

# MASTER THESIS

## CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS

A DEEPER LOOK INTO THE OCCURRENCE OF PARTICIPATION FATIGUE IN PARTICIPATION PROCESSES DEALING WITH ENERGY TRANSITION IN THE NETHERLANDS



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# **PREFACE**

The research laid out in this report, was conducted as part of my graduation process from the master's program 'Management in the Built Environment', at the Delft University of Technology. The research was conducted in light of the increasing relevance of citizen participation and the rise of energy transition projects in the Netherlands. As a result of the research, this thesis report makes practical recommendations that municipalities and citizen organizations can use in order to better facilitate citizen participation in energy transition projects in the Netherlands. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of participation fatigue experienced by participating citizens in these types of projects, was also garnered.

## **WORD OF THANKS**

I would not have been able to conduct this research if not for the help of my two mentors, Tong Wang and Aksel Ersoy, who devoted their time and expertise in order to guide me through the thesis process. Their feedback and guidance have been integral to the successful completion of my research and graduation process. I would also like to thank the municipalities and organizations that participated or aided in the continuation of the research. The eagerness these parties showed in wanting to talk about the subject of citizen participation and participation fatigue, also signaled to me that my research was important and relevant to them, which was a key motivator for me personally. Finally, I would also like to thank my parents, brother and friends for supporting me throughout these past six months of me writing my thesis. They showed nothing but helpfulness and support, and for this, I am very grateful.

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## ABSTRACT

In 2021, many Dutch municipalities have started to transition away from fossil fuel sources towards more sustainable ones in order to achieve the goals set by the Parisian climate agreement of 2015. 2021 was also the year in which a new Omgevingswet was introduced in the Netherlands, in which citizen participation has become a very important pillar (Informatiepunt Leefomgeving, 2021). This, in combination with the increasing prominence of participation in the design field, means that citizen participation processes will be used more and more in projects across the country. Participation processes are processes in which citizens work together with local authorities and industry professionals. However, some challenges do exist in the usage of citizen participation for energy transition projects. One of these challenges is the occurrence of participation fatigue. Here, participants of the participation process become exhausted from working on the project and motivating them to still make useful contributions becomes more difficult. In light of this challenge, the research question this thesis aims to answer is the following: “What are the main characteristics and lessons learned from participation fatigue experienced by citizens in participation processes for public energy transition projects?”. The analysis of both qualitative and quantitative empirical data, resulted in the identification of five major categories of causes linked to the occurrence of participation fatigue. These findings were strengthened further through a quantitative analysis. The five categories were: 1) participation fatigue due to actions of and interactions with local governments and instances, 2) participation fatigue due to lack of results or slow progress in the process, 3) participation fatigue due to the intensity of the participation, 4) participation fatigue due to lack of enthusiasm of fellow citizens or organizations/businesses, and 5) participation fatigue due to lack of serious uptake of participants’ input. The report also delves into the possible solutions towards solving the issue of participation fatigue.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

In the winter of 2015, close to 190 parties were present for the Paris Climate Agreement in order to put into motion a global framework aimed at avoiding dangerous climate change by limiting global warming (European Commission, n.d.). Among these parties were the EU and its member states, thus including the Netherlands in the agreement. Since then, great efforts have been poured into achieving the goals set out in the Agreement, by striving to transition away from fossil fuels towards green sources of energy. This, in combination with new legislation (Omgevingswet), that was introduced in the Netherlands as of 2021 – in which the involvement of citizens has become a ‘must’ for municipalities – has made the subject of energy transition and the challenges that come along with this, a heavily discussed topic. Because of this, this report aims at investigating one of those challenges present in energy transition projects, namely, the issue of participation fatigue experienced by participating citizens. The occurrence, effects, and possible solutions to this issue will be looked into.

## 1.1 THE RISING TIDE OF ENERGY TRANSITION IN THE NETHERLANDS

As mentioned above, the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015 acted as a catalyst for the recent influx in energy transition projects in the Netherlands. This is because in order to achieve the goals of the Agreement- which include the reduction of greenhouse gases by 49% in 2030 and by 95-100% in 2050- the Netherlands will have to transition away from non-renewable energy sources, like natural gasses, towards more sustainable ones (RIVM, n.d.).

Figure 1.1 shows how this has been organized in the Netherlands and what different scale levels exist and have an influence on each other. The figure shows how – even though there clearly exists a hierarchy between the various levels, with the imposition of legislation on a national level trickling down to municipalities – a simultaneously top-down, as well as bottom-up approach is supposed to take place through the whole process.

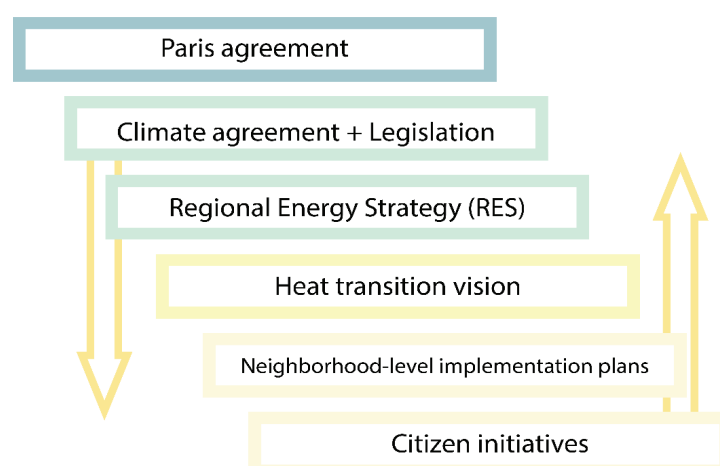


Figure 1.1: average energy transition strategy development process of Dutch municipalities (Adapted from Nieuwkoop, 2021)

After the Paris agreement was signed in 2015, a national climate agreement was composed that includes more than 600 commitments to combat greenhouse gas emissions (Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat, 2021). This agreement included that 70% of all energy should come from renewable sources by 2030, as well as the fact that 7 million homes and 1 million buildings should have transitioned away

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from natural gas, by 2050. In order to achieve these ambitious targets, collaboration is needed on a regional (between different municipalities) and municipal (between municipalities and citizens & businesses) level, as is shown in figure 1.1.

## **1.2 CITIZEN PARTICIPATION – A NEW PILLAR IN DUTCH LEGISLATION**

Energy transition is thus a process that has to take place on all levels of Dutch society and, by nature, is a socio-technical topic. This is proven by the increase in citizen initiatives in recent years: citizens are clearly interested in involving themselves in the energy transition process that will be unfolding over the coming years (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2022). Additionally, recent studies show that 48% of the Dutch population, actively thinks that petroleum and natural gas should be used less (Kloosterman, 2021). The Dutch government reacted to the evolving need of citizens to participate in the energy transition process, by introducing the new ‘Omgevingswet’ in 2021. In this piece of legislation, the involvement of citizens in projects has become an important pillar and the rules for spatial development are merged and simplified in order to make participation easier (Informatiepunt Leefomgeving, 2021; Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, 2021).

Not only has the participation trend taken off in the Netherlands, the inclusion of participation and thus, citizens, in public projects, has become more and more prevalent in Europe and the rest of the world (Mahmoud, Morello, Ludlow & Salvia, 2021). Here, the public is involved in the design process as a way to address socio-ecological challenges of sustainability and development (Sanya, 2016). Co-design specifically, has gained increasing popularity in recent years because it describes a way of designing in which citizens and professionals stand on equal footing during the process.

Because of all of this, participation processes will become more prevalent in the Netherlands, making the challenges involving them more pressing. Among these challenges is the concept of participation fatigue, where the participants of the participation processes become tired of contributing to this process (Combrinck & Porter, 2021). It is this issue of participation fatigue that forms the focus of this report.

## **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **1.3.1 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION**

The increasing relevance of citizen participation, thus makes the occurrence of participation fatigue an important issue to analyze. Furthermore, although participation fatigue is a recognized issue in literature, mentions of it are often made briefly or almost like an afterthought and any in-depth analysis of the issue is missing from the existing body of literature. It is this gap in the research that the author wishes to address with this thesis. In order to do this, the main research question is the following: *“What are the main characteristics and lessons learned from participation fatigue experienced by citizens in participation processes for public energy transition projects?”*.

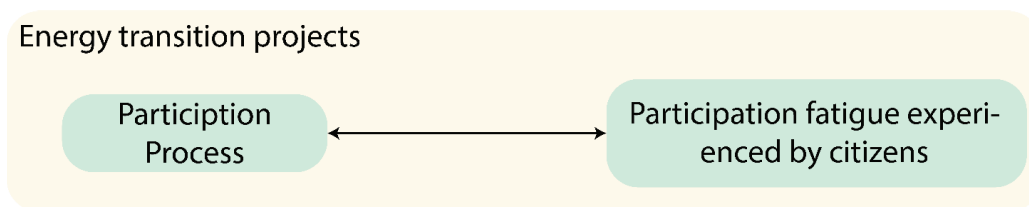


Figure 1.2: Conceptual Model

Figure 1.2 shows the conceptual model that surrounds the primary research question of this thesis report. In this relatively simple model, one can see how participation processes can bring forth the issue of participation fatigue as experienced by citizens. The model insinuates that the way the participation process is handled/managed, can influence the occurrence of this issue. Moreover, there exists a bilateral relationship between the two concepts in that the occurrence of participation fatigue will also have a potentially negative impact on the participation process itself.

### 1.3.2 SUB QUESTIONS

In order to answer the main question introduced in the previous subsection, the following questions have to be answered first:

1. What does participation fatigue mean in the context of participation processes?
2. Why is participation fatigue an important issue to solve in participation processes dealing with energy transition?
3. In case of the occurrence of participation fatigue in participation processes, can the citizens link this to specific problems during the process?
4. What are the lessons learned from the occurrence of participation fatigue in practice?

Question one and two will be answered through the literature study. Question three and four will require additional empirical methods in order to answer them. The insights garnered from answering the sub questions as well as the main research question, will thus result in the analysis of the phenomenon of participation fatigue.

## 1.4 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND RELEVANCE

As previously mentioned, energy transition is a socio-technical topic. The societal relevance of investigating the occurrence of participation fatigue, stem from the increasing relevance of energy transition in Dutch society and the involvement of citizens within the trajectories that surround them. Being able to provide an accurate account of the phenomenon of participation fatigue as experienced by citizens, could lead to participation processes in which the involved stakeholders are aware of the issue and can work together to avoid it, or remedy it if it does occur. Doing so will likely improve the experiences of participating citizens and could even improve the results of the participation process since participation fatigue has been proven to cause participants to leave the process.

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In terms of academical relevance, it was found that there currently exists a gap in the research surrounding participation fatigue. Any in-depth analysis of the issue seems to be missing from the existing academic literature. The research thus wishes to supplement the existing body of research with a descriptive account of the phenomenon as it occurs in participation processes dealing with energy transition..

## **1.5 DISSEMINATIONS AND AUDIENCES**

In terms of dissemination, this thesis report will be made publically available through the TUDelft repository. Also, all of the (anonymized) empirical data that will be collected during the research, will be made available according to FAIR principles.

Even though the focus of the research lies specifically on the experience of citizens in participation processes of energy transition projects, the knowledge that will be generated through the research is intended for all of the parties (citizens, municipalities, citizen organizations,...) who are involved with citizen participation.

## **1.6 TERMINOLOGY/CONCEPTS**

Before a more in-depth look is taken at the relevant literature and theoretical background of the research subject, the terminology that is used for some of the concepts this research focuses on will be set out in this subsection. This choice was made because it was found that in literature, some concepts this research focuses on are described with a multitude of terms.

Since the research looks into participation processes, it is important to understand what exactly understood with that. At first, the research planned to use the term co-design to describe the participatory processes investigated in this report. This term emphasizes equality between professionals and citizens as well highlighting the democracy of the process, while these can range from ‘heavy’ to ‘light’ in processes described as “participatory design” (Sanya, 2016; Dearden & Rizvi, 2008). However, when the author first started looking at citizen participation processes for energy transition projects in the Netherlands, it became clear that municipalities have varying approaches towards it. Some municipalities use an approach that can be categorized as co-design, whereas others utilize lighter forms of cooperation that can be better described as participation processes. So, the use of the term “co-design process” was replaced with that of “participation process”. Doing so better reflected the reality of approaches taken towards citizen participation processes for energy transition projects in the Netherlands. Important to note here, is the fact that “participation process” can still be used to describe a co-design process, it is thus an umbrella term.

The second concept for which multiple terms can be used to describe it, is the concept of ‘participation fatigue’. During the literature study, the author found relevant literature about participation fatigue using the following search terms: participation fatigue, stakeholder fatigue, participatory fatigue, and stakeholder exhaustion. Older literature, from when participation fatigue hadn’t already been found to

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be a systematic issue, also mention issues such as “loss of motivation”, “participants becoming tired”,... (Hussain, Sanders & Steinert, 2012). However, as of approximately 2019, more specific terms have been used (such as participation fatigue, stakeholder fatigue, participatory fatigue,...), but there doesn't seem to be a clear consensus on using the term ‘participation fatigue’ (or any other term for that matter). For that reason, the author chose the term ‘participation fatigue’ in a more or less arbitrary manner, based on the fact that it was simply used the most out of all the terms.

Lastly, the term ‘participants’ will be used for describing the participating citizens. Of course, the professionals involved in public transformation projects are also participants (and citizens). However, the research chooses the term ‘participants’ for describing the citizen-participants because it is often used in literature. It also emphasizes the important democratic aspect of participatory processes- that every citizen can and should be able to provide input for projects that they have a stake in. This is also reflected by literature, in which all types of citizens- ranging from minors to elderly people and people with very different socio-economic backgrounds- have been known to be able to provide very meaningful inputs in participatory processes (Robertson & Simonsen, 2012; Rijn & Stappers, 2008).

## 1.7 STRUCTURE

The report is set up as follows: firstly, the main findings from literature and market research are looked at in an in-depth manner in chapter two. Then, Part II of the report begins with chapter three in, which the research design will be set out. Chapter four delves into how the proposed research design will be operationalized in order to answer the research questions introduced in this introduction. Here, the methods and techniques, manner of data collection, manner of analysis, etc. are explained. Next, chapter five in Part III of the report, sets out the results that were garnered through the empirical research. This includes a discussion of the practical implications of the findings that were garnered. Chapter six and seven will conclude the report as well as make some recommendations on how future research can contribute to further analyzing the occurrence of participation fatigue. Finally, the author will reflect on the research process that was undertaken in chapter eight.

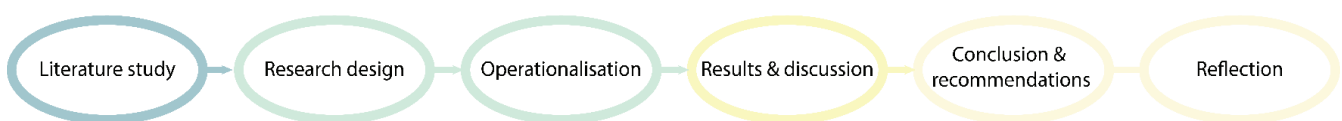


Figure 1.3: Report structure



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## 2. LITERATURE STUDY

Chapter two of the report sets out to build the theoretical background for the research, by conducting a literature study. This chapter delves into the existing literature surrounding citizen participation and participation fatigue.

### 2.1 ORIGINS OF PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

In this subsection, the different theories and ideas surrounding citizen participation practices will be explored. Doing this will help in developing a clear understanding of how a typical participation process unfolds and in pinpointing why participation fatigue occurs when and where it does.

#### 2.1 ORIGINS OF PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

Participatory design has its roots in 1970's Scandinavia where it was used to describe the "constructive design of technological alternatives with and for future users" (Bodker & Pekkola, 2010). Since then, the tradition has spread over to other fields such as systems design, social design, urban planning,... (Salomão, Sabiescu & Cantoni 2013). The tradition grew and evolved over the years, from participatory design to co-design: where in early participatory design, the involved citizens took a backseat to the professionals, co-design strives for a more democratic process in which the citizens and professionals stand on equal footing (Bodker & Pekkola, 2010; Sanya, 2016). Co-design specifically is a concept that has gained increasing popularity in recent the years as it is believed to better handle the socio-ecological challenges of sustainability and development (Sanya, 2016). Participatory design in general is believed to enrich the design process as well as increase the chances of project success. This is done by inducing a cross-pollination between industry professionals and citizens (Oakley, 1991; Sanya, 2016). Here, the 'professionals' or designers bring their formal education and knowledge to the table while the citizens provide tacit knowledge about the project which they gained from experiencing their surroundings (Sanya, 2016). Moreover, literature suggests that particularly involving disadvantaged groups in these design processes, also has a positive influence on the communities in which they reside by emancipating them and giving them the confidence to take on problems they face within their communities (Robertson & Simonsen, 2012). However, caution must be taken here since having a wide array of participants (e.g.: when it comes to backgrounds, social standing, interests, competencies, values,...), can enrich the process but can also slow it down and become counterproductive (Metze, 2009).

According to Dearden & Rizvi (2008), the participation processes can be split up into different stages in which different aspects become more important to lay focus on. For example: when initiating the processes, it is imperative for the professionals to win the trust of the citizens. To do so means listening closely to the citizens. Setting up explicit expectations of mutual learning while supporting the development of skills as the project progresses, is also very important (Dearden & Rizvi, 2008). This is because participation processes require learning from both professionals and citizens in order to be successful (Hussain et al., 2012). Fors, Hagemann, Sang & Randrup (2021), also set out different phases, this time specifically for the long-term participation process for the realization of urban green spaces. They identify three major phases – outside of the maintenance phase- in which different forms of participation takes

place. These are: analysis phase, in which participants are consulted and involved. The design phase, in which the participants enter a partnership with the professionals and contribute more actively and on equal footing with the professionals. Then, finally, the implementation phase involves the empowerment of citizen-participants on top of them working together with professionals. This entails that participants will gain more power and control over the process, while being supported by the professionals and local authorities. Later on in this report, it will be concluded that the participation processes of Dutch energy transition projects often times have a similar trajectory – although they are still in the design phase at the moment.

As mentioned in the introduction, it was found that Dutch municipalities’ use of participation processes, range from ‘light’ participation (e.g.: only informing the citizens), towards partnering up with them (co-design). Fors et al. (2021) also describe these different forms of participation, ranging from inform to consult, involve, partnership, and empower. These forms of participation can be traced back to the sixties, with the work of Shelly Arnstein (1969) and her development of a ‘participation ladder’. Figure 2.1 shows the participation ladder with its different levels of participation. As can be seen, these levels range from “nonparticipation”, to “degrees of tokenism” to “degrees of citizen power” (Arnstein, 1996). Nonparticipation means that the citizen has

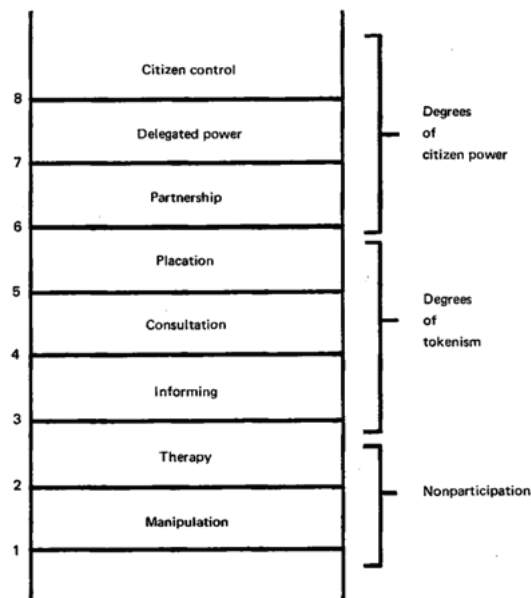


Figure 2.1: Participation ladder. (source: Arnstein, 1969)

absolutely no power in the process. This level will not be discussed further in this report, since it does not constitute as citizen participation. The second level pertains to forms of participation that – if they are the only employed ways in which citizens can participate – constitute as tokenism. Tokenism happens when “a perfunctory or symbolic effort is made to do a particular thing, especially by recruiting a small number of people from under-represented groups in order to give the appearance of sexual or racial equality within a workforce” (“Tokenism”, n.d.). So, this means that, if for example citizens are only informed about a certain project, they are not really participating. Arnstein argues that then, the ‘participation’ is merely a tool by which local authorities can appear in a better light. Important to note here, is the fact that informing and consulting both are very important steps in the participation process, but they should not be the only forms of participation. As will be discussed in later chapters, some Dutch municipalities are currently ‘only’ informing their citizens, but in these cases they are mostly planning on involving them more in the future. Lastly, the final level pertains to participation in which citizens have actual power in the process. According to Arnstein, this is seen as true participation and should be strived towards.

Finally, another important factor to take into consideration during co-design processes is the language that is used. Different tools and frameworks exist that seek to manage and improve the co-design process, such as: participatory analysis of secondary sources; focus groups; ‘do-it-yourself’ where the practitioner is taught how to perform an important village task; transect walks; appreciative inquiry;... (Dearden & Rizvi, 2008). These languages aim at making communication possible between professional and citizens.

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## 2.2 PARTICIPATION FATIGUE: AN INEVITABLE ISSUE IN PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

As can be deduced from the above, a successful participation process demands a lot from both the participating professionals and citizens. For the professionals, they have to dedicate a lot of time to getting to know and winning the trust of the citizens, while also ‘translating’ their expert knowledge into understandable concepts for the citizens. The citizens on the other hand, have to dedicate themselves and their time to the process in order to build their capacity and keep providing valuable input in the process. This in combination with the long periods of time a lot of projects often span over, contributes to the occurrence of participation fatigue.

According to Tshishonga (2020) participation fatigue is *“tiredness due to unmet expectations/empty promises and a non-responsive government, which can result in people absenting themselves from partaking in the political and democratic processes.”*. In this definition, participation fatigue is accredited specifically to the fact that participants’ expectations are not met as well as the fact that the higher levels of authority don’t respond to the work that is delivered or inquiries about certain topics that were discussed before but are later ‘forgotten’ (empty promises). These reasons accredited to the causation of participation fatigue, were also found in other pieces of literature. For example, the Robert Bosh Stiftung (2019), highlights the importance of ensuring the legitimacy and serious uptake of the outcomes and decisions taken from participatory processes. Besides this, Cho & Ho (2020) describe the need to manage the expectations of the participating citizens and build social support among this group of citizens, in order to avoid them leaving the project later on because of participation fatigue. This corroborates what is stated in the definition. Besides the two causes of participation fatigue taken from this definition, other causes were also found in literature. For example, according to Combrinck and Porter (2021) participation fatigue is a phenomenon that sometimes occurs in longer participation processes in which the participants become exhausted with the process because of its length. They describe how engaging the citizens becomes more difficult in later stages of the process because they expect the professionals to know more than them and believe that they don’t have anything useful to contribute anymore. Even if, with a little bit of learning, they can still provide meaningful input for the project. This especially happens in large-scale projects, where citizens can have difficulty conceiving that they can influence the process (Dalsgaard, 2012). For this, Frantzeskaki (2019) recommends trying to avoid calling upon the same group of people time after time. However, in some projects, this is not always possible.

Besides the length of a process being able to cause participation fatigue, an article written by Milkman (2021), about the experiences of citizens of Denver with participatory processes, laid bare another striking cause behind participation fatigue. In this article, multiple sources were interviewed about how they experienced requests to participate from urban planners. It was found that people living in industrial areas were fatigued because they had received request upon request from urban planners to participate, but when they did voice their concerns, they weren’t listened to. This can again be tied to the definition of Tshishonga (2020), but also adds another layer to possible causes of participation fatigue. Part of it

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was brought forth because the city of Denver outsourced participatory work to public information firms who proved to not be very reliable: apparently, they cycled in and out of neighborhoods at an alarming rate, causing citizens to lose trust in the city and become exhausted on top of that (Milkman, 2021). This installed participation fatigue and a certain sense of cynicism in the residents, making them elusive to possible future participation processes (Milkman, 2021). This example from the city of Denver shows how, when public parties take on an ad hoc approach towards participation, it will negatively impact the participation process. In the case of Denver, this was done by pushing for the inclusion of certain demographics without actually taking their personal needs into account as well as eventually disregarding their concerns about the project. This is what in the previous section was referred to as tokenism. In the Denver case, the ‘under-represented group’ were the less well-off inhabitants of industrial areas. Not only did the involved citizens feel exhausted from the process, a more serious issue with them losing trust in the municipality as a whole was also brought forth. This example clearly shows how the presence of tokenism in participatory processes can bring forth not only the issue of participation fatigue, but can also cause grave additional damage to the relationship the involved citizens have with their municipality. The Denver case also shows that participation can be a symptom of a much larger, more pressing problem, and finding this cause should thus be important.

## **2.3 SUPPORTING THEORIES**

As can be seen from the previous sub section, participation fatigue has been mentioned in academical research, however, no in-depth analysis of the issue has been made. Causes and effects of the phenomenon are mentioned here and there but have not been shown in a clearly structured way as of yet. But, based on findings from both literature and the interviews (more on this later), it was found that the occurrence of participation fatigue can be partly explained by looking at some broader psychological theories. So, in order to properly analyze participation fatigue occurring in Dutch energy transition projects, the research conducted for this thesis utilizes two psychological theories in order to support the research. In this sub section, the two supporting theories- which are those of self-determination theory (SDT) and the theory of planned behavior (TPB)- that were chosen, will be explained.

### **2.3.1 SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY**

Self-determination theory was first developed in the 1970’s as a way of comparing different types of motivation and was accepted into the empirical canon in the mid-eighties, because of the work of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (CSDT, n.d.). Over the years, it has grown to be the most prominent and the leading motivation theory in academia, as well as being considered to be very versatile and applicable across many disciplines (Visser, 2021; Souders, 2021). This is also why this theory has been chosen as opposed to other motivation theories such as Maslow’s theory of the hierarchy of needs, Alderfer’s ERG theory, McClelland’s achievement motivation theory, etc.

SDT looks at the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the factors that influence this. Here, intrinsic motivation means that a person is motivated by internal means such as interests, values,

curiosity, etc. While extrinsic motivation means that a person is motivated by external factors like grades, evaluations, reputation, etc. (CSDT, n.d.). The theory explains how people that are intrinsically motivated, possess the ability to sustain their efforts even when they might not be externally rewarded, while extrinsically motivated people will be quicker to bury the hatchet in situations

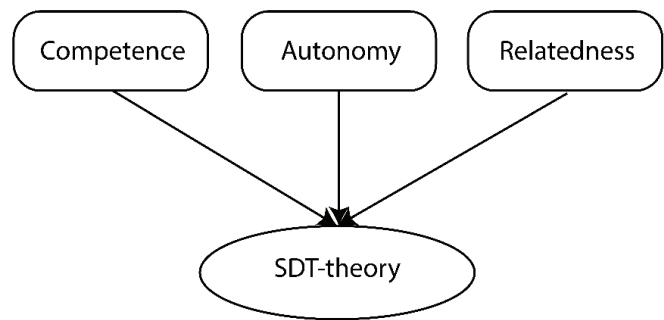


Figure 2.2: SDT. (source: adapted from CSDT, n.d.)

like these. Looking at self-determination theory in a more in-depth manner, three conditions of an individual's experience can influence that individual's motivation, and thus, their ability to engage in a certain task. These three conditions are: competence, autonomy, and relatedness (see figure 2.2) (CSDT, n.d.). Here, competence relates to whether a person feels like they are able to interact effectively within their environment, and they have the skills needed for success to ensure that their goals are achieved (Lopez-Garrido, 2021). Autonomy is related to the whether a person feels in control of their behavior and destiny, this includes being able to decide when you initiate a certain behavior as well as being able to regulate that behavior (Lopez-Garrido, 2021). Finally, relatedness pertains to whether a person feels a sense of both attachment to other people and a sense of belonging amongst other people, while performing a task. Relatedness thus involves feelings of closeness and belonging to a social group (Lopez-Garrido, 2021). When all three of these needs are met during the participation process, the participant will be intrinsically motivated and therefore less likely to be affected by participating fatigue, more on this later.

When we look at the three needs in light of a citizen engaging in an energy transition project, factors can be found that both relate to these conditions as well as the occurrence of participation fatigue. So, the reason why SDT theory was chosen for this research, is because it can be linked to some of the factors that influence the occurrence of participation fatigue found in both literature as well as the fieldwork that was conducted for this research. These are factors such as: the legitimate uptake of the participants' input (relates to autonomy), the participants' existing skills and knowledge (relates to competence) and the underlying reasons behind a person's motivation (relates to relatedness as well as motivation in general). Moreover, through the interviews that were conducted after the literature study, it became clear that both municipality officials as well as participants themselves, acknowledge the importance of being intrinsically motivated, more on this later.

### 2.3.2 THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR

The second theory that was chosen for supporting the analysis of participation fatigue, is the theory of planned behavior. Just like SDT, TPB finds its roots in the mid 80's where it was proposed by Icek Ajzen as a way of expanding on the already existing 'theory of reasoned action' (Ajzen, 1985). TPB states that an individual's intentions to engage in a certain behavior (like participating in an energy transition project) can predict their actual engagement in that behavior (c). Just like SDT, it has also been applied across many different fields and has been heavily researched since its introduction in the eighties.

As mentioned before, TPB states that intention shapes behavior (see figure 2.2). In its own turn, intention is also shaped by three key concepts: personal attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. Here, attitude relates to a person's personal attitude towards a certain behavior, this is determined by that person's knowledge, prejudices, etc. (Ajzen, 1985). Subjective norms are about whether a person believes that other people approve or disapprove

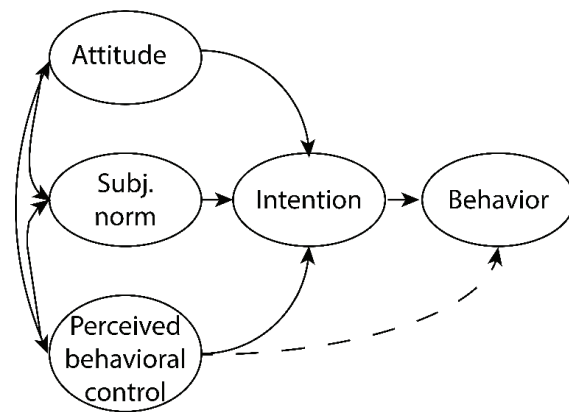


Figure 2.3: TPB (source: adapted from Ajzen, 1985)

of a certain behavior (Ajzen, 1985). It relates to a person's beliefs about whether peers and people of importance to the person think he or she should engage in the behavior (LaMorte, 2019). For example, if sustainability is seen as important by a person's family, it is more likely that this person also finds sustainability important. Finally, perceived behavioral control says something about to what extent a person thinks they can control their behavior (Ajzen, 1985). This can be influenced by both internal factors (like their background knowledge, capacity to learn, etc.) as well as external factors (like whether or not they have enough time available to carry out a certain behavior). So, to summarize: the three key concepts of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, shape a person's intention. This intention can then serve as a predictor of the behavioral achievement of that person.

Looking at the three key concepts in context of participation fatigue, they can again be linked to influencing factors of participation fatigue that were identified through the literature study and interviews. For example: municipality officials expressed how the presence of citizen organizations in their municipality, such as energy coöperations, positively impacted citizen participation as it provided them with a sort of point of contact with different communities and neighborhoods (anonymous, 2022). This can be linked to the concepts of 'normative beliefs' and 'subjective norms', since the existence of these citizen initiatives signals a positive view on citizen participation to their surrounding communities. Of course, this does not guarantee that a person also sees participation as a positive through their own subjective norms, but it does positively influence their view of it according to the theory.

To elaborate more on exactly why TPB was chosen in combination with SDT, it is important to point out that SDT's intrinsic motivation can be seen as an antecedent to TPB's key concepts of 'attitudes', 'subjective norms' and 'perceived control' (Brooks, Iwanaga, Chiu, Cotton, Deiches, Morrison, Moser & Chan, 2017). By fostering this intrinsic motivation in citizens three things will happen according to Brooks et al. (2017): 1) their attitudes towards participating in an energy transition project will be positively impacted, 2) their confidence about their ability to participate in a useful way will be elevated, and 3) they become more aware that participating is seen as normal and expected. Possibly existing mental barriers towards participation are thus alleviated. Moreover, when citizens are intrinsically motivated during the participation process, they are also likely to make more progress as well as feel better during the process (Gorin et al., 2014; Koestner et al, 2002). Supposedly, they are then also less likely to be affected by participation

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fatigue. Through this line of reasoning, this report thus utilizes the both self-determination theory as well as the theory of planned behavior, in order to analyze the phenomenon of participation fatigue.

### 2.3.3 OTHER THEORIES

Aside from SDT and TPB, some other theories were also looked at in regards to their relevance for this research. One of these is flow theory. According to Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi (2009), key concepts of flow theory include the fact that: goals are understood & clearly set out, a state of concentration is achieved, there is a loss of reflective self-consciousness, immediate feedback is present, there is a balance between personal skill level and difficulty of the task at hand, a sense of personal control or agency is present, there should be a distortion of temporal experience and the activity is experienced as rewarding. As one can see, some aspects of SDT as well as TPB can be found in flow theory too. Flow theory can definitely be used in order to set up more productive meetings, workshops, etc., however, the scope on which this theory can be applied differs from that of this research. This research looks at the participation process as a whole, while flow theory has to be applied on a meeting-by-meeting basis by using its key concepts to better organize these kinds of get-togethers. Therefore, it was concluded that flow theory falls outside off the scope of this research and will not be used for the analysis of participation fatigue, however, organizations that facilitate citizen participation can still benefit from looking at flow theory in order to better organize their assemblies.





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## 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Now that the theoretical background to this report has been described in chapter two, chapter three delves into how the research will be conducted in order to answer the research questions.

### 3.1 TYPE OF STUDY, DATA & LOGICS OF INQUIRY

This section of the proposal focuses on how the research will be designed in order to answer the research question and its sub-questions. For this, the author proposes a mostly qualitative approach due to the explorative nature of the research. The literature review illustrated that participation fatigue is an issue that has not been researched in an in-depth manner. Because of this, this thesis report sets out the conduction of an explorative research in which a better understanding of the phenomenon is garnered and the foundations for further research are built. The aim of the research is therefore to provide an account of the characteristics of participation fatigue in order to fill the previously mentioned gap in academic research. This will be done through the collection of qualitative data, as well as a small portion of quantitative data.

The research utilizes inductive as well as retroductive logics of inquiry for answering the research questions. This is because it both aims at describing the phenomenon of participation fatigue, as well as discovering the underlying mechanisms leading to its occurrence (Blaikie & Priest, 2019a). Figure 3.1 on page 28, shows this in a comprehensive way, as well as the complete structure of the research design. In the following sub-sections, each empirical research activity that will be conducted, will be elaborated on.

### 3.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

#### 3.2.1 CASE STUDIES & SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Because literature alone has shown to not be able to provide the needed depth to gain a deeper insight into the mechanisms that occur in participation processes and potentially lead to participation fatigue, multiple case studies and interviews were conducted in order to further analyze the issue of participation fatigue. By doing this, the author aimed to make a qualitative analysis of how Dutch energy transition projects and citizen participation have been organized and how participation fatigue occurs within these processes.

The semi-structured interviews were held with municipality officials as well as with citizens volunteering in citizen initiatives. The goal of these interviews was twofold: 1) understanding the trajectory of the energy transition projects and how the participatory process was organized within this, and 2) finding out how the participatory process might have influenced the occurrence of participation fatigue according to the interviewees. For example: maybe participating citizens voiced that the lack of feedback sessions caused them to feel that their contribution wasn't as important as they thought, demotivating them in the process. In other words, the qualitative data extracted from these interviews were aimed at garnering more understanding about why, and why then and there, people think participation fatigue occurs in the process. This means that the interviews partly answered sub question three as well as

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four. The conduction of the interviews resulted in the development of a provisional theoretical framework, in which identified causes of participation fatigue were categorized and linked to the supporting theories that were introduced in the previous chapter. This framework was used in order to set up the survey, which is discussed below. Due to pragmatic considerations and the principle of saturation, the number of interviewees turned out to be five (six, if one takes into account one interview which had to be left out of consideration due to withdrawal of consent).

In order to find potential case studies and interviewees, different organizations and municipalities were approached in order to find running energy transition projects in which citizen participation plays a central role. More on this in the 'Operationalization' chapter.

### 3.2.3 SURVEY

In order to provide a higher level of triangulation in the research design, a qualitative survey was also sent out. This survey is aimed at confirming and possibly enriching the findings from the interviews and case studies – and by extension – the theoretical framework that was developed, using both qualitative and quantitative analyses. For this, a purposive snowball sampling method has been used. This is because the sample was made by using the existing networks that organizations such as energy coöperations and municipalities have built over the years. However, important to keep in mind here, is the fact that by using this sampling method, the sample is not considered to be random anymore. This is because a certain type of participant will be reached quicker than other types: more active participants showed to be better represented in the sample than less active participants, more on this later. The population for the survey consists of citizens who are currently participating in energy transition projects organized by municipalities or citizen organizations-or- have done so in the past. Because of the very specific requirements of the population from which the sample was drawn (and no previous existing database of this population being accessible), as well as time limitations of the graduation project in which the research takes place, the data extracted from the survey is mostly qualitative. However, it does shed some light on the demographical backgrounds of respondees and manages to lay some quantitative correlations between the occurrence of participation fatigue, and other variables present in the participation process. The survey took place after the findings from the case studies and interviews had been analyzed.

### 3.3 OVERVIEW

Now that the proposed methods for answering the research questions have been laid out, figure 3.1 shows a comprehensive image of the process as a whole. Note that for each sub-question (SQ), the logic of inquiry that will be used is also shown. Here, retroductive logic is used to discover underlying mechanisms and explain observed regularities, while inductive logic is used to accurately describe the phenomenon of participation fatigue in an in-depth manner (Blaikie & Priest, 2019a).

Subquestions (SQ's):

1. What does participation fatigue mean in the context of participation processes?
2. Why is participation fatigue an important issue to solve in participation processes dealing with energy transition?
3. In case of the occurrence of participation fatigue in participation processes, can the citizens link this to specific problems during the process?
4. What are the lessons learned from the occurrence of participation fatigue in practice?

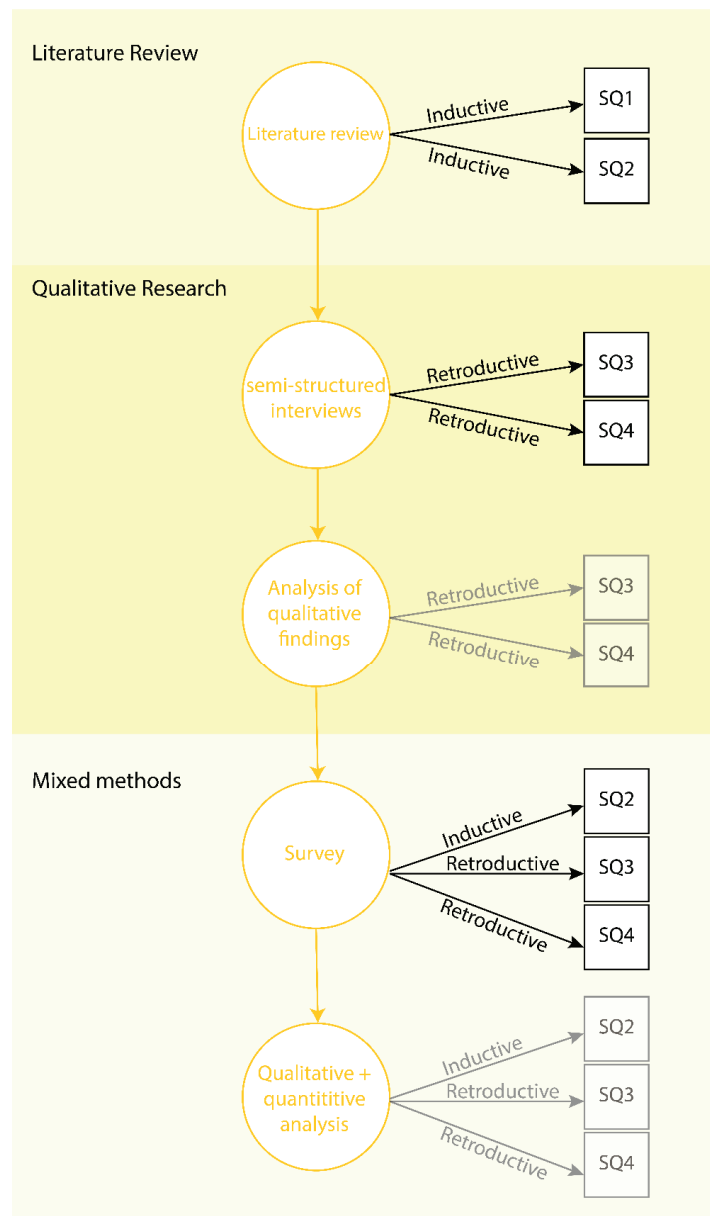


Figure 3.1: Research design

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### 3.4 DATA MANAGEMENT

In appendix B, the data management plan devised for this research can be found. This DMP shows what type of data has been collected and how it was processed, handled, and stored. The importance of this is undeniable, especially given the fact that this research will involve the collection of personal data and the involvement of ‘normal’ citizens.

### 3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As can be deduced from the methodology described in previous sections, the research is largely dependent on third-party actors. Moreover, since the focus of the research lies on the occurrence of participation fatigue as experienced by normal citizens, extra care has to be given to ensuring that the research design covers all ethical considerations that are needed. To gauge how the research design performs when it comes to ethical considerations, the four positions that relate to the conduct of social research as described by Blaikie & Priest (2019b), are used. These four positions are: duties, consequences, virtues, and situation ethics (Blaikie & Priest, 2019b). Here, duties refer to obligations and rights based on universal rules; consequences refer to how actions are judged based on how much good or bad they do; virtue refers to ideals like honesty, which are the basis of human action; and situation ethics refer to how ethical dilemmas that come up during the research because of the context are handled by the researchers (Blaikie & Priest, 2019b).

Because of the involvement of third parties in this research design (interviews, case studies, and a survey), extra care has to be given to making sure the ethical duties are fulfilled. For this, all participants will give informed consent to participate in the research. This means that they will be aware of the nature of the research and its objective, how long they will be involved, what data will be shared with the public, etc (Blaikie & Priest, 2019b). They also have the freedom to withdraw from the process when they wish. Furthermore, it is the duty of the researchers to make sure that the gathered (anonymized) data will be made available to the public according to FAIR principles (TU Delft, 2021). Part of these duties have also been recorded in the data management plan.

In terms of the consequences of the research, the ultimate goal of the research is to gain more insight into the occurrence and effects of participation fatigue in participation processes. This objectively reads as a positive consequence. However, research results can sometimes be used in a malicious way by third parties, even if this was not the intended result of the original research (Chan, 2021). In order to evade this problem, the research not only looks at the causes and effects of participation fatigue in participation processes, but also introduces some important ‘lessons learned’ from practice. By doing this, the author hopes to provide some solutions towards avoiding or remedying participation fatigue, instead of just proving that it is indeed a serious issue.

Given not only the heavy involvement of participation in the research design, but the research question containing the concept of participation as well, trust will be one of the most important virtues that play a role in the research. Trust lies in the nature of all successful co-design processes, as proven by not only

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literature but case studies as well (Dearden & Rizvi, 2008; Hussain et al., 2012). Not only that, but conducting social research itself requires researchers to build trust with the participants. In order for this to be done, the virtue of honesty is used. Participants will be given the needed transparency for them to know exactly what is going on and how their contributions will be used afterward.

The fourth and last position regarding the conduct of social research is that of situation ethics. This final position relates to how the research context might produce some ethical dilemmas in which the research needs to use their moral values and ethical skills in order to negotiate resolutions for these dilemmas. From the present, these ethical dilemmas are hard to predict, but if such a dilemma were to transpire, the above-mentioned provisions for ensuring an ethical research design will be used again. This will be done by keeping in mind the virtues of trust and transparency, as well as the core ethical principles of social research (Blaikie & Priest, 2019b). These core principles include things such as how participation should be voluntary, participants should be able to give consent in an informed manner, participants have the freedom to withdraw, participants have right to privacy (this is why the data will be anonymized), etc. (Blaikie & Priest, 2019b).

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## 4. OPERATIONALISATION

Now that the different tools and methods for garnering the data have been set out in the previous chapter, this chapter explains more about how exactly these tools have been used in order to collect the needed data as well as how this data will be analyzed. For this, the strategy for reaching the interviewees and survey respondents will be explained, as well as what the different requirements were for these two groups.

### 4.1 DATA COLLECTION

#### 4.1.1 REACHING INTERVIEWEES AND SURVEY RESPONDENTS

After the literature study was concluded in January of 2022, the first steps towards gathering empirical data were taken. These first steps took the form of trying to reach relevant sources for data by contacting municipalities, third party organizations and citizen initiatives alike. This sub-section delves deeper into how this process shaped the research.

##### 4.1.1.1 Interviews

Due to the fact that the findings of the interviews and case studies were meant to lay the foundation for the survey questions, interviewees were the first contributors that were contacted during the research. For this, the author had initially aimed at interviewing citizen-participants of various energy transition projects in the Netherlands. However, this soon proved to be much more challenging than first thought. The strategy for this was to contact different municipalities, setting up an interview with them, and then hope to be put into contact with citizens participating in their energy transition projects. However, municipalities (as well as energy coöperations, citizen initiatives, etc.) were, understandably so, very cautious about putting the author into contact with the citizens. This was strengthened by an ironic contradiction experienced by the author during the research: the aim of the research was to investigate the phenomenon of participation fatigue – but- by requesting time and effort from citizens to participate in this study, this could then also invertedly lead to strengthened feelings of participation fatigue.

So, the strategy for reaching potential interviewees changed: the focus shifted towards interviewing people standing in positions in which they had an overview of the participation process and stood in contact with citizens. In table 4.1, each interviewee's role/position within their respective organizations can be found.

Practically, the relevant cases from which the interviewees were garnered, were mostly found through the website 'CitizenLab'. CitizenLab is an online participation platform that has been used by many Dutch municipalities in order to organize citizen participation for different types of projects, including energy transition projects. Often used by municipalities in varying degrees- from purely information dissemination purposes, to active and lively discussion boards in which citizens are encouraged to share their ideas - the website provides a useful overview of a municipality's running projects. CitizenLab also provides a comprehensive overview of each projects' different phases and what was produced during them. After

relevant cases in certain municipalities were found, they were then contacted and scheduled for an interview.

#### 4.1.2.2 Survey

When the findings of the interviews and case studies were concluded, the survey was composed and sent out using the online ‘experience management’ platform Qualtrics. For this, the strategy on one hand was to disperse an online questionnaire with anonymous link to social media platforms such as Linked In, Facebook and Twitter using recognizable hashtags/mentions or groups or pages designated to the subject of citizen participation for energy transition projects. A reward of 20 euros for an online shop was also used in order to draw in more respondents.

The questionnaire was also directly sent 30 municipalities and over 130 citizen initiatives, such as energy coöperations, with the request to further distribute it to its members. Of those 160 organizations, about fifteen followed up on this request, thus garnering 106 respondents.

### 4.1.2 INTERVIEW AND SURVEY REQUIREMENTS

Both the interviews and survey have to adhere to certain requirements in order to be useful for the analysis of participation fatigue in energy transition projects using citizen participation. This sub-chapter delves deeper into what exactly these requirements are.

#### 4.1.2.1 Interviews

As mentioned before, the focus for the interviews shifted from interviewing ‘average’ citizen-participants towards municipality officials and a highly engaged citizen-participants. This meant that they could give an accurate account of how the participation had been organized in their respective trajectories, as well as the technical implications of the energy transition project that they were working on. They also gave an account of whether or not they had noticed participation fatigue in themselves or citizens. This resulted in the conduction of six interviews, five of which are included for analysis in this report (the sixth interviewee withdrew their consent). Table 4.1 shows each of the interviewee’s role:

Case:	(self-described) Role:
Interview 1, Municipality A	Process manager energy transition
Interview 2, Municipality B	Policy advisor for sustainability
Interview 3, Municipality C	Involved with everything “sustainability” in their municipality
Interview 4, Municipality D	Heat director
Interview 5, Citizen initiative A	Board member
Interview 6, Municipality E	Omitted due to withdrawn consent

Table 4.1: Interview profiles

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, guided by findings from the literature review but still allowing for new insights to be made. This meant that some questions were predetermined, such as: ‘How was the participation organized in your municipality/organization?’, ‘What kind of tools did you use during the participation process’, ‘Did you notice the presence of participation fatigue in the participating citizens or even yourself?’, etc. But, the interviewer could veer off into other topics as well, thus discovering different facets of the participation process and its possible influence on participation fatigue. Doing so allowed for patterns to be noticed between interviews, as well as comparisons to be made between each interview.

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#### 4.1.2.2 Survey

The target group for the survey, as explained in the research design, consisted of citizens who are currently participating in energy transition projects organized by municipalities or citizen organizations-or- have done so in the past. A side-effect of garnering respondents through directly contacting citizen initiatives and municipalities, was that because the questionnaire was often send to one of the board members, it was also filled in by them. Or, in some cases, it was filled in by a fraction of the members that stood closest to the board. This meant that a certain percentage of respondents are people that devote quite some time towards participating and even organizing energy transition trajectories in their respective communities. In itself, this does not pose that much of a threat to the results of the study, since even the members of a citizen initiative's board, are still volunteering citizens. Meaning: they (mostly) don't get paid, have jobs outside of their involvement with the initiative and are thus considered participating citizens, even though they are a lot more involved than the average participating citizen. However, this could result in a certain bias in the findings, considering that people who spend more time on a project are also expected to experience signs of participation fatigue more quickly. However, these findings, although maybe biased, could still prove very significant for this research. Therefore, the possible bias is held into account and appropriately addressed in the 'results' chapter of this report.

For the survey, which garnered 106 respondents, a mix between qualitative and quantitative questions was used. In appendix E, one can find the list of questions, which shows a blend between open-ended as well as questions using a Likert scale or multiple choice. The open ended questions were mostly posed in relation to the respondent's experiences with the participation process and participation fatigue in order to get a more nuanced picture of their experiences, which would not be achievable through multiple-choice or other short-form question types. The general structure of the survey was based on the theoretical framework introduced in the next chapter, and went as follows: first, the respondents were asked about their demographical background. Then, the contextual background behind their participation was inquired about. After this, the survey delved into how the participation process in which the respondent took part, was organized. Finally, the survey asked the respondents about their experiences with participation fatigue. The reason for this structure and how the supporting theories that were introduced in the literature study were incorporated into this, will be made clear in part III (results) of this report.

## 4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.2.1 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The interview and case study data that was collected in the first part of the empirical research, served towards gaining a better understanding of the trajectories of energy transition projects and how citizen participation is organized within this, as well as identifying possible sources of participation fatigue. This was done by using interview statements and progress documents of the respective energy transition projects, found on CitizenLab and other websites. Together with the findings from the literature study, this formed the basis for the proposition of a theoretical framework in which causes of participation fatigue are categorized and linked to the supporting theories of SDT and TPB.



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In order to analyze the data collected through the survey, the thematic content analysis-method was used on a certain part of the survey responses. Here, certain aspects of the participation process and respondents' experience with participation fatigue, were categorized based on shared characteristics and features that emerged. A thematic content analysis is conducted in order to discover underlying themes and present the qualitative data in a descriptive way.

#### **4.2.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

Part of the survey was also used to garner quantitative data that could be used in order to conduct a statistical analysis with SPSS. In doing so, correlations between the occurrence of participation fatigue, and other variables present of the participation process were found.



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## 5. RESULTS

Chapter five of this report discusses the results of the fieldwork that was conducted for the research. This includes the findings drawn from the semi-structured interviews as well as those from the survey that was sent out to citizens. The analysis of the qualitative (and partly, quantitative) data that was garnered here, will thus be set out.

### 5.1 INTERVIEWS & CASE STUDY RESULTS

As mentioned in previous chapters, five interviews were conducted for this research: four with municipality officials and one with a board member of a citizen initiative. The interviews were conducted in Dutch, but, quotes and citations have been translated for the sake of this report. This sub-chapter presents a description of each case as well as some insights from the interviews. After this, a framework will be presented that categorizes factors that were identified to potentially lead to participation fatigue and links these to the two supporting theories. The protocol used for the interviews can be found in Appendix C.

#### 5.1.1 INTERVIEWS WITH MUNICIPALITY OFFICIALS

Firstly, the interviews with municipality officials and their respective cases will be discussed. For this it is important to have some background information regarding how Dutch municipalities have tackled energy transition projects over the past years. Most municipalities started with setting up a regional energy strategy (RES) after which they started on developing a heat transition vision- or transitie visie warmte' in Dutch- on a municipal level. Figure 5.1 reiterates how these take place on different levels: from a national, to regional, to municipal and finally, a local level.

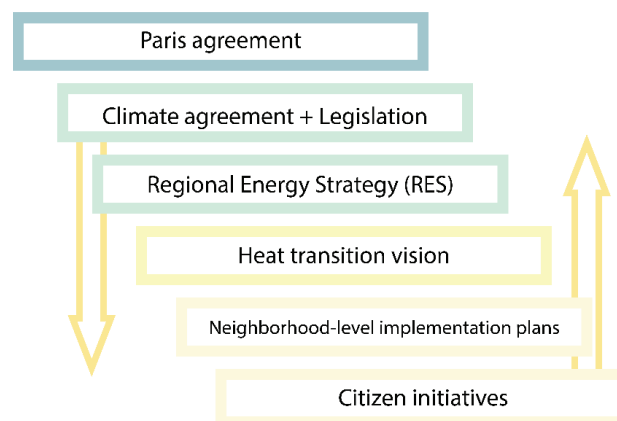


Figure 5.1: average energy transition strategy development process of Dutch municipalities (Adapted from Nieuwkoop, 2021)

The RES aims at a regional collaboration regarding energy transition by bundling the ‘powers’ of local governments, inhabitants, businesses, and grid operators (Nationaal Programma RES, n.d.-b). The RES addresses inquiries such as “where there might be space for generating green energy”, “how much energy can be generated and how”, “which heat sources can be used in order to transition away from fossil fuels”, “how can residents be involved in this”, etc. (Nationaal Programma RES, n.d.-a). Basically, it lays the foundation for more concrete projects, such as the heat transition vision. This is also why most municipalities opt for finishing their RES before starting on the development of their heat transition vision.

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The heat transition vision on the other hand, is a municipal policy document in which the following should be recorded (Programma Aardgasvrije Wijken, n.d.-a).:

1. How many residences and other buildings will be insulated and/or made gas-free by 2030;
2. Which alternative heat supplies could be used; and
3. Which heat alternative has the lowest national costs.

This vision aims at setting out a plan for achieving the goal of being completely independent of fossil fuels by 2050. For this vision, it is also explicitly mentioned that early involvement of the public – in other words, citizen participation – is key, so that different “wishes, perspectives, knowledge and creativity”, are brought to the table (Programma Aardgasvrije Wijken, n.d.-b).

### 5.1.1.1 Municipality A

*“Everyone has their own motivations behind participating, their own background knowledge and priorities.”* - interviewee A, 2022

The first interview was conducted with the process manager for energy transition of municipality A. Municipality A is a rural municipality located in the Green Heart of the Netherlands. This means that, outside of the residential areas and village centers, there exists a large amount of green space used for agriculture, recreation, nature preservation, etc. In Dutch, this is called the ‘buitengebied’. This low density of the built environment has important implications for their energy strategy, since certain sources or methods for realizing energy transition, might be more or less feasible based on this. For example, the implementation of a heat network would be a lot more costly for municipality A than for a municipality with a more urban-like density. Similarly, the presence of a large ‘buitengebied’ might provide opportunities for the realization of solar fields or wind turbines. Besides this, municipality A can be considered to be a relatively small municipality with about 28.000 inhabitants.



Figure 5.2: Municipality A (adapted from Google Maps)

In terms of developing their energy transition strategy, municipality A followed a similar trajectory as shown in figure 5.1. First, they worked on their RES together with 11 other municipalities in their region (CitizenLab, 2022a). Here, they looked at the possibility of using energy sources like the wind and sun and how they could then implement this (interviewee A, 2022). The result of this was that they produced a comprehensive map for solar fields in the region. This was concluded in March of 2021 (CitizenLab, 2022a). Then, in June of 2021, they set the first steps towards developing their heat transition vision. At the end of 2021, this vision was drawn up and submitted to the municipal council, where it currently

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awaits their decision. The vision includes an extensive analysis of the current situation, the different heat sources that are accessible in the municipality, financial analysis, etc.

Up until now, citizen participation in municipality A was organized as follows: first, for the RES, residents were not involved immediately from the start. Rather, the municipalities worked on this internally and then moved towards informing the citizens about the plans they had developed. Initially, the involvement included mostly informing the citizens rather than allowing them to contribute their own ideas. Later on, they did send out a survey and organized meetings to ask the citizens what they thought about their proposals. This approach seems to be a common thread among the municipalities and reflects a top-down approach towards energy transition. Especially for the RES this seemed to be the case, presumably due to it regarding a regional strategy:

*“Yes, but these kinds of trajectories [RES], those are such broad trajectories. It’s about the whole municipality. So that’s thirteen village centers and we have to outline a policy for the entire municipality. That can be quite distant from people. People may think, well, what should I do with it? It doesn’t have much to do with my immediate environment, so let’s not participate.” - interviewee A, 2022*

The supposed ‘distance’ of the RES to the residents’ daily lives makes participation difficult. The somewhat controversial nature of implementing for example wind turbines or devoting a large plot of land to the realization of a solar field, also meant that the people that did participate for the RES, were mostly there to voice their concerns and negative feelings surrounding this (interviewee A, 2022). At this point in the research it was therefore decided that more ‘concrete’ and more citizen-involving projects or programs- like the heat transition vision or the implementation of a heat network- would be more suitable to talk about than the RES.

For the heat transition vision, the citizen participation consisted of an initial survey that was sent out to citizens in which they could indicate their opinions surrounding heat transition, what they were prepared to pay for this, what information they still needed, etc. (CitizenLab, 2022a). The results from this survey were then analyzed and used for developing an initial vision for heat transition in the municipality. This was done in collaboration with the local energy coöperation and a focus group devised of about 40 stakeholders which included representatives from different village centers. During this whole process, they also held meetings with a broader group of citizens where they informed them of the proceedings as well as allowed them to ask questions. In order to implement their heat transition vision, municipality A still has a long way to go until 2050. For this, they also have set up a participation strategy that is embedded within their transition vision (CitizenLab, 2022a). The next step seems to be to delve deeper into each neighborhood and work from there.

When asked about participation fatigue occurring in the process they went through up until now, interviewee A responded with the following:

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*“[...] as soon as the self-interest is large enough, there doesn't seem to be any participation fatigue [...] but, you do have to 'dose' the participation. So, if you request citizens to participate time after time, people do indeed become tired, this is something you have to organize carefully.”- interviewee A, 2022*

Also, another interesting fact was that the municipality's collaboration with the local energy coöperation as well as an 'energy counter' (where citizens can ask for advice surrounding the more technical aspects of energy transition), seemed to positively impact the participation. This is because- since energy coöperations are largely made up of volunteering citizens- the local energy coöperation provided the municipality with points of contact in different neighborhoods, thus bringing energy transition 'closer' to each citizen's daily life.

Interviewee A thus addresses three interesting factors that can potentially influence participation fatigue: the motivation/self-interest of the citizen, the organization of the participation itself, and the presence of citizen initiatives like energy coöperations that provide a point of contact for participating citizens. This will be held into account for the development of the theoretical framework introduced in sub-chapter 5.1.3.

#### *5.1.1.2 Municipality B*

Municipality B is a suburban municipality, consisting of a relatively dense built environment as well as a large green space outside of the built environment that is used for recreation and nature preservation. It lies on the banks of a lake and is therefore known for both its beautiful forest and qualitative waterfront by both visitors as well as the inhabitants themselves. The municipality consists of almost 50.000 inhabitants.



Figure 5.3: Municipality B (adapted from Google Maps)

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For this interview, the author spoke with interviewee B: the policy advisor for sustainability of their municipality. An important aspect of interviewee B's role is finding a balance between the concepts of energy transition, climate adaptation, circularity and biodiversity. Because, although these fields are related to each other and can have a heavy impact on each other, there also exists a certain tension between them (Interviewee B, 2022). Similar to municipality A, municipality B started working on their heat transition vision after they had developed their RES with other municipalities in the region. For the heat transition vision, the trajectory went as follows: at the start of 2019, the municipality started on the heat transition vision (CitizenLab, 2022b). At first, this was done in collaboration with the housing coöperation, grid operator, the regional energy counter and the local energy coöperation (in which citizens are very active). Then, when the outlines of the heat transition vision were set up, the municipality organized 'city conversations' (stadsgesprekken in Dutch) where citizens could voice their opinions and ideas regarding the proposed outline. In these conversations, 450 participants were present and they also resulted in the creation of two citizen initiatives in two different neighbourhoods. After this, some follow-up (online) meetings were organized as well that functioned as spaces where citizens could ask questions, garner information and get additional information on how they could contribute further. Finally, a last walk-in assembly was held before the heat transition vision was officially submitted to the municipal council. Municipality B thus informed, involved and consulted with their participating citizens.

Compared to municipality A, there seems to exist more of a culture of participation in municipality B. This could be seen as a positive especially in regards to the socio-technical problem of energy transition, for which citizen participation has become so important. However, as mentioned in the literature study, too much participation can have adverse effects on the results and the experiences of the participating citizens (Milkman, 2021). It seems this might be the case for municipality B since they utilize citizen participation, not only for projects relating to energy transition, but for a plethora of other projects as well (looking at their CitizenLab site, no less than 32 projects have been launched as of 2018, 27 of which are already finished) (CitizenLab, 2022b). About this, interviewee B said the following:

*"[...] something that I find quite challenging is that in our municipal council, it is always expected that participation is used. Even for the smallest things – like installing a trashcan on the street corner so to speak. This is something that is really difficult to handle because what is the aim and the need for the participation? Is it just appearances? This should be avoided."* - interviewee B, 2022

Involving the citizens too frequently for relatively minor projects like this, can lead to participation fatigue. This was both mentioned by interviewee A as well as found in literature (Frantzeskaki, 2019; Milkman, 2020). It could lead to citizens not participating in the more important projects in which participation is actually needed, thus negatively impacting these projects. Interviewee B elaborates further that for the heat transition vision trajectory, they did try to pay more attention to how they worked with the participating citizens:

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*“We try to take caution as to not bother the citizens too much by talking about the same subject a lot of times. In the focus groups we also noticed that when it takes too long and not much progress or results are being made, they start thinking “I am going to spend less time on this” [...]. It doesn’t surprise me that some people drop out of the process, these are oftentimes the ones who are just there for garnering the information rather than actually providing input. This is something you see much less in the people who are passionate about it.” - interviewee B, 2022*

Interestingly, interviewee A also mentioned this aspect of intrinsic motivation in their interview. This can be explained through the self-determination theory that was introduced in the literature study, more on this in sub-chapter 5.1.3. Apart from these observations regarding participation fatigue in citizens, interviewee B also made an additional remark about the phenomenon also occurring in professional parties involved in the project:

*“Some companies we are collaborating with are becoming a bit impatient, wanting to start the projects instead of just talking about it and planning it. So here you can already see it (participation fatigue) coming a bit. However we can’t just decide things without involving them so that’s where it becomes really tricky” - interviewee B, 2022*

This corroborates the fact that participation fatigue is not an issue exclusive to citizen-participants, but can also occur in any other party involved in a certain project (Tshishonga, 2020).

### 5.1.1.3 Municipality C

The third interview was conducted with a municipality official involved with everything “sustainability” in their municipality. Municipality C, a rural municipality not far from municipality B, has a relatively small and low-density built environment. Surrounded by agricultural space and a large forest area, they face similar opportunities and challenges when it comes to energy transition as municipality A. The municipality can be considered small as it consists of 19.010 inhabitants.



Figure 5.4: Municipality C (adapted from Google Maps)



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Interviewee C' role thus included "everything sustainability", but they have been mostly focusing on energy and heat transition over the last years. For this, they recently concluded their RES trajectory and are now setting their first steps towards developing their heat transition vision. For the RES, municipality C initially decided to omit citizens from this process, since they thought it would be too abstract for them to participate in. Later on, they did include them in the process though:

*"[...] residents weren't involved in this (the RES) immediately, we actually did the preparatory work for this first and in a later stage we involved the citizens. First this was done in an informative manner [...] after this we started organizing meetings and sending out surveys in order to test whether or not what we were doing aligned with the citizen's views. So, when we're talking about the level of participation, I think it's mainly... well people are allowed to have their opinions and ideas about things, but only after the municipality has already come up with something"* - interviewee C, 2022

After different citizen groups – such as village councils – showed interest in participating, they thus decided to open up the discussions to citizens as well. Here, they decided to approach these citizen groups instead of organizing the participation on an individual level. Similarly to municipality A, interviewee C addressed how the existence and inclusion of these citizen groups in the process, was beneficial to the development of the strategy.

Interviewer: *"[...] the fact that citizens had organized themselves like you also said, was something that they [municipality A] found very positive. [...] Do you also feel this way?"*

Interviewee C: *"yes, exactly"*

The participation of these citizens first took a purely informative form, informing the participants of the outlines of the strategy the municipality had developed thus far. After this, as the strategy became more concrete, they started organizing meetings in different villages as well as sending out surveys.

Municipality C still stands at the initial phases of developing their heat transition vision and the citizen participation has not been very intense yet. Therefore, interviewee C expresses how he has not yet noticed participation fatigue in the citizens yet. However, he does make a similar observation as municipality B with regards to the phenomenon occurring in professional parties who they are working with:

*"We have not yet seen this [participation fatigue] in our residents yet, because if they feel like this they probably just won't come. I have seen it however with the professional parties that are active in our municipality, so basically stakeholders. Not in individual companies necessarily but in the overarching parties such as business associations, nature associations or LTO's (agricultural associations). This is because these types of associations are requested to come to meetings a lot"* - interviewee C, 2022

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#### 5.1.1.4 Municipality D

The final interview with a municipal official, was conducted with the heat director of municipality D who, together with a second heat director, has been working on the heat transition of their municipality since 2019. Municipality D is a medium-sized municipality located on the banks of the IJssel lake. The municipality consists of a low-density built environment – including a business park –, is surrounded by agricultural land and enjoys the perks of a very qualitative waterfront. The population of the municipality is just short of being 45.000

The heat transition vision of municipality D set out two goals for moving away from natural gas: a municipal-wide ‘route’ for developing the needed resources and stimulus so that people who want to, can transition away from the usage of natural gas. The other route aimed at increasing the awareness surrounding the issue so that more people would opt for alternative, green heat sources. Right now, they have appointed seven neighborhoods as ‘opportunity neighborhoods’. Which means that these will be the first neighborhoods to completely transition away from natural gas usage due to them having certain characteristics (like being built after 1990) that make them more adaptable with a smaller investment.

Interviewee D says that this affordability was a very important aspect of the heat transition vision, along with citizen participation and communication. Municipality D also possesses some heat sources (geothermic source from greenhouses and solar power) that are already present and could be used for the business park or even some neighborhoods.

The participation process that was used for realizing and operationalizing the heat transition vision, was quite extensive in municipality D. Interviewee D mentions that they were lucky enough to have a budget available for hiring a consultancy firm that steered the participation and this definitely provided a very strong base for the participation. The process was follows: mid-corona, they started the participation by sending out a survey that was filled in by 400 residents, in which they were asked about their awareness about heat transition and what were the most important factors to think about during the process. After this, the municipality planned four meetings (only one would be held physically, the other ones online due to lockdown). The heat transition vision was then made more concrete by the municipality based on the meetings and survey.



Figure 5.5: Municipality D (adapted from Google Maps)

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After the vision was made more concrete by the municipality based on the meetings and survey, another survey was sent out to the people residing in the ‘opportunity neighborhoods’ specifically. This survey garnered 350 and was aimed at both informing the residents as well as asking for their input. In it, citizens were informed about why the vision was made, where exactly the opportunities lay for them and what heat transition entails. Citizens could then indicate what they wanted from the participation process, what aspects of heat transition they were worried about (e.g. affordability, construction, adaptability, ...). 42% of respondents answered that they wanted to be involved early on in the trajectory, even if there is no plan yet, 21% wanted to give their opinion after the plans were finished, and 13% wants to be involved when the plan was starting to be developed. This clearly indicates a desire in citizens to co-create the plans. After the answers of the second survey were processed, six meetings were planned in the opportunity neighborhoods, with a turnout of 45 different people each evening. Interviewee D explains how the presence of citizen ‘pioneers’ – people who had already made their residences natural gas-free independently-, in these meetings was very helpful for the municipality:

*We did have – and that’s something we’re very happy about – we have a number of residents who already transitioned away from natural gas themselves and they can explain this very well. I think that may have been the most valuable thing of all those evenings. People could really just ask these persons questions and they also regularly receive e-mails from people with questions about heat transition. Or they are even visited by people that want to see how everything works in their natural gas-free houses.- interviewee D, 2022*

The presence of these pioneer citizens to which the other participants could relate to, was thus beneficial to the participation process as a whole. This can be tied to the concept of ‘relatedness’ in the self-determination theory, as well as the concept of ‘subjective norms’ of the theory of planned behavior (see section 2.3).

All of these steps in the participation process led to the creation of a start-up document, and currently, municipality D is organizing more focused meetings in the opportunity neighborhoods. Notably, the general sentiment seems to be that most citizens want the municipality to develop the plans so they can state their opinions on it (consult), even though 46% of them had initially indicated that wanted to co-decide on the plans:

*“[...] and as far as we’re concerned, they’re actually allowed to co-decide and create with us. But the enthusiasm for that is somewhat less than expected. So, I suspect that it will be the case that we [the municipality] develop things and make a proposal to then discuss it with them and they then indicate whether they agree.” - interviewee D, 2022*

In terms of participation fatigue, Interviewee D states that they have not yet explicitly seen this, but that the lack of enthusiasm for co-creation could be an indicator of it. All in all, the way municipality D approached the participation process may also be the reason why interviewee D has not explicitly seen

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participation fatigue: it was made clear to citizens that they have an immense value in the energy transition process, they were given an important place and influence in the process, the goals of the process were made very clear to them, they were able to indicate what worried them early on in the process, ... On the other hand, the frequency and amount of surveys, meetings, etc. may have resulted in participation fatigue in some citizens, however, this is just speculation.

### 5.1.2 INTERVIEW WITH PARTICIPATING CITIZEN

The final interview that will be discussed in this section, is one which was conducted with a board member of citizen initiative A, which has been active for quite some years now and also acts as a coöperation. As mentioned in the introduction, citizen initiatives are organizations set up by citizens of neighborhoods, villages or municipalities. They can be aimed at undertaking a wide range of actions: from organizing street clean-ups, to creating ride-share (Nationale Ombudsman, 2021). In recent years, citizen initiatives related to working on energy transition specifically, have been increasing in numbers (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2022). They are also part of why the new Omgevingswet was introduced: the government noticed that citizens were interested in partaking in the trajectory of energy transition as well as other socially relevant matters.

Citizen initiative A specifically, strives at connecting their neighborhood to a heat network and, at the time when the interview was conducted, was in the process of collecting 500 pledges from households in the neighborhood that want to commit themselves to connecting their residences to a heat network. When this interview was conducted at the end of March, about 120 households had pledged themselves to the initiative. Merely three weeks later, on the 11th of April, they reached their goal of 500 pledges. This means that now, their municipality and the involved grid operators and energy suppliers, will invest in the needed resources to make the heat network possible in the neighborhood. The citizen initiative on the other hand, will continuously support the households and members by providing the needed resources and guidance (Interviewee E, 2022).

As can be deduced from the above, citizen initiative A has booked tremendous progress towards facilitating energy transition within their neighborhood. Compared to the municipalities that were interviewed for this study, they seem to be much more further along in setting concrete steps towards energy transition. Granted, interviewee E does express how his neighborhood is a very active one, with strong social cohesion. The realization of a heat network is not the only initiative in the neighborhood: creating green roofs, electric car-sharing and the realization of collective solar panels, were all subjects that were worked on in other initiatives in the neighborhood. Additionally, interviewee E explains how their neighborhood, which is highly urbanized, is relatively affluent and well educated. This means that the residents also have the needed disposable income that facilitates the necessary investments for adapting a residence to be connected to a heat network (interviewee E, 2022). Still, such a successful effort cannot be ignored.

When asked about how the initiative evolved from its beginnings in 2015, until now in 2022, interviewee E explains the following: it all started with some residents wanting to contribute something to make the

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neighborhood more sustainable. They started working through the neighborhood association (a group that organizes social gatherings) and started organizing discussion evenings, sent out a survey now and then, put up a booth at the neighborhood fair, etc. From there, the initiative organically grew and the goal became more clear as potential. Throughout this process, they were also supported by some subsidies. Then, in 2018, the coöperation was founded which is now the official vessel through which, what was originally an informal ‘participation club’, operates. Since then, the technical and preparatory foundations were laid for where they now stand – with 500 households having pledged themselves to their cause. They hope that their pioneer project will become an example for other neighborhoods, that energy transition is definitely a realistic goal. Interviewee E also stresses how energy transition is a socio-technical issue, and that involving the public early on in the process, is beneficial to the process:

*“It is not only a technical challenge (regarding energy transition projects) or just a question about infrastructure and finances, but there also is a social aspect and this is something really important. You often times see how discussions about wind turbines or solar parks can be really polarizing [...] but if you involve the citizen early on you can actually outpace this problem. This way you can actually show citizens how it can be something advantageous”* – interviewee E, 2022

This early-on involvement thus lessens the ‘NIMBY’-effect (not in my backyard) and also communicates that energy transition can be a personally beneficial thing. Moreover, interviewee E explicitly mentions that they feel very supported by their municipality, this might be another reason for why the initiative has been so successful over the years.

Regarding participation fatigue, interviewee E makes a few insightful statements. Firstly, in his position as a board member, he knows that participation fatigue is definitely something that happens with the people that initiate or stand at the helm of citizen initiatives (all of the original initiators that started the participation club in 2015, have since left the neighborhoods):

*“I was thinking about your email about participation fatigue [...] You do see it sometimes with the initiators. Of course they think ‘it takes so long, I put so much commitment into it. It takes too long. I’m going to stop it with it.’ You do see that happen.”* – Interviewee E, 2022

Interviewee E himself, also expresses that his role in the initiative is something that just happened and that he did not plan beforehand that he would be putting so many hours in it. The sheer amount of work can sometimes be a source of participation fatigue:

*“[...] In that sense [due to the amount of hours they put into it], there might also be some fatigue from time to time with us”* – interviewee E, 2022

Interviewee E also discusses that, because the organization is so active, they have a lot of different sub-projects with different themes and goals. If all of the members were to go to all of the meetings for these

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subprojects, this might lead to participation fatigue. Interviewee E therefore explains how it is important to let participants know the following:

*“It can be really difficult because we have so many different sub-projects and most people want to be involved in all of them. Something that really helps for this is making the following clear: ‘why are we doing this’, ‘what is being discussed’, ‘what can your contribution be’ and ‘how will this help you’. Just an evening of brainstorming with 80 people without a clear goal doesn’t really do anything. [...] making it personal for people really helps.”* – interviewee E, 2022

Although participation fatigue is not something they had already seen in members of the organization outside of the board, Interviewee E does state that it might be something that will have to be dealt with in the future. For this, he explains how they want to lessen the burden by working towards an organic distribution of it across their community:

*“[...] due to the nature of what we are working on [regarding complexity and length of the project], participation fatigue is something we will definitely encounter. [...] so something we want to realize is that the burden will not only fall on 10 people, but that it spreads through the whole neighborhood and people will spontaneously start to talk with each other or organize things.”* – interviewee E, 2022

All in all, citizen initiative A seems to be a very good example of how beneficial proper citizen participation – as well as the support of citizen organizations by local governments- can be for achieving energy transition. Although figure 5.1 shows that energy transition should be something that is done with both a top-down and bottom-up approach, there currently still are a lot of municipalities not using this existing potential present in their neighborhoods. In the next section, the findings of the interviews will be used in order to present a framework aimed at categorizing some of the identified causes of participation fatigue, and linking them to the supporting theories.

### 5.1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From the statements and findings garnered from the interviews set out in the previous sections, certain factors were repeatedly mentioned as having a certain influence on the participation process and the occurrence of participation fatigue. More insights in the general proceedings of participatory processes for energy transition projects organized by municipalities, were also garnered. This, in combination with the findings drawn from the literature review, all resulted in the development of a theoretical framework in which the influencing factors have been categorized into three pillars.

Figure 5.6 shows this framework. As can be seen, a visual representation of the municipal participation process for energy transition projects is shown on the left-hand side. The cyclic representation of the process that is shown in the framework, is based on a paper by Fors, Hagemann, Sang and Randerup (2021), and then supplemented by the interview findings. In it, four stages of the co-design process – analysis phase, the design phase, the implementation phase, and the maintenance phase

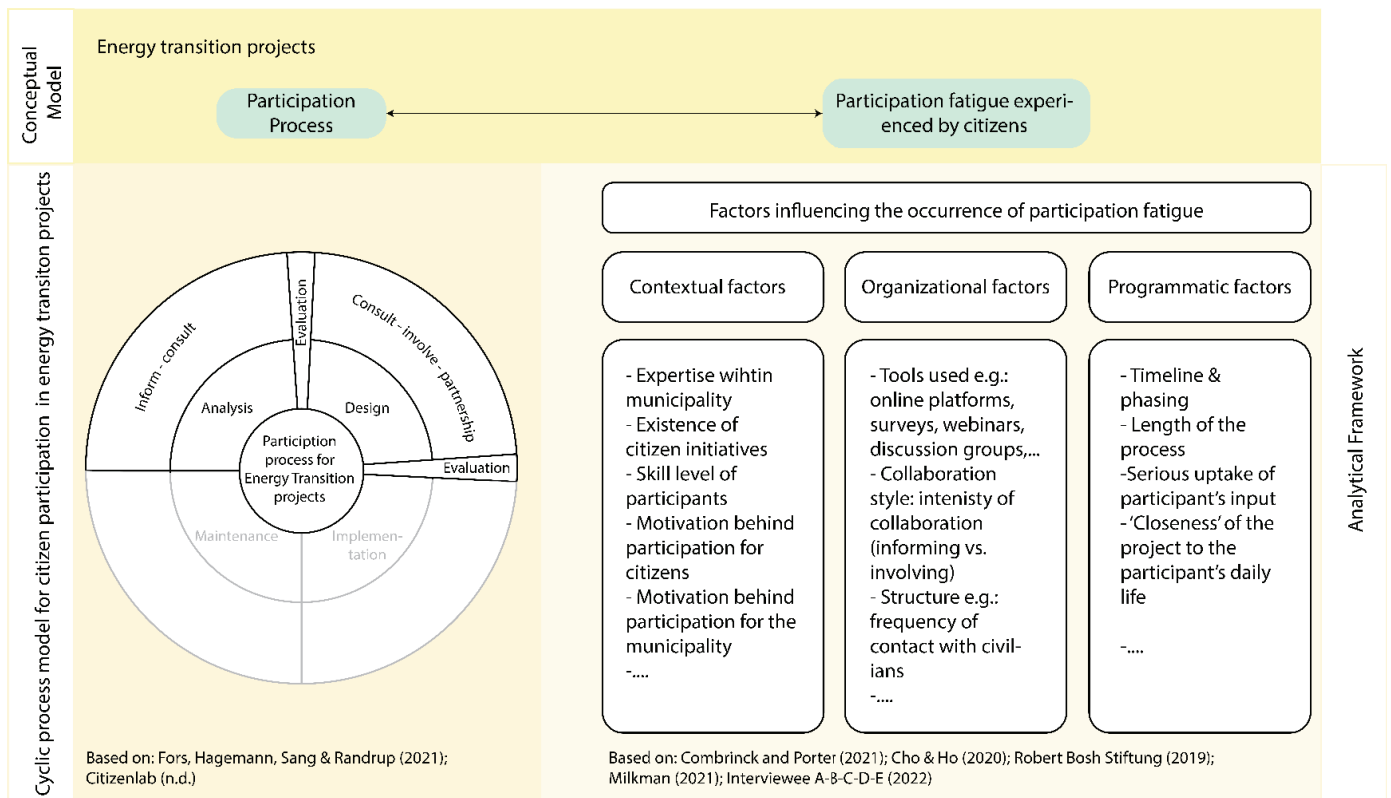


Figure 5.6: Theoretical framework part I

– are displayed together with the degree of citizen participation that is used during each phase. For now, the lower half of the cycle has been left semi-empty and more transparent, since the energy transition projects that were looked at during this research have not yet reached these stages. During the initial phase - the analysis phase - municipalities largely opt for a lesser degree of participation, mostly only informing their citizens of what is happening in the project and maybe asking them their opinion regarding this. This corroborates with, for example, municipality C's choice of doing all of the preparatory work (a.k.a. the analysis) without input from their citizen, but still informing them by organizing webinars or other forms of informative sessions. After this, they sent out a survey inquiring their citizen about whether they agreed with their work or not, this is regarded as the evaluation that takes place before the project moves on to the next phase – the design phase. During the design phase, the intensity of the participation increases in most cases, including both informing, consulting and partnering up with their citizens. In practice, this takes the form of, for example, creating focus groups, organizing workshops, etc. This phase, again, is concluded with an evaluation on whether or not the work is satisfactory. It should be mentioned that figure 5.6 shows a quite rigid representation of the participation process. In reality, the borders between the different phases might be blurred, or municipalities might still ask the input of participants in the analysis phase. Municipality B for example, started off with a massive 'city conversation' in which ideas and concerns were collected and then taken to the drawing board.

To the right of the visual representation of the participation process, a categorization of the various factors identified as being influential to the occurrence of participation fatigue, has been made based on the analysis of the interviews as well as the literature. It divides them into three pillars: contextual

factors, organizational factors, and programmatic factors. Here, contextual factors regard the current situation and circumstantial factors that can influence one’s participation. Organizational factors pertain to how the participation was organized, it’s frequency and structure. Finally, programmatic factors are related to the inherent nature of the type of projects they are working on. The reason for this categorization is the following: it suggests that, since participation fatigue can stem from different sources, different interventions should be introduced in order to solve it. For example: participation fatigue stemming from organizational factors, could be directly evaded by making changes to the organization of the citizen participation (e.g.: making it less intensive). On the other hand, participation fatigue stemming from contextual factors, which mostly lie outside the direct control of participants and organizers, might best be addressed by providing support for things that cannot be addressed directly (e.g.: organizing information sessions to supplement the participant’s pre-existing knowledge).

### 5.1.3.1 The theoretical framework, supporting theories and the development of the survey

As mentioned in the literature study, this report utilizes two supporting psychological theories in order to support the research. During the analysis of the interviews and the subsequent categorization of the different factors influencing participation fatigue shown in figure 5.6, it was found that the reason why these factors were mentioned in the interviews and literature, could be partly explained by looking at the self-determination theory (SDT) and the theory of planned behavior (TPB). Figure 5.8 on the next page, shows how this works.

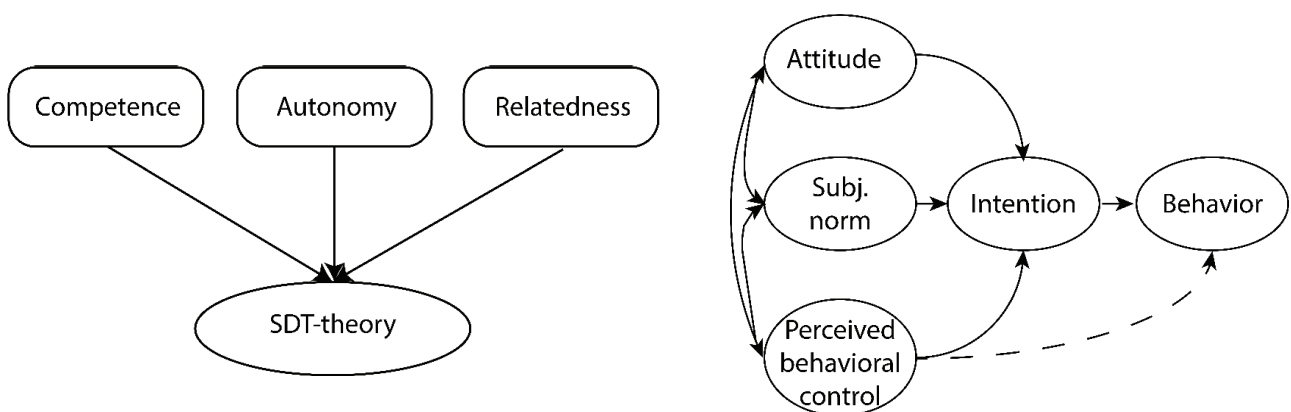


Figure 5.7: SDT and TPB concepts

The influencing factors of figure 5.6, can thus be linked to the concepts of SDT and TPB shown in figure 5.7. For example, in regard to SDT, the legitimate uptake of the participants’ input can be related to the concept of autonomy, the participants’ existing skills and knowledge can be related to their competence and the underlying reasons behind a person’s motivation can be related to the participant’s relatedness to the project as well as whether they are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. Similarly, for TPB, the existence of citizen initiatives in one’s municipality communicates energy transition as a positive subjective norm to participants and positively impact their participation. Or, the fact that a participant’s demographical background can directly influence their attitude and thus, their behavior. Statements like those of Interviewee E, about “having to make it personal for participants in order to motivate them”, can thus be explained by looking at the theories.



The usage of these theories therefore provided important support for the research and was also used in developing the survey questions. In appendix G, a comprehensive table with survey questions and their relation to the two supporting theories can be found. Also, due to the explorative nature of this research, already established theories like TPB and SDT were needed in order to strengthen the findings.

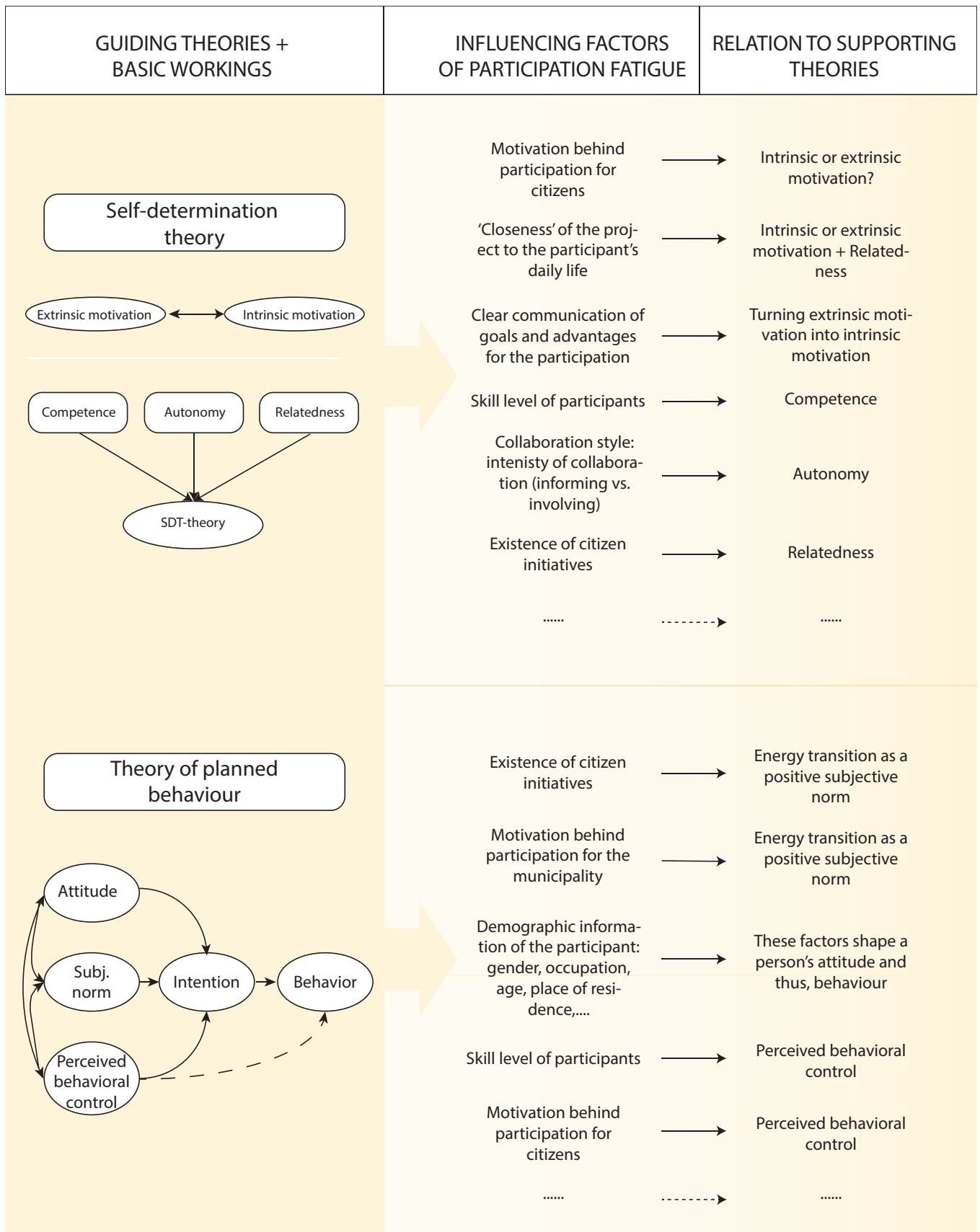


Figure 5.8: Theoretical framework part II

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## 5.2 SURVEY RESULTS

### 5.2.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

The survey started with a string of questions about the demographical characteristics of the respondents. Here, questions such as their age, occupation, living situation, the type of municipality they live in, etc. were inquired about. Both literature and interviewees indicated that these factors can have an effect on whether people choose to participate or not.

The results show that the respondent group consisted of people that are 35 years old and over. The survey thus garnered no responses from the two groups between 18-24 and 25-34 years old. Furthermore, when looking at the data, the respondents consisted mostly of people of 45 years old and over, with 43.8% being between 45-64 years old, and 49.5% being 65 plus years old. This is also reflected in the question about what their occupation is, with 27.6% of the respondents being retired. Younger audiences were either not reached through this survey- or- these younger groups are underrepresented in participation processes dealing with energy transition. This latter option is also corroborated by multiple interviewees. Interviewee A for example, stated that mostly older men were present for their meetings, because they have the time to do so and are often highly educated (2022). This is again confirmed when looking at the survey data: only 23.8% of the respondent group was female, meaning that either more men are currently participating in energy transition projects – or – women were less inclined to respond to the survey. Based on the interviews, it seems that the first option reflects the reality of the situation.

Due to the respondent group being relatively mature, their living situation showed that most of them, 68.6%, were married and living together with their spouses. Besides this, 40% of the respondents of the survey live in an urban area, 30.5% lives in a suburban area and 23.8% live in a rural or other type of area.

As mentioned before, 27.6% of the respondents stated that they are currently retired. Some of them indicated that even though they are retired, they are now very active in the organization of which they are part of. Notably, most of the respondents that are currently employed, seem to be in white-collar positions, such as consultants, medical professionals, ICT-specialists and even a philosopher. A considerable amount of the respondents (12.4%) even works in the construction or sustainability sector, such as architects, engineers and sustainability consultants. The responses show that a lot of the participants are highly educated and a lot of them are already knowledgeable about the technical aspects of energy transition. This can be tied to the concept of ‘perceived behavioral control’ in the theory of planned behavior, which states that the easier it is for a person to perform a certain behavior – like participating in an energy transition project, for which some technical knowledge is needed- the more likely that person will actually perform that behavior. The findings thus seem to corroborate this.

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## 5.2.2 CONTEXT

As mentioned in section 4.1.2 (Interview and survey requirements), the survey was divided into three different blocks: general/demographics, context, organization and participation fatigue. This section discusses the results of the questions regarding the context of the participation

### 5.2.2.1 Type of participatory energy transition projects – Programmatic factors

The requirements for the respondents of the survey, was that they were currently participating in an energy transition project or had done so in the past. Of the 105 respondents, 98 were currently participating. The 16.2% of respondents that had done so in the past, did this between 2010 and 2021. Of those 17 cases, the reason why their participation ended varied between the project being completed (11 cases), the project reaching a premature end (1 case), or the respondent withdrawing due to personal reasons such as lack of interest or moving to another municipality (6 cases).

The type of cases that the respondents have worked on are shown in figure 5.2.1 and is based on the respondents' descriptions of the project that they are currently working on (or have done so in the past). Interesting to note here, is the fact that 18,1% of respondents indicates that they are working on the development of a RES, even though, according to the goals set up in the climate agreement, this should have already been concluded at the end of 2021 (Nationaal Programma RES, n.d.-a). The data shows that most respondents, namely 31.4% of them, are involved in projects meant for generating solar energy. This can be both the creation of solar fields, as well as the placement of solar panels on the roofs of residences, businesses or public buildings. Besides this, in the category 'energy cooperation member', the respondents might also be working on, for example, a solar or wind energy project, they just didn't specify this in their responses. The category 'miscellaneous' includes projects such as localized neighborhood projects like the creation of a heat network or the replacement of insulation. All in all, respondents are shown to be involved in a broad range of different types of energy transition projects

Types of projects/organizations

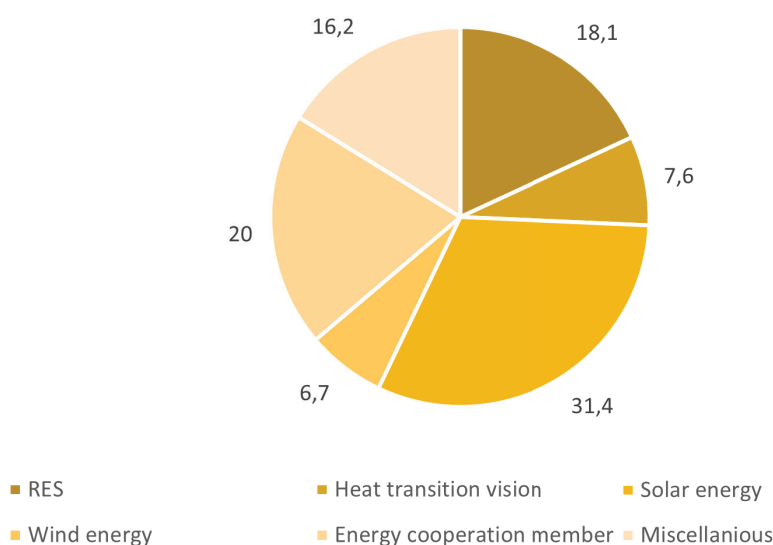


Figure 5.2.1

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### 5.2.2.2 Motivation and pre-existing knowledge

During the interviews, as well as through the usage of the supporting theories, it was concluded that the source of motivation behind a citizen's participation, can be a crucial factor in deciding how people are influenced by participation fatigue. Meaning that, if the citizen is intrinsically motivated, they are also less likely to experience participation fatigue or exit the participation process due to it (Interviewee E, 2022; CSDT, n.d.). Because of this, the survey included questions in which the respondents could indicate why they started participating, whether or not the project they worked on had a direct impact on their daily lives and what level of knowledge about energy transition they had before they started participating. These questions paint a picture of the respondents' motivation and whether or not it was easy for them to start participating.

The first question regarding motivation was a multiple choice question in which respondents could choose multiple answers as well as provide their own additional reasons. The summary of this can be found in table 5.2.2. Here, 68.6% of respondents chose that they started participating because energy transition was important to them, which shows an intrinsic motivation behind their participation. 32.3% of respondents participate like involving themselves in discourse and energy transition projects is, which, again, shows an intrinsic motivation behind their participation. Noticeably, only 5.7% of respondents participate because they feel like they have to, this shows that a low amount participants are merely extrinsically motivated. Other reasons that were mentioned through the textbox that was provided, included: benefitting from the financial opportunities that exist through participation (6 cases), frustration towards local governments that resulted in the respondent 'taking matters into their own hands' (two cases), expanding opportunities for placing solar panels that would otherwise not be allowed (4 cases) and more general sentiments towards wanting to contribute to a sustainable future (8 cases). With the results of this question, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents are intrinsically motivated to participate. Either through an inherent interest for energy transition and/or sustainability – or – through wanting to participate in order to provide a meaningful contribution to their communities:

"Moving away from fossil fuels is an important issue for me. So I'd like to contribute to this."	68.6%
"I like to brainstorm and help decide what happens in my community and neighborhood"	32.3%
"If I do not participate, I am afraid that my opinion and that of others will not be taken into consideration. I therefore feel compelled to participate."	5.7%
Other reasons	19%

Table 5.2.1 Respondents' motivations behind participating

The next question inquired the respondents about their pre-existing knowledge regarding energy transition and their interest in subjects like sustainability. For this, the question assumed that if the respondent already has an extensive knowledge regarding these subjects, they are also interested in them. Table 5.2.2 shows the results from this question. As can be seen here, a large majority of respondents (84.8%) says to have extensive or moderate knowledge about energy transition projects. This corroborates with the occupational data that was introduced in the 'demographics' section, that showed quite a substantial

portion of the respondents had a technical background. Interviewee A also mentioned this, calling them the “technical people that always showed up” (technenuten in Dutch) (2022). The third most prominent group (14.3%) are the people that are interested in sustainability-related topics, but did not know that much about energy transition before they started participating. Only one participant indicated that they had not much knowledge about- and were not that interested in- energy transition.

“Prior to my participation, I already knew a lot about energy transition and I am interested in topics such as sustainability, green energy,....”	41%
“Prior to my participation, I already knew some things about energy transition but I am interested in topics such as sustainability, green energy,....”	43.8%
“Prior to my participation, I did not know that much about energy transition and I am interested in topics such as sustainability, green energy,....”	14.3%
“Prior to my participation, I did not know that much about energy transition and I am not really interested in topics such as sustainability, green energy,....”	0.95%

Table 5.2.2 Respondents’ prior knowledge and interest in energy transition

Of the 105 respondents, 38.1% of respondents indicated that the project they were working on would not have a direct impact on their daily lives. 41.9% responded that it would impact their lives and 19% was not sure whether this would be the case. The general conclusion that can be drawn from this sub-section, is the fact that 99% of participants are intrinsically motivated to participate in energy transition projects. Meaning, most participants are already intrinsically motivated to participate, before they even start participating, making it easier for them to do so.

### 5.2.3 ORGANIZATION

The next string of questions in the survey were in regard to how the participation was organized. This included questions about how frequently they actively participated, how long they had been doing so, what form this participation took on, as well as whether or not the participants felt like they had the power to influence the project they were working on. Additionally, the survey also inquired into whether or not the participants felt like the municipalities took their contribution into account in an adequate manner.

#### 5.2.3.1 *The respondent’s role in the participation process*

The respondents were given the option of describing their role in the project they are working on (or have worked on in the past). This was done in an open question in order for them to be able to give an accurate description of their role, but for the sake of this analysis, their responses were categorized into four groups: initiators, active volunteers, active participants, and passive participants. Here, initiators are respondents that founded their own citizen groups/organizations, or are currently in the board of these groups. Active volunteers are people who - aside from attending meetings, workshops, etc. like regular participants- have also volunteered to take on supporting roles for the participation, like organizing meetings, advising others about certain aspects of the project, being part of a focus group, etc. Active participants are people who regularly come to meetings and information sessions and actively contribute to these sessions. Finally, passive participants are those who only attend meetings sporadically in order to garner information (these respondents described themselves as passive).

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The results of this classification are visualized in figure 5.2.2. Almost a quarter, namely 24.7%, of the respondents were initiators of a citizen organization. These included energy coöperations and citizen initiatives. Presumably, respondents in this group are frequently busy with the energy transition project they are working on. There are 27 active volunteers in the respondent group (25.7%), similarly to the initiators, they presumably devote more time to the projects than the other two groups. Next, the active participants compose the largest part of the respondent group, with 31.4% being included here. Lastly, the passive participants take up 18.1% of the total respondents, making them smallest group among them. In section 5.3, the quantitative relationship between the participant's role and whether or not this influences the occurrence of participation fatigue, will be discussed.

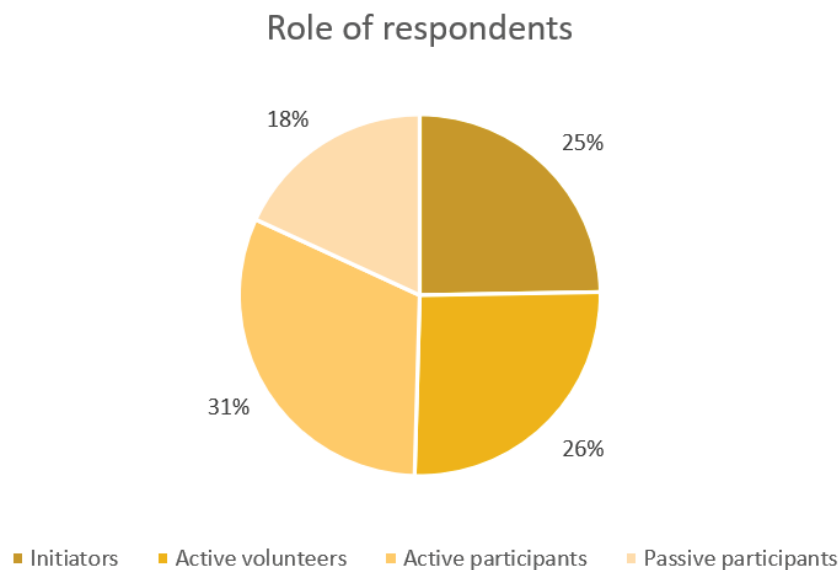


Figure 5.2.2

### 5.2.3.2 Tools used during the participation

During the participation process, different modes of interaction were used to facilitate the process. The survey inquired about different tools found in literature as well as mentioned in the interviews and allowed the respondents to choose multiple options. Figure 5.2.3 shows the result of this. The most prominent way citizens participated, was through information sessions (60%) and neighborhood conversations (45.7%), the latter is commonly referred to in Dutch as 'buurtgesprekken' or 'buurttafels'. Twenty-five (23.8%) respondents have participated through the completion of an online survey and 10.5% have used online forums to exchange ideas or discuss the proceedings of projects. Some participants (20.9%) engaged through door-to-door conversations and 26.7% reports on participating through reading newsletters in which the energy transition project is discussed. Additionally, 22.8% of the respondents have participated in workshops where they worked on and discussed the project.

A lot of the respondents, about 42% of them, also reported that other forms of engagement were used. These include member meetings, booths at village fairs, brochures, reports, meetings with energy coaches, (neighborhood) WhatsApp groups and even LinkedIn. There thus exist a plethora of tools for engaging citizens in energy transition projects. The analysis of these findings did not find any relationship between the tools that were used during the energy transition projects and the occurrence of participation fatigue.

### Tools used during the participation

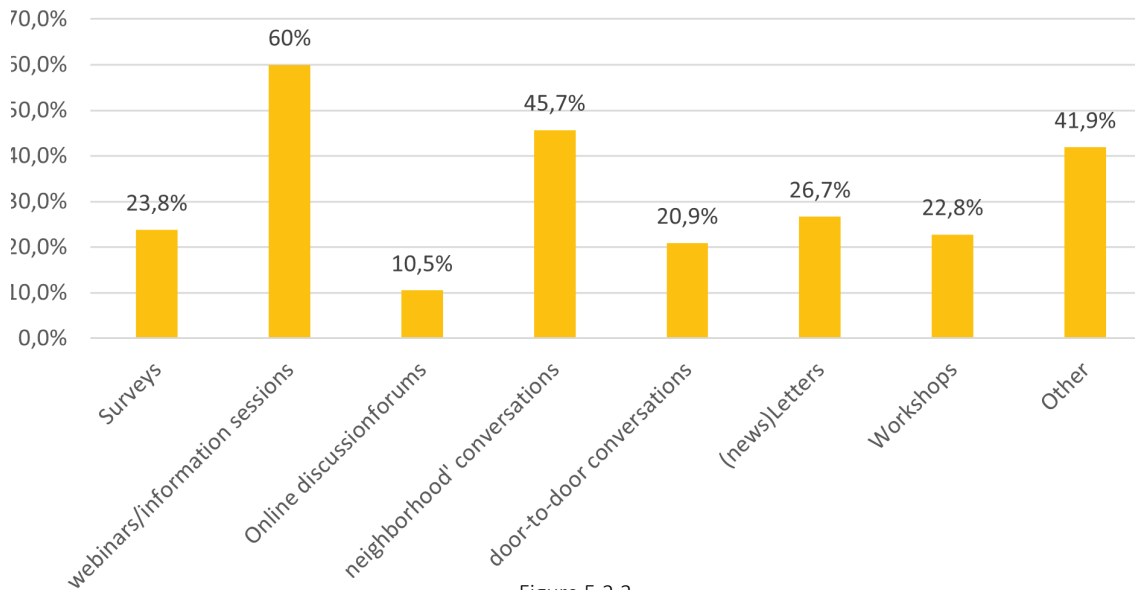


Figure 5.2.3

#### 5.2.3.3 Frequency of the participation

The frequency by which participants participate, can have an important effect on the occurrence of participation fatigue (Frantzeskaki, 2019). The more frequent the participation, the larger the chance that participation fatigue might occur. Therefore, the respondents were asked about how frequently they participated in their respective projects. Figure 5.2.4 shows the results of this. A substantial number of participants reported on devoting time to a project daily, about 16%. Nearly the same amount (15.2%) reported on participating on a weekly basis. These groups might therefore stand at a higher risk of experiencing participation fatigue, according to the literature and interviews. Next, 11.4% of respondents report on participating about once a month, while 15.2% does this once every two or four months. The frequency by which respondents participate in the participation process, is thus quite evenly distributed over the different options that were given. However, 7.4% of respondents used the 'other' option to give a different response. They report that they either don't remember how frequent their participation was (in this case of they participated in the past), or that their participation varies greatly over the years. In section 5.3, the quantitative relationship between the frequency of the participation and whether or not this influences the occurrence of participation fatigue, will be discussed.

### Frequency of the participation



Figure 5.2.4

#### 5.2.3.4 Respondent's influence on the project

The following question in the survey was about the respondent's experience with whether they felt like they could influence the project that they were collaborating on. As explained in the literature review, the 'serious uptake' of participants' input is an important inhibitor of participation fatigue. This was shown both through the literature review regarding participation fatigue, as well as by looking at the concept of 'autonomy' in the self-determination theory. The survey therefore used a Likert scale in which respondents could rate their perceived impact on the project from one to ten. Here, "1" meant that they did not seem to have any influence on the project and the municipality/organization only informed them about decisions they made, and "10" meant that they, together with their fellow citizens, have the power to make important decisions in the project.

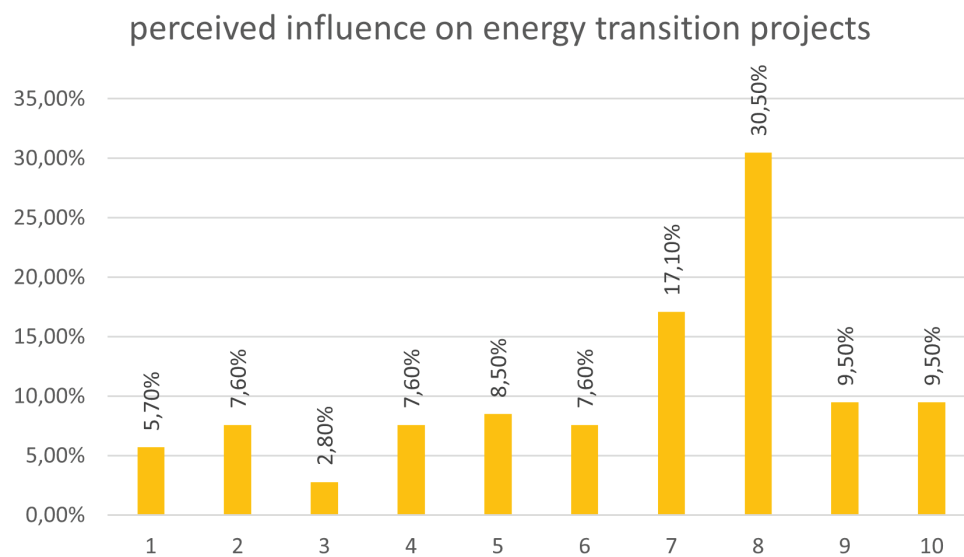


Figure 5.2.5

Figure 5.2.5 shows that the majority of respondents, 70.5%, rated their perceived influence to be more than five. Respondents thus think that they have quite some influence over the projects that they are working on. Still, 14.3% of respondents (15 cases) rated their influence with a three or lower. These people are at an increased risk of facing the issue of participation fatigue compared to their peers. More on this in chapter 5.3.

#### 5.2.3.5 Relationship with the municipality

The final question in the 'context' part of the survey, was asked about whether or not the respondents felt like their input (or that of their organizations), was adequately taken into account by the municipality in which they reside. If not, this can thus lead to participation fatigue. This question provided the respondents that were participating through citizen organizations, the chance to reflect on their organization's relationship with the municipality (so, it is not quite the same as the question discussed in the previous section). Majority of respondents, namely 61%, answered this question with 'yes'. They thus think that the municipality does take their input into account in an adequate manner. The remaining 39% that answered with 'no', were given the opportunity to communicate why they thought so in a text box. Reasons differed. A considerable amount however, expressed how the municipality didn't really involve the citizens in the development of, for example, the heat transition vision, due to inexperience or fear that it would be more of a risk than reward. The following answer from one of the respondents illustrates this:



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*“The participation ladder is limited to top-down informing and consulting with the citizens. They don’t actively listen to the citizen initiatives; the experts of the neighborhoods. There is a fragmented and formal interpretation of tasks by civil servants (fear culture, lack of an integrated approach to the energy transition).” – Anonymous, 2022*

The slow progress and lack of ambition was also mentioned multiple times. Overall, the tone of the respondents that answered this question with “no”, seemed to be rather cynical and distrustful towards the municipality. One respondent even shared an almost nihilistic viewpoint on this that also showed clear signs of participation fatigue:

*“I helped set up a Sustainability Center in the municipality, but they are just not on track [for the goals that were set out in the climate agreement]. So that Sustainability Center is kind of a shameful reminder of this. My conclusion: I’m not going to waste any more time on a goal that this world is no longer going to achieve. We’re going to go to hell. And I’m terribly sorry to have to share that recognition with you and my children.” – Anonymous, 2022*

This bleak outlook on energy transition seems to be the result of the lack of care on the municipality’s end. Earlier on in the survey, this respondent also mentioned how they don’t trust the municipality with funds anymore. They are not the only one that has lost faith in their local government, multiple respondents that answered with ‘no’ on this question, express how they feel like their municipality is distant, disregards local initiatives or is only interested in “political games”.

## 5.2.4 PARTICIPATION FATIGUE

The final group of questions were specifically related to the respondents’ experiences with participation fatigue. The survey first explained what exactly participation fatigue is in order for the respondents to give an accurate account of their own experience with it. After this, they were asked to rate their experience with participation fatigue on a Likert scale. The survey also inquired about what they felt like was the cause of their participation fatigue and how it impacted their participation – did they go to meetings less frequently, did they stop participating altogether, etc.? In order to get a sense of what might improve their experiences, the respondents were also asked about what they thought might help alleviate the feeling of participation fatigue. Since all of these questions form such an integral part of the research, appendix H gives the full list of the responses for this last group of questions.

### 5.2.4.1 Respondent’s perceived experience with participation fatigue

In figure 5.2.6, the results of the first question regarding participation fatigue are shown. The respondents rated their experience with the phenomenon on a scale of one to ten. Here, ‘1’ meant that they had never felt participation fatigue and ‘10’ meant that participation fatigue was so impactful for them, that they stopped participating altogether. The average score that was given to participant’s experience with participation fatigue, was 4.76 on a scale from one to ten. Sixteen respondents (15.2%) indicate that they have not experienced participation fatigue during the process, for them, the survey ‘jumped’ to the last

questions (so they were omitted for the questions that follow). Respondents that rated their experience with participation fatigue between two to five, make up 44.8% of the total respondent group. This means that the remaining 40% of respondents have experienced participation fatigue in a relatively serious manner, answering with a rating of six or more. Exactly 20% of respondents rated their experience with an eight or higher, which means that they have come close to quitting the participation process or have actually done so.

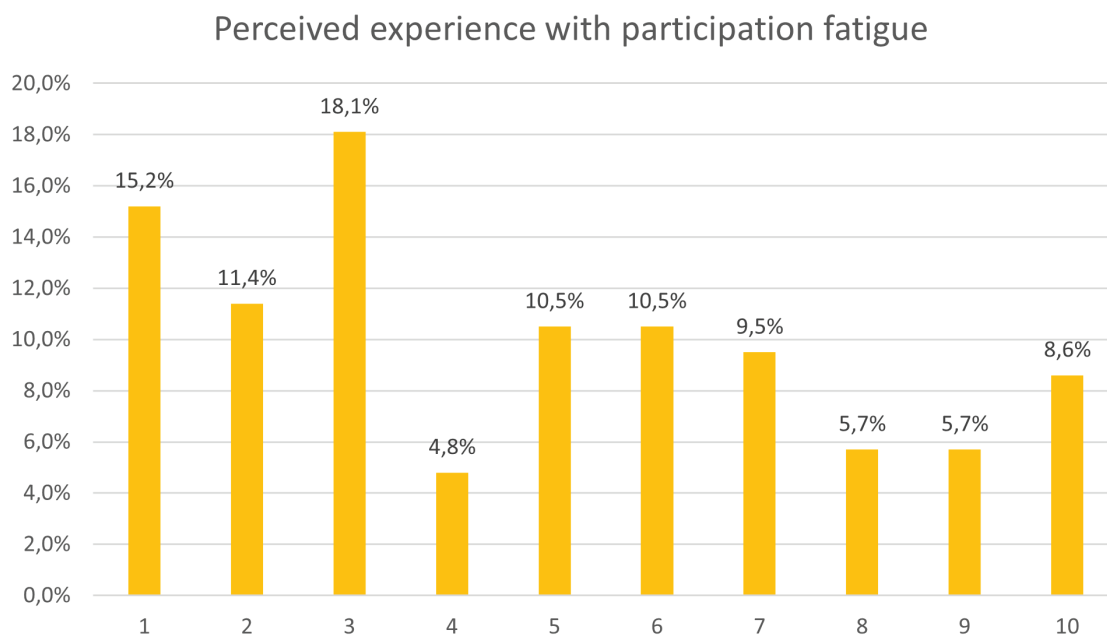


Figure 5.2.6

#### 5.2.4.2 Causes behind participation fatigue according to respondents

Respondents that rated their experience with participation fatigue to be higher than a “1”, were given the option to comment on what they thought the causes behind this were. The thematic content analysis of the responses showed that most responses fell into five different categories:

1. Participation fatigue due to actions of and interactions with local governments and instances
2. Participation fatigue due to lack of results or slow progress in the process
3. Participation fatigue due to the intensity of the participation
4. Participation fatigue due to lack of enthusiasm of fellow citizens or organizations/businesses
5. Participation fatigue due to lack of serious uptake of participants’ input

A few of the respondents’ answers were categorized in multiple categories. This makes sense since some of the categories can be linked to one another. For example, when progress of a project is slow, this can be due to bureaucratic reasons stemming from the municipality – or – lack of interest with other citizens, making projects stagnate after some time. Similarly, a lack in the serious uptake of participant’s input can also be related to how local governments sometimes use participation as a token: something that has to be done for good appearances rather than actual practical use (Milkman, 2021). Figure 5.2.7 shows the five categories and the percentage of the 89 respondents that mention causes of participation fatigue, related to these categories.

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## Categorization of causes behind participation fatigue

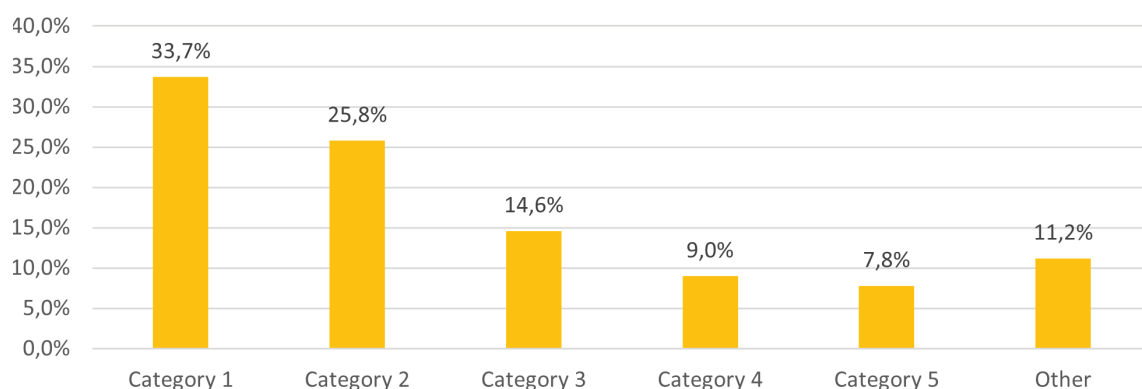


Figure 5.2.7

### Category 1

The first category ‘participation fatigue due to actions of local governments and instances’, was the most prominent cause of participation fatigue according to respondents. 30 respondents, so 28.5%, mention this in their reasoning for why they experienced participation fatigue. More specifically, this can mean that working together with the municipality is sometimes difficult due to the existing bureaucracy or, as some respondents mention, the municipality’s ‘attitude’:

*“Our coöperation (both the board and members) are very good at going against the current. However, multiple other citizen groups dealing with solar energy have given up on their causes due to the lack of mature steering and proper policies from our municipality.” – Anonymous, 2022*

*“[The reason for my participation fatigue was because of] the feeling of constantly running into a political wall with the municipality. The argument “no money” is used continuously.” – Anonymous, 2022*

*“It’s hard to get a conversation with the municipality about developments and when you do, it often turns out that the municipality and citizens speak different languages.” – Anonymous, 2022*

*“[The reason for my participation fatigue was because of the] attitude of the municipality: they set up a broad participation process in all the villages and then decided to organize it differently without any consultation” - Anonymous, 2022*

Multiple respondents also mention that changing regulations or political climates put a wrench in projects that were counting on certain factors to be in effect, but were then changed. An example of this are projects regarding a Dutch regulation called the ‘PostCodeRoos’, in which people with a certain postal code can invest in collective solar panels (so not on their own roofs) and be exempted from taxes on the energy that they generate this way for 15 years (Postcoderoos.nl, 2021). The regulation was first introduced in 2013 but was substituted by a new regulation in April of 2021- seven years before the conclusion of the original tax exemption period. Sudden changes like these can be jarring to energy transition projects, especially when a whole business case is dependent on certain regulations that are then changed.

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## Category 2

The second most prominent reason behind participation fatigue - with 25.8% of respondents that answered, mentioning this-, is the fact that often times, the progress in energy transition projects is very slow and not that many results are being made even though continuous efforts are poured into the process. As mentioned before, this can be aggravated by actions (or lack thereof) taken by local governments and instances, as illustrated by the following answers from the respondents:

*"[The reason for my participation fatigue was because of] the non-active attitude of the initiative of the city organization. There was an enthusiastic round of information, but no follow-up after that. Plus, as mentioned, the overriding plan of the municipality. Incidentally, it is only now, at the beginning of 2022, that it will become clear for the first time where the zip code projects will be located. The municipality also played an emphatic role in the slow process."* – Anonymous, 2022

*"realization [of a project] takes a lot of time. The Government, Notary, Stedin [grid operator] and Certiq [organization that certifies electricity and heat generated from sustainable sources], are difficult work together with to get something really working, especially these last two. Working with the new regulation of the government will also be very difficult in the coming years."* – Anonymous, 2022

These two respondents clearly link the slow progress of their projects to the inner workings of their local (and sometimes also national) governments and institutions. Still, there exists a clear desire in the respondents to contribute to energy transition, but they are thus hindered by outside forces. The following respondent also expresses how, even though they have a keen interest in participating in transitioning away from fossil fuels, the length of the process makes it difficult for them:

*"I still find it interesting and relevant, but I always have trouble doing the same thing for very long. As soon as routine creeps in somewhere I want to do something different."* – Anonymous, 2022

## Category 3

Participation fatigue due to the intensity of the participation was the third most mentioned reason. Over 14% of respondents that answered the question, explain how the amount of work, the length of meetings, the lack of time to devote to participation or the amount of information that has to be internalized, lead to participation fatigue. As mentioned in the literature review, this is one of the most straightforward causes of participation fatigue. Here are three quotes from respondents:

- *"By having been intensively active in our neighborhood initiative for a few years now (and by also taking on more work than I first intended), I sometimes find that I am quite busy participating. It is now almost as important as my real job."* – Anonymous, 2022
- *"Our "work" takes a lot of time and energy, pioneering. We are not received enthusiastically by everyone. Always having to apply for subsidies etc."* – Anonymous, 2022
- *"Too much in too short a time"* – Anonymous, 2022

- 
- *“My lack of technical background, I don’t want to ‘study up’ before each meeting, I just want to work on the project” - Anonymous, 2022*

#### Category 4

The fourth category that was recognized, regarded participation fatigue due to lack of enthusiasm of fellow citizens or organizations/business. 9% of respondents cited this as a reason for their participation fatigue. Some respondents refer to the lack of care or support from local governments, organizations and businesses that could help them with their initiatives (for example by allowing them to place solar panels on roofs of large buildings). Others specifically refer to the lack of enthusiasm of their fellow citizens. There seems to be a common thread of frustration that they themselves are doing the work to make the world a better place, while others might not care that much. Some people try to keep a cheerful outlook about this:

*“I know that sustainability is not important to everyone, so I know that I have to keep putting energy into it myself. I also sometimes think that private initiatives by people are enough. But in general, I think the association’s projects, such as the postcoderoos, are good and I think residents benefit from them.” – Anonymous, 2022*

While other take on a more cynical point of view:

*“There is a huge lack of knowledge and the right attitude among the public, we are not going to fix that. [...] People are busy with their mortgages and hobbies, travelling, etc. The fact that people in India live at 10 degrees C or less in houses without central heating, does not occur to them. Seriously sacrificing luxury to save the earth is not something we are taught in school or work.” – Anonymous, 2022*

#### Category 5

The fifth and smallest category- with 7.9% of respondents who answered the questions mentioning this – is about participation fatigue due to lack of serious uptake of participants’ input. There exists a clear link between this category and the first one, with respondents expressing how they felt used for the sake of appearances by their local governments. As mentioned in the literature study (as well as it being mentioned by Interviewee B), participation for the sake of participation can be detrimental to the citizen’s trust in their municipality. It deters them from ever participating again. The following respondents express their sentiments regarding this issue:

*“Real participation did not exist; decisions had already been made. The project was started just to be able to paint a nice picture for press releases. A real political game.” – Anonymous, 2022*

*“This concerned the RES. The municipality keeps talking about the importance of citizen participation and was proud to involve citizens. I didn’t think involvement in step 5 (out of 7) was a good example and felt like an “excuus-Truus” [basically a female token in Dutch], something to tick off a box with.” – Anonymous, 2022*

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### Miscellaneous category

Besides the clearly defined categories that were found in the responses, some answers did not directly fit in with any of the five categories and were only mentioned once. These answers mentioned the following: the organization which the respondent is a member of is not well-led resulting in badly organized participation, bad communication, not everyone in the citizen initiative has the same drive leading to increasing responsibilities for the respondent.

#### 5.2.4.3 Effects of participation fatigue according to respondents

The next question inquired about what the effects of the phenomenon were on the participation of the respondents. According to literature, experiences with participation fatigue can result in participants becoming less active or even quitting the process entirely. The respondents that rated their participation fatigue with a two or higher (89 cases), were therefore able to fill in an open question regarding its effects on their participation. Here, again, their answers were categorized into four clear groups, as well as a 'miscellaneous' category that did not fit in with the other four categories. The resulting five categories are the following:

1. There was no effect on the participation
2. There was no effect on the participation yet, but there might be in the future
3. The respondent became less active in the participation process
4. The respondent stopped participating
5. Other

Findings thus reflect that quitting or becoming less active, were indeed some of the effects of participation fatigue. Figure 5.2.8 shows each category with the percentage of responses that fit in them.

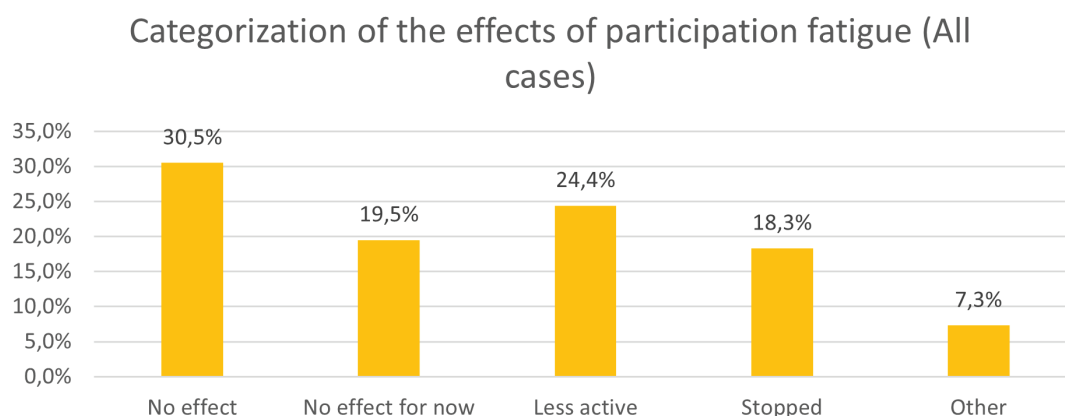


Figure 5.2.8

Furthermore, when the forty-two respondents that rated their participation fatigue with a six or higher are held into account, it becomes clear that they experienced more severe effects than those that rated it with a five or lower. Meaning, they were more likely to become less active or even quit participating. This is shown in figure 5.2.9. and corroborates the findings drawn from the literature as well as illustrating the need for managing the process in a way that evades the issue. It also answers research question two:

“Why is participation fatigue a critical issue to solve in co-design processes dealing with energy transition?”. If the social advantages stemming from citizen participation in energy transition processes are to be reaped, participants becoming less active or leaving the process should be avoided. So, by proxy it is in the best interest of everyone that participation fatigue is avoided or alleviated.

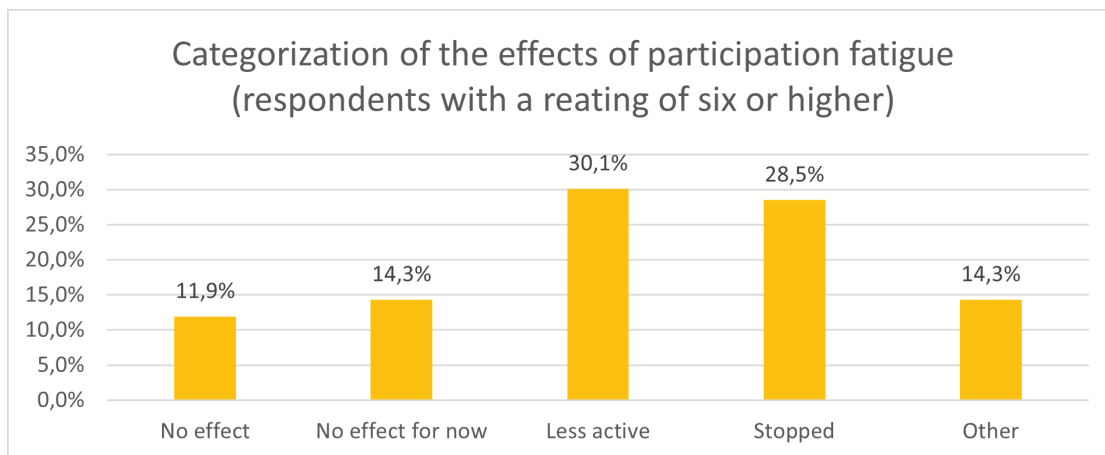


Figure 5.2.9

#### 5.2.4.3 Effects of participation fatigue according to respondents

The survey concluded with a question about what the respondents thought might help alleviate or prevent their participation fatigue. Due to the large amount of highly specific answers, it is best to fully show their answers instead of trying to condense them in this chapter, this can be found in Appendix G. They will, however, be discussed later on in the report in order to give some practical recommendations for evading or alleviating participation fatigue.

### 5.3 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF CAUSES OF PARTICIPATION FATIGUE

The previous section of the report has now provided a qualitative analysis of how participation fatigue occurs and what its effects are on the participation process. Additionally, there are a few quantitative data points in the survey that can be used to further analyze participation fatigue using statistical methods. These regard the correlation between the respondents’ rating of their experience with participation fatigue, and five other quantitative variables that were measured in the survey: pre-existing knowledge & interests, the participant’s role in the process, frequency of the participation, the perceived influence on the process, and the serious uptake of participants’ input by municipalities. Spearman’s rho was used to understand the strength of the relationship between these variables, since they are all either continuous or ordinal in nature. This section of the report therefore further answers research question three: “In case of the occurrence of participation fatigue in participation processes, can this be linked to specific problems during the process?”.

#### 5.3.1 PARTICIPATION FATIGUE AND PRE-EXISTING KNOWLEDGE & INTERESTS

The first quantitative variable that was tested for being correlated with participation fatigue, was the respondents’ pre-existing knowledge & interests regarding energy transition. A multiple-choice question was used that garnered ordinal (scale) values (see table 5.2.2 for the possible answers). The variable was then assessed for correlation with the respondents’ self-rated experience with participation fatigue, using Spearman’s rho. The result of this was non-significant ( $p=0.187$ ) with a slightly positive correlation

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coefficient of 0.13, this might be due to the sample size. It means that the null hypothesis “pre-existing knowledge & interests have no effect on the perceived participation fatigue”, cannot be rejected. In principle, this goes against our hypothesis that intrinsic motivation and “perceived behavioral control” have an influence on participation fatigue. However, it is important to remember that, as previously shown in table 5.2.2, over 80% of respondents indicated that they had already acquired substantial knowledge regarding energy transition. Furthermore, 99% of respondents said that they have an interest in sustainability-related topics. This means that the overt majority of respondents were already intrinsically motivated. If the sample for the survey were to include more respondents with no interest or background knowledge about energy transition, results may have been significant. Especially since one respondent specifically stated that the cause for their participation fatigue was their lack of knowledge (see section 5.2.4.3, miscellaneous category)

### 5.3.2 PARTICIPATION FATIGUE AND THE PARTICIPANT’S ROLE

In section 5.2.2.1, the respondents’ answers regarding their role in the energy transition project that they were participating in, were categorized into four different groups: initiators ( $\approx 25\%$ ), active volunteers ( $\approx 26\%$ ), active participants ( $\approx 31\%$ ), and passive participants ( $\approx 18\%$ ). Because the original answer to this question was open-ended, and thus in text form, a new variable was created where: initiators=1, active volunteers =2, active participants =3, and passive participants =4. This was possible because the categories can be interpreted as ordinal (scale) in nature: initiators are more active than active volunteers, active volunteers are more active than active participants and active participants are more active than passive participants). When this newly created variable was tested for having a correlation with the respondents’ experience with participation fatigue by using Spearman’s rho, the result was significant ( $p=0.03$ ). The correlation coefficient was -0.21, thus showing a negative correlation between the two variables. This means (for example) that initiators are more likely to face participation fatigue than passive participants, and thus confirms our hypothesis that the more active a participant is, the more likely they are to experience participation fatigue.

### 5.3.3 PARTICIPATION FATIGUE AND FREQUENCY OF THE PARTICIPATION

The frequency of participation of respondents varied from daily participation to some only participating a few times a year, as was shown in section 5.2.3.3. According to literature and interviews, this frequency of the participation is an influencing factor of participation. The qualitative analysis of the responses also showed that 14% of participants attributed the intensity of the participation to their participation fatigue (although this also included the intensity of individual sessions). Therefore, the frequency variable was also tested for having a correlation with the respondents’ experience with participation fatigue by using Spearman’s rho. Although this showed a slight positive correlation of 0.13, the result was deemed insignificant with a p-value of 0.15. Like other insignificant results shown in this section, this might be due to the sample size being too small. Further quantitative research will thus have to be conducted in order to properly test whether or not the number of times participants are called on to participate, has a positive correlation with their perceived participation fatigue.



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### 5.3.4 PARTICIPATION FATIGUE AND PERCEIVED INFLUENCE ON THE PROJECT

The perceived influence that respondents have on the energy transition projects that they were working on, can be linked to the concept of “autonomy” from the self-determination theory. It was therefore also tested for its correlation with the perceived participation fatigue of respondents. The perceived influence of respondents was measured with a Likert scale, just like the perceived participation fatigue. Using Spearman’s rho, a negative correlation of -0.2 with a statistical significance of  $p=0.04$  was found. This means that, when people feel like they have less influence on the project that they are participating on, they are more likely to face participation fatigue. It thus confirms what was stated in the theoretical framework and can also be linked to the qualitative findings of the survey – such as the issues that were found relating to municipalities and tokenism.

### 5.3.5 PARTICIPATION FATIGUE AND THE SERIOUS UPTAKE OF PARTICIPANTS’ INPUT

Finally, the theoretical framework indicates that, when municipalities don’t take the input of participants into account in an adequate manner, this can lead to participation fatigue. This was also corroborated by the qualitative analysis of the survey: respondents’ experiences with their municipalities are the most mentioned source of participation fatigue (33.7% of respondents with participation fatigue). Therefore, this section looks at the correlation between perceived participation fatigue and whether respondents feel like their municipalities take their input into account in an adequate manner. The result of this was very significant ( $p=0$ ), with a positive correlation coefficient of 0.4. This means that that when respondents felt like their inputs were not taken seriously by their municipalities, they were also more likely to face more severe forms of participation fatigue, and thus corroborates the theoretical framework and the analysis of the qualitative findings.

## 5.4 PARTICIPATION FATIGUE – A DISCUSSION

Now that the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the survey data has been set out, this subchapter discusses how exactly this reflects on the proposed framework introduced in section 5.1.3 (Theoretical framework), as well as what the practical implications of these results are.

### 5.4.1 ASSESSING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that was introduced in section 5.1.3, used the interviews and literature study to identify causes for participation fatigue and linked different theories to these causes. Part of the goal of the survey was to ascertain whether this framework accurately portrays the factors that are of influence on the phenomenon of participation fatigue (as well as finding other potential causes). The results show that there is a clear link between the causes that were implemented in the framework, and the causes found through the analysis of the survey responses. Figures 5.4.2, 5.4.3 and 5.4.4 visualize these links in a comprehensive manner.

In the first part of the theoretical framework, factors that can influence participation fatigue, were categorized into three pillars: contextual factors, organizational factors, and programmatic factors (see figure 5.4.1). These pillars were also used in the setup of the survey and, based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the survey responses, encompass all of the identified causes of participation fatigue, as shown in figure 5.4.2. All of the causes of participation fatigue identified through this research, can thus be categorized as either contextual, organizational or programmatic in nature. The figure also shows how the statistically proven causes for participation fatigue, are linked to those that were identified in the qualitative analysis.

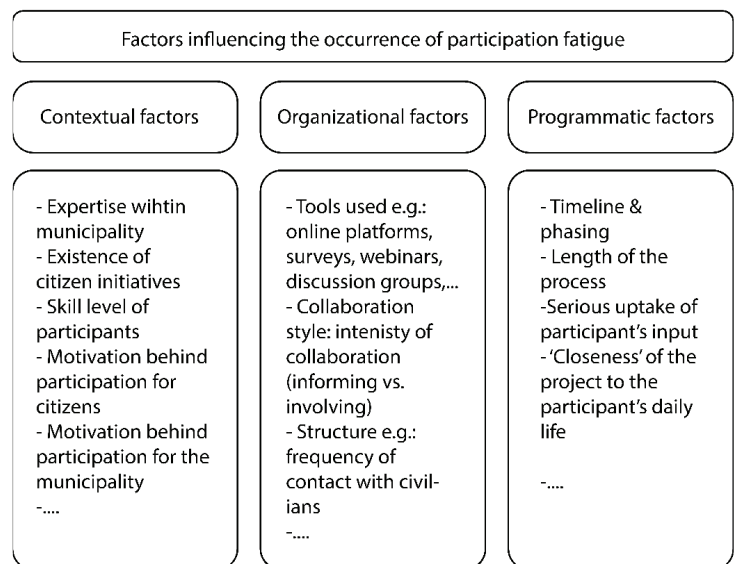


Figure 5.4.1

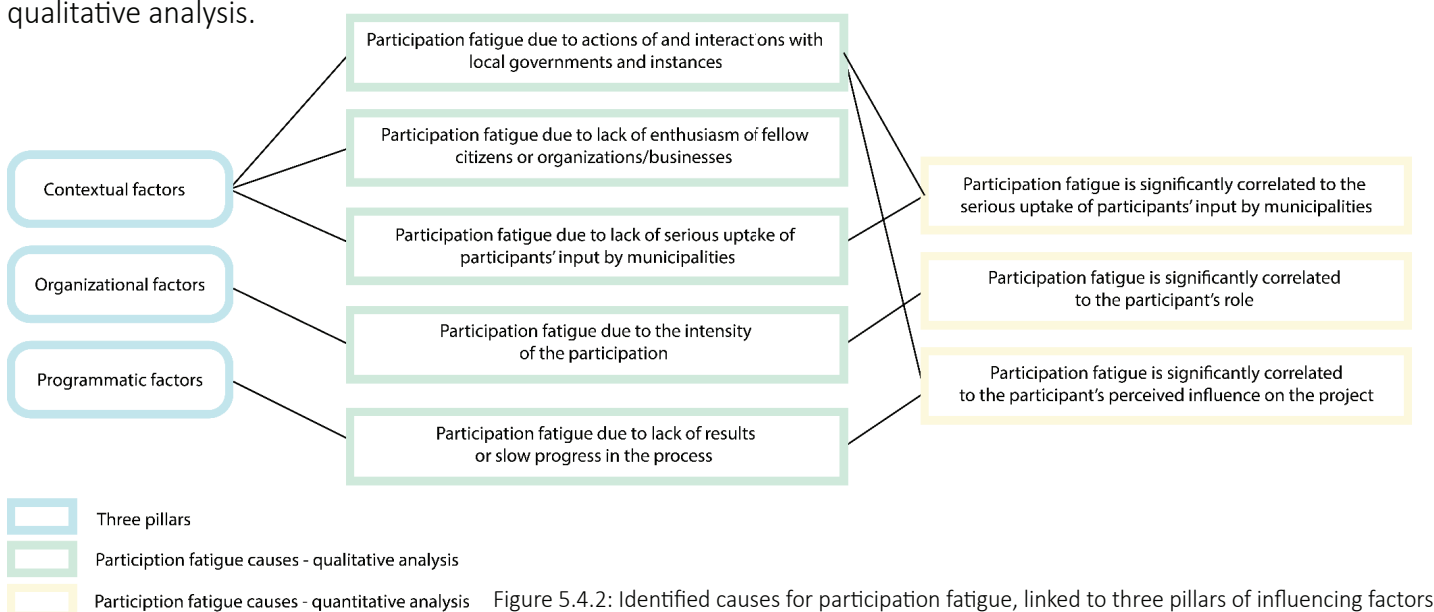


Figure 5.4.2: Identified causes for participation fatigue, linked to three pillars of influencing factors

The second part of the theoretical framework used self-determination theory and theory of planned behavior in order to provide an explanation as to why the influencing factors introduced in the framework, potentially led to participation fatigue. Section 5.1.3.1 explained how the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of SDT, are shaped by a participant’s autonomy, competence and relatedness. TPB on the other hand, states that the concepts of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, shape a person’s intention, and thus, their behavior.

The analysis of the survey responses is used in order to assess how well the supporting theories can be used in order to explain why certain things affect the occurrence of participation fatigue. So, for example, if causes for participation fatigue were mostly related to things that could not be linked to the supporting theories, it would show that the framework does not accurately portray why participation fatigue occurs. This section uses the five categories of causes for participation fatigue, set out in section 5.2.4.2, to assess whether they can be linked to the supporting theories of the theoretical framework. Figure 5.4.3. and 5.4.4 show that all five categories of causes for participation fatigue, are related to the supporting theories and that the framework is thus confirmed. Additionally, this means that the supporting theories can be used to propose possible solutions towards evading the occurrence of participation fatigue: the concepts of SDT – competence, autonomy and relatedness – should be strengthened and supported during the participation process (e.g.: providing the participants with enough independence and power in order to strengthen their sense of autonomy). The concepts of TPB on the other hand, can be used as indicators of where solutions should be implemented in order to avoid participation fatigue (e.g.: by sending out a survey in which residents can indicate how they would like to participate in the energy transition project, the process can then be designed according to these answers and this will increase the perceived behavioral control of future participants – this is also what municipality D did before they launched their citizen participation process).

#### 5.4.1.1 SDT

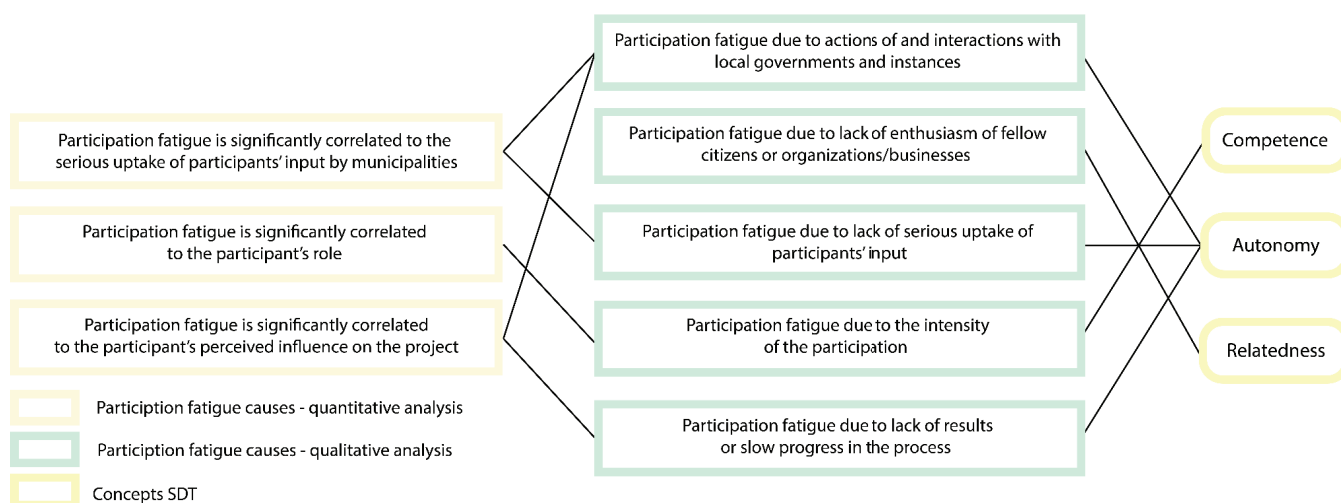


Figure 5.4.3: Identified causes for participation fatigue, linked to three pillars of influencing factors

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## *Competence*

The relation between the concept of ‘competence’, and the identified causes of participation fatigue, is shown through its link with the fourth category of participation fatigue causes: “Participation fatigue due to the intensity of the participation”. Intensity refers to both the amount of responsibility a participant carries (e.g.: are they an active volunteer or an active participant?), as well as the amount of work the participation involves. This latter aspect is the one which can be linked to the concept of competence: some respondents indicated that their lack of technical knowledge or dislike of having to read through a lot of informational materials before meetings, is what resulted in participation fatigue for them. People want to feel like their competences are useful and make them do a good job- maybe some people are better at socially engaging tasks, rather than purely technical ones. If this is not the case, they become less intrinsically motivated and in some cases, this led to participation fatigue.

## *Autonomy*

The concept of autonomy is closely tied to being able to control what we do and what the outcomes of these actions are. It also relates to how much freedom is provided. Autonomy relates to 1) participation fatigue due to actions of and interactions with local governments and instances; 2) participation fatigue due to lack of serious uptake of participants’ input; and 3) participation fatigue due to lack of results or slow progress in the process. The first link relates to how, when municipalities don’t allow participants to make meaningful contributions to the energy transition process – in other words, they do not provide them with any autonomy or say in the process –, participation fatigue is likely to occur. Additionally, the second and third link are made due to a similar reason, namely that participants feel like their work has no impact and is thus inconsequential. This should be avoided at all cost, more on this later.

## *Relatedness*

The third concept that shapes SDT, is that of relatedness. This is tied to the need for social interactions and working together with your community to achieve energy transition. As was shown through ‘participation fatigue due to lack of enthusiasm of fellow citizens or organizations/businesses’, when fellow citizens respond indifferently to the work of the participants, participants become frustrated and start experiencing participation fatigue. For one respondents of the survey, it even resulted in a changed world view that was quite pessimistic. This participant in particular felt like the work they were doing, was nothing more than a pinprick in the grand scheme of things, that it was impossible to reach the goal of energy transition. This shows how important relatedness can be to avoiding the occurrence of participation fatigue.

## *Motivation*

SDT states that all of the concepts/needs discussed above, promote intrinsic motivation. When they are disregarded, intrinsic motivation lessens and the drive to keep participating dissipates. Moreover, additional factors such as a person’s personal interests, also influence intrinsic motivation. This is why the responses to the survey indicated that most people involved in the participation process, were already interested in energy transition: only one person had no knowledge or interest in energy transition prior to participating, and, they incidentally also rated their participation fatigue quite high with a 7/10. Safe

guarding the participants basic needs and fostering intrinsic motivation, is thus imperial to both evading participation fatigue, as well as motivating people to continue participating even if participation fatigue is present.

### 5.4.1.2 TPB

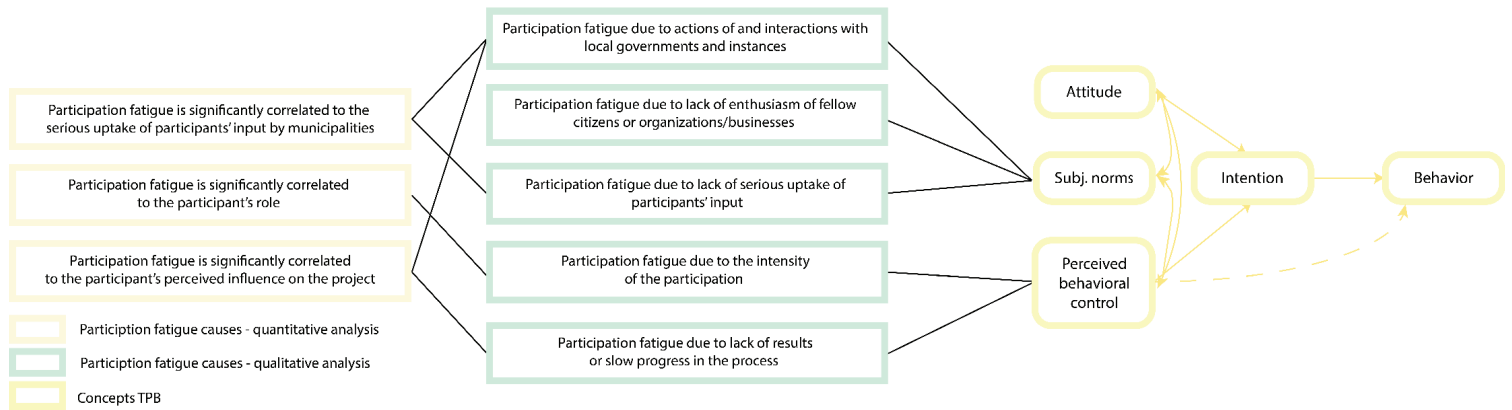


Figure 5.4.4: Identified causes for participation fatigue, linked to three pillars of influencing factors

### Attitude

The concept of ‘attitude’ has not been directly linked to any of the five major categories of participation fatigue causes. It was found however, that participants of energy transition process already have a certain attitude towards the subject that allows them to participate. This was shown through the survey with, for example, the demographical questions: most respondents were highly educated, older, male and had a pre-existing interest in energy transition. All of these factors shape a person’s attitude and reflect that participation is mostly done by people with a specific profile. Attitude therefore seemingly shapes the participant’s decision to participate. However, future studies that use other methods and have larger sample sizes, might find a link between participation fatigue and attitude, since this was eluded to by some respondents that said they were to ‘stubborn’ to let participation fatigue influence their participation.

### Subjective norms

In terms of the concept of ‘subjective norms’, links were made to the following causes of participation fatigue: participation fatigue due to actions of and interactions with local governments and instances, participation fatigue due to lack of enthusiasm of fellow citizens or organizations/businesses and participation fatigue due to lack of serious uptake of participants’ input. In all three of these causes, participants are basically asking the following question: “is energy transition and the participation of citizens in it, seen as a positive social norm?”. When the work of participants isn’t supported, ignored or not used, it shows them that the normative beliefs of the public regarding energy transition as a whole, or their participation specifically, is uncaring of it, which influences the subjective norms of individuals, making it less important for them. Of course, people aren’t immediately deterred by this, but when this happens over longer periods of time and it actively counteracts the work of participants, it becomes an important catalyst for participation fatigue.

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### *Perceived behavioral control*

Finally, the perceived behavioral control of participants relates to how easy it is for them to execute a certain behavior. This is therefore closely related to the concept of 'competence' in SDT and also why it is also linked to 'participation fatigue due to the intensity of the participation'. Additionally, it is also linked to 'participation fatigue due to lack of results or slow progress in the process'. This is because, as indicated by multiple respondents, some participants just don't have the patience to work on the same thing for long. They have difficulties with doing the same thing over longer periods of time. For them, participation fatigue occurs as soon as routine sneaks in.

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### 5.4.3 IMPLICATIONS

The results of the research have shown that participation fatigue is an issue with multiple sources that either stem from inside the participation process, or have external roots. In this section, solutions towards alleviating participation fatigue faced by citizen-participants, will be discussed by addressing these sources and using responses from the survey. The last part of appendix G contains these responses.

Some of the solutions that are discussed in this section, are only useful when applied in a proper and relevant way. It is therefore imperative for organizations and municipalities to inquire the citizen-participants about what they want, expect or need from the participation process. This is similar to what municipality D has done with their surveys: asking people about what they expect from the process, what they would like to see in the process, how they would like to collaborate, what they are worried about, etc. This in itself is already a great tip for municipalities and organizations. In doing this, a fruitful participation process can be created that is tailor made for the participants instead of the other way around. Expectations are managed and participants will feel like they have some control over how they choose to participate. Moreover, the fact that people will feel 'heard', makes them feel valued and thus more inclined to participate. This relates to the concept of perceived behavioral control (TPB) and fosters a sense of autonomy (SDT) in participants, which have been proven through this research, to influence the occurrence of participation fatigue

#### *5.4.3.1 Regarding the municipality*

The most common source of participation fatigue found in this study, was participation fatigue due to issues stemming from the municipality. Frustrations with how municipalities handle citizen participation stemmed from both a lack of regard for participants' input, as well as the changing rules and regulations surrounding energy transition projects. Although the latter source of participation fatigue can be difficult to manage – changing regulations and the slow proceedings of governmental bureaucracy have been a heavily criticized topic for years across many different sectors- multiple respondents indicated that even just having a municipality that is willing to enter an open dialogue with citizen initiatives, about possibilities and long-term visions, would be beneficial. This seems like a very rudimentary step towards improving the participation process (and it is), yet it still does not happen enough according to respondents. If done properly, it would also send a message that citizen initiatives are an added value to the municipality, increasing morale and a sense of autonomy. Appointing a fixed point of contact within the municipality for citizen initiatives, is related to this. Additionally, having more clarity on what exactly the regulations are, would already be helpful. This includes the possibility of lightening the administrative burden that lies on citizen initiatives. All in all, citizen initiatives should feel supported by their municipalities, this can be done in ways that are not necessarily financial.

The second, and much more egregious, source of participation fatigue stemming from municipal proceedings, is "participation for the sake of participation". In the worst cases, respondents of the survey describe how the municipality already knew that they would not use the citizens' input, before participation even started. This issue can be detrimental to citizen participation and instills a sense of distrust for the government in citizen-participants, making them much more cynical and adverse

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to participation. It is also an issue that can be addressed with much more straight-forward solutions. Firstly, municipalities should only enter the participation process with a clear goal and process in mind. This way, participants can also know what to expect when they start participating and what will happen with the input they provide - this is also mentioned as being of great importance by multiple interviewees. Of course, the support from a professional consultancy firm in organizing the participation process - if the budget allows it - can also be immensely beneficial to the process.

#### *5.4.3.2 Adapting the process*

There are also a number of possible solutions to alleviating participation fatigue that pertain to how the participation process organized. Participation fatigue due to lack of results or slow progress in the process as well as the intensity of the participation, can be addressed by implementing the following things. Firstly, municipalities and citizen organizations should put extra effort in creating clarity and purpose in the participation process. Practically, this means the creation of a long term vision that can be worked towards. The goals of meetings should also be clear and communicated to attendants before the meeting. Secondly, multiple respondents indicated that the celebration of achievements and milestones would vastly improve the process for them. This is especially true for processes that span over long periods of time. In a similar vein, respondents indicated how the process could be made more 'fun' and less formal. After all, working together with the people of your community, should also provide an environment in which you can connect with those people and even make friends. Municipality D and citizen initiative A also expressed how beneficial this is. Practically, this could mean the organization of activities that don't involve participation but are really just aimed at connecting with your fellow participants.

#### *5.4.3.3 Reaching the public, lessening the burden*

The general public's disregard and lack of enthusiasm for energy transition, was proven to be a substantial source of frustration and, by proxy, participation fatigue for citizen-participants. It is here that municipalities and citizen groups should work together in order to raise awareness about energy transition and increase the visibility of existing initiatives/projects. Of course, many municipalities and organizations already use (and maybe over-use) traditional channels of communication to inform their residents/neighbors about the subject. But, maybe less formal, more 'fun' ways of promoting participation could work here. Could the promotion of participation as a way to meet new people and make friends, be beneficial for garnering more support from the general public? Some respondents of the survey certainly think so. Additionally, and almost in a paradoxical sense, the improvement of the participation process might also garner more participants that would otherwise have not involved themselves in energy transition projects. This would also lessen the burden of participants who are currently carrying a lot of responsibility because there is a lack of man power in their respective organizations.

To conclude, there are a number of issues that cannot be solved through the solutions introduced in this section. However, if the sources of participation fatigue that can actually be solved, are addressed, this would already result in a considerably improved participation process with less sources of participation fatigue. Chipping away at these sources there were it is possible, is thus the first step towards completely eliminating participation fatigue from the process.





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## 6. CONCLUSION

This report set out a study that was conducted in order to analyze the phenomenon of participation fatigue experienced by participating citizens in Dutch energy transition projects. This focus on participation fatigue stemmed from the fact that the occurrence of the phenomenon and its consequences, had not yet been empirically researched in the past, and any analysis of it was missing from the academic body of literature. The study was therefore explorative in nature: using mostly qualitative methods for analyzing the issue, as well as some quantitative elements. Part of the aim of the research, was to also lay the foundations for further empirical research that can delve deeper into the issue, using different qualitative and quantitative methods. The author hopes that, through this study, awareness surrounding participation fatigue and its effect on citizens will also increase, so that municipalities and organizations can be mindful of it when designing their participatory processes.

The main research question this explorative study aimed to answer was *“What are the main characteristics and lessons learned from participation fatigue experienced by citizens in participation processes for public energy transition projects?”*. In order to answer this main research question, four sub-questions were formulated. Now that the study has been concluded, the answers to these research questions will be set out in this chapter.

*Sub question 1- What does participation fatigue mean in the context of participation processes?*

The answer to this first research question was found in the existing body of literature regarding the subject. Participation fatigue is a phenomenon in which contributors of a certain process become tired of the participation, thus affecting this participation. In essence, participation fatigue can occur in any type of participatory process, in any of the parties involved. In context of this research however, the specific focus lay on the occurrence of the phenomenon in citizens that are participating in Dutch energy transition projects.

*Sub question 2 - Why is participation fatigue an important issue to solve in participation processes dealing with energy transition?*

The increasing relevance of energy transition projects and the expectation of citizen participation in them, make it so that challenges occurring within these processes are becoming increasingly relevant as well. Participation fatigue is one of those challenges and – if left to its own devices – can result in citizen becoming more passive participants or even quitting the process entirely. This was proven through the survey, where respondents indicated that their participation fatigue resulted in the following outcomes:

There was no effect on the participation	33.7%
There was no effect on the participation yet, but there might be in the future	25.8%
The respondent became less active in the participation process	14.6%
The respondent stopped participating	9%
Other	7.8%

Table 6.1: Effects of participation fatigue

Already, a significant amount of respondents indicate that participation fatigue influences their participation in a significant way. However, when only the respondents that rated their participation with a 6/10 or higher, are taken into account, the results are even more apparent:

No effect on the participation	11.9%
No effect on the participation yet, but there might be in the future	14.3%
The respondent became less active in the participation process	<b>30.1%</b>
The respondent stopped participating	<b>28.5%</b>
Other	14.3%

Table 6.2: Effects of 'severe' participation fatigue

Citizens that are experiencing higher levels of participation fatigue are thus increasingly at risk of becoming less active, or even quitting the participation process entirely. This would completely negate the potential benefits that come from involving citizens in development projects: part of the reason why citizen participation has recently been introduced as an important pillar in Dutch legislation, is because it is believed to better handle the socio-technical challenges that occur in energy transition projects. Participation fatigue is thus an issue that should be actively avoided, otherwise the benefits of citizen participation might be entirely lost. It also causes the remaining citizens to be at risk of becoming more fatigued, since it's likely that they will have to compensate for the absence of their peers. Participation fatigue is thus an issue that should be (pro)actively avoided.

*Sub question 3 - In case of the occurrence of participation fatigue in participation processes, can the citizens link this to a specific problem during the process?*

The third sub question of the research was answered through the conduction of interviews on one hand, and through a mixed method survey on the other hand. The process was as follows: the literature review and interviews resulted in the development of a theoretical framework that is aimed at identifying factors that influence the occurrence of participation fatigue and was supported by two broader psychological theories: Self-Determination Theory and Theory of Planned Behavior. These findings and the supporting theories, were then used in order to set up a survey aimed at confirming the framework, as well as potentially adding to it. This way, causes of participation fatigue were identified and possible ways to avoid the phenomenon could be found.

The qualitative analysis of the survey responses, resulted in the identification of five major categories of causes linked to the occurrence of participation fatigue. These five categories, and the percentage of respondents linking their participation fatigue to them, were:

Participation fatigue due to actions of and interactions with local governments and instances	33.7%
Participation fatigue due to lack of results or slow progress in the process	25.8%
Participation fatigue due to the intensity of the participation	14.6%
Participation fatigue due to lack of enthusiasm of fellow citizens or organizations/businesses	9%
Participation fatigue due to lack of serious uptake of participants' input	7.8%

Table 6.3: Categorization of causes behind participation fatigue experienced by survey respondents

Additionally, quantitative analysis proved that three specific variables were also statistically and significantly correlated to the occurrence of participation fatigue. These were:

Participation fatigue and the participant's role	$r_s = -0.21$	$p = 0.03$
Participation fatigue and perceived influence on the project	$r_s = -0.20$	$p = 0.04$
Participation fatigue and the serious uptake of participants' input by municipalities	$r_s = 0.40$	$p = 0.00$
Participation fatigue and pre-existing knowledge & interests	$r_s = 0.13$	$p = 0.19$
Participation fatigue and frequency of the participation	$r_s = 0.13$	$p = 0.15$

Table 6.4: Correlations found between the occurrence of participation fatigue and quantitative variables

The most prominent source of participation fatigue proved to be related to how municipalities handle citizen participation processes, this includes things such as: the municipality's attitude towards participants and participation in general, the municipality's intention with using citizen participation, whether municipalities are open to citizen's input or not, how municipalities have communicated different rules and regulations to local citizen groups, etc. This is also the area in which there is the most room for improvement towards eliminating participation fatigue from the participation process.

*Sub question 4 - What are the lessons learned from the occurrence of participation fatigue in practice?*

The analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data shows that the most prominent cause of participation fatigue, is the treatment of citizens participating in energy transition trajectories by local governments. This is both in regard to the treatment of citizens participating through processes set out by municipalities, as well as the efforts taken by citizen initiatives independently working on energy transition projects. After all, the goal of citizen participation is to develop an integrated solution towards energy transition, that takes into account the needs and wants of citizens. How can this be done without taking their contributions into account. The municipality should be aware of its residents' expectations on one hand-and – should have a clear and reasonable goal for wanting to use citizen participation in the first place. This was not only discovered with the findings of this study, but also corroborated by the exiting literature. Practical solutions include:

- Participation for the sake of participation should absolutely be avoided. Municipalities should only enter the participation process with a clear goal and process in mind
- Municipality should be willing to enter an open dialogue with citizens and citizen initiatives. This sends a message that citizen initiatives are an added value to the municipality, increasing morale and a sense of autonomy
- Appointing a fixed point of contact within the municipality, for citizens and citizen initiatives
- More clarity on rules and regulations
- Professional guidance (if possible)
- ...

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Generally, creating a very clear and transparent participation process - in which participants know the rules, can know what to expect and can see how exactly their contributions influence the project – was also proven to be important, both for municipalities and citizen initiatives. Aside from this, there are additional measures that can be taken to adapt the participation process to avoid participation fatigue faced by citizen-participants. These range from including more informal activities in the participation process – these could be unrelated to the project but meant for strengthening social ties between participants-, to structuring the process in a way that breaks it up more and makes room for the celebration of achievements. Summed up, the following interventions can aid in alleviating feelings of participation fatigue:

- Creating clarity and purpose in the participation process (long-term AND short term)
- Celebration of achievements and milestones
- Make the process more fun, less formal

Finally, in order to increase general awareness across the whole municipality of why energy transition is important and why you should care, interventions will have to be made as well. Here, the goal is for the participants to feel valued, heard/seen, and useful – and – for more potential participants to be reached:

- Raising awareness of projects throughout communities. Municipalities and citizen groups should work together in order to raise awareness about energy transition and increase the visibility of existing initiatives/projects.
- Promoting participation: make it personal, make it fun
- Reaching underrepresented groups such as women, younger people, etc (many municipalities and organizations are already working on this)

As previously mentioned, there are still sources of participation fatigue that cannot immediately addressed by the measures proposed in this report, such as the complexity and volatility of rules and regulations for example. However, in creating more awareness and alleviating participation fatigue where it can be done, this study hopes to at least lay the groundwork for future change.

Having addressed the four sub questions, the main research question *“What are the main characteristics and lessons learned from participation fatigue experienced by citizens in participation processes for public energy transition projects?”* – has now been answered. In doing so, this thesis report has shown that addressing the issue of participation fatigue throughout the participation process of energy transition trajectories, is imperial in ensuring the citizen-participants’ well-being, as well as safeguarding the benefits that stem from involving citizens energy transition process.

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## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The research set out in this thesis report, has laid the foundations for further analysis of the phenomenon of participation fatigue. In this chapter, the possibilities of future research, as well as the limitations of the study elaborated on this report, will be discussed.

### 7.1 LIMITATIONS

A few of the limitations of the research have already been briefly mentioned in some parts of the report, however, it is important to clearly set them out in order to be able to make recommendations for future research. In general, since the study was exploratory in nature, the findings of the research are likely to not encompass an entirely complete portrayal of the characteristics and mechanisms of participation fatigue. As mentioned previously, this is also why the study aims at laying the foundations for future research in which further insights can be gained. Other limitations of the research will now be discussed. Firstly, the findings drawn from the interviews that were conducted with municipalities and one citizen initiative, are limited because of the amount of cases. Therefore, the municipalities that were chosen for the interview, varied in density of the built environment, possible renewable energy sources, their approach towards the participation process, etc. This way, the research attempted to gain as many nuanced perspectives as possible. The research was also very careful as to not portray the findings as generalizable one, but rather that they had to be validated through the survey and could be used to further analyze participation fatigue.

For the survey on the other hand, there also exist some limitations. Foremost, the survey indiscriminately inquired both citizens participating through municipal processes, as well as those participating through citizen initiatives, about their experiences with participation fatigue. Because it lay outside the scope of this study, it did not look into whether there might be a different experience with participation fatigue between those groups. This could be the subject of further research, especially since so many respondents expressed their frustrations with working together with municipalities.

Additionally, the respondents were reached through contacting citizen initiatives and a few municipalities. A side-effect of this, was that the questionnaire was also filled in by the board members of these citizen initiatives. As was shown through the analysis of the respondents' role, 25% of respondents were identified as initiators-meaning they either were the founders of their respective initiatives, or currently occupied important roles such as those of board members. In itself, this did not pose that much of a threat since these initiators are still volunteering citizens. Furthermore, the causes of participation fatigue that were eventually identified in this research, showed that they were (mostly) not related to the role of the participant. There was a significant correlation between the participant's role and their experience with participation fatigue, but outside of this, the causes of participation fatigue that were found, were issues that were experienced by all types of participants. The solution that were introduced in this report would also be beneficial to all participants.

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In terms of how participation fatigue was measured, there might also exist some limitations. Currently, the research inquired about respondents' experience with participation fatigue, by asking them to rate it on a scale of 1-10. This rating of perceived participation fatigue, may be differently interpreted by everyone – although the survey did provide how the lower and upper boundaries should be interpreted. But, respondents were also able to communicate how they experienced participation fatigue, affected their participation in an open question. Here, it was shown that there was a clear link between respondents' rating of their own participation fatigue, and them leaving the process or becoming less active. This (qualitatively) confirmed the hypothesis and by proxy, verified the rating system.

## **7.2 FURTHER RESEARCH**

This section now proposes how additional research can contribute to the further analysis of participation fatigue.

Based on the limitations discussed in the previous section, future research could shed more light on the difference between participation fatigue experienced by citizens participating through municipal processes, and those participating through citizen initiatives. Additionally, sending out a survey with a larger sample size could also be beneficial to contributing to the findings of this study.

Then, since the research described in this report, mainly set out to gain a better understanding of the causes and effects of participation fatigue, future research could focus more on the potential solutions and the development of a sort of participation toolkit. This could take the form of a longitudinal study in which the possible solutions are implemented in the participation process, and participants will be assessing their experiences with participation fatigue over the course of the participation. This way the solutions could be assessed in how well they prevent the participation fatigue/ contribute to the participation process. A longitudinal study that takes into account the different phases of citizen participation, could also provide even more insight into how participation fatigue evolves or is impacted by, the passing of time within these participation processes. This would also create more of an understanding to which activities specifically, might be more prone to causing participation fatigue.

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## 8. REFLECTION

In this final chapter of my graduation thesis, I look back upon the process I went through, the methods I used, and the results that were garnered in a more holistic manner. Back in September of 2021, I took my first steps in the graduation process. Fueled by a pre-existing interest in citizen participation and the increasing relevance of energy transition in the Netherlands, I chose my research topic. Since then, I have devoted my time and efforts to solving my main research question.

Through the courses I took in the MBE master track, I have become aware of how the inclusion of the end-users in development projects can be imperative to the success of such a project, but can also be a really difficult and taxing thing to do. This in combination with recent strides of Dutch municipalities towards transitioning away from fossil fuels – which in turn resulted in the involvement of citizens in these energy transition projects – has not only made the topic more interesting for me personally but has also made it increasingly relevant for the MBE field. Here, I became especially interested in the challenges that presented themselves during these types of projects dealing with citizen participation, one of them, of course, being participation fatigue.

During the first phase of my graduation process- the literature study- it became clear that my research topic was relatively innovative. Much research had already been conducted on the topics of participatory design and processes involving citizen participation, some studies even mention the issue of participation fatigue. But, no studies had been devoted to analyzing the issue of participation fatigue, a phenomenon that, as shown through my thesis, can be detrimental to the potential benefits of citizen participation, as well as the citizens' experiences within these processes. Conducting a study on a topic for which there is no preceding research like this, without being associated with a major company or municipality that might provide the environment and research subjects that I had first envisioned, was hard for me to conceptualize at first. This is where I really appreciated the feedback from my mentors. Sometimes it was hard to “see the wood for the trees”, and the guidance they provided really shed clarity on the research in these moments.

There were also challenges that presented themselves with regards to the research process specifically. I remember that I went through a brief moment of panic when I started to find potential interviewees. I had first thought of only interviewing citizens currently involved in participation process, but ran into a wall when I was unable to schedule meetings with them. So, I went back to the ‘drawing board’ and realized that interviewing people standing in positions in which they had an overview of the participation process and stood in contact with citizens, could be even more insightful. Then, after this, the viewpoints and experiences of “regular” citizen-participants could still be collected through the survey. This actually improved the research since more insights from different viewpoints were garnered. Additionally, another challenge that was faced, was the ironic dichotomy between the aim of the research, – investigating the occurrence of participation fatigue – and the fact that the research methods that were used, might theoretically also invertedly lead to participation fatigue. I have to admit that I laughed out loud when I



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got a snarky response from one of the citizen initiatives I contacted, that proclaimed they would not be distributing my survey because their members were probably 'survey fatigued'.

Of course, there were also some things that I wish I had done differently: personal hurdles that had to be overcome. After working on my thesis for the first semester- when the other courses I was taking and the structure they provided, fell away – I went through a period of procrastination and languor. It was strange: I wanted to work, even sat in front of my desk for days at a time, not doing anything. Eventually I snapped out of this and continued on working. However, I wish I had talked about it more openly with my friends, parents and mentors. For some reason I felt ashamed, but I think that if I did talk about it with someone, that feeling would have dissipated much sooner. This is definitely something of personal value that I learned during the process.

Finally, before I started conducting the empirical research needed for my study, there were some goals I formulated and wanted to achieve by the end of my thesis process. Due to the explorative nature of my research, I knew that my approach would include quite a lot of qualitative methods and fieldwork, given that I could not really rely on existing academic research. I was actually quite excited about this since I already had some experience with interviewing and other qualitative methods. Conducting interviews, finding contacts for case studies and useful organizations that could help in the research,... were all tasks for which I knew I had to take on a proactive approach. Looking back, I am quite happy with how I handled this. I came into contact with a lot of different people with different backgrounds, and during the interviews, some really interesting insights were found. Especially in regards to how municipalities approach the subject of citizen participation, as well as the difference in top-bottom vs. bottom-up approaches that are present in Dutch energy transition projects involving citizen participation. Additionally, my other goal of "making a relevant contribution to both the academic and practical MBE field", was also achieved. Through this study, I was able to shed light on an unexplored problem that occurs in participation processes, as well as introduce a set of practical solutions in order to start solving this challenge of participation fatigue. I am thus content in what I achieved during this 10-month process and am looking forward to future developments in both theory and practice surrounding citizen participation in energy transition projects in the Netherlands.

This reflection upon the research process I went through for the past few months, marks the end of my thesis. I would like to thank you, the reader, for taking the time to read this report.



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## APPENDICES

Appendix A	Graduation Plan
Appendix B	Data Management Plan
Appendix C	Interview Protocol
Appendix D	Letter of Informed Consent
Appendix E	Survey questions
Appendix F	Survey questions in relation to supporting theories
Appendix G	Survey answers relating to participation fatigue

# APPENDIX A - Graduation Plan

## Graduation Plan: All tracks

Submit your Graduation Plan to the Board of Examiners ([Examencommissie-BK@tudelft.nl](mailto:Examencommissie-BK@tudelft.nl)), Mentors and Delegate of the Board of Examiners one week before P2 at the latest.

The graduation plan consists of at least the following data/segments:

Personal information	
Name	Christina Swinnen
Student number	4579968

Studio		
Name / Theme	- (no studio, MBE graduation track)	
Main mentor	Tong Wang	DCM
Second mentor	Aksel Ersoy	UDM
Argumentation of choice of the studio	-	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	Co-Design in Public Transformation Projects - A deeper look into the occurrence of participation fatigue in co-design processes dealing with energy transition
Goal	
Location:	The Netherlands
The posed problem,	In 2021, many Dutch municipalities have started to transition away from fossil fuel sources towards more sustainable ones in order to achieve the goals set by the Parisian climate agreement of 2015 (RIVM, n.d.). Another development is the fact that co-design processes have gained increasing popularity in recent years because it is believed to address socio-ecological challenges of sustainability and development. Furthermore, in 2021 the Dutch government put into motion the new 'Omgevingswet'. In this piece of legislation, the involvement of civilians in projects has taken on an important role (Informatiepunt Leefomgeving, 2021). Because of all of this, co-design processes will likely become more prevalent in the Netherlands, making the challenges involving them more pressing. Among these challenges is the concept of participation fatigue, where the participants of the co-design process become tired of contributing to the process (Combrinck & Porter, 2021). This can even lead to participants leaving the process, thus negating the positive effects co-design processes bring with them (Tshishonga, 2020). Because of these serious negative effects, the gap in literature surrounding participation fatigue, the current relevance of participation in the Netherlands with the new 'Omgevingswet' and recent strides of Dutch municipalities to transition to more sustainable energy sources - the research proposed here wishes

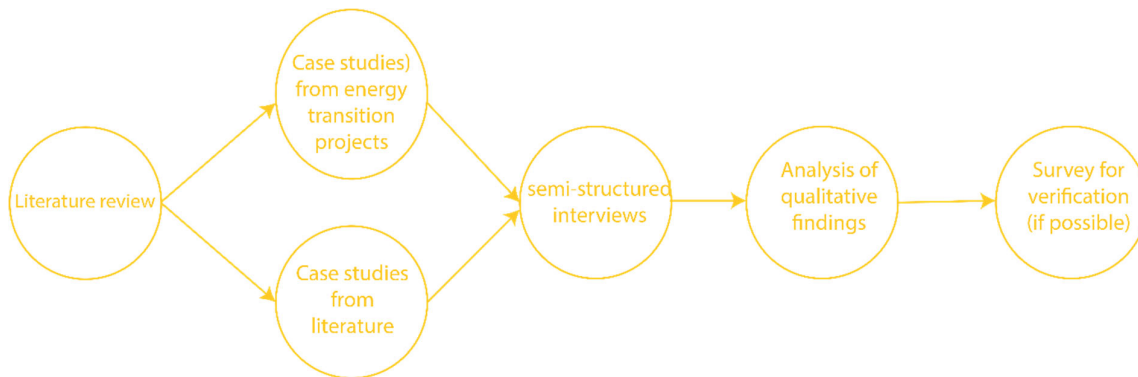
	to look into the issue of participation fatigue by describing its characteristics, occurrence and lessons learned from practice.
research questions	<p>RQ - What are the main characteristics and lessons learned from participation fatigue experienced by citizens in co-design processes for public transformation projects dealing with energy transition?</p> <p>SQ's:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What does participation fatigue mean in the context of co-design processes?</li> <li>2. Why is participation fatigue an important issue to solve in co-design processes dealing with energy transition?</li> <li>3. In case of the occurrence of participation fatigue in co-design processes, can the citizens link this to a specific problem during the process?</li> <li>4. What are the lessons learned from the occurrence of participation fatigue in practice?</li> </ol>
design assignment in which these result.	
<p>The resulting research design aimed at answering these research question, is a <u>descriptive research</u> that provides an accurate account of the characteristics and occurrence of participation fatigue - as well as the lessons learned taken from experiences of citizens. The focus of the research lies on Dutch, public transformation projects that deal with energy transition. The reason for this being the actuality of energy transition in Dutch municipalities in recent years as well as the considerable impact these types of projects have on surrounding communities, making their participation very important (Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat, 2021).</p> <p>In order for this research design to be successful, the following deliverables are expected to be produced in the upcoming months:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Case descriptions as well as the stakeholder and business process analysis resulting from this</li> <li>2. Interview recordings and transcriptions as well as the supporting material for the interviews (such as the informed consent forms and interview protocol)</li> <li>3. Thematic content analysis from the interviews</li> <li>4. Finalized survey about how participation fatigue is experienced</li> <li>5. Dataset resulting from this survey</li> <li>6. Interpretation of this dataset, supposedly supporting the data gained from the qualitative research segment</li> </ol>	

## Process

### Method description

**Type of study and data:** a mixed-method approach is proposed with qualitative methods and a possible quantitative element as well (depending on the opportunities presented during the research itself). The possible quantitative element can strengthen the findings of the research but is not necessary towards answering the research questions and drawing some strong conclusions. The overall research is thus predominantly supported by qualitative data and supplemented by quantitative data. The aim of the research is to provide an accurate account of the characteristics of participation fatigue in a **descriptive** way in order to fill the existing gap in academic research surrounding the phenomenon.

### Methods:



**Case studies:** With the case studies, a clear analysis of how the projects have been organized and how participation fatigue has been impacted by this setup will be made. In order to find potential case studies (and interviewees, more on this later), different organizations and municipalities have been approached in order to find running public transformation projects that deal with energy transition and in which co-design processes are used. A very useful contact that has been made is with the organization 'Transitiedoeners', this organization facilitates co-creation processes and the development of the necessary skills for co-creation (Transitiedoeenrs, n.d.).

**Semi-structured interviews:** To gain a deeper insight into the mechanisms that occur in co-design processes and potentially lead to participation fatigue, semi-structured interviews with citizens who have participated in a co-design process in the past (or re currently doing so), will be held. The goal of these interviews is twofold: pinpointing the occurrence of participation fatigue and the conditions credited as to its causation; as well as extracting the lessons learned from the participants' experience.

**Analyzing qualitative data:** In order to analyze the data collected through the case studies and interviews, thematic content analyses will be carried out using ATLAS.ti. This is done to discover underlying themes and present the qualitative data in a descriptive way. The literature that discusses the issue of participation fatigue will also be used in a simple thematic content analysis. The purpose of the thematic content analysis of the literature is to ascertain the scope of existing research surrounding participation fatigue. As mentioned before: it was already found that there currently exists a certain gap in the research surrounding this issue, the thematic content analysis is meant to show this gap as well as illustrate how existing literature treats the issue of participation fatigue.

**Survey:** In order to provide a higher level of triangulation in the research design, the author also wishes to send out a small survey. This survey would aim at confirming and enriching the findings from the interviews and case studies in a quantitative way. For this, a purposive snowball sampling method would be used. This is because the sample will be made by using the existing networks that organizations such as "Transitiedoeners", have built over the years. In terms of required responses, no estimates can be made yet. Because of the very specific requirements of the population from which the sample will be drawn and the time limitations of the graduation project in which the research takes place, it is not yet certain whether or not this will survey will actually be conducted. It would, however, take place after the findings from the case studies and interviews have been analyzed.

## **Literature and general practical preference**

In order to acquire the context and knowledge needed for generating the proposal introduced in this document, academical and non-academical literature surrounding the topics of co-design and co-creation processes, participatory processes and participation fatigue have been consulted. Most literature found regarding these subjects, deal with existing participatory design frameworks (such as the CLEVVVER framework), theories and case studies. Most methods found in the academical sources utilize qualitative methods, sometimes supplemented by quantitative methods. The research proposed here also consists mainly of qualitative methods supplemented by quantitative methods.

The extended reference list used for the research, can be found in "P2\_Report\_ChristinaSwinnen\_4579968"

## **Reflection**

1. What is the relation between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

My personal interest in lay participation was piqued last year following the course "Re-design: Complex Redevelopment Projects. I became aware of how the inclusion of the end-users in development projects can be imperative to the success of such a project, but can also be a really difficult and taxing thing to do. This in combination with recent strides of Dutch municipalities towards transitioning away from fossil fuels – which in turn resulted in the involvement of citizens in these energy transition projects – have not only made the topic more interesting for me personally, but has also made it relevant for the MBE field. If in the future, co-design processes will be used more, then problems occurring within these types of projects will also become more pressing. Being able to eventually manage issues like participation fatigue, thus lies in the interest of the MBE field.

2. What is the relevance of your graduation work in the larger social, professional and scientific framework.

Similarly to the above-mentioned, the societal relevance of investigating the occurrence of participation fatigue, stems from the same driving forcing (co-design becoming more popular in general, more participation in the Netherlands, more energy transition projects in the Netherlands). Being able to provide an accurate account of the phenomenon of participation fatigue as experienced by citizens, will eventually (hopefully) lead to co-design in which the involved stakeholders are aware of the issue and can work together to avoid it or remedy it if it does occur. Doing so will likely improve the experiences of participating citizens and could even improve the results of the co-design process itself.

In terms of academical relevance, it was found that there currently exists a gap in the research surrounding participation fatigue. Any in-depth analysis of the issue seems to be missing from the existing academic literature. The research thus wishes to supplement the existing body of research with a descriptive account of the phenomenon as it occurs in public transformation projects dealing with energy transition.

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# APPENDIX B - DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN

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## **0. Administrative questions**

**1. Name of data management support staff consulted during the preparation of this plan.**

Diana Popa

**2. Date of consultation with support staff.**

Question not answered.

## **I. Data description and collection or re-use of existing data**

**3. Provide a general description of the type of data you will be working with, including any re-used data:**

<b>Type of data</b>	<b>File format(s)</b>	<b>How will data be collected (for re-used data: source and terms of use)?</b>	<b>Purpose of processing</b>	<b>Storage location</b>	<b>Who will have access to the data</b>
Qualitative interview data	.mp4 + .txt files	Interviews will be recorded after which transcriptions will be made.	To identify the underlying causes of participation fatigue and lessons learned from it, as experienced by lay participants	Project storage drive	Researchers involved in this project
Names, contact information	.pdf file	Subjects will be asked to fill in this personal info on an informed consent form	The purpose of this is so the subjects are able to consent to participate in the interviews and workshops	Project storage drive	Researchers involved in this project
Anonymized data on profession	.mp4 + .txt files	Interviews will be recorded after which transcriptions will be made.	Due to the nature of the interviews, personal data such as occupation may be brought up. This data will of course be anonymized	Project storage drive	Researchers involved in this project
Quantitative Survey data	.csv file	A questionnaire will be sent out to members of IPMA-NL	The data will corroborate whether or not the developed framework is expected to work or not	Project storage drive	Researchers involved in this project

#### **4. How much data storage will you require during the project lifetime?**

- < 250 GB

## **II. Documentation and data quality**

#### **5. What documentation will accompany data?**

- Data will be deposited in a data repository at the end of the project (see section V) and data discoverability and re-usability will be ensured by adhering to the repository's metadata standards
- I will adhere to disciplinary metadata standards - please explain which standards in the box below



- Methodology of data collection

### III. Storage and backup during research process

**6. Where will the data (and code, if applicable) be stored and backed-up during the project lifetime?**

- Project Storage at TU Delft

### IV. Legal and ethical requirements, codes of conduct

**7. Does your research involve human subjects or 3rd party datasets collected from human participants?**

- Yes

**8A. Will you work with personal data? (information about an identified or identifiable natural person)**

*If you are not sure which option to select, ask your [Faculty Data Steward](#) for advice. You can also check with the [privacy website](#) or contact the privacy team: [privacy-tud@tudelft.nl](mailto:privacy-tud@tudelft.nl)*

- Yes

The informed consent forms will include the full name and possibly the contact information of the interviewees.

During the interviews, personal data such as occupation or the municipality in which the interviewee resides might come up. This data will be anonymized.

**8B. Will you work with any types of confidential or classified data or code as listed below? (tick all that apply)**

*If you are not sure which option to select, ask your [Faculty Data Steward](#) for advice.*

- No, I will not work with any confidential or classified data/code

**9. How will ownership of the data and intellectual property rights to the data be managed?**

*For projects involving commercially-sensitive research or research involving third parties, seek advice of your [Faculty Contract Manager](#) when answering this question. If this is not the case, you can use the example below.*

All data that will be shared outside of the research team will be anonymized. Datasets gathered through the survey will be publicly released following the TU Delft Research Data Framework Policy.

**10. Which personal data will you process? Tick all that apply**

- Other types of personal data - please explain below
- Data collected in Informed Consent form (names and email addresses)
- Signed consent forms

Other types: data such as occupation or the municipality in which an interviewee resides might come up

**11. Please list the categories of data subjects**

Lay people who have participated in co-design processes in the past (or are currently doing so) - so they are not industry professionals

**12. Will you be sharing personal data with individuals/organisations outside of the EEA (European Economic Area)?**

- No

**15. What is the legal ground for personal data processing?**

- Informed consent

**16. Please describe the informed consent procedure you will follow:**

All interviewees will be asked for their written consent for taking part in the study and for data processing before the start of the interview. The informed consent template from The Human Research Ethics Committee at TU Delft will be used.

**17. Where will you store the signed consent forms?**

- Same storage solutions as explained in question 6

**18. Does the processing of the personal data result in a high risk to the data subjects?**

If the processing of the personal data results in a high risk to the data subjects, it is required to perform a [Data Protection Impact Assessment \(DPIA\)](#). In order to determine if there is a high risk for the data subjects, please check if any of the options below that are applicable to the processing of the personal data during your research (check all that apply).

If two or more of the options listed below apply, you will have to [complete the DPIA](#). Please get in touch with the privacy team: [privacy-tud@tudelft.nl](mailto:privacy-tud@tudelft.nl) to receive support with DPIA.

If only one of the options listed below applies, your project might need a DPIA. Please get in touch with the privacy team: [privacy-tud@tudelft.nl](mailto:privacy-tud@tudelft.nl) to get advice as to whether DPIA is necessary.

If you have any additional comments, please add them in the box below.

- None of the above applies

**22. What will happen with personal research data after the end of the research project?**

- Anonymised or aggregated data will be shared with others

**25. Will your study participants be asked for their consent for data sharing?**

- Yes, in consent form - please explain below what you will do with data from participants who did not consent to data sharing

## **V. Data sharing and long-term preservation**

**27. Apart from personal data mentioned in question 22, will any other data be publicly shared?**

- All other non-personal data (and code) underlying published articles / reports / theses

**29. How will you share research data (and code), including the one mentioned in question 22?**

- All anonymised or aggregated data, and/or all other non-personal data will be uploaded to 4TU.ResearchData with public access

**30. How much of your data will be shared in a research data repository?**

- < 100 GB

**31. When will the data (or code) be shared?**

- At the end of the research project

**32. Under what licence will be the data/code released?**

- CC0

## **VI. Data management responsibilities and resources**

**33. Is TU Delft the lead institution for this project?**

- Yes, leading the collaboration

**34. If you leave TU Delft (or are unavailable), who is going to be responsible for the data resulting from this project?**

In this case my thesis mentors will presumably be responsible, in this case Tong Wang (1st mentor) or Aksel Ersoy (2nd mentor)

**35. What resources (for example financial and time) will be dedicated to data management and ensuring that data will be FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Re-usable)?**

4TU.ResearchData is able to archive 1TB of data per researcher per year free of charge for all TU Delft researchers.

# APPENDIX C - Interview protocol

Ask for consent to record the meeting, briefly explain what will be done with the recording.

Introduction:

- Who am I
- What am I studying at the TUDelft
- What is the research that I am conducting about
- How did I become interested in this subject
- What will I be asking about

Ask the interviewee to introduce themselves

*The following questions were asked about in an semi-structured manner, mostly letting the interviewee explain and talk in their own words and asking for clarification/more in-depth answers if needed. Since all interviewees were closely involved with the organization of the citizen participation or the energy transition process in their respective municipalities/organizations, this was found to be the best strategy.*

How is your municipality/organization tackling the energy transition challenge:

- What type(s) of energy transition projects/plans are they working on
- How has the process been up until now
- What are the plans for the future
- ....

How has citizen participation been facilitated in the energy transition process

- How is participation organized: intensity, structure, tools used, manners of communication,....
- What do you think about the proceedings of the citizen participation: what aspects are positive, which are negative, were can improvements be made,...
- ....

*When a clear picture of how the citizen participation has been organized, has been painted, delve into specific questions about participation fatigue, again, in a semi-structured manner.*

Have you noticed the issue of participation fatigue within the participating citizens (or maybe other parties that are involved)

What do you think might be the cause of this? What might be possible solutions to this?

Conclude the interview with practical information about how and when the interviewee can expect to receive the finished results of the research and thank them for participating.

# APPENDIX D - Geïnformeerde toestemming



Geachte heer/mevrouw,

U bent recent uitgenodigd geweest om deel te nemen aan een onderzoek genaamd *“Co-Design in Public Transformation Projects - A deeper look into the occurrence of participation fatigue in co-design processes dealing with energy transition”*. Het onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd in context van een master-afstudeerscriptie aan de faculteit bouwkunde van de Technische Universiteit Delft, ondernomen door Christina Swinnen, onder begeleiding van Tong Wang Ph.D en Dr. Aksel Ersoy.

In de afgelopen jaren zijn er in Nederland grote stappen gezet richting het afstappen van fossiele brandstoffen om zo een duurzamere toekomst te creëren. Voor deze energietransitie opgave — en ook door de invoer van de nieuwe Omgevingswet — zijn vele gemeentes actief begonnen met het betrekken van hun inwoners bij het ontwikkelen van hun energietransitie strategieën en plannen. Deze burgerparticipatie kan enorme voordelen en interessante bijdragen leveren aan het energietransitie vraagstuk, maar, is uiteraard ook een uitdagend proces voor zowel gemeentes als inwoners. Een van die uitdagingen is het fenomeen ‘participatie moeheid’, waarrond nog weinig onderzoek bestaat. Het doel van het onderzoek is dan ook het analyseren van het fenomeen participatie moeheid in context van burgerparticipatie voor energietransitie projecten in Nederland.

In deze geïnformeerde toestemming, geeft u toestemming tot het verzamelen van informatie door het afleggen van een interview over uw ervaringen met burgerparticipatie en participatie moeheid. Het interview werd afgelegd door Christina Swinnen en vergde ongeveer 45 tot 60 minuten van uw tijd. Het interview werd (na het geven van uw toestemming) opgenomen voor latere verwerking om zo te kunnen leren van uw ervaringen. Het beeld- en geluidsmateriaal van deze opname wordt niet gedeeld, maar dus enkel gebruikt voor verwerking van de data.

In deze brief vragen we schriftelijk of we de verzamelde data van uw interview mogen gebruiken voor het onderzoek. Deze informatie wordt geanonimiseerd zodat u niet geïdentificeerd kunt worden door partijen buiten het onderzoeksteam. Er wordt een algemeen en anoniem verslag over uw ervaringen gemaakt. Als uw woorden worden aangehaald, dan zal uw naam niet gebruikt worden en wordt ervoor gezorgd dat het niet duidelijk is wie dit gezegd kan hebben. Uw naam- en contactgegevens worden meteen na afloop van het onderzoek vernietigd. U mag ook nu nog zeggen dat u liever niet mee doet. U kunt u ook later nog bedenken en uw deelname intrekken zonder opgave van reden. U mag iedere vraag die wij stellen weigeren te beantwoorden.

Als u toestemt met het bovenstaand, zet dan a.u.b. uw (digitale) handtekening onderaan deze brief en stuur deze pdf terug naar de hoofdonderzoeker (Christina Swinnen). De hoofdonderzoeker ondertekende deze brief ook zodat u zeker weet dat er vertrouwelijk omgaan wordt met uw gegevens en antwoorden.

Als u vragen heeft over dit onderzoek, kunt u contact met ons opnemen:  
Christina Swinnen, C.M.S.Swinnen@student.tudelft.nl, +32 490567878 .

**In te vullen door de onderzoeksparticipant:**

1. Ik verklaar op een voor mij duidelijke wijze te zijn ingelicht over de aard, methode, doel en belasting van het onderzoek.
2. Mijn vragen zijn naar tevredenheid beantwoord.
3. Ik begrijp dat het geluids- en/of beeldmateriaal (of de bewerking daarvan) en de overige verzamelde gegevens uitsluitend voor analyse en wetenschappelijke presentatie en publicaties zal worden gebruikt.
4. Ik behoud me daarbij het recht voor om op elk moment zonder opgaaf van redenen mijn deelname aan dit onderzoek te beëindigen.
5. **Ik heb dit formulier gelezen of het formulier is mij voorgelezen en ik stem in met deelname aan het onderzoek.**
  - **Graag ontvang ik aan het eind van het onderzoek een exemplaar van de uitgewerkte scriptie. Om deze reden verleen ik toestemming om mijn naam- en adresgegevens tot het eind van het onderzoek te bewaren. (de verwachte einddatum van het onderzoek ligt tussen 07/22 en 10/22)**

**Naam deelnemer**

**Handtekening**

**Datum**

\_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**In te vullen door hoofdonderzoeker:**

Ik, **de onderzoeker**, verklaar dat ik de het instemmingsformulier correct aan de potentiële deelnemer heb bezorgd en, naar het beste van mijn vermogen, heb verzekerd dat de deelnemer begrijpt waar hij/zij vrijwillig mee instemt. Verder verklaar ik mezelf bereid nog opkomende vragen over het onderzoek naar vermogen te beantwoorden.

**Naam onderzoeker**

**Handtekening**

**Datum**

Christina Swinnen

  
\_\_\_\_\_

22/03/2022



# APPENDIX E - SURVEY

## Block 1

Deze enquête wordt uitgevoerd door een masterstudente aan de faculteit bouwkunde van de Technische Universiteit Delft voor hun afstudeerscriptie. Hiervoor horen we van u graag wat meer over uw ervaringen met burgerparticipatie voor energietransitie projecten. Meer bepaald over uw ervaring (of gebrek daaraan) met het fenomeen "participatie moeheid". Hierover later meer.

De enquête vergt ongeveer 10 minuten om in te vullen. U kunt de enquête maar één keer invullen. De enquête is compleet anoniem en op vrijwillige basis. Door op "volgende" te klikken, stemt u in met het deelnemen aan de enquête. Als u vragen hebt over de enquête, kunt u een e-mail sturen naar: C.M.S.Swinnen@student.tudelft.nl

We stellen uw inbreng zeer op prijs! Indien u dit wenst, kunt u door de enquête in te vullen dan ook kans maken op een cadeaubon van 20 euro voor de online webwinkel bol.com. Deze bon zal aan 1 deelnemer (op willekeurige wijze gekozen) geschonken worden.

## Block 5

Indien u kans wilt maken op de voucher van 20 euro voor online webwinkel bol.com, vul dan hier uw email adres in. Na het verloten van de voucher wordt deze data meteen vernietigd. Indien u liever geen persoonlijke informatie vrijgeeft, kunt u de vraag gewoon leeg laten en op volgende klikken. U maakt dan wel geen kans op de cadeaubon.

## Default Question Block

In de afgelopen jaren zijn er in Nederland grote stappen gezet richting het afstappen van fossiele brandstoffen om zo een duurzamere toekomst te creëren. Voor deze energietransitie opgave — en ook door de invoer van de nieuwe Omgevingswet — zijn veel gemeentes actief begonnen met het betrekken van hun inwoners bij het ontwikkelen van hun energietransitie strategieën en plannen. Sommige burgers zijn

zichzelf ook vrijwillig beginnen te organiseren in coöperaties of burgerinitiatieven om zo samen aan dergelijke projecten te werken (zoals bijvoorbeeld het aanleggen van een warmtenet op buurtniveau).

Om aan deze enquête mee te kunnen doen, hoort u een burger te zijn die momenteel of in het verleden betrokken is (geweest) bij één of meerdere energietransitie projecten. Dit wil zeggen dat u bijvoorbeeld mee hebt gedaan of aanwezig was voor informatiesessies, webinars, discussies, workshops, buurtgesprekken, focusgroepen,... Deze kunnen online of offline plaatsgevonden hebben.

Duid aan wat voor u van toepassing is:

- Ik ben momenteel betrokken bij een energietransitie project
- Ik ben in het verleden betrokken geweest bij een energietransitie project

Wanneer bent u (ongeveer) begonnen met participeren?

	Jaartal	Maand
Selecteer:	<input type="text" value="v"/>	<input type="text" value="v"/>

Hoelang hebt u (ongeveer) meegedaan aan het project?

Indien u in het verleden geparticipeerd hebt in een energietransitie project, leg hier dan kort hoe/waarom uw participatie tot zijn einde gelopen is (bv.: het project liep zijn natuurlijke einde, de interesse die u initieel had was er niet meer,...)

Bij wat voor type energietransitie project bent u betrokken (geweest)?

- Regionale energie strategie
- Transitievisie warmte
- Aanleggen warmtenet

- Andere, vul in wat voor u van toepassing is (bijvoorbeeld zonneveld project, groene daken initiatief, gemeenschappelijke tuinen...)

Hoe oud bent u?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-64
- 65+

Hoe identificeert u uzelf?

- Vrouw
- Man
- Andere

Wat is uw beroep?

How zou u uw woonplaats/gemeente omschrijven?

- Stedelijk gebied
- Suburbaan gebied (In een suburbaan woongebied is meer ruimte voor groen en water. Het gebied kent voornamelijk een woonfunctie met daarnaast ook op kleinere schaal bedrijvigheid)
- Plattelands gebied
- Anders, namelijk:

Hoe omschrijft u uw leefsituatie

- Gehuwd samenwonend
- Ongehuwd samenwonend
- Alleenwonend
- Anders, namelijk:

## Categorie 1: Context

In deze eerste set vragen, vragen we u wat meer over de context van uw participatie. Deze context kan namelijk invloed hebben op hoe u het participeren ervaart. Zaken zoals uw persoonlijke motivatie en bestaande achtergrondkennis zijn hier relevant.

Duid aan wat voor u van toepassing is:

- Ik wist voorafgaande aan mijn participatie al veel over energietransitie en ben geïnteresseerd in onderwerpen zoals duurzaamheid, groene energie,....
- Ik wist voorafgaande aan mijn participatie al een beetje over energietransitie en ben geïnteresseerd in onderwerpen zoals duurzaamheid, groene energie,....
- Ik wist voorafgaande aan mijn participatie niet veel over energietransitie maar ik ben wel geïnteresseerd in onderwerpen zoals duurzaamheid, groene energie,....
- Ik wist voorafgaande aan mijn participatie niet veel over energietransitie en ik ben niet erg geïnteresseerd in onderwerpen zoals duurzaamheid, groene energie,....

Wat was voor u de aanleiding om te participeren? Wat was voor u de grootste motivatie? (meerdere opties zijn mogelijk)

- Het afstappen van fossiele brandstoffen is een belangrijk onderwerp voor mij. Ik wil hier dus graag over meedenken.
- Ik denk en beslis graag mee over wat er in mijn gemeente en buurt gebeurt
- Indien ik niet mee participeer, ben ik bang dat mijn mening en die van anderen niet in achtning zullen worden genomen. Ik voel me dus genoodzaakt om te participeren.
- Anders, namelijk:

Zal het project waar u aan meewerkt een impact op uw dagelijks leven hebben? Zo ja, op welke manier? (bv.: een energietransitie project dat gaat over het installeren van een warmtenet in uw buurt, zal invloed hebben op de straat waar u in woont alsook uw woning)

- Nee
- Ja, namelijk:
- Dit weet ik niet precies

Hoe bent u begonnen met participeren? Denk hierbij aan hoe u te weten bent gekomen dat burgerparticipatie/burgerinitiatieven mogelijk was/waren in uw gemeente.

- Via communicatie van de gemeente ben ik te weten gekomen dat dit mogelijk was (bv.: via nieuwsbrieven, de dorpskrant, e-mail,...)
- Ik ben dit te weten gekomen door te praten met mijn burens
- Ik vroeg me af of burgerparticipatie mogelijk was en ben dit gaan opzoeken. Zo ben ik te weten gekomen dat participeren in mijn gemeente een optie was.
- Anders, namelijk:

Is er in uw gemeente sprake van burgerinitiatieven? Burgerinitiatieven zijn kleine of grote groepen inwoners die zichzelf organiseren om bepaalde zaken voor elkaar te krijgen (bv.: energiecoöperaties, schoonmaakacties, gemeenschappelijke moestuintjes,...)

- Neen
- Ja, namelijk:
- Dit weet ik niet

Bent u zelf betrokken (geweest) bij dergelijke burgertinitiatieven?

- Ja
- Neen

## Categorie 2: Organisatie

Deze tweede set vragen gaat over hoe de participatie in uw gemeente of burgerinitiatief georganiseerd was. Dit kan namelijk een grote invloed hebben op uw ervaringen als participant. De lengte, intensiteit, gebruikte communicatie middelen,... van de participatie hebben hier allemaal een potentiële invloed.

Wanneer is het project waar u aan mee doet gestart? Vul aub een jaartal in (let op, met deze vraag wordt de start van het project bedoeld, niet de start van uw participatie, een project kan dus bijvoorbeeld al een jaar voor uw betrokkenheid gestart zijn)

Selecteer:	Jaartal: <input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="v"/>
------------	---

Hoe zou u uw rol als participant beschrijven? Mogelijke antwoorden zijn bijvoorbeeld: "ik ga naar de meeste bijeenkomsten en informatiesessies en geef daar mijn inbreng. Daarbuiten lees ik af en toe berichten op het discussieforum" - of - "ik was een van de

eerste participanten betrokken bij het project en ben momenteel actief in een soort van kerngroep die samenwerkt met de gemeente".

Welke communicatiemiddelen worden/werden er gebruikt voor de participatie? Duid hier alle relevante antwoorden aan. Indien een gebruikte communicatiemiddel niet in de lijst staat, voeg deze dan a.u.b. toe in het tekstvak.

- Vragenlijsten
- Webinars/informatiesessies
- Buurtgesprekken
- Discussieforum op het internet
- Deur-aan-deur gesprekken
- Brieven
- Workshops
- Andere

Hoe frequent bent/was u actief bezig met participeren? Met actieve participatie wordt bedoeld dat u de tijd neemt om bijvoorbeeld een vragenlijst in te vullen, eventuele brieven/mails over het project leest, naar bijeenkomsten gaat, reacties plaatst op een online discussiebord,... Indien u in het verleden geparticipeerd hebt, maak dan een schatting van hoe vaak u gemiddeld participeerde.

- Dagelijks
- Wekelijks
- Een paar keer per maand
- Eén keer per maand
- Eén keer in de twee tot vier maanden
- Een paar keer per jaar
- Ik heb maar 1 keer geparticipeerd
- Anders, namelijk:

Beoordeel uw vermogen als participant om het project waar u aan meewerkt te beïnvloeden, op een schaal van 1 tot 10. Hier betekent '1' dat u geen invloed lijkt te hebben op het project en de gemeente u enkel informeert over beslissingen die ze maken, en '10' dat u, samen met uw medeburgers, de kracht hebt om belangrijke beslissingen in het project te sturen.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Beoordeling:

Vindt u dat de gemeente uw bijdrage en die van uw medeburgers voldoende in acht neemt?

- Ja  
 Nee

Indien u dit niet vindt, verduidelijk hieronder waarom:

## Participatie Moeheid

In dit laatste deel van de enquête worden er vragen gesteld over uw ervaring met het fenomeen 'participatie moeheid'. Participatie moeheid is een fenomeen dat kan voorkomen in processen waarbij mensen met verschillende achtergronden samen werken om een bepaald doel te bereiken. Het betekent dat deelnemers van zo'n proces als het ware 'moe' kunnen worden van de samenwerking en hierdoor zelfs kunnen afhaken. Oorzaken van participatie moeheid kunnen zaken zijn zoals: de participatie is te intensief (te vaak of te langdurig), er wordt niet genoeg rekening gehouden met de inbreng van participanten, het participatie proces is niet goed gestructureerd,.... Wanneer we kijken naar burgerparticipatie bij energietransitie projecten in Nederland, is er nog niet veel bekend over hoe dit probleem optreedt bij participerende burgers. Daarom gaat dit deel van de enquête hier dieper op in om zo te kijken of participatie moeheid iets is wat u zelf al ervaren heeft. In combinatie met de antwoorden op de vorige vragensets, zal er een beeld geschetst kunnen worden van de verschillende

factoren die participatie moeheid kunnen beïnvloeden en hoe dit in de toekomst vermeden kan worden.

Beoordeel, gebaseerd op het bovenstaande, uw ervaring met participatie moeheid op een schaal van 1 tot 10. Hier betekent '1' dat u nog nooit participatie moeheid gevoeld hebt en '10' dat participatie moeheid voor u zo impactvol was dat u gestopt bent met participeren.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Uw ervaring met  
participatie moeheid:

Wat waren voor u de oorzaken van participatie moeheid? Denk hier bijvoorbeeld aan de intensiteit en structuur van de participatie, de gebruikte communicatiemiddelen, de houding van de gemeente, omstandigheden in uw eigen leven die de participatie moeilijker maakten...

Heeft participatie moeheid de manier waarop u participeert, beïnvloedt? Zo ja, op welke manier (bv.: u gaat naar minder bijeenkomsten, u bent gestopt met participeren, ...)

Wat zou voor er voor u helpen om participatie moeheid te ontwijken of verzachten? Denk hierbij bijvoorbeeld aan: duidelijkere communicatie over wat het doel is van elke bijeenkomst/vragenlijst/ etc., meer duidelijkheid over hoe uw inbreng precies gebruikt wordt,...



Heeft u participatie moeheid al zien voorkomen bij participerende medeburgers?

- Neen
- Ja
- Ik ben niet zeker

## Block 6

Bedankt voor invullen van de enquête! Uw bijdrage wordt erg op prijs gesteld en zal helpen bij het succesvol afronden van het onderzoek. Indien u geïnteresseerd bent in de resultaten van het onderzoek, kunt u de volledige scriptie tegen het einde van de zomer terugvinden op de 'TUDelft repository' site onder de naam "Co-Design in Public Transformation Projects - A deeper look into the occurrence of participation fatigue in co-design processes dealing with energy transition".

# APPENDIX F - SURVEY QUESTIONS + RELATING THEORIES

Block 1: respondent background	Indicator of:	Related theory	aspect of theory
Bij wat voor type energietransitie project bent u betrokken (geweest)?	type of project	SDT	relatedness
Hoe oud bent u?			
Hoe identificeert u uzelf?	All of these factors are things that could influence a person's behaviour	TPB	Demographical information
Wat is uw beroep?			
How zou u uw woonplaats/gemeente omschrijven?			
Hoe omschrijft u uw leefsituatie			
<b>Block 2: context</b>			
Duid aan wat voor u van toepassing is: (achtergrondkennis)	existing knowledge prior to participation + intrinsic/extrinsic motivation	SDT + TPB	competence + relatedness (+perceived behavioural control)
Wat was voor u de aanleiding om te participeren?	What type of motivation	SDT	motivation
Zal het project waar u aan meewerkt een impact op uw dagelijks leven hebben?	closeness' of project to respondent's daily life	SDT	relatedness
Hoe bent u begonnen met participeren?		could be TPB	subjective norms
Is er in uw gemeente sprake van burgerinitiatieven?	energy transition as a positive subjective norm	TPB	subjective norms
<b>Block 3: organisation</b>			
Wanneer is het project waar u aan mee doet gestart?	when they entered the project	-	-
Hoe zou u uw rol als participant beschrijven?	role and intensity	SDT	autonomy
Welke communicatiemiddelen worden/werden er gebruikt voor de participatie?	tools used	-	-
Hoe frequent bent/was u actief bezig met participeren?	frequency participation	-	-
Beoordeel uw vermogen als participant om het project waar u aan meewerkt te beïnvloeden	theoretical framework	SDT	autonomy
Vindt u dat de gemeente uw bijdrage en die van uw medeburgers voldoende in acht neemt?	theoretical framework	SDT	autonomy
<b>Block 4: PF</b>			
Beoordeel uw ervaring met participatie moeheid op een schaal van 1 tot 10		open question	
Wat waren voor u de oorzaken van participatie moeheid?		closed question/mc/slider	
Heeft participatie moeheid de manier waarop u participeert, beïnvloedt?			
Wat zou voor er voor u helpen om participatie moeheid te ontwijken of verzachten?			
Heeft u participatie moeheid al zien voorkomen bij participerende medeburgers?			

# APPENDIX G – SURVEY RESPONSES REGARDING PARTICIPATION FATIGUE

## Answers regarding causes of PF

- Door al enkele jaren best wel intensief actief te zijn in onze buurtinitiatief (en door ook meer hooi op mijn vork te hebben genomen dan dat ik eerst van plan was), vindt ik soms dat ik het wel heel druk heb met participeren. Het is nu bijna even belangrijk als mijn echte job.
- de bureaucratie/regelgeving
- te weinig resultaat
- Interne processen, vertraging door overheid en bureaucratie
- lange duur van de ontwikkeling
- realisatie vergt heel veel tijd. Overheid, Notaris, Stedin en Certiq. Vooral deze laatste twee zijn lastig om iets echt werkend te krijgen. Overheid met de nieuwe regeling wordt de komende jaren ook erg lastig.
- traagheid, houding gemeente, afhankelijkheid an andere organisaties
- Slechte ondersteuning, weerstand instanties, etc, etc
- Zie txt bij gemeenten, zo ook bij netbeheerders.
- Het kost enorm veel tijd en het resultaat is twijfelachtig
- samenwerking/goedkeuring gemeente niet optimaal
- Dit betrof de Res, m'n tav warmte. De provincie was is de mond vol van het belang van burgerparticipatie en was trots dat ze burgers betrok. Ik vond betrokkenheid in stap 5 (van de 7) geen goed voorbeeld en voelde me een excuus-Truus; een vonkje halen.
- ik weet dat duurzaamheid niet voor iedereen belangrijk is, dus weet ik dat ik er zelf energie in moet blijven steken. ik denk ook wel eens dat private initiatieven van mensen voldoende zijn. maar in het algemeen vind ik de projecten van de vereniging, zoals de postcoderoos, goed en ik denk dat bewoners er baat bij hebben.
- Te veel, te vaak geprobeerd als partner van de overheid, met dezelfde doelgroep maar (soms) met andere middelen transities als stimulans te benutten. Te vaak en te veel waren deze pogingen vruchteloos
- "Ons 'werk' kost veel tijd en energie, pionieren. We worden niet door iedereen enthousiast ontvangen. Steeds weer subsidie aan moeten vragen enz."
- Tijdgebrek, soms veel informatie om te lezen
- Steeds wijzigende regels van de rijksoverheid mbt postcodeprojecten.
- Regelgeving en soms ook een onbetrouwbare overheid.
- Ik ga door waar andere ophouden Is ook mijn vak, Ben ook zo opgevoed
- Steeds nul op request bij het zoeken naar geschikte daken.
- Corona heeft natuurlijk de intensiteit van de werkgroep doen afnemen, video- overleg was soms een oplossing.
  - afspraken worden niet altijd nagekomen door vrijwilligers waardoor trajecten kunnen vertragen
  - niet iedereen heeft dezelfde ambitie en drive"
- Houding gemeente, besluitvorming, traagheid
- Ambtenaren kunnen eigenwijs zijn
- politiek activisme

- Groot verschil in kennis van deelnemers.
- Enige oorzaak van participatie moeheid heb ik als er geen rekening mee gehouden wordt.
- Intensiteit
- "de cooperatie Sterk op Stroom (bestuur en vrijwilligers )is sterk om tegen de stroom in de roeien echter het leeuwendeel van de genoemde zon energie cooperaties in Den Haag is in de afgelopen 4 jaar afgehaakt vanwege het ontbreken van volwassen beleid van de Gemeente Den Haag"
- te lange meetings
- Ik vind dat het allemaal soepel verloopt en er bij mij geen sprake van participatie moeheid"
- Moeizame samenwerkingen tussen/met stakeholders
- Vooral de mate van effectiviteit en het gebrek aan centrale sturing
- Het was soms rommelig, soms wel goed gestructureerd. Soms werden plaatsnamen gebruikt die niet van onze stad waren... copy paste misser.
- gemeente luistert slecht naar de burgers
- De heel formele manier van communiceren
- "Het gevoel bij de gemeente voortdurend tegen een politieke muur aan te lopen. Continu wordt het argument ""geen geld"" gebruikt. Slechte communicatie."
- Houding van gemeente en diverse bestuurders
- Ik wil meer terugzien van onze inbreng. Beleidsplannen zijn niet het resultaat van de webinars die we hebben bijgewoond."
- De gemeente bemoeit zich niet met onze projecten. Het zijn dorpsinitiatieven die gezamenlijk en zelfstandig worden uitgevoerd. Samen steken we de handen uit de mouwen. Als er behoefte en noodzaak is om zaken aan te pakken , is de medewerking vaak geen probleem in ons dorp. Grote sociale cohesie.
- Alles duurt te lang
- Veel wisselingen in. De politiek, veel wisselingen van ambtenaren
- Te weinig regie
- Teveel onderwerpen waar participatie gewenst is
- Het vraagt veel om met de gemeente in gesprek te komen over ontwikkelingen en als dat wel lukt blijkt vaak dat gemeente en burgers verschillende taal spreken.
- technische informatie voor mij niet interessant, ik wilde gewoon aan de slag. heb dat ook gedaan na mijn verhuizing: energiecoach op bezoek gehad, vloerisolatie en zonnepanelen genomen. duurzame energie genomen.
- structuur van organisatie, samenwerking/tegenwerking, alles zelf doen, geen echte organisatie, laat staan leidinggevenden
- in eerste instantie te weinig ontwikkelingen, stappen naar verdere ontwikkelingen
- Ik vind het nog steeds interessant en relevant, maar ik heb er altijd moeite mee om heel lang hetzelfde te doen. Zodra ergens routine in sluipt wil ik iets anders gaan doen.
- tijd
- De niet-actieve houding van het initiatief van de stedelijke organisatie.Wel enthousiaste informatieronde, maar geen vervolg. Plus, zoals gezegd, het overulende plan van de gemeente. Overigens wordt nu begin 2022 eerst duidelijk waar die postcoderoosprojecten komen in Deventer.In de trage werkwijze heeft ook de gemeente een nadrukkelijke rol gespeeld.
- Vechten tegen de bierkaai van Landelijke overheid (ontoereikend subsidiebeleid) en Lokale overheid (trage voortgang bij verkrijgen omgevingsvergunning). Wispelturige overheid maakt plannen maken haast onmogelijk."
- De houding van de gemeente
- Amateurisme, tegenstand, volle agenda.

- Toch wel het gemak waarmee subsidies gebruikt worden voor het inschakelen van allerlei proletarische milieubureautjes waarvan de inbreng zich beperkt tot oeverloos vergaderen zonder daadwekkelijke resultaten.
- Bij windpark 2013-2020: totaal geen gesprek mogelijk, slechts 1 doorgaande gang van monsterverbond provincie met initiatiefnemer. Bij zonnepark 2020-2022: volledige en transparante uitwisseling en samenwerking met de omgeving, met dezelfde initiatiefnemer. Twee uitersten dus
- Niet altijd, "tijd" om meetings bij te wonen
- weinig positieve respons, meestribbelen gemeente, uitzichtloosheid
- Ik leef zelf van bijna niks en je gaat in gesprek met mensen die willen dat je door hun hoepeltje springt, en zij worden er goed voor betaald. De middelen (communicatiemiddelen) overvleugelen het doel. Er is een enorm gebrek aan kennis en de juiste attitude onder het publiek, dat gaan we niet oplossen. Mensen zijn druk met hun hypotheek en hobbies, vliegereizen, de tuin bestraten, een hond erbij nemen, zich volvreten met Thuisbezorgd, of rijden langs de MacD en de kinderen leven om te gamen, etc. Dat in India mensen bij 10 graden C of minder in huizen leven zonder CV, komt niet in ze op. Serieus inleveren op luxe om de aarde te redden, dat wordt ons niet geleerd op school of werk."
- Geen tijd - geen nieuwe initiatieven - te veel top-down - eigenwijsheid
- Wat ik al eerder zei: Te veel onderwerpen, te veel meningen en pogingen om die op te valideren waardoor het voor mij eigenlijk een soort onherkenbare brij werd. Bovendien voelde ik mij gebruikt" door de gemeente. Ik had het idee dat het traject vooral was opgezet om te kunnen zeggen: "we hebben aan participatie gedaan" zonder dat er m.i. echt geluisterd werd."
- traag proces
- Gebrek aan constructieve samenwerking met de gemeente. NIMBY effect bij de omgeving van de projecten
- De lengte van het participatieproces (tussen initiatief tot realisatie zat een tijdsperiode van bijna 10 jaar), reden voor sommige leden om af te haken
- tijdinvestering is lang, maar vanuit mijn werk weet ik dat dit soort trajecten veel tijd vragen.
- De houding van de gemeente. Zaken zijn eigenlijk al besloten, maar er wordt voor de vorm gewerkt met participatiegroepen. De gemeente neemt haar burgers niet serieus. In mijn geval betrof het meerdere andere projecten (dus niet specifiek zaken betreffende milieu en energie).
- Werk en gezinsomstandigheden hiernaast
- Ik antwoordde al: mijn interesse was de klimaatcrisis. Energietransitie werd de focus van het project. Niet mijn ding, en genoeg ander werk
- Langzaam en te weinig rendement
- Houding van de gemeente: breed participatietraject in alle dorpen optuigen en vervolgens, zonder afstemming, besluiten het anders in te gaan richten
- Traagheid van het proces
- het gaat soms te langdradig. veel praten maar geen concrete zaken van de grond tillen
- Gebrek aan medewerking van de gemeente.
- De nieuwheid is eraf. Het wordt alleen nog maar werk en moeten
- weinig concreet
- de houding van ambtenaren en geen energie meer kunnen opbrengen om in de wijk mee te helpen bij schoonmaakacties
- in wezen de matige inzet vna anderen
- Als het project eenmaal gerealiseerd is, is de noodzaak om naar bijeenkomsten te gaan minder. Daarnaast was er corona....
- De houding van de gemeente, zoals ik al heb gemeld in een eerdere vraag.
- Weinig interesse bij andere mensen in de buurt

- te veel in te korte tijd
- 1. De stroperigheid van het besluitvormingsproces zonder zichtbaar resultaat. 2. De weerstand onder de bevolking om in oplossingen te willen denken. Het alleen gericht zijn op vermeende, niet wetenschappelijk onderbouwde persoonlijke ongemakken en stemmingmakerij.

### Answers regarding effects of the PF

- Voorlopig nog niet, maar ik hoop in de toekomst wat meer tijd vrij te maken voor andere zaken.
- ik stop na realisatie zonnepark
- gestopt
- Ja, minder actief
- nog niet
- Nee
- ambitie is bijgesteld en participatie deelname gelijk gebleven
- nee, ik ben een doorzetter
- Zeer kieskeurig, zeer kritisch... Blijven herhalen wat er aan schort, blijven hopen op kanteling...
- Nee
- Het heeft mijn participatiebereidheid (nog) niet beïnvloed.
- minder motivatie bij werkgroep
- Zeker, ik probeer projecten op te pakken waar ik het meeste effect kan bereiken. Green graffiti: met zaad(bommen) en plantjes de openbare omgeving vergroenen. Daarnaast, omdat het zo'n leuk team is, toch nog collectieve zonnedaken
- nee, nog niet. maar ik ben niet iemand die het lang volhoudt als er tegenslag is. ik zou dan stoppen of minder komen op bijeenkomsten
- risico ligt op de loer om cynischer te worden
- Nee, niet echt. Ik word natuurlijk wel betaald, ca 8 uur per week.
- Soms, ik ga wat minder vaak naar informatiebijeenkomsten
- nee
- Nee, maar het vraagt wel extra inzet van de mensen die de participatie organiseren en veel moeite moeten doen om de participanten betrokken te houden.
- Zoek steeds andere wegen en invalshoeken
- Minder interesse
- Mijn participatiemoedigheid probeer ik om te zetten in activiteiten, zoals rol als voorzitter oppakken, artikeltjes schrijven voor dorpsblad, rapport schrijven, warmtebeeld-metingen verrichten in huizen, enz.
- Belangrijk is hierbij wel dat gemeente ons goed faciliteert en ook aanwezig wil zijn bij ons overleg"
- Gestopt met participatie
- Neen
- enigszins
- neen. Gewoon doorbikkelen.
- Nee
- Op een heel laag pitje gezet
- ja maar ik blijf prikken. een gezonde acupunctuur behandeling van 88 ambtenaren apparaat (ik ben een door de wol geverfde lobbyist met 30 jaar ervaring)
- nee

- Nee
- Nee, ik heb het afgemaakt, maar op het eind wel met tegenzin. Participatie bestaat niet, beslissingen zijn allang genomen. Het project is gestart om een vinkje te kunnen zetten in de persberichten. Als je invloed wilt moet je de politiek in.
- nee
- Ga minder naar bijeenkomsten
- Ik ben gestopt met participeren.
- Gestopt met bestuurslidmaatschap Deventer Energie en bij ons innovatieve project te maken met eerder genoemd eigen belang van ambtenaren op gemeentelijk, provinciaal en landelijk niveau (vast inkomen, risicomijdend, visieloos, ambitieeloos)
- Nee
- Nee
- De aanhouder wint.
- Overslaan activiteiten
- Niet echt, Corona heeft meer gefrustreerd
- doe niets meer....
- eigen weg bewandeld
- ja, zelf actief geworden binnen de organisatie
- Nee, nog niet echt, maar ik merk wel dat ik toe ben aan iets nieuws.
- minder bijeenkomsten
- "Het wel geloven", eigen plan gaan trekken en dus dan toch maar zonnepanelen op het eigen dak.
- Kost zeer veel inzet, moeite. Niet uit te leggen aan de omgeving/ belangstellenden.
- Nee
- Ik ben selectiever.
- Niet.
- ik heb Asperger. weinig prikkels. Dus geen actieve deelname.
- Nu het denken in heilig moeten van wind op land al aan het kantelen is, zijn gesprekken zinvoller geworden
- Nauwelijks
- minder behoefte om er energie in te steken
- Ik ben nagenoeg gestopt. Ik verwijs naar de mensen die nog wel proberen groene zoden aan de dijk te zetten. Zij kunnen dan voor nop opdraven, terwijl de overbetaalde communicatie- en ambtenaren 'mensen' weer een 'done' kruisje zetten in hun 'strategische communicatieplannen'.
- ja, ik heb nu mijn eigen kennis en de vereniging is goed voor het advies aan de gemeente en burgers die nog van niets weten maar nu om financiële redenen toch maar eens gaan zoeken naar manieren.
- ik heb het participatie traject van de omgevingsvisie wel afgerond. Maar daarna had ik er een rot gevoel over, een gevoel dat ik "gebruikt" was. Dus zal ik niet zo gauw meer aan zo iets mee doen. Ik vind de omgevingswet en de participatie eisen (hij die iets wil moet de participatie organiseren) een heel bedenkelijk soort wet.
- De mensen die je graag zou willen horen en voor wie participatie waarschijnlijk belangrijk is, hebben het druk genoeg met gewoon overleven, die zitten helemaal niet te wachten om daar aan mee te doen.
- nee
- Nee integendeel, ik begeleid nu (betaald) andere coöperaties bij de opstart
- Voor mij was participatie moeheid geen factor, het was wel vervelend om mensen te zien afhaken

- Minder moeite doen om naar een bijeenkomst te kunnen gaan, wat effectief betekend minder bijeenkomsten kunnen bezoeken.
- Ik ben gestopt met participeren.
- Selectief participeren
- Ja, ik ben gestopt actief te participeren, volg de ontwikkelingen wel.
- Gestopt
- Nee
- Beperkt, want de samenwerking met de gemeenten loopt voor onze Werkgroep Duurzaamheid goed. Belangrijk voordeel hierbij is: we werken aan doelen die voor de gemeente zelf ook van belang zijn c.q. waar de gemeente nadrukkelijk een opgave in heeft en ons nodig heeft voor bereiken van inwoners om die doelen te kunnen realiseren (warmtetransitie, klimaatadaptatie e.d.).
- Nee
- Nee
- Soms te veel informatie
- nee, maar het kan nog veranderen
- Nee. De gemeente Amersfoort is gewoon hopeloos als het om participatie gaat. Participatie is voor hen: wij vertellen wat wij vinden, ziet u het anders? dan vertellen we nog een keer wat wij vinden. En nog een keer, en nog een keer. Luisteren is er niet bij.
- Gestopt
- minder bijeenkomsten
- in principe ben ik gestopt met naar bijeenkomsten te gaan omdat mijn ervaring is dat het weinig nut heeft
- Na een aantal jaren is het de beurt aan anderen.
- ik ga niet meer naar alle bijeenkomsten
- Ik geef de moed nog niet op. Nieuw bestuur, dus wie weet.....
- Ja
- minder intensief lezen
- "Niet langer actief organiseren van netwerkbijeenkomsten.
- Gestopt met participatie in RES bijeenkomsten.
- Overwegen te stoppen met bestuurstaak in coöperatie."



## Answers regarding possible solutions ('I don't know'-answers were filtered out)

- Als we meer mensen actief kunnen betrekken bij het buurtinitiatief, zal er uiteindelijk ook wel minder last op de schouders van de 'harde kern' liggen. Door de jaren heen is de gemeente ook meer met on gaan samenwerken dus misschien zullen zij in de toekomst ook wat meer het heft in handen nemen als de plannen voor het warmtenet concreter worden
- professionele hulp bij project
- Minder stop en go, vieren van mijlpalen
- versnelling bij gemeente in procedures
- Gezelligheid en erkenning van de deelnemers
- meer medewerking van de 4e macht. Continuïteit in aanspreekpersonen bij de overheid
- Een gemeente die open staat voor burgerinitiatieven, en dan echt. Niet met vage projecten. Lokaal eigenaarschap ondersteunen. Investeren in lokale projecten. Echte participatie met burgers opzetten. (het (b)lijkt onmogelijk).
- Het zou fijn zijn als er wat waardering getoond wordt. Je bent als burger altijd in je vrije tijd bezig en zit altijd aan tafel met mensen die gewoon betaald worden (n.l. de ambtenaren). Dat is wel eens frustrerend.
- Duidelijkere regels gemeente
- Een meedenk- en meewerkstand van alle medewerkers van de gemeente, ook zij die niet over duurzaamheid gaan. En rijksregels en -subsidies met lage administratieve last. Bedrijven worden tegemoetgekomen tav regeldruk, burgerinitiatieven hebben een mega-zware administratieve last. Vergelijk vb de SDE met de postcoderoos. Je wordt geen vrijwilliger om administratie te doen. Het rijk en PBL zijn zich dit niet bewust(anders zou het aangepakt zijn)
- meer ideeën en enthousiasme van andere leden en inwoners
- Vooral duidelijkheid: wat zijn de kaders, wat kan wel en wat niet.
- We hebben de gemeente gevraagd om een basissubsidie te geven voor de komende jaren.
- Minder informatie
- Stabiele wetgeving gedurende langere termijnen
- Heeft niets met communicatie te maken. Het hangt vooral af van commitment van de overheid en op koers blijven. Participatie is iets van de lange adem.
- "Een meer faciliterende gemeente en Provincie Ook financieel. Koplopers hebben dat nodig om te kunnen verbinden. Zie ook het boek van Jan Rotmans : OMARM DE CHAOS"
- Betere voorlichting
- Het zou helpen als mensen in het dorp wat spontaner reageren op het werk van de werkgroep. Er heerst veel gelatenheid, men lost het zelf wel op of de energietransitie is voor hen te hoog gegrepen (kennis, leeftijd, beschikbaar budget)
- Actie
- Communicatie en afspraken nakomen
- begin maar eens met in gesprek gaan met ondernemers en burgers
- realisme en relativering van het onderwerp
- "Doel vooraf duidelijk maken. Screening vooraf deelnemer o.b.v. elementaire kennis (incl. kennissessies vooraf). Ik snap het. Heel gevaarlijk en discutabel."
- Alle neuzen dezelfde kant op en doorpakken op projecten
- "volwassen aandacht, respons en committent m.b.t. tot onze plannen in plaats van koek-koek participatie waarbij sprake is van ""participatie-prostitutie"" misbruik van het goede voorbeeld
- Als de bureaucratie bij sommige partners minder zou zijn.
- Beter mogelijkheden om ook individueel al een traject te starten
- duidelijkere toekomstvisie van de gemeente en betere communicatie hiervan.
- Het is een relatief kleine club. De haast ambtelijke manier van vergaderen past mij niet zo.
- "Stel een burgercoördinator aan. Antwoord opvragen."
- Een echt luisterend oor en actiebereidheid.

- Laten zien wat er met de inbreng is gedaan
- "Politiek moet geen dubbele agendas hebben en doen wat ze zegt. Politiek moet geen zwakke knieën hebben en de rug recht houden."
- Meer mogelijkheden tot actie
- Het helpt als de gemeente duidelijk tot gesprek uitnodigt en richting geeft en open staat voor het onverwachte
- communicatie bestuur en gemeente had beter gekund, marketing voor project ontbrak
- het eerste bestuur had een bredere kijk op de energietransitie moeten hebben, was erg eenzijdig richting alleen energie opwekken en het rendement er uit
- De organisatie doet mijns inziens niets verkeerd. Het is mijn eigen drang om altijd weer iets nieuws te willen doen.
- meer duidelijkheid over idealisme versus werkelijkheid
- Wat zou helpen is: dat als je zaken oppakt, ze ook doorzet. Nu was er de kans op meer stedelijke postcoderoosprojecten en die verzandde volledig. Ook mede door de dreiging van de afschaffing van de subsidie- en teruglevermogelijkheden (en dan ook geld terug te krijgen. Dat was en is niet onze insteek. Een bijdrage aan duurzaamheid zou al genoeg moeten zijn.
- Het kunnen bereiken van concrete doelen die ook op lange termijn houdbaar zijn. De overheid heeft geen lange termijn visie met betrekking tot burgerparticipatie. Geen visie leidt tot wispelturig beleid en beperking van participatie omdat de burger niet weet waaraan hij toe is.
- Duidelijkheid over gemeentelijk beleid
- Kwaliteitscriteria, meer transparantie, ...
- De communicatie is niet duidelijk, in die zin dat er symboolpolitiek belangrijker wordt geacht dan het daadwerkelijk behalen van doelen.
- Niet faciliteren door overheid van energie-initiatieven, maar faciliteren van belang van alle burgers, dus ook zij die omwonenden zijn of worden
- meer positieve respons
- Als het bij elkaar geparticipeerde draagvlak voor een warmtenet eenmaal voor elkaar is, kan aan het warmtenet tzt een fossiel warmte-apparaat worden toegevoegd omdat natuurlijk gaat blijken dat warmte uit de RWZI onvoldoende biedt in de winter, en het eigenaarschap daarvan zal wellicht overgaan in Japanse handen ofzo... als belegging. Het is immers een aantrekkelijk investeringsmodel dat mensen niet meer kunnen veranderen maar wel extra vaste lasten krijgen.
- De buurt - straat betrekken in plannen en ideeën daarop afstemmen ipv de omgekeerde richting. Daarom is de gemeente zo belangrijk
- "Duidelijker en eerlijker communicatie over het doel. Het had nu veel weg van spelletjes (met knikkers over wat je belangrijk vond) en in eens werd m.i. een tekst die al klaarlag onderbouwd met wat we allemaal hadden gedaan in de sessies."
- "Bij de 'gemiddelde' burger ontbreekt nog steeds het noodzakelijke besef en de nodige basiskennis. Men is het er mee eens dat er 'iets' moet gebeuren, maar vooral door een ander en elders."
- Het zou fijn zijn als er kortere procedures gevolgd zouden kunnen worden
- Proces verkorten
- Zie boven, De gemeente heeft al besloten wat de uitkomst wordt, het participatietraject wordt alleen opgestart omdat dat volgens de procedure moet..... er is geen echte inspraak en burgers worden niet serieus genomen.
- Efficiënte besprekingen en minder frequent
- Als er minder van tevoren was vastgelegd.
- Actiever ondersteuning vanuit gemeente
- Meer planmatige opzet
- Duidelijke structuur in de processen naar Wijkuitvoeringsplannen voor de warmtetransitie + duidelijkheid over de rol en bijdragen van onze Werkgroep Duurzaamheid daarin. Maar die duidelijkheid gaan we binnenkort met elkaar maken, dus dat komt wel goed.

- meer besluitvorming
- duidelijkere communicatie en verwachtingen
- duidelijker aangeven wat het doel van de bijeenkomst is en ook een reëel tijdsplan aangeven van volgende stappen plus oprecht de inbreng van aanwezigen integreren
- "Heldere doelen, heldere vergadertechniek, heldere voorzitter. Snel versturen van verslagen en actielijsten"
- Meer duidelijkheid in het belang en gebruik van mijn inbreng. Ik heb de indruk dat al het gepraat over en pogingen tot het realiseren van oplossingen niet worden gewaardeerd. Beslissingen worden gestuurd en genomen door grote belanghebbende partijen zoals bijvoorbeeld Vattenfall.