), exposes the theoretical body of knowledge that was shared with participants, and presents the project outcomes in terms of the researcher’s

7 Chapter 2 is not yet published but under review.
observations of participants’ interactions and shared experiences as well as the visible changes in their attitudes and the narratives they produced. The research described in this chapter can be considered as an explorative preliminary work and as a springboard for the research Disclosing cooperation described in the rest of the study.

The central theme of the Disclosing Cooperation study is introduced in chapter 2—namely, the role of voluntary immigrant organisations in Dutch youth policy. Drawing on literature from social geography studies, this paper analyses how Dutch social policy has understood the social contribution of immigrant organisations and how this relates to the recent policy turn towards ‘active citizenship’. The analysis shows that the way their role has been framed throughout the history of Dutch social policy reflects only one possible way of understanding the role of grass-roots organisations. The second part of the chapter illustrates this analysis through the case of youth policy and the role of immigrant organisations in the Dutch system of pedagogic support. Some core empirical findings of Disclosing Cooperation are summarised to elucidate and support the general analysis.

Chapter 3 enters more fully into the main empirical findings from Disclosing Cooperation. The chapter explores the difficulties that representatives from voluntary immigrant organisations and professional agencies encounter when they attempt to work together. It also presents analysis of volunteers’ and professionals’ views recorded during the study, using frame analysis. Lastly, the paper attempts to answer the question of whether, and under what conditions, divergence in the dominant frames employed by actors could work, not just as an obstacle to cooperation, but also as a potential advantage.

A subproject of Disclosing Cooperation, YFC on the Spot, is highlighted in chapter 4. This participatory action research was undertaken as an in-depth study case in the Amsterdam Nieuw-West district. This methodological paper focuses on (1) the relation between the Disclosing Cooperation and this participatory subproject and (2) the specific effects of the participatory project in terms of both local change and knowledge production.

Finally, chapter 5 explores the role of social sciences in a changing social order characterised by ‘improvisation’ and ‘social crafting’ and discusses the research presented in chapters 1–4 in relation to this quest. Connecting to contemporary discussions on the social impact of scientific knowledge production mentioned at the outset of this introduction, this paper focuses on the specific nature of the social sciences and their enabling potential, in terms of introducing new ways of conceptualising and acting upon social realities and producing ideas and meanings that show the possibility of new courses of action. Disclosing Cooperation, particularly its interactive and participatory aspects, is one of the two cases presented to explore the concrete challenges that researchers face when conducting research at the interface with practice—the other case being the establishment and functioning of the chair of Security and Citizenship at the Department of Governance Studies where Disclosing Cooperation was conducted.

I will conclude this dissertation with a review of the work presented in the papers, highlighting the contribution of the research presented in relation to the notion of ‘enabling knowledge’ that is elaborated in chapter 5.
References


