Listening to Every Voice:
Improving Participation in Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods

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Master Thesis Report

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Preface

When I needed to start looking for a thesis topic within the graduation domain of Projects and People, I was reminded of the topic of participation by someone at the CME Dispute Master Thesis Inspiration event. During the summer of 2023, I had attended a Summer Course on Participatory Design and since then this topic has interested me immensely. I am a huge believer in achieving better projects and living environments with the help of the people who will have to live with them. As a result, I finally had a clear direction in which I wanted to conduct research.

This thesis is my final academic challenge, one that at times proved greater than expected, that officially concludes my student life. I certainly encountered myself several times during the research and writing of this thesis. Especially during the citizen interviews. I used a picture of myself interviewing a group of Turkish women on the front page of this research, which shows the setting of the street interviews. Fortunately, there were multiple people around me who helped me to bring this final thesis to a successful conclusion. Therefore, I would like to thank several people.

First of all, I would like to thank my graduation committee, both from TU Delft and Witteveen+Bos, for your support throughout the past months. Ellen, thank you for being such an understanding chair of this committee. Your enthusiasm for the subject from the beginning kept me motivated. Audrey, I would like to thank you for all the inspiring workshops from your own research project that I had the opportunity to follow. Without these moments, I would never have been able to make certain contacts with the residents. Our

feedback moments were also always important when I could no longer see the wood for the trees. Niek, thank you for always sharing interesting literature and insights from practice that helped broaden my horizons. Last but not least, I would like to thank Eva from Witteveen+Bos. Our weekly catch-up moments always recharged me more than you would think, and your insights helped bring this thesis to where it stands today.

Furthermore, I would like to thank everyone from Witteveen+Bos, Sweco, Municipality of Delft, Haarlem, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam for taking the time to participate in interviews and for their valuable input. My deepest appreciation also goes to Aysel, who helped me conduct street interviews in Rotterdam. Without her contacts, it would have been much more challenging to get close to the residents. Special thanks also go to all the citizens, who were all so open and friendly to me during our interviews.

My friends should certainly not be forgotten in the list of important people. Thanks for the various thesis sessions on campus in the library, for motivating each other by sharing To Do lists, but also for the necessary relaxing walks, coffees, and dinners. Finally, I would like to thank my partner Matthias and family for their patience and support during my second thesis and throughout my time in Delft.

Enjoy reading this master's thesis. I hope it can inspire you to become more inclusive in any field you work.

Lisabeth Huysentruyt
Delft, 2024

Abstract

Participation activities are often dominated by individuals who are easy to recruit, vocal, and comfortable in public arenas. As a result, white, older, higher-educated, and male citizens tend to overshadow other citizens, which can lead to a misinterpretation of the true community interests. This leaves underrepresented groups – such as ethnic minorities, youth, women, and lower-educated citizens – with a lack of voice or power. This research examines how public participation processes of projects in the urban environment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods can be improved to better represent the voices of these vulnerable groups.

The study involved a policy document analysis and semi-structured interviews with ten experts and thirteen citizens from two disadvantaged neighbourhoods, Feijenoord and Meerwijk. Through this secondary and empirical data, this research found that experts employ various strategies in the following areas: accessibility, communication, existing networks, human aspect, location, and rewards. This study also formulated a definition of disadvantaged neighbourhoods based on literature and through the perspective of the experts. Next, experts formulated multiple challenges they experienced during participation processes in terms of engagement, expectations, outside influence, participation design, representation, and understanding the neighbourhood. Lastly, the barriers and motivators of residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods to participate are discussed. The thesis concludes with eleven recommendations for policy and practice aimed at improving inclusivity and effectiveness in public participation for disadvantaged communities.

KEYWORDS: Public participation; disadvantaged neighbourhoods; vulnerability; citizen engagement

Executive summary

Introduction

Public actors increasingly need to involve citizens in decision-making processes through public participation. This shift reflects the growing recognition of participatory governance as crucial for sustainable urban development. However, ensuring that a diverse range of voices is represented remains one of the biggest challenges in this field. Most participation processes are dominated by individuals who are easy to recruit, vocal, and enjoy being in public arenas. As a result, white, older, higher-educated, and male citizens tend to overshadow other citizens, which can lead to a misinterpretation of the true community interests. This leaves underrepresented groups – such as ethnic minorities, youth, women, and lower-educated citizens – with a lack of voice or power. This research aims to address this challenge by exploring how public participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods can be improved. To guide this research, the main question is:

How can public participation processes of projects in the urban environment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods be improved such that the opinions of vulnerable citizens from these neighbourhoods become more represented than today?

This main research question was divided in four sections, which all contributed to the conclusion. Figure 1 shows the research design of this thesis in a schematic overview. The research conducted a literature review, a policy document analysis, and semi-structured interviews to gather data. This data was analysed through coding the transcripts and drawing conclusions from it. Synthesised member checking and a validation workshop served as a final iteration of the results to enrich the final guidelines.
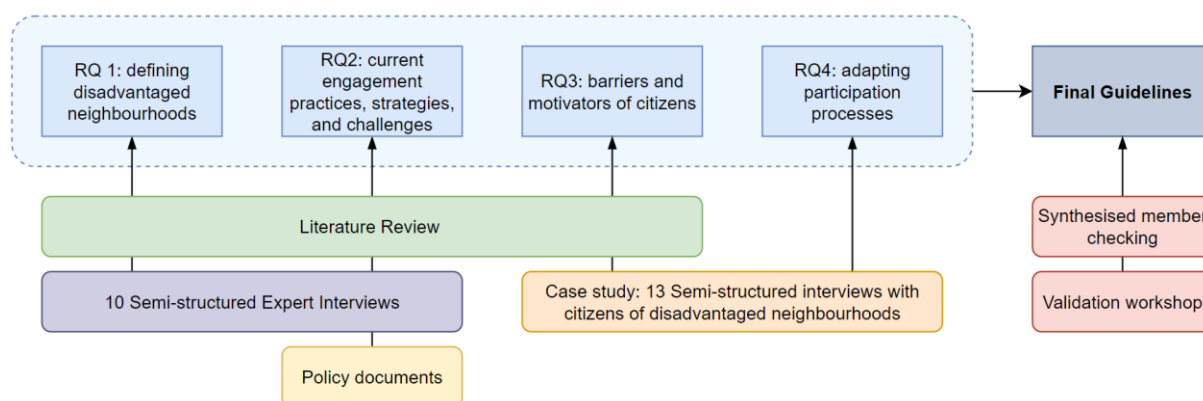

Figure 1: Research design (executive summary)

Literature review

First, a literature review was conducted, which aimed to provide theoretical background and frameworks to analyse the results of the research. Based on literature, direct public engagement is defined as: '*Direct public engagement in urban projects are the in-person and online processes that allow members of the public in a neighbourhood to personally and actively exercise voice such that their ideas, concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into the planning, development, and implementation of urban projects, thereby fostering more inclusive and responsive decision-making.*'

The literature then presented ways of categorising participation methods based on five levels of engagement: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. Next, it discusses the barriers and challenges that hinder community engagement, related to context, infrastructure, and the process. The following section presents two frameworks towards inclusive participation. For this research, the CLEAR framework of Lowndes et al. (2006) is chosen to assess the strengths and weaknesses of public participation strategies. The framework is composed of five elements that describe that citizen participation works best when citizens: **Can do** – having the right skills and resources, **Like to** – feeling a sense of community which reinforces participation, **Enabled to** – having a network of organisations, **Asked to** – receiving a clear invitation to participate, and **Responded to** – seeing evidence that their opinions are taken into account.

The second framework of this thesis considers the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators of citizens to make the decision to participate. Franklin (2020) describes this as push and pull factors. Figure 2 presents the fourteen push and pull factors.
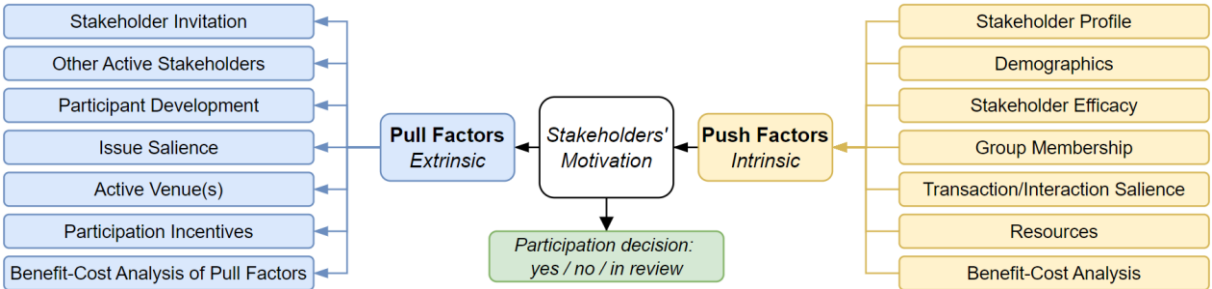

Figure 2: Model for stakeholder motivation and the participation decision, adapted from Franklin (2020) (executive summary)

The other part of the literature review provides characteristics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods in public participation. These neighbourhoods consist of people with low income, poverty, unemployment, high percentage of young and old people, women, ethnic minorities, higher levels of criminality, lower health, language barriers, lower education levels, and higher percentages of social housing.

Results

Using the insights from literature, the next section of this research dived into the current participation practices through empirical and secondary data. An analysis of policy documents on public participation of twenty-eight municipalities revealed that several of them strive for inclusive participation processes and that there is attention for vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups. Additionally, ten semi-structured interviews with urban professionals in stakeholder management provided empirical data to define disadvantaged neighbourhoods, discuss the challenges in conducting public participation with these communities, and formulate several strategies to organise engagement with vulnerable citizens.

The experts' challenges can be grouped into six themes: engagement, expectations, outside influences, participation design, ensuring representation, and understanding the neighbourhood. The strategies of experts are grouped into six categories: accessibility, communication, existing networks, human aspect, location, and rewards.

The expert experiences are enriched by the perspective of citizens from two disadvantaged neighbourhoods, Feijenoord and Meerwijk. Thirteen semi-structured interviews gave insight into the barriers and motivators of participating in neighbourhood matters. Citizens complained about poor communication, lack of information and follow-ups, and about the feeling of having little impact on

final decisions. Citizens also experience multiple barriers to participate related to time and timing, ability, communication, and interest. On the other hand, citizens can be motivated to participate by several things. The biggest motivator is the feeling that their opinion has impact, that they feel heard and are taken seriously. Next, the results showed that personal relevance is also important. Rewards, recognitions, social relations, and proper event logistics can also be motivators for citizens. Citizens also explained that they still prefer traditional forms of communication compared to social media for example. Moreover, they prefer in-person participation methods over online participation methods.

Validation of results and final guidelines

After finding the results, they were validated in two ways. First, synthesised member checking was conducted, by returning the summarised results to the interviewed experts. Then, a validation workshop was held with colleagues of the graduation company who had not seen the guidelines before. After these two rounds of input, the final guidelines are more refined and nuanced. Figure 3 summarises the final practical guidelines towards more inclusive participation processes.

Accessibility
- Simple language (B1 level)
- Translations for documents and during events
- Images and videos
- Digital participation methods
- Digital accessibility
- Creative methods
- Multiple forms of participation
- Timing of events
- Informal setting

Communication
- Expectation management
- Honest and open communication with citizen and client
- Advance notice
- Process communication
- Respecting and valuing input
- Targeted communication
- Explain usefulness and necessity
- Provide feedback

Existing networks
- Connect with local networks and organisations
- Link up with existing neighborhood events and projects
- Contact key figures
  - e.g.: wijkregisseur
- Make use of existing communication channels

Human aspect
- One-on-one conversations
- Be physically present
- Make personal connections
- Understanding local culture
- Investing time in communities
- Being approachable
  - e.g.: sometimes translator is needed
- Listen

Location
- Be present in the neighbourhood
- Community centres
- School
- Playgrounds
- Retirement homes
- Mosques and churches
- Project location
- Digital
- Avoid 'colored' locations
- Be where the community meets

Rewards
- Provide food and drinks
  - e.g.: local specialties
  - vb: ice cream cart / coffee cart / chocolate milk car
- Prices or coupons
- Leave them less vulnerable then before the project

Figure 3: Strategies towards inclusive participation with vulnerable citizens (own figure) (executive summary)

Discussion

In the discussion of this thesis, the results were linked to two theoretical frameworks, the push and pull factors of Franklin (2020) and the CLEAR framework of Lowndes et al. (2006). The discussion also reflected on the justification of public participation, the practical and scientific relevance of the research, its limitations, and recommendations for future research and for practice.

Citizens' barriers and motivators were linked to the expert strategies and push (intrinsic) and pull (extrinsic) motivators. Most of the motivators are tackled by the strategies, however some motivators could benefit from future research and attention to them. Intrinsic motivators, such as 'Demographics' and 'Transaction/interaction salience' remain unaddressed. Experts can put extra effort into understand how a person's age, ethnicity, or education level could influence their motivation. Additionally, experts can increase motivation by showing citizens that their participation can achieve a desired outcome or reduce certain complaints they have about their neighbourhood. Extrinsic

motivators, such as 'Participation incentives' is already considered in the strategies but how big the impact is of these incentives on motivation is still unclear. The experts already see 'Stakeholder invitation' as a standard element of the process, but further insights are needed to know the best way to reach each type of citizen. Lastly, 'Participant development' was not addressed by any of the strategies, indicating it is an underutilised motivator that could be improved in the future.

The next section of the discussion focused on analysing the experts' challenges in conducting public participation in these neighbourhoods. This analysis revealed the complexity of public engagement and the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by experts. It became clear that even though experts know the right strategies, they still struggle to implement them. This could indicate that there are skill issues or that they do not learn from previous experiences.

Assessing the effectiveness of the found strategies using the CLEAR framework showed that all elements of the framework are addressed. This means that if experts follow their own strategies, the participation process should be effective. No single strategy that can tackle all five elements, so experts should always make us of a combination of several strategies.

Although this research assumes that participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is desirable, it also questioned whether it is always beneficial by discussing the ideal conditions for community engagement of Irvin & Stansbury (2004). To effectively engage a diverse range of opinions, the project must be relevant and worthwhile for the residents. Nevertheless, presence of high-cost and low-benefit indicators should not discourage attempts to engage these residents. Therefore, it is essential to create flexible and adaptive participation strategies that align with their preferences and circumstances.

Based on the results of this research, several avenues for future research have been identified. Further research could evaluate and observe the implementations of the guidelines of this research, together with their feasibility. Next, future research could elaborate on the impact of using motivators in participation design. Lastly, exploring more creative participation methods could be an avenue for other researchers.

In addition to the recommendations for research, several recommendations for practice and policy makers are provided at the end of this research. Urban professionals should invest more time in understanding the local context at the beginning of a project and tailor participation methods to this context. The concept of 'fun' and building social relations with the citizens should not be forgotten in this process. It is important to emphasise the possible impact that citizens can have by engaging. Professionals should also invest more time and resources in trainings on inclusive participation and learning from past experiences. Policy makers should invest in local organisations as they are needed to reach certain target groups. They should also encourage collaboration across municipal departments. Lastly, they should provide financial support for the use of participation incentives.

Conclusion

This research showed that experts already have strategies towards more inclusive participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods but the implementation of them is still behind.

Public participation processes in disadvantaged neighbourhoods can be improved by taking more time to understand the local context; employing tailored and accessible participation methods; incentivising engagement; investing in building social relations with citizens and local organisations; increasing organisational learning from past experiences; demonstrating the impact citizens can have; and by continuing to increase awareness of the strategies that are already known to work.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and context

Public actors increasingly need to involve citizens in decision-making processes through public participation. This shift reflects the growing recognition of participatory governance as crucial for sustainable urban development (Geekiyanage et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020). In the Netherlands, this need is further emphasised by the new Environment and Planning Act (Omgevingswet), effective since January 1, 2024 (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, 2023). This act combines existing laws governing the spaces where people live, work, and relax and mandates public actors to engage in participation during decision-making processes (art. 16.55 lid 6, Omgevingswet 2024). Additionally, citizens, known as initiators, with a plan or idea are encouraged to participate (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2023). The law does not specify how the participation process should take place, acknowledging that each decision, environment, and community is unique (Informatiepunt Leefomgeving, n.d.). Each legal instrument, such as an environmental permit, will have to adhere to one or more of the three rules for participation: notice (Kennisgeving), justification (Motiveringsplicht), and application (Aanvraagvereiste) (Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten, 2019).

As public actors implement this act, they face the challenge of ensuring that a diverse range of voices is represented in participatory processes. One of the biggest challenges is the inclusion of those who are typically overlooked during decision-making processes because of institutionalised inequities (Bryson et al., 2013). Most participation processes are dominated by individuals who are easy to recruit, vocal, and enjoy being in public arenas (Bryson et al., 2013). Additionally, white, older, higher-educated, and male citizens tend to overshadow other citizens, which can lead to a misinterpretation of the true community interests (Mahjabeen et al., 2009). This leaves underrepresented groups – such as ethnic minorities, youth, women, and lower-educated citizens – with a lack of voice or power (Tonkens & Verhoeven, 2019).

Disadvantaged neighbourhoods are populated by people who on average face higher levels of poverty, debt, health problems, nuisance, poor housing conditions, feelings of insecurity, and educational challenges (Nationaal Programma Leefbaarheid En Veiligheid, 2022). This makes them vulnerable in participation processes, since vulnerability can be defined as a 'dynamic condition marked by the transition from inclusion to exclusion and vice versa' (Ranci & Migliavacca, 2010, p. 219). Eikelenboom & Long (2023) also found that these vulnerable groups are usually forgotten in stakeholder engagement. Kujala et al. (2022) argue that the voice of marginalised citizens and communities or less powerful stakeholders is not researched enough and should gain attention. This focus is crucial because the moral component of stakeholder engagement aims for legitimacy, trust, and fairness (Kujala et al., 2022). Organisations can work towards better stakeholder engagement by focusing on these less powerful stakeholders.

Furthermore, giving a voice to underrepresented groups can have positive effects, such as improving social well-being and stakeholder value. Especially when a project directly impacts disadvantaged neighbourhoods, engaging with the local citizens helps understanding their needs, which in turn will help improve the project (Jagtap, 2019). The international emphasis on inclusive development, as highlighted by the Sustainable Development Goals, underscores the need for engaging vulnerable communities in participatory practices (Geekiyanage et al., 2020). Therefore, attention in research to

these underrepresented voices is not only a matter of fairness but also crucial for achieving broader social benefits. Moreover, Kennisknooppunt Participatie, an initiative that promotes the development and application of knowledge on participation in the Netherlands, emphasised the need for research on properly involving currently excluded groups in participation processes (Wiekens et al., 2024).

1.2 Research gap

With the new Environment and Planning Act in place and the resulting focus on participation in the Netherlands, it is the perfect time to investigate the inclusion of seldom-heard stakeholders in decision-making and participation processes. Some research has already identified multiple barriers for communities to participate in urban planning and possible solutions to overcome them (Geekiyanage et al., 2020). Other research looks at how marginalised stakeholders can be successfully involved during a multi-stakeholder initiative (Eikelenboom & Long, 2023).

However, despite the growing emphasis on participation processes in research and in practice, some research suggests that participation processes are difficult to execute in marginalised neighbourhoods and with marginalised groups (van de Wetering & Groenleer, 2023). Reflecting on previous literature, it became clear that disadvantaged neighbourhoods are still often overlooked and marginalised in participation processes. Furthermore, it is unclear which solutions or ideas from the literature have already been implemented in the Dutch urban planning and construction.

If we want the new obligations surrounding participation to be successful for everyone, it is important to see how disadvantaged neighbourhoods can be included more effectively so that their voice is heard and taken into account. To address the research gap, this research dives into how the involvement and inclusion of citizens from disadvantaged neighbourhoods can be improved in participation processes. The goal is to develop guidelines and improvement points that organisations and policymakers can implement to effectively manage the inclusion of disadvantaged communities.

1.3 Research scope

Given the time constraints of this thesis, the study focuses on the following elements. First of all, even though participation is needed and implemented in many different areas, this research only looks at projects within decision-making in urban development in the Netherlands. This refers to the processes and activities involved in planning, designing, and executing urban development projects. Second, as mentioned before, vulnerability comes in many forms and each group has distinct needs. This research narrows its focus to participation processes with citizens of socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods within the Netherlands, although insights from international literature might be considered when they are relevant. Third, the research examines current participation practices and policies to identify gaps and points of improvement.

1.4 Research questions and objectives

1.4.1 Research questions

With the introduction, research gap and scope in mind the following research question is proposed to answer the knowledge gap in literature:

How can public participation processes of projects in the urban environment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods be improved such that the opinions of vulnerable citizens from these neighbourhoods become more represented than today?

The main research question is subdivided into the following four sub questions:

1. **SQ1:** What are the characteristics of a disadvantaged neighbourhood?
2. **SQ2:** What are the current challenges and practices in engaging citizens of disadvantaged neighbourhoods?
3. **SQ3:** What barriers and motivators do citizens of disadvantaged neighbourhoods experience during participation processes?
4. **SQ4:** How can participation processes be adapted so that the voices of citizens in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are included?

The research methods of this thesis and how the different questions are answered are discussed in Chapter 3, Research Methodology.

1.4.2 Objectives

The research questions above were chosen to achieve the following outcomes. First, the intended outcome of the first question is to establish a clear understanding of what makes a neighbourhood disadvantaged and why its residents are disadvantaged or vulnerable during participation processes. The second sub question aims to create an overview of how practitioners currently conduct public participation processes in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and which challenges they encounter. The third sub question addresses the citizens' perspective of public participation processes. Finally, the ultimate outcome of this research is to provide guidelines on how participation processes can be more inclusive towards the less powerful stakeholders, such as disadvantaged neighbourhood residents.

1.5 Theoretical and societal relevance

This research contributes to the existing theoretical discussions on the inclusion of disadvantaged communities in projects and on participation processes. By exploring the current participation practices and by involving both experts and citizens through qualitative research, this thesis aims to advance theoretical frameworks related to participation processes, stakeholder engagement, and inclusive decision-making in urban development contexts.

From a societal perspective, this research has the potential to make urban development projects more inclusive towards disadvantaged communities who are currently often overlooked. By understanding their needs and current challenges, this research can shed light on which steps still need to be taken towards meaningful participation. The outcomes of this research will not only help these communities, but also policymakers and other practitioners in the field to create and promote social inclusion in their projects.

1.6 Thesis outline

The outline of this thesis is summarised in Figure 4. The introductory chapter of this thesis provides background information on the topic and formulates the research gap. It also presents the research questions, objectives, and scope. Chapter 2 highlights relevant literature on public participation and disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the research methodology that was used for this research, explaining the data collection and analysis methods. Chapters 4 and 5 describe the results of the interviews with experts and citizens. In Chapter 6, guidelines are developed to improve public participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Chapter 7 discusses these results and their implications for practice and theory, followed by the limitations of this study and future research.

Ch 1	• **Introduction**: background, research gap, scope, research objectives and questions
Ch 2	• **Literature review**: on public participation and disadvantaged neighbourhoods
Ch 3	• **Research methodology**: data collection and analysis methods, synthesised member checking
Ch 4	• **Current participation practices**: policy documents and expert insights, addresses subquestion 2
Ch 5	• **The citizens' perspective**: citizens' perspective on public participation, addresses subquestion 3
Ch 6	• **Guidelines development**: synthesised member checking and final guidelines, addresses subquestion 4
Ch 7	• **Discussion**: relates results back to theoretical frameworks, makes recommendations for practice and future research, and addresses the research limitations
Ch 8, 9	• **Conclusion and reflections**: addressing the main RQ and discussing final reflection

Figure 4: Thesis outline

2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review has five purposes. Firstly, it defines public participation and provides an overview of key participatory methods. Secondly, it introduces the pros and cons of public participation and under which conditions it is ideal to implement this form of decision-making. Thirdly, this review gives an overview of the challenges to community entry and engagement. Fourthly, this literature review presents guidelines for successful public participation and two frameworks, one that helps analyse participation strategies and one that helps identify motivators of engagement. These are used to analyse the empirical results. Lastly, it identifies characteristics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which will be used to assess the vulnerability of the case study areas.

2.2 Public participation in the urban environment

This first part of the literature review provides a definition of public participation. Next, different participation methods are presented, related to purposes of participation. Next, the concept of successful participation is discussed. After that, the current challenges and barriers in this field are presented. Next, two models for inclusive participation are discussed. Finally, different factors that motivate citizens to make the decision to participate are presented.

2.2.1 Defining public participation

Public participation, as defined by Creighton, p. (2005, p. 7), is 'the process by which public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated into governmental and corporate decision-making. It is two-way communication and interaction, with the overall goal of better decisions that are supported by the public.' Just informing the public can not be seen as public participation, since there has to be interaction between the decision-maker and the participating citizens. It is a deliberate and organised process where the input of the participant has some impact or influence on the final decision. It applies mostly to administrative decisions made by agencies or private organisations rather than elected officials or judges (Creighton, 2005).

Participation of citizens is rooted in politics, since it can be seen as vital to democracy (Michels & de Graaf, 2010). Arnstein defines citizen participation as a 'redistribution of power that enable the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future,' (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216). She also states that if this redistribution of power does not happen, participation becomes an empty process where policy makers can claim that every voice has been listened to while maintaining the status quo (Arnstein, 1969). However, citizen participation is different from political participation, which includes voting or contacting elected officials (Callahan, 2007). Arnstein (1969) created a ladder of citizen participation, differentiating between levels or gradations of participation and 'non-participation.' This ladder exists of the following levels, increasing in the intensity of participation: manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and citizen control (See Figure 5). Only the last three levels are a degree of true citizen power, where citizens can negotiate and engage in trade-offs or even obtain a majority of the decision-making seats.

8	Citizen control	Degrees of citizen power
7	Delegated power	
6	Partnership	
5	Placation	Degrees of tokenism
4	Consultation	
3	Informing	
2	Therapy	Nonparticipation
1	Manipulation	
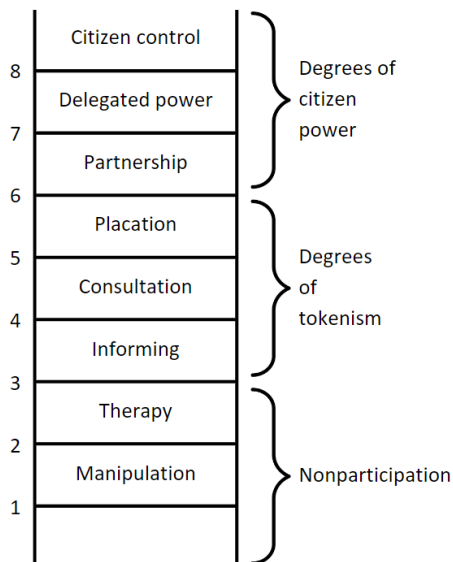
Figure 5: Ladder of Citizens Participation (Arnstein, 1969)

Community engagement, a related concept, is defined by Geekiyanage et al., p. (2021, p. 6) as a 'purposeful process which develops a working relationship between communities, community organisations and public and private bodies to help them to identify and act on community needs and ambitions.' Although Callahan (2007) writes that civic engagement differs from citizen participation, since that is a broader concept where individuals are more supporting their community through volunteering and civic activism, Geekiyanage et al. (2021) use the terms interchangeably. One of the frameworks for citizen participation was conceptualised by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) in 2000. The framework contains five levels: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower, as shown in Figure 6. Each level serves a distinct purpose, from just providing information to letting citizens become the decision-makers and makes a specific promise to the public (International Association for Public Participation, 2018).

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Figure 6: Spectrum of Public Participation ((International Association for Public Participation, 2018)

Solitare, p. (2005, p. 920) offers a basic definition of public participation where it is 'a means of political representation through set methods in which public constituencies attempt to influence governmental

and private decisions.' Public participation is a way of stakeholder involvement, where sub-communities of the larger public are involved because they potentially have a common interest in the decision-making or are potentially affected by it. Based on this, Solitare (2005) makes a distinction between two groups: the affected and the effectors. The first group being the public that feels the impact of certain decisions and often does not have decision-making power, and the latter group being the stakeholders who have some level of decision-making power.

Stakeholder engagement, a fundamental concept in business and society research, serves as a broader framework within which citizen participation operates (Kujala et al., 2022). Stakeholder engagement is used to comprehend and clarify the relationships between organisations and their stakeholders, such as employees, customers, suppliers, competitors, local communities, and citizens (Kujala et al., 2022). While the other stakeholders are already included by default, local communities and citizens are not yet always involved in the context of multi-stakeholder initiatives (Eikelenboom & Long, 2023). Citizen participation has been a widely discussed topic in literature, where many discuss the benefits that it can bring to policy making or other projects, while others are more critical and discuss its challenges (Kujala et al., 2022).

Finally, Nabatchi & Amsler (2014) confirm that scholars and practitioners use a large variety of related terms to refer to the same thing. In research and practice, the following related terms and concepts are used: public engagement, citizen engagement, civic engagement, community engagement, public participation, citizen participation, resident participation, community participation, community involvement, stakeholder involvement, public deliberation, deliberative democracy, empowered participatory governance, democratic governance, collaborative governance, and collaborative policy making, among many others (Nabatchi & Amsler, 2014). They divide these terms into the 'who' and 'how' of the process:

- Who:
    - **Public**: the broad and general populace
    - **Citizens**: eligible voters
    - **Residents**: inhabitants of a particular locale such as a housing subdivision or building
    - **Community**: members of a particular neighbourhood or area
    - **Stakeholders**: individuals who have a personal stake in an issue by virtue of their professional role or involvement in a formal group or organisation
- How:
    - **Engagement or involvement**: general terms for assembling individuals to address an issue
    - **Public participation**: a legal term of art
    - **Collaboration**: organisation or a network addressing an issue
    - **Deliberation**: a specific mode of communication during engagement

With this terminology in mind, the definition of Nabatchi & Amsler (2014) of *direct public engagement* in local government is slightly adapted for this thesis into the following:

> *Direct public engagement in urban projects are the in-person and online processes that allow members of the public (i.e., those not holding office or administrative positions in government) in a neighbourhood to personally and actively exercise voice such that their ideas, concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into the planning, development, and implementation of urban projects, thereby fostering more inclusive and responsive decision-making.*

In this thesis, public engagement or participation and community engagement or participation are used interchangeably but will refer to the same definition.

2.2.2 Participatory methods

With a common definition of public engagement establish, it is important to have an overview of the available participation methods. Geekiyanage et al. (2021) did a systematic literature review to classify and analyse these methods based on participation levels and their purpose. They identified twelve purposes of community engagement and categorised each method using the five levels of the International Association for Public Participation (2018), as shown in Figure 7. It can be noted that most methods are in the inform and consult level. Case study analysis revealed that community engagement is limited to these two levels. Furthermore, none of the methods can accomplish all twelve purposes of community engagement. This means that there is no superior method, but that the method should be chosen based on the purpose of the public participation and on the unique situation.
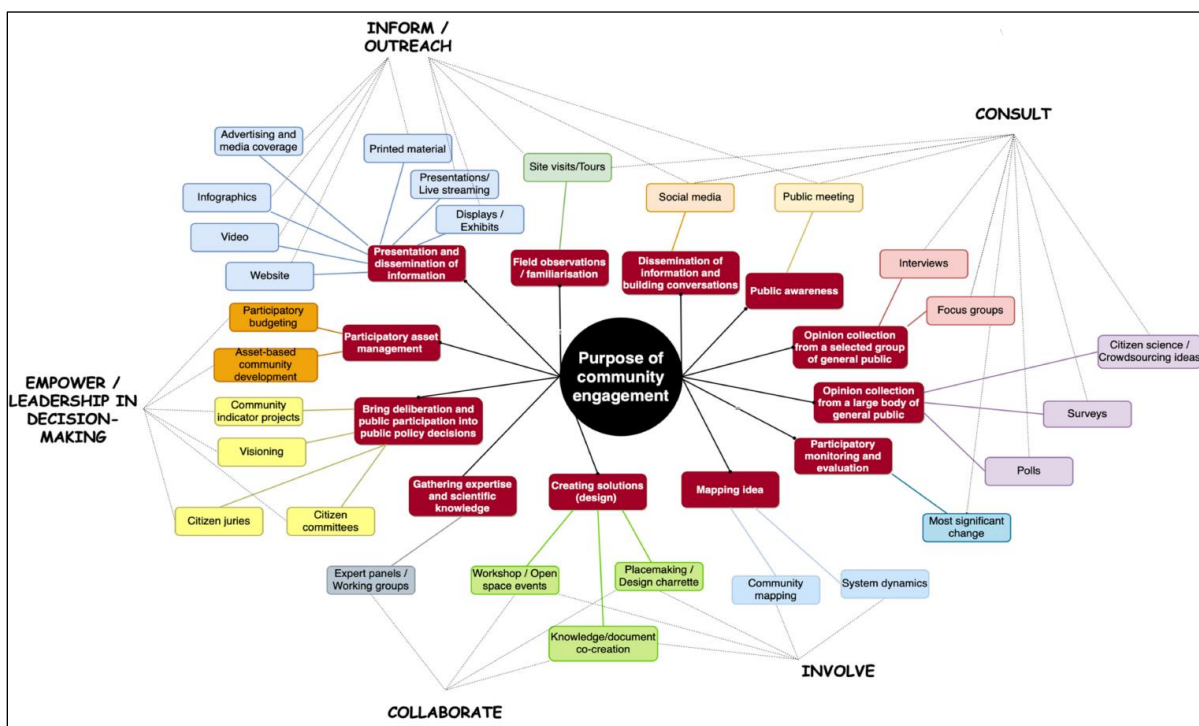
Figure 7: Mapping of participatory methods into the spectrum of community engagement (Geekiyanage et al., 2021)

2.2.3 Pros and cons of public participation

The overview of participation methods describes the 'how to,' but this section discusses the 'whether to participate at all.' Public participation has many benefits for democracy, but it also has its disadvantages (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). The assumption is that actively involving citizens in decision-making will lead to more democratic and effective governance. However, it also requires time and resources to incorporate citizen input. According to Irvin & Stansbury (2004), participation processes can offer both significant benefits and drawbacks, both for the citizens involved and the governmental entities overseeing the process. The following section discusses these advantages and disadvantages, as well as the ideal and non-ideal conditions for citizen participation in decision-making processes.

Advantages and disadvantages of public participation

The advantages and disadvantages of public participation are divided across two categories: the decision-making process and the outcomes. Each of these can be assessed from the perspective of two

beneficiaries: the citizens and the government. Table 1 shows the specific pros and cons for both groups.

Table 1: Advantages and disadvantages of the decision process and outcomes of citizen participation for citizens and government, adapted from Irvin & Stansbury (2004)

	Advantages to citizens	Disadvantages to citizens	Advantages to government	Disadvantages to government
Decision process	Education (learn from and inform government representatives) Persuade and enlighten government Gain skills for activist citizenship	Time consuming (even dull) Pointless if decision is ignored	Education (learn from and inform citizens) Persuade citizens; build trust and reduce anxiety or hostility Build strategic alliances Gain legitimacy of decisions	Time consuming Costly May backfire, creating more hostility toward government
Outcomes	Break gridlock; achieve outcomes Gain some control over policy process Better policy and implementation decisions	Worse policy decision if heavily influenced by opposing interest groups	Break gridlock; achieve outcomes Avoid litigation costs Better policy and implementation decisions	Loss of decision-making control Possibility of bad decision that is politically impossible to ignore Less budget for implementation of actual projects

As the table shows, participation processes have the potential to increase collaboration and decision quality, but they can also be resource-intensive, boring, exacerbate tensions, or lead to decisions that are difficult to reverse. These trade-offs highlight the importance of understanding the conditions under which public participation is likely to be most effective.

Ideal conditions for public participation

Public participation will be more effective under certain conditions than others. Irvin & Stansbury (2004) identified a range of low-cost and high-benefit indicators that indicate when public participation is likely to succeed. These indicators focus on factors such as community interest, logistical feasibility, and the urgency of the issue. Table 2 summarises these ideal conditions.

Table 2: Ideal conditions for citizen participation, adapted from Irvin & Stansbury

Ideal conditions for citizen participation	
Low-cost indicators	**High-benefit indicators**
Citizens readily volunteer for projects that benefit the entire community.	The issue is gridlocked and a citizen mandate is needed to break the gridlock.
Key stakeholders are not too geographically dispersed; participants can easily reach meetings.	Hostility toward government entities is high, and the agency seeks validation from community members to successfully implement policy.
Citizens have enough income to attend meetings without harming their ability to provide for their families.	Community representatives with particularly strong influence are willing to serve as representatives.
The community is homogenous, so the group requires fewer representatives of interest groups, smaller groups speed decision-making.	The group facilitator has credibility with all representatives.
The topic does not require representatives to master complex technical information quickly.	The issue is of high interest to stakeholders and may even be considered at 'crisis stage' if actions are not changes

Under these conditions, citizen participation is more likely to achieve significant outcomes, such as improved community decision-making and public acceptance of the new policy as the best option.

Non-ideal conditions for public participation

On the other hand, there are certain conditions under which citizen participation may be ineffective and a waste of time and resources. The non-ideal conditions, presented in Table 3, are not a conclusive reason to avoid a participatory process (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). However, decision-makers could take these into account and adapt their strategies to the situation. Low-benefit indicators imply that public involvement may not have a major impact on the outcome, while high-cost indicators show that participation may need too many resources.

Table 3: Non-ideal conditions for citizens participation, adapted from Irvin & Stansbury (2004)

Non-ideal conditions for citizen participation	
High-cost indicators	**Low-benefit indicators**
A complacent public is reluctant to get involved in what is considered the work of government employees.	The public is generally not hostile toward government entities.
The region is geographically large or presents other obstacles (such as heavy traffic) that make regular face-to-face meetings difficult.	The agency has had prior success in implementing policy without citizen participation (that is, the voting process is sufficient to guide policy-making behaviour).
Many competing factions and socioeconomic groups require a very large participatory group.	The population is large, making it difficult for involved stakeholder to influence a significant portion of the population.
Low-income residents are key stakeholders for the issue at hand and should be included, yet they cannot because of work and family priorities.	The decisions of the group are likely to be ignored, no matter how much effort goes into their formation (the group does not have authority to make policy decisions);
Complex technical knowledge is required before participants can make decisions.	The decisions of the group are likely to be the same decisions produced by the government entity.
The public does not recognise the issue under consideration as a problem, nor are potential competing policy alternatives familiar to the public.	

These non-ideal conditions suggest that not all situations call for significant participation processes. It could be more effective to use traditional decision-making procedures when citizen input is unlikely to affect outcomes or when there are significant logistical obstacles.

In summary, public participation has the potential to enhance democratic decision-making and governance. However, its success is dependent on the conditions under which it is implemented. The outcomes of Irvin & Stansbury (2004) highlight the importance of carefully considering both the costs and benefits of engaging citizens.

2.2.4   Challenges in public participation

Even though citizen participation has many benefits, there are many barriers to community entry and challenges for community engagement. Geekiyanage et al. (2020) found 48 barriers, challenges, and issues through a comprehensive literature review, dividing them into three specific areas: context, infrastructure, and process. While other researchers (Enshassi et al., 2016; Li et al., 2020; Offenbacker, 2004; Solitare, 2005; van de Wetering & Groenleer, 2023) touch on specific elements, Geekiyanage et al. (2020) bring all barriers together, thereby offering a holistic overview of existing literature. To keep

this literature review efficient and to avoid redundancy, only the overview of Geekiyanage et al. (2020) is used to present the barriers and challenges. A summarised overview of the found barriers can be seen in Figure 8.
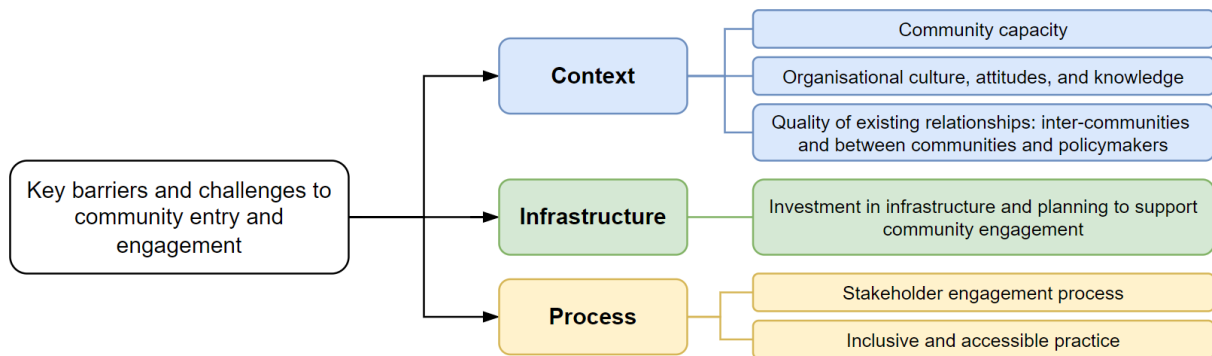
Figure 8: Key barriers and challenges to community entry and engagement, adapted from Geekiyanage et al. (2020)

Difference between barriers and challenges

In the next section, the different barriers and challenges under each theme are shortly discussed and presented in summarising tables. Before doing this, it is important to make a distinction between barriers and challenges, something that Geekiyanage et al. (2020) did not address in their research. The Cambridge Dictionary definitions of 'barrier' and 'challenge' are as follows:

- **Barrier** ("Barrier," n.d.):
    - 'Something that prevents something else from happening or makes it more difficult'
    - 'Something that keeps people or things apart'
- **Challenge** ("Challenge," n.d.):
    - '(the situation of being faced with) something that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person's ability'

For this thesis, the word **barrier** is used to refer to things that prevent citizens from participating. Despite these barriers, citizens still possess the agency to influence change. Moreover, recognising these barriers highlights where citizens may feel disempowered or excluded in the participation process. Things that urban professionals find difficult to complete successfully during participation processes are referred to as **challenges**. It emphasizes how complex and effort-intensive it is to provide inclusive and effective engagement.

Contextual challenges and barriers

There are 25 context-specific barriers, challenges and issues identified, which are further divided into three themes: community capacity; quality of existing relationships; and organisational culture, attitudes, and knowledge (Geekiyanage et al., 2020). An overview of the different barriers can be seen in Table 4.

Challenges to **community capacity** include a lack of knowledge about development plans and processes, high poverty levels, low literacy, and cultural norms that do not align with participation processes. Physical and mental disabilities and consultation fatigue also hinder engagement. One reflection that can be made on the results of Geekiyanage et al. (2020) is that high levels of poverty do not 'inspire them not to attend…' but discourage them to attend in engagement activities.

Challenges related to the **quality of existing relationships** inter-communities and between communities and policy makers include poor engagement with the community, fear of discrimination,

competing agendas, and a lack of fair representation. Moreover, distrust in the planning system and poor community headship also contribute to weak participatory outputs.

Lastly, challenges in the **organisational culture, attitudes, and knowledge** include lack of organised commitment, absence of accountability, lack of knowledge and skills on participation methods, and negative attitudes from officials towards seldom-heard people.

Table 4: Key contextual barriers and challenges to community entry and engagement in risk-sensitive urban planning and development, adapted from Geekiyanage et al. (2020)

Community capacity
1. Lack of communities' knowledge and awareness of urban development plans, formal development procedures, and benefits of community participation
2. Consultation fatigue due to lack of communities' interest in engagement
3. Lack of capacity (individuals' lack of interpersonal skills and/or self-confidence) within community organisations
4. High levels of poverty that exist within most community members inspire them not to attend in engagement activities
5. Low levels of literacy and numeracy and the dominance of oral culture among communities
6. Cultural norms and life circumstances (inconsistency with community traditions)
7. Negative community perceptions of participation in the planning system
8. People reluctant to engage due to inability to attend meetings/training caused by physical impairment, and lack of consciousness caused by mental impairment
Quality of existing relationships: inter-communities and between communities and policymakers
1. Absence or lack of meaningful engagement with community
2. History of poor relations of communities with decision-makers and urban planners
3. Community engagement is considered as a threat by communities due to discrimination, fear of exposure to authorities (over drug use, immigration status, or stigmatising illness), and engagement is seen as diverting existing funding into other initiatives
4. Communities' lack of trust, respect, and confidence in the planning system
5. Poor community headship that does not give feedback to community members
6. No fair representation from communities
7. Competing agendas across stakeholders within partnerships
8. Limited understanding of the roles and responsibilities of participants
9. No recognition of community rights and responsibilities by decision-makers
10. Some community members (political followers) involved in informal political networks to gain own personal benefits rather than having a collective and long-term approach for urban development
Organisational culture, attitudes, and knowledge
1. Continuous top-down and centralised management of government authorities
2. Lack of organisational commitment for engaging communities
3. Absence of accountability: although governments have an obligation to inform participants how they use inputs received through engagement, this is not fulfilled
4. Lack of understanding of community engagement tools and techniques for specific circumstances
5. Professionals' lack of knowledge and skills in participation techniques and participation competences
6. Official attitudes towards seldom-heard people
7. Professionals' inflexibility in terms of finding a common agenda with the community

Infrastructural challenges and barriers

Next, Geekiyanage et al. (2020) defined 10 barriers regarding the **limited investments in infrastructure and planning** to encourage community engagement (see Table 5). Issues in investment in infrastructure and planning to support community engagement include a lack of relevant training for both professionals and communities, limited financial resources, and lack of communication channels between decision-makers and the community.

Table 5: Key infrastructural barriers and challenges to community entry and engagement in risk-sensitive urban planning and development, adapted from Geekiyanage et al. (2020)

Investment in infrastructure and planning to support community engagement
1. Lack of appropriate training for professionals to conduct community engagement and development programmes
2. The information gap between citizens and the government: citizens' lack awareness of government meetings, familiarity with government officials, or knowledge about government affairs
3. Limited financial resources for supporting community participation
4. Limited resources for participation: lack of knowledgeable and experienced professionals, venues, and material for workshops
5. Lack of communication channels between decision-makers and community
6. Rural isolation due to weak community infrastructure: poor roads and transportation
7. Lack of participation mechanisms to achieve consensus in an efficient manner
8. Lack of dedicated staff to engage with communities
9. Lack of technology for supporting effective community participation
10. Lack of appropriate training for communities for engaging with decision-makers in the urban development processes

Process-related challenges and barriers

Lastly, there are 13 barriers found connected to the process of community engagement (Geekiyanage et al., 2020). The first seven barriers are grouped under the theme of the stakeholder engagement process, while the others are grouped under inclusive and accessible practice. An overview of all barriers can be found in Table 6.

Seven challenges are found regarding the **stakeholder engagement process**. These include ill-defined aims of engagement, limited time for building trust, complex decision-making processes, and lack of evaluation.

Next, six challenges are defined on **inclusive and accessible practice**. These include exclusion of some communities because of poor event logistics, no clear information provision, unequal community representation, cultural and language barriers, and exclusion of certain groups.

Table 6: Key process-related barriers and challenges to community entry and engagement in risk-sensitive urban planning and development, adapted from Geekiyanage et al. (2020)

Stakeholder engagement process
1. The aim and purpose of engagement are ill-defined, with a lack of clarity (mixed messages), a lack of transparency and confused expectations
2. Limited time is given for building trust, establishing participatory suggestions, and achieving results
3. Complexity of current decision-making process due to inevitable tensions between stakeholders
4. Weak administrative structure in local government to support community participation
5. Uncoordinated national development policies
6. No meaningful evaluation of community transformation and project success
7. Conflicts between objectives set by governments and the needs of local communities
Inclusive and accessible practice
1. Some communities are excluded due to improper event logistics
2. The information provided cannot be clearly understood by the public: use of scientific language and inconsistent use of terminology
3. Unequal community representation due to the existence of partisanship between government and community representatives
4. Some communities are excluded due to cultural and language issues
5. Excluding seldom-heard people and not encouraging apathetic majority for engagement
6. Exclusion of community champions or leaders due to administrative delays

2.2.5 Guidelines for successful public participation

The effectiveness of participation methods depends on a range of factors, which is explored in this section. These guidelines or factors are important to understand the quality of participation (Rowe & Frewer, 2000). Kenniskooppunt Participatie (n.d.), a Dutch platform on participation, defined eight factors to successful participation:

1. **Early involvement** of the relevant stakeholders;
2. Stakeholders are facilitated with sufficient, appropriate, and **accessible information** to contribute meaningfully to the participation process;
3. A **participation plan** has been made;
4. This participation **plan** has been created with input from stakeholders;
5. There is an administrative (political and official) **decision** regarding the participation process;
6. The **needs and interests** of all stakeholders (including decision-makers) are **understood** and recognised;
7. Participants' input is **seriously considered**;
8. Stakeholders get **feedback** on how their input is being weighed and used.

Webler et al. (2001) did a case study on how participants characterise a good public participation process. Through using Q-methodology, they found that people express different ideas about what a good public participation process is. This research resulted in five discourses, discussing that the process should:

1. **Be legitimate**: This discourse explains that a legitimate decision-making process should focus on reaching consensus, be evidence-based and transparent, and avoid arbitrary deadlines to manage conflict effectively. Key attributes include consensual decision-making, the use of both technical and local knowledge, and complete transparency to avoid secrecy and ensure informed participation.
2. **Promote a search for common values**: This discourse argues that decision-making should focus on shared values and ideals rather than just facts, aiming to create a sense of regional awareness and strong relationships. It emphasizes educating people, enforcing rules for good behaviour, and planning how to put recommendations into action, rather than seeking full agreement or involving everyone extensively.
3. **Realise democratic principles of fairness and equality**: This discourse focusses on a fair and unbiased decision-making, ensuring everyone gets a chance to speak and be heard. It highlights the importance of consensus decision-making with a clear deadline, professional facilitation, and being realistic about what public participation can achieve.
4. **Promote equal power among all participants and viewpoints**: This discourse stresses that a fair process should ensure equal power among participants, where decision-making is based on evidence rather than power, and open to all viewpoints. Power can be equalised by educating people, having open discussions, well-scheduled meetings at convenient times, and by not favouring towards any one group.
5. **Foster responsible leadership**: This discourse emphasises the importance of responsible leadership in decision-making, where council members weigh input from diverse groups to make final decisions, recognizing that consensus is unlikely. It values meaningful public participation, respectful processes, and educating the public, but places decision-making responsibility on leaders to ensure effective outcomes.

This research showed the subjective nature of what good public participation can be.

2.2.6 Towards inclusive participation

This section of the theoretical review reviews two frameworks that can help overcome current barriers and challenges and enhance inclusive participation. The first model is that of Geekiyanage et al. (2020), which explains that for more inclusive development, three general solutions: transforming attitudes and building community capacity, facilitating participatory decision-making, and changes in the process and in policy. The second model is the CLEAR framework of Lowndes et al. (2006), which is an acronym describing that citizen participation works best when they: **Can do** – having the right skills and resources, **Like to** – feeling a sense of community which reinforces participation, **Enabled to** – having a network of organisations, **Asked to** – receiving a clear invitation to participate, and **Responded to** – seeing evidence that their opinions are taken into account.

Inclusive development model

To overcome these barriers and challenges in inclusive urban developments, Geekiyanage et al. (2020) looked at possible solutions and recommended best practices. An overview of their conceptual model can be seen in Figure 9. The full table of all recommended solutions can be found in Appendix 3: Solutions and best practices to inclusive urban development. To address the barriers specific to the context of community engagement, they propose an attitude transformation and capacity building. For example, policymakers should set realistic participation targets and should focus on making the process more accessible, user-friendly, and relevant. Next, to overcome the infrastructure related barriers, they advise to facilitate participatory decision-making. Examples of possible solutions are using mass media to spread information and set an agenda or reviewing and assessing personnel, time, and financial resources. Lastly, to solve process related issues, they propose various process and policy changes. For instance, a proposed best practice for policymakers is to not set unrealistic expectations for the participation and to give sufficient time. Other examples are to use appropriate language to limit language barriers and to conduct participation in familiar places, while creating an informal atmosphere.

Figure 9: Conceptual model for achieving inclusive development through addressing associated barriers and challenges, adapted from Geekiyanage et al. (2020)

The CLEAR model

The CLEAR model, developed by Lowndes et al. (2006), is a tool that can help anyone who designs participation processes to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their current design. The framework is composed of these five elements, where people participate when they:

- **Can do**: they have the resources and knowledge to participate;
- **Like to**: they have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation;
- **Enabled to**: they are provided with the opportunity for participation;
- **Asked to**: they are mobilised by official bodies or voluntary groups;
- **Responded to**: they see evidence that their views have been considered.

These five elements are neither ranked on importance, nor should take place in a specific order (Evans & Pratchett, 2013). While ideally, all components would be present, effective participation does not depend on the implementation of every element. The framework does not prioritise any factor or suggests a certain balance between them. Instead, it functions as a diagnostic tool to help identify and reflect on the strengths and potential gaps of participation strategies. Each element is discussed more detailed below.

Can do is central to understanding that socio-economic factors, such as skills and resources, influence local participation rates (Lowndes et al., 2006). Citizens with better education and employment status typically have the necessary skills, such as public speaking and event organising, and resources, such as internet access, to participate more actively. People with a lower socio-economic background tend to have less of these skills and less resources, which results in lower participation levels. As mentioned by Geekiyanage et al. (2020) as well, building community capacity can increase this 'can do' factor. This can be done by giving support to citizens to develop the necessary skills and resources for participation.

Like to refers to the influence of feeling a part of something on participation (Franklin, 2020; Lowndes et al., 2006). When citizens feel a sense of community, they can become more willing to participate. By understanding the identity of the communities and where their sense of loyalty lies, policy makers and urban professionals can use this as a starting point to promote a sense of civic citizenship and solidarity. However, it is essential that these professionals do not harm existing social capital in the process. While a strong sense of community can empower participation, citizens may still decide not to participate. This can happen when residents want to let others, such as elected representatives, represent them during participation activities.

Enabled to is about the power of existing organisations and groups in the community on participation (Geekiyanage et al., 2020; Lowndes et al., 2006). There needs to be a variety of groups, because each group can reach different parts of the community. Local authorities play an important role in connecting with these voluntary and community groups, to provide them with ins to decision-making. Investments in these groups are also needed, because those organisations can function as participation platforms and reach their members easily, next to their primary purposes (e.g. sporting or educating). A special focus is needed on supporting community networks that can engage the marginalised groups in the community.

Asked to explains that simply being asked to participate already increases the levels of engagement (Geekiyanage et al., 2020; Lowndes et al., 2006). Especially when the one who is making the decisions asks others to engage in decision-making, people tend to be more willing to provide input. It is important to invite citizens and design participation activities in different ways, since some may be more comfortable in public settings, while others favour online manners. The invitation can be strengthened by providing incentives (e.g. rewards), by creating a sense of obligation (e.g. jury duty), or by presenting deals/transactions. The scope, a single neighbourhood or the country's whole population, of the invite should also be considered.

Responded to is the last step of the framework and highlights that it is important for citizens to feel like their input has actual impact on the decision. It means that citizens should feel listened to and they

need to know that their opinion has been taken into account, even if the outcome does not align with their initial preferences. Policy makers can influence whether there is enough capacity to provide response or feedback and whether certain groups have more influence on the end decision than others. Transparency is needed about how the input from citizens is weighed against other participation events and the opinions of other stakeholders. This can be done by providing enough feedback on how to decision is made and the influence of participation within that. It is important to state from the start that participation does not guarantee citizens' preferred outcome, but that it ensures that their views are heard and listened to.

To conclude, the CLEAR framework can be used as a tool to analyse current challenges in public participation and determine how they can be overcome. This framework will be used in analysing the results from the interviews.

2.2.7 Motivation to participate

Solitare (2005) described individual and situational factors that predict whether a person will participate. The individual factors are about socio-economic characteristics such as age, income, and gender. He also defined five situational factors:

1. Local authorities must be sincere in sharing the decision-making authority and truly listen to citizens' concerns;
2. Citizens must be aware of the actual opportunities to get involved;
3. Citizens must have time as an available resource;
4. The citizens must trust the other stakeholders to be honest and to represent their interests;
5. The issue should matter to the citizen and affect their immediate interests and neighbourhood.

Franklin (2020) explained the motivation to participate in a more thorough way by defining fourteen push and pull factors that influence whether someone will make the decision to participate. Motivation can be defined as 'the thoughts that guide and cause behaviour,' which in the case of participation can be seen as the thoughts that guide and cause people to share their opinions and engage (Franklin, 2020, p. 66). Push factors are intrinsic motivators, meaning that the choice to participate is based on endogenous satisfaction, such as fun or challenge (Franklin, 2020; Li et al., 2020). Pull factors are extrinsic motivators, meaning that the decision to participate is based on potential gained outcomes, such as financial rewards or reputation (Franklin, 2020; Li et al., 2020). Intrinsic motivation is influenced by extrinsic rewards. An overview of the different push and pull factors are shown in Figure 10. The arrows in the figure show that the push factors come from the citizen themselves and the pull factors will pull the citizen towards participation. These factors enhance each other.
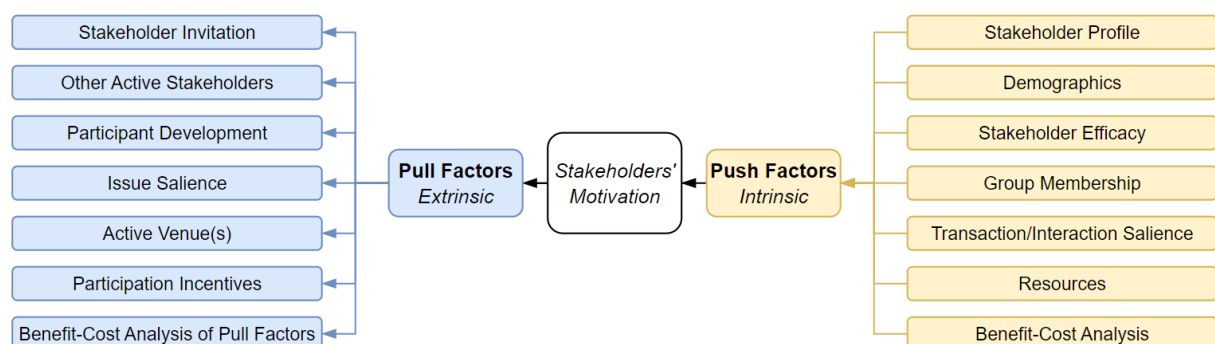
Figure 10: Pull and push factors influencing stakeholders' motivation to participate, adapted from Franklin (2020)

Push factors

The seven push factors or intrinsic motivators are shortly discussed in relation to the willingness of citizens to participate and provide input on a decision of an urban development project (Franklin, 2020).

The first push factor is the **stakeholder's profile**. A citizen will be more likely to participate if the following things are the case: they have a voluntary relationship with the project, a direct interest in the project, they are already involved in other community matters, they represent individual interests or interests of an organisation, the project has direct impact on their daily lives, and the project could have a potential negative or mixed impact on the citizen.

The second push factor are **demographics**. Older people tend to participate more than younger people. People who are more educated and wealthier are also over-represented in participation processes. Having a lower socioeconomic status makes people less likely to participate, but income has less influence compared to age and education. Race, ethnicity, and ideology also play a role in how likely someone will participate.

The third push factor is **stakeholder efficacy**. It refers to the belief in one's ability to produce an intended result and engage confidently in discussions. Having knowledge on the topic, a positive self-image, and being at ease during social interactions improve efficacy. If a citizen had a successful previous experience during participation, their efficacy would increase. People should believe that they have influence on project decisions.

The fourth push factor is **group membership**. Citizens who are already active in political parties, or who are a member of an interest, civic, social, or affiliation group, will have more motivation to participate. Although people are less likely to be part of social organisations, the bonding and bridging of group membership still has benefits in motivating citizens.

The fifth push factor is **transaction/interaction salience**. Certain prominent situations can also motivate a citizen to make a participation decision, divided into instrumental or expressive motivations. Instrumental motivations stem from self-interested benefits where an individual tries to achieve a desired outcome or to reduce certain complaints they have about the project. Expressive motivations stem from the feeling that participating on its own is inherently rewarding.

The sixth push factor is **resources**. Certain people, like disadvantaged or marginalised groups, are less likely to participate because they lack resources. Examples of these resources include transportation and childcare. Time is also a resource and people who work and have a family to care for do not always have much time left to engage in other things (Schlupp & Franklin, 2014). Digital mechanisms can help with certain resource constraints, such as participating from home and not needing childcare. However, accessibility to these technologies has to be considered.

The seventh push factor is **benefit-cost analysis**. When a citizen is deciding whether to participate, they could be more motivated if the benefits are larger than the costs. The analysis can be made for all the previous push factors. Opportunity costs can also be considered in this equation, where engaging in participation means that they have to lose out on other activities, such as working more or spending time with family. These costs and benefits will be defined by relative value instead of monetary values. Risk aversion can lead individuals to choose the status quo, often overestimating short-term costs and undervaluing long-term benefits.

Pull factors

Now the seven pull factors or extrinsic motivators are covered in relation to the willingness of citizens to participate and provide input on a decision of an urban development project (Franklin, 2020). Pull factors are needed in addition to the previous push factors to influence people's decision.

The first pull factor is **stakeholder invitation**. The opportunity to participate has to be clear to the citizens. Communication about the upcoming opportunities to participate by inviting them is a crucial factor for motivation but is often lacking.

The second pull factor is **other active stakeholders**. Connecting to the push factor of group membership, when people from our group already decided to participate or when they invite us. This pull factor is even greater when individuals are influenced by people who are close to them, such as friends and family.

The third pull factor is **participant development**. Citizens can be attracted by offered resources such as education and training, for example on educational websites, to increase project knowledge and effectiveness of participation. These kinds of participant development exercises remove barriers to involvement. Additionally, gaining enough knowledge to participate is also related to more trust in the organisation, which helps the participant's development.

The fourth pull factor is **issue salience**. This motivation factor is about how prominent and visible the issue or project is. If there is an exciting decision agenda or if the project is politically controversial, people are more likely to participate. Additionally, the coverage of this upcoming participation opportunity in media, organisations, or interest groups also pulls citizens.

The fifth pull factor is **active venue(s)**. A venue is defined as 'a space, either tangible or intangible, that people use to communicate and where something happens based on these communications,' (Franklin, 2020, p. 47). These venues can draw citizens into the participation process. They range from court decisions to social media platforms, each offering varying times in which the decision and thus change can occur. The preferred outcome and perceived probability of success can influence the choices of venue and participation activity.

The sixth pull factor is **participation incentives**. Three types of incentives are found to be useful to motivate someone. Material incentives offer a tangible reward. Solidary incentives are rewarding because of the possibility of to affiliate with someone, mostly high-profile or powerful organisations. Purposive incentives happen when achieving the goal becomes a reward. Having direct influence on decision making also increases the willingness of people to participate.

The seventh pull factor is **benefit-cost analysis of pull factors**. This involves citizens evaluating extrinsic benefits and costs of participation. Unlike push factors, which are driven by individual motivations, pull factors consider the collective benefits and outcomes. Potential benefits could be reputational effects and trust-based relationships. Potential costs could be extra time commitment or certain membership requirements.

Participation motivation model

The different push and pull factors work together in influencing the citizen's motivation to engage in public participation. The participation decision can be either yes, no, or still under further monitoring. Figure 11 shows how these intrinsic and extrinsic motivators together will influence the participation decision.
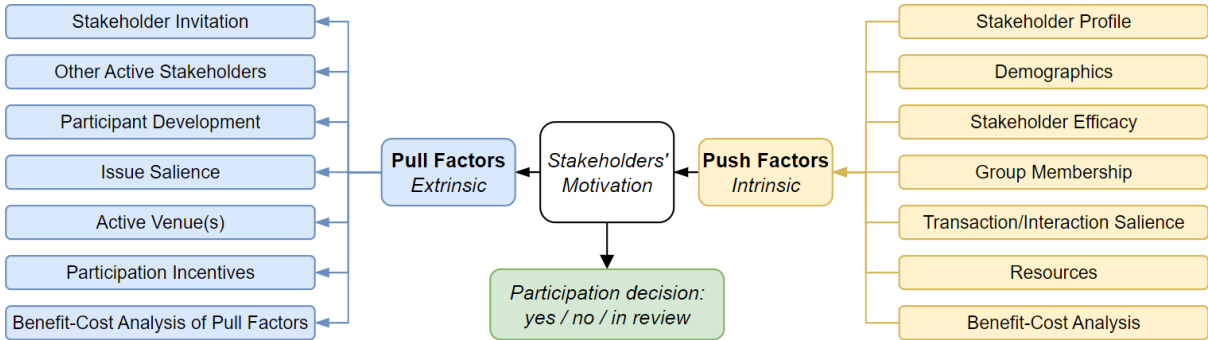
Figure 11: Model for stakeholder motivation to participate, adapted from Franklin (2020)

2.3 Disadvantaged neighbourhoods

As mentioned before in literature, it is important that public participation is reflective of the whole community to be meaningful (Solitare, 2005). Right now, certain people tend to dominate participation processes: middle-aged, higher educated, white men (Michels & de Graaf, 2010; Tonkens & Verhoeven, 2019). This leads to inequality in public participation, where ethnic minorities, younger and lower educated people, and to a lesser degree women, are often excluded. This section of the literature review looks at the different terminologies used in literature to refer to disadvantaged neighbourhoods and excluded groups. Next, characteristics of a disadvantaged neighbourhood are defined and a framework is developed to be able to define the vulnerability of a neighbourhood.

2.3.1 Terminology in literature

Defining disadvantaged neighbourhoods through literature is not an easy task. Scholars interchangeably use multiple words. To gain an understanding of the terminology, an overview is made of the different terms used in literature. The summarised version is presented in Table 7, the extended version can be found in Appendix 4: Terminology on disadvantaged neighbourhoods. All studies in this review have a link to (public) participation through the title, key words, and/or content. Different adjectives are used: deprived, disadvantaged, disempowered, excluded, hard to reach, marginalised, seldom-heard, underprivileged, underrepresented, and vulnerable. In combination to these adjectives, different nouns are used: neighbourhoods, areas, citizens, communities, groups, voices, societies, and stakeholders. The different combinations of adjectives and nouns are used in literature to refer to groups of people who are less present in participation processes. Additionally, Dacombe (2021) also talks about deprivation, and van de Wetering (2024) about vulnerability.

In this thesis, disadvantaged and vulnerable (as a direct translation of 'kwetsbaar') are used interchangeably, together with neighbourhoods, communities, residents, and citizens. The definition and characteristics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods are discussed in the next section.

Table 7: Summarised literature review of terminology used to describe disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Adjective	Noun	Source
	Deprivation	(Dacombe, 2021)
Deprived	Neighbourhoods	(Tonkens & Verhoeven, 2019)
		(van de Wetering, 2024)
		(Bonomi Bezzo & Jeannet, 2023)
	Areas	(Dacombe, 2021)
	Communities	(Bonomi Bezzo & Jeannet, 2023)
Disadvantaged	Neighbourhoods	(de Graaf et al., 2015)
	Areas	(Gosman & Botchwey, 2013)
	Citizens	(Železnik, 2017)
	Communities	(Adamson, 2010)
	Groups	(Mahjabeen et al., 2009)
Disempowered	Voices	(Železnik, 2017)
Excluded	Citizens	(van de Wetering, 2024)
	Sections of community	(Lowndes et al., 2006)
Hard to reach		(van de Wetering, 2024)
Marginalised	Communities	(Gosman & Botchwey, 2013)
	Groups	(van de Wetering, 2024)
		(Lowndes et al., 2006)
		(Upali, 2015)
		(Ianniello et al., 2019)
		(Juarez & Brown, 2008)

Adjective	Noun	Source
	Neighbourhoods	(van de Wetering, 2024)
	Societies	(Jagtap, 2019)
	Stakeholders	(Eikelenboom & Long, 2023)
Seldom-heard	Groups	(Yellow Book Limited, 2017)
Underprivileged	Groups	(Železnik, 2017)
Underrepresented	Groups	(Juarez & Brown, 2008)
		(Michels & de Graaf, 2010)
	Vulnerability	(van de Wetering, 2024)
Vulnerable	Groups	(van de Wetering, 2024)
	Neighbourhoods	(van de Wetering, 2024)
	People	(van de Wetering, 2024)
	Position	(Eikelenboom & Long, 2023)

2.3.2 Characteristics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods

To define the characteristics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the following eleven sources were used from Table 7:

1. (Dacombe, 2021)
2. (Lowndes et al., 2006)
3. (Tonkens & Verhoeven, 2019)
4. (de Graaf et al., 2015)
5. (Adamson, 2010)
6. (Mahjabeen et al., 2009)
7. (van de Wetering, 2024)
8. (Eikelenboom & Long, 2023)
9. (Upali, 2015)
10. (Yellow Book Limited, 2017)
11. (Michels & de Graaf, 2010)
12. (Bonomi Bezzo & Jeannet, 2023)

These sources mentioned specific characteristics of these neighbourhoods, while other sources just used the terminology without providing any definition or characteristics. An overview of the different characteristics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and in which sources they were mentioned is shown in Table 8. These characteristics were found by scanning the text near the previously mentioned terminology. Whenever a new characteristic was found, it was added to the table. The characteristics from Table 8 is used to define disadvantaged neighbourhoods in this research.

Table 8: Literature review on characteristics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Source number / Characteristic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Low income	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Unemployment	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓					✓
Low-education	✓	✓	✓				✓				✓	
Young people			✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	
Women / gender			✓						✓	✓	✓	
Ethnic minorities			✓						✓	✓	✓	
Socio-economic		✓				✓	✓					
Minority groups				✓		✓		✓				

Health	✓				✓				
Unsafe/criminality			✓		✓				✓
Disabled							✓	✓	
Age		✓							
Language				✓					
Homeless								✓	
Social isolation						✓			
Addictions						✓			
Quality of housing									✓
Housing tenure									✓

Different researchers agree that these socio-economic characteristics influence the level of participation between neighbourhoods (Bonomi Bezzo & Jeannet, 2023; Solitare, 2005; Tonkens & Verhoeven, 2019).

2.4 Conclusion

As outlined in the introduction, this literature review had five primary objectives: defining public participation, exploring its pros and cons, identifying challenges to community engagement, presenting frameworks for evaluating participation strategies, and defining characteristics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

This research uses the following definition of public engagement: 'Direct public engagement in urban projects are the in-person and online processes that allow members of the public in a neighbourhood to personally and actively exercise voice such that their ideas, concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into the planning, development, and implementation of urban projects, thereby fostering more inclusive and responsive decision-making.'

This definition was followed by a framework to categorise participation methods according to the five levels of participation: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. After defining public participation and categorizing the methods, this review explored its benefits and disadvantages for both citizens and governments. These were linked to both the decision-making process and its outcomes. Additionally, this part discussed indicators for considering when to allocate resources to participation processes.

This section also showed an extensive overview of the challenges, barriers and issues that exist in this field. The challenges are categorised by contextual, infrastructural, and process-related challenges and barriers. Following this, two sets of guidelines for successful participation were highlighted. Next, the CLEAR framework was discussed as a tool to analyse participation strategies. Lastly, the motivation to participate was explained through fourteen push and pull factors. These factors provide insight into what motivates or hinders individuals from engaging in public participation.

The last section of this literature review identified characteristics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods to assess their vulnerability in public participation processes. These characteristics include low-income, unemployment, low-education, language barriers, and more. These characteristics are used to discuss the vulnerability of the neighbourhoods of the case studies in this research.

By reviewing these theoretical frameworks and challenges, this literature review lays the foundation for understanding the specific dynamics of public participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. These will inform the analysis of public participation strategies in the case studies that follow.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

The research methodology of this thesis is presented in Figure 12. The different elements of this are explained in the subsequent sub chapters. First the data collection methods are presented, then the data analysis methods and the method of synthesised member checking are explained. Lastly, the ethical considerations of this research design are discussed.
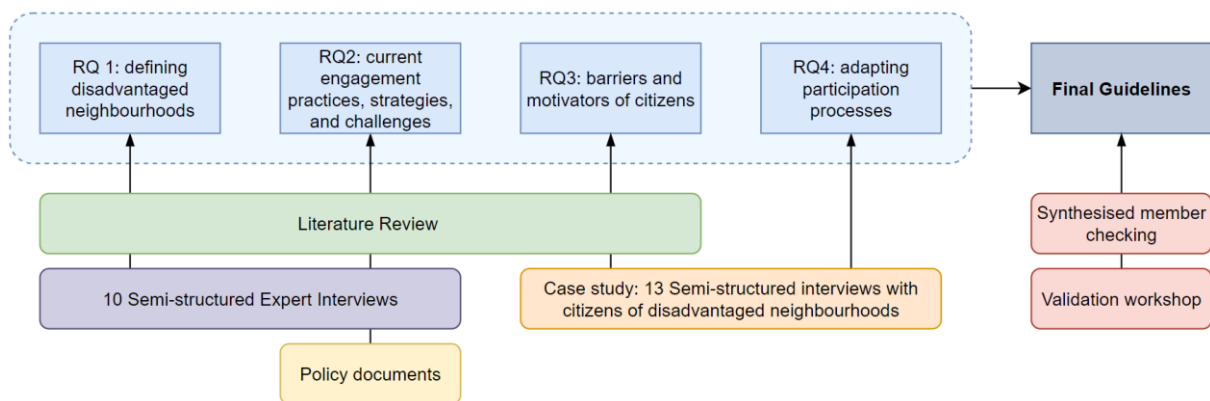
Figure 12: Research design (own figure)

3.2 Data collection methods

This research makes use of qualitative research methods to investigate the inclusion of residents from disadvantaged neighbourhoods in public participation processes. Each sub question has its own research methodology, which is discussed below.

1. **What are the characteristics of a disadvantaged neighbourhood?**

The first sub question is analysed through a comprehensive literature review. Existing definitions and frameworks related to disadvantaged neighbourhoods are explored. The goal is to define what disadvantaged neighbourhoods are; to identify its characteristics and to lay out why these characteristics make its residents vulnerable or disadvantaged during participation processes.

2. **What are the current challenges and practices in engaging citizens of disadvantaged neighbourhoods?**

After establishing a definition of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the second sub question dives into current practices of public participation. This sub question is answered by three different research methods. First, a literature review is conducted to create an overview of existing participation methods and challenges. Additionally, guidelines for inclusive participation are presented.

Second, semi-structured interviews were held with experts in stakeholder management of engineering firms and municipalities. In these interviews, the goal is to obtain insights into which participation methods are currently implemented for conducting public participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Additionally, questions were asked about which challenges they experience during participation activities and which strategies they implement.

Lastly, policy documents of municipalities in the Netherlands on participation are analysed to gain understanding about the policy landscape surrounding community engagement. This analysis is done to contextualise current participation practices within the broader regulatory context.

3. What barriers and motivators do citizens of disadvantaged neighbourhoods experience during participation processes?

This sub question is answered by a literature review on barriers and motivators during participation processes. Additionally, this sub question is analysed by conducting short semi-structured interviews with citizens of two disadvantaged neighbourhoods: Feijenoord in Rotterdam and Meerwijk in Haarlem. By using input from two neighbourhoods, a richer pool of qualitative data is created. After these interviews with the experts and citizens, a first draft of guidelines is created.

4. How can participation processes be adapted so that the voices of citizens in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are included?

The final sub question is answered by combining the insights from the citizens and experts. The outcomes of the expert interviews are also reviewed by synthesised member checking, a method to enhance the results by asking the experts to provide feedback on them. This method is further explained in Chapter 3.4. The combination of expert and citizen interviews in creating the guidelines provides for a more wholesome approach, improving the inclusion of citizens from disadvantaged neighbourhoods in participation processes.

3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik (2021) formulated seven steps to conducting, analysing, and reporting semi-structured interview data. An overview of the seven steps can be found in Figure 13. These steps are used in the research design.

The first step is to assess the appropriateness of the method in relation to the research objectives. The objective of this research is to find how vulnerable communities can be included and involved more effectively in public participation processes of urban environment projects in the Netherlands. Semi-structured interviews allow to explore the unique experiences and perspectives of participants, instead of understanding a phenomenon on a general level (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Interviews in a semi-structured format are the most frequently used in qualitative research (Kallio et al., 2016). It is a versatile and flexible data collection method and it allows for two-way interaction between the interviewer and participant. The interviewer is following a predetermined interview guide but can improvise during the interview with follow-up questions based on participants' replies (Kallio et al., 2016). Semi-structured interviews help explore sub questions two, three, and four.
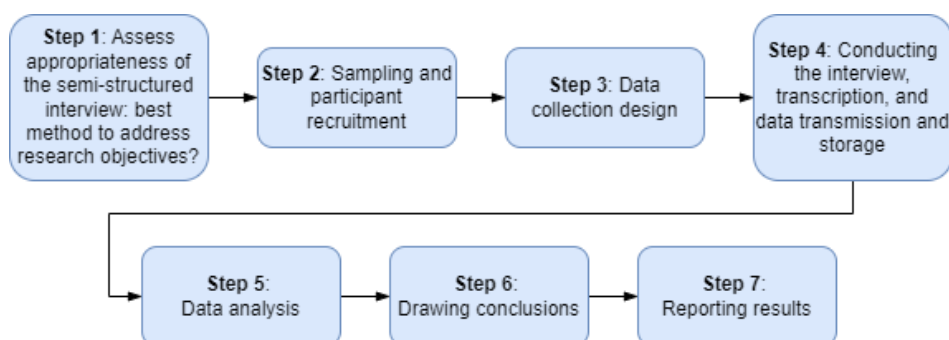
Figure 13: Seven steps to conducting, analysing, and reporting semi-structured interviews, adapted from Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik (2021)

Participants and sampling

The group of interviewees can be divided in two: experts and citizens.

Experts

Sampling and recruiting participants are the second step of the process (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). During this research, purposive sampling is used to select experts for an interview. This is a sampling approach that selects participants based on certain criteria of interest. This method was chosen, as opposed to random selection, because it allows to target individuals who have the most relevant experience or knowledge related to the research topic. This ensures that the gathered data is more relevant and specific to the subject matter. In this case, purposive sampling was valuable for interviewing experts, as it ensured that only those with direct experience in stakeholder management in neighbourhoods were included. The first practitioners were provided by the graduation company, Witteveen+Bos. Snowball sampling was used to gather contacts from other experts relevant for the study by asking if they know anyone with a similar expertise. This method is used when it is hard to access subjects with the required criteria (Naderifar et al., 2017). An overview of the interviewed experts can be found in Table 9. A sample size is sufficient when no new codes or themes emerge from new interviews, a point which is referred to as theoretical or thematic saturation (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). During the 9th and 10th interviews, no new themes emerged during coding and saturation was achieved.

Table 9: Overview of the expert interviews

Participants	Practitioner profile	Company	Means
Practitioner 1	Team leader urban climate adaptation	Witteveen+Bos	Online
Practitioner 2	Stakeholder manager	Municipality of Rotterdam	Online
Practitioner 3	Urban development advisor	Witteveen+Bos	In-person
Practitioner 4	Stakeholder manager	Witteveen+Bos	Online
Practitioner 5	Strategic stakeholder advisor	Witteveen+Bos	Online
Practitioner 6	Team leader Urban Stakeholder management and infrastructure	Witteveen+Bos	Online
Practitioner 7	Energy transition participation advisor	Municipality of Amsterdam	In-person
Practitioner 8	Energy transition advisor	Municipality of Delft	In-person
Practitioner 9	Stakeholder manager	Sweco	In-person
Practitioner 10	Project leader neighbourhood approach Meerwijk	Municipality of Haarlem	In-person

Citizens

Due to practical and ethical considerations, this research focused on interviewing citizens from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, rather than assessing socio-economic characteristics of each citizen. The two neighbourhoods that are selected are classified as disadvantaged, which is analysed in Chapter 5.2. This analysis is based on the vulnerability factors from Chapter 2.3.2.

The group of citizens had to be recruited by an active recruitment approach (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). In Meerwijk (Haarlem), the researcher was present at the local community centre and right outside of it, actively approaching people to see whether they were open to a short interview. Some of the citizens in Haarlem were found through citizens that were already interviewed (snowball sampling). In Feijenoord (Rotterdam), all citizens were approached with the help of one of the local neighbourhood council members. This approach was selected due to her extensive network within the neighbourhood. Moreover, as a member of the Turkish community, she was able to establish connections with residents who would have been difficult for the researcher to reach otherwise. An overview of the interviewed citizens can be found in Table 10. Interviews lasted between 8 and 20 minutes. As can be seen in Table 10, some interviews were conducted in Dutch, others were conducted

in Turkish, English, or Arabic. The interview questions were available in Turkish and English. During the Arabic and some of the Turkish interviews, questions were read aloud in Dutch in Google Translate and translated in Arabic or Turkish. The answers were given in Arabic or Turkish and also translated again to Dutch in Google Translate. This way of interviewing made it possible to talk to people who are not proficient in the Dutch language. However, context may have gotten lost in translation.

Two interviews from the citizens are cut from the dataset, interviews with Citizen 9 and 11 since they were conducted fully in Turkish. Someone else read and explained the questions and so the researcher had little to no control over how these interview questions were asked or explained. Translating the transcriptions was also not possible because it was not the native language of the researcher. Chapter 9 reflects on this matter.

Table 10: Overview of citizen interviews

Citizen	Code	Area	Location	Language
Citizen 1	C1	Meerwijk	Community Centre	Dutch
Citizen 2	C2	Meerwijk	Community Centre	Turkish
Citizen 3	C3	Meerwijk	Community Centre	Dutch
Citizen 4	C4	Meerwijk	Street	Arabic
Citizen 5	C5	Meerwijk	Community Centre	Dutch
Citizen 6	C6	Meerwijk	Hotel	English
Citizen 7	C7	Feijenoord	Office	Dutch
Citizen 8	C8	Feijenoord	Street	Dutch
~~Citizen 9~~	~~C9~~	~~Feijenoord~~	~~Street~~	~~Turkish~~
Citizen 10	C10	Feijenoord	Street	Dutch
~~Citizen 11~~	~~C11~~	~~Feijenoord~~	~~Street~~	~~Turkish~~
Citizen 12	C12	Feijenoord	Street	Dutch
Citizen 13	C13	Feijenoord	Street	Dutch
Citizen 14	C14	Feijenoord	Office	Dutch
Citizen 15	C15	Feijenoord	Street	Dutch

Data collection design

Step 3 in Figure 13 is about the data collection design, which includes developing the semi-structured interview guide (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Different questions have been asked to the experts and the citizens. Both interview protocols can be found in Appendix 5: Interview protocols.

3.3 Data analysis methods

3.3.1 Coding the interviews

The qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews is analysed using ATLAS.ti software, a tool commonly used to systematically analyse this type of data. A thematic approach is used to identify recurring themes and insights from the interviews with community members and industry experts. This is done after transcribing the interviews and coding them (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Inductive coding is used, where the codes are derived bottom-up entirely from the data. Codes are created in two steps. First, the interviews are read through and general codes are created. Second, line by line coding is done, identifying the codes in more detail, and keeping track of their meaning. To make sure that coding is done consistently, only one person does coding. Finally, the codes are grouped in categories to extract recurring themes and narratives out of them.

3.3.2 Analysing the codes

The overarching themes are derived from own interpretation of the individual codes. The analysis of the codes and overarching themes is done by the use of the CLEAR framework of Lowndes et al. (2006) and the push and pull factors of Franklin (2020). The mapping of the data on these theoretical frameworks is done based on the personal understanding of the underlying theories and is justified in Chapter 7 Discussion.

3.3.3 Assessing vulnerability

Chapter 2.3.2 discussed the characteristics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The vulnerability characteristics from Table 8 are translated into indicators using the available statistical data from Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS). This is a Dutch organisation that provides relevant and independent data on various societal themes (CBS, 2024b). These indicators are used to assess the vulnerability of the two neighbourhoods, Feijenoord and Meerwijk, which are used as a case study in this research. Table 11 shows which statistical information is taken from CBS, from which year this data is, and extra information where needed.

Table 11: Statistical metrics to assess a neighbourhoods' vulnerability (CBS, 2024a)

Vulnerability factor (literature)	Statistical indicators	Year	Extra information
Demographics	Vulnerable age group: 0 – 15 years > 65 years	2023	
	Gender ratio	2023	-
	Origin: Dutch European Outside of Europe	2023	The population of the Netherlands on 1 January. For reasons of statistical confidentiality, the numbers at district and neighbourhood level are randomly rounded to multiples of 5.
Health	% wmo-clients	2022	Number of people who had at least one customised arrangement under the Social Support Act (Wmo). Act that supports the self-reliance and participation of people with disabilities, chronic psychological or psychosocial problems.
Income and employment	Share of households living around or under national poverty line	2022	
	Average standardised household income	2022	Disposable income adjusted for differences in household size and composition.
	Net employment rate	2022	The share of the employed labour force in the population. This definition refers to persons living in the Netherlands (excluding the institutional population). Data are usually presented for the population aged 15 to 75.
Housing tenure	Owners	2023	
	Renters	2023	
Safety	Crime rates	2018	This line shows the total of 'Theft/ burglary from dwelling' and 'Theft/ burglary from shed/ garage/ garden house.'
Education	Education levels: Low education Secondary education High education	2022	Low education includes education at the level of primary education, the vmbo, the first 3 years of havo/vwo and the entrance education, the former assistant education (mbo1), practical education. Secondary education comprises upper secondary education (havo/vwo), basic vocational education (mbo2), vocational education (mbo3) and middle management and specialist education (mbo4). High education includes education at the level of hbo or wo.

3.4 Validation of results

3.4.1 Synthesised member checking

In this qualitative research, the data collection and analysis are done by the same researcher, which gives potential for researcher bias (Birt et al., 2016). This researcher bias can be reduced by having the research participants checking and confirming the results, which can be done through different methods. The different methods fall under the concept of member checking, used to assess, validate, or verify the trustworthiness of qualitative results (Birt et al., 2016). One way of implementing member checking is by returning the interview transcript to the participants. However, this might enable participants to reconstruct their stories through deleting certain parts. For this reason, another way of member checking is used, developed by Birt et al. (2016), which is called Synthesised Member Checking (SMC). It originally consists of a five-step process, which is slightly adapted for this thesis into a four-step process:

1. Prepare synthesised summary from emerging themes along with interview data quotes which represent the themes
   a. Non-scientific wording to engage all participants
   b. Open questions
   c. Clear space for feedback
2. Send out SMC report and ask participants to read, comment and return
   a. Ask 'does this match your experience'
   b. Ask 'do you want to change anything'
   c. Ask 'do you want to add anything'
3. Gather responses and added data
4. Integrate findings

The SMC is only done for the expert interviews since no citizens left their contact details and because of time constraints.

3.4.2 Validation workshop

A validation workshop with colleagues in stakeholder management served as a final iteration and validation of the results. Seventeen people with varying expertise were present during the workshop, which lasted 30 minutes. The slides of the workshop can be found in Appendix 7: workshop slides. The group was split into six teams and each team reflected on one strategy. Afterwards, insights were shared with the whole group, which enriched the final results of this thesis. The additional insights are discussed in Chapter 6.2.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Since external experts and citizens were contacted for the interviews for this thesis, an HREC application was made, together with a Data Management Plan and Informed Consent documents that were shared with the participants. The goal of this application is to assess the potential risks that practitioners and residents may face because they participate in the research. In general, practitioners and residents are made anonymous when the thesis is published and unnecessary data is destroyed afterwards. An overview of the HREC application and Informed Consent form are presented in Appendix 1: HREC checklist and Appendix 2: informed consent form. The signatures from the HREC application are left out of the appendix for privacy, the original application is submitted and approved signed.

4 Current participation practices

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the current state of participation practices in two ways. The first section reviews relevant policy documents of 28 municipalities are reviewed to provide context on the guidelines and frameworks that shape participation practices. The second section provides an overview of the insights from expert interviews, beginning with an overview of existing participation methods, followed by a discussion on the definition of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and residents. Next, the challenges practitioners experience during participation processes are examined. The last section presents the strategies to organise public engagement in these communities. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

4.2 Policy documents

Many municipalities have developed their own policy documents outlining how they want to manage public participation. In this study, 28 participation handbooks from different municipalities have been analysed for their inclusivity. The selection of these municipalities was based primarily on a list of the 28 largest cities in the Netherlands. Only cities with an available participation handbook were included, while other regulations have been left out. This selection was then complemented by a few additional cities that also had participation handbooks (Parolo, 2024).

The coding process involved analysing the documents using the Text Search tool in ATLAS.ti. Specific terms were selected based on their relevance to inclusivity in public participation and on the terminology described in Chapter 2.3.2, which helped to focus the analysis on key concepts mentioned in the documents. The keywords used for the coding process were:

- **Inclusivity** (*inclusief*): This term was used to capture any mentions of the municipality's intent to create an inclusive participation process.
- **Vulnerable groups** (*Kwetsbare groepen*): This code referred to explicit mentions of vulnerable groups in the handbook.
- **Accessible / Accessibility** (*Toegankelijk*): This code highlighted any references to making the participation process, including language and locations, more accessible. Mentions of city accessibility outside the context of participation were excluded.
- **Language** (*Taal*): This referred to any indication of using clear and straightforward language in communication with citizens.
- **Diversity** (*Diversiteit*): Any mentions of promoting or considering diversity were coded under this term.
- **Low-barrier** (*Laagdrempelig*): This referred to mentions of reducing barriers to participation.
- **Underrepresented** (*Ondervertegenwoordigd*): This term was included to identify if the municipality recognized that certain groups are often not heard or listened to during participation processes.
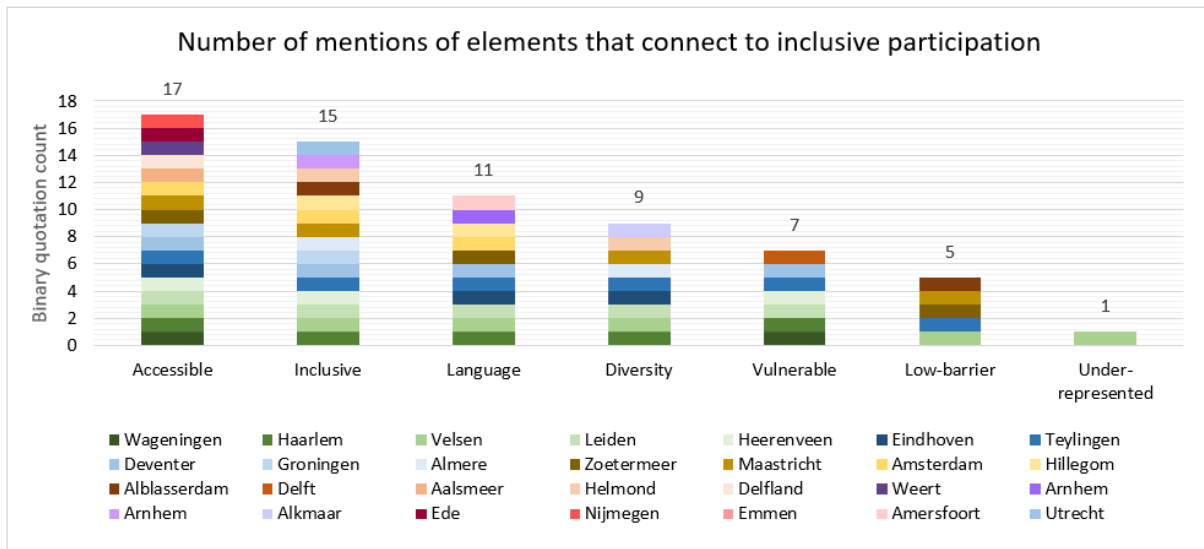
Figure 14: Binary quotation count of mentions of elements that connect to inclusive participation

In Figure 14, an overview is given of how often a certain concept as mentioned in the participation handbooks of different cities. First of all, it can be noted that many municipalities strive for an inclusive and accessible participation process. The municipality of Teylingen mentions for example the following about this: 'Reflection and inclusiveness: this means allowing everyone to participate in participation processes.' The municipality of Heerenveen explains it further: 'In our ambition, we pay extra attention to inclusiveness. This means that we also want to enable vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups (such as the low-literate and young people) to participate in the participation process.' Accessibility can be found in using accessible locations and language, but also by using digital participation tools. Furthermore, information should be easily accessible, so everyone is able to find it. Together with being accessible and inclusive, the process should also be low-barrier. This means that the municipality tries to take into account barriers that citizens feel to participate and then tries to minimize them. The municipality of Velsen writes about it as one of quality criteria: 'Barriers to joining the conversation are as low as possible.'

Another element that leads to more inclusive participation processes is the use of clear and accessible language. Haarlem writes the following about this: 'Attention to accessible and clear language: In our region, 9% of residents have difficulty reading and using a computer or smartphone. To fully participate in participation processes, everyone has to be able to understand what the government writes or says.' The city of Amsterdam divides their clear communication over two parts:

> The municipality communicates clearly and transparently about the purpose, the degree of influence and the precise scope of the question submitted to the stakeholders. The municipality provides clear and straightforward information in understandable language [...] about the process and what is happening or has happened with the participants' input. [...] If something has not been adopted, it is explained why.

Striving towards a diverse participation process has also been mentioned by multiple municipalities. Maastricht wrote the following about this:

> 100 per cent representativeness is never achieved in practice. Nor is this the goal. In practice, you often see that [...] the same parties usually speak up. To still get a good picture of the different interests and take them into account, you have to make an effort for diversity.

Multiple other municipalities also agree that it is not realistic to try to include everyone in the process, but efforts should still be made to achieve a certain degree of diversity.

Finally, seven municipalities also specifically talk about vulnerable groups in their handbooks. Both Haarlem and Teylingen write that the municipality is responsible for the vulnerable groups in society. One of the municipalities talks about underrepresented citizen groups. The city of Deventer describes it as hard-to-reach people:

> In the current participation processes, we often miss a number of groups: people who do not speak the Dutch language well, young people, the elderly, people with a mental or physical disability, the mentally vulnerable, people who have lost trust in government or society ('drop-outs'), people with busy schedules (young parents, informal carers) an people who have other things on their minds ('survivors').

Gemeente Westland (2022) provides several examples in their policy on how to adjust participation methods to the abilities of different target groups:

- **Cultural minorities**: Language versions participation resources, Collaboration with meeting locations
- **(Visually) impaired people**: Audiovisual participation tools, Accessibility of meeting places
- **Hearing impaired and low-literate people**: subtitling audiovisual participation tools, Application B1 language level, Visual participation tools (pictograms)
- **Youth**: Social media, Collaboration with meeting location
- **Elderly**: Subtitling audiovisual participation resources, Audio versions participation resources, Collaboration with meeting locations

4.2.1 Conclusion

It can be concluded that striving for inclusive participation processes is on the minds of many municipalities in the Netherlands. Many municipalities emphasise the importance of inclusivity, particularly for vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups, by employing clear communication, reducing barriers, and ensuring accessibility through various means, including digital tools. Some also provide clear guidance on what could be done to include a diverse range of people.

4.3 Expert interviews

This section discusses the findings from the 10 expert interviews conducted as part of this study. First, an overview is presented of which participation practices are used most often in the field. Then vulnerability is defined by how the practitioners think about it. Next, common barriers and challenges are discussed that practitioners experience during participation processes. The last section explores the strategies that practitioners mentioned during the interviews to engage more people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

4.3.1 Overview of participation practices

During the interviews, practitioners were asked to describe which participation methods they currently use. An overview of their replies can be seen in Figure 15. The graph illustrates the different methods employed by the different practitioners to engage communities in urban planning processes. The methods are categorized into the five levels of engagement: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. This categorisation was based on the classification of Geekiyanage et al. (2021), which is described in Chapter 2.2.2.

The interviews revealed a high variety of participation methods that are used in practice. There is a preference for Inform and Consult over Involve and Collaborate methods. None of the practitioners mentioned methods in the level of Empower. This suggests that practitioners may prioritise informing and consulting with communities, potentially due to resource limitations or the nature of the projects. Geekiyanage et al. (2021) also confirm in their research that there are only a small number of participatory methods and tools available to collaborate with or empower residents.

In the level of informing, flyers and letters in residents' mailbox and different types of information evenings are most frequently used. Consulting residents is mostly done through surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Multiple practitioners mentioned that they make use of social media, which falls under the category of involving residents, based on the framework of Geekiyanage et al. (2021). Lastly, workshops and children's council are used to collaborate with the neighbourhood.
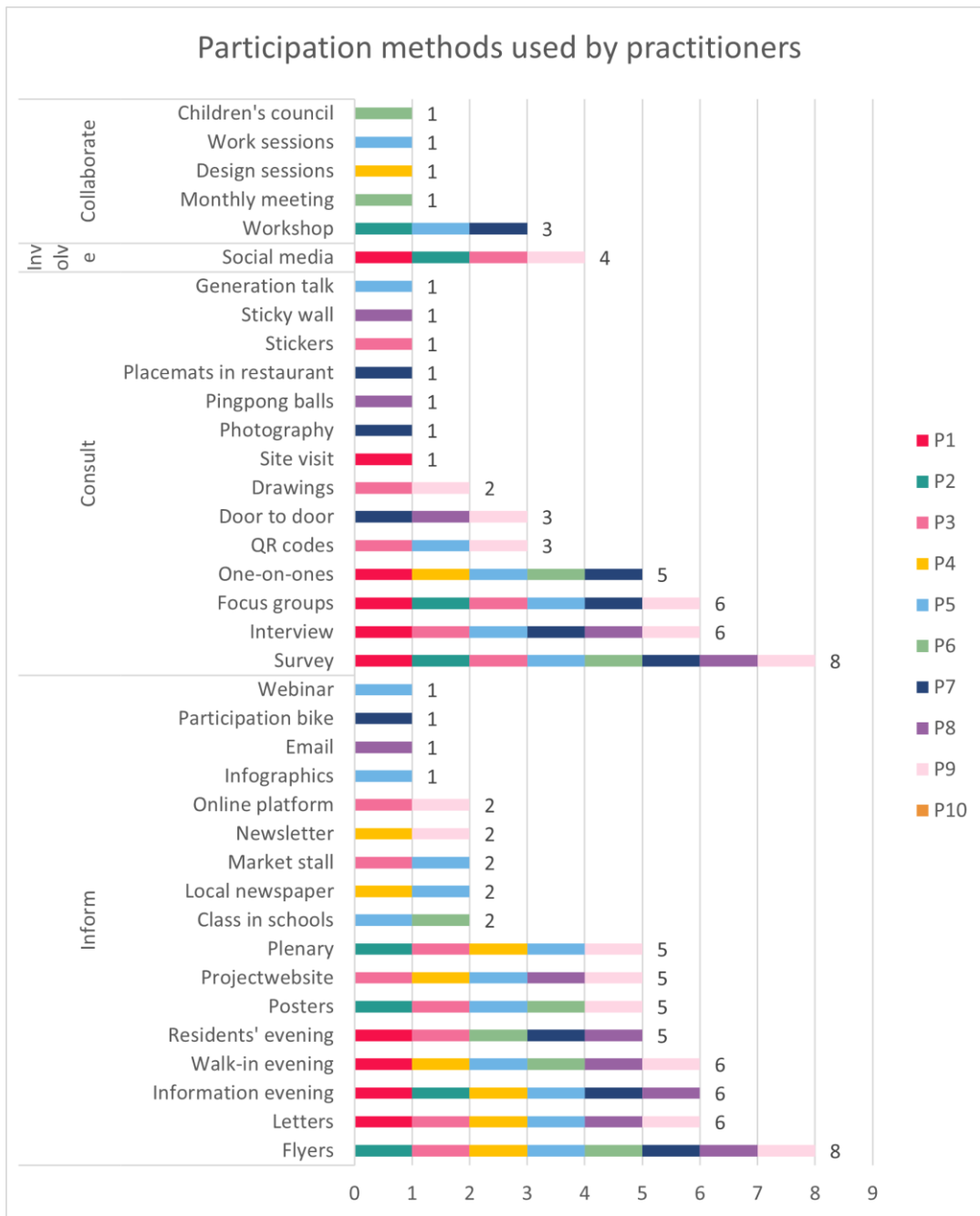
Figure 15: Participation methods used by practitioners and their participation level, obtained from interviews

4.3.2 Defining disadvantaged neighbourhoods and residents

Before diving into what is done in practice for participation processes, it is important to understand how practitioners define vulnerability in their work. This chapter explores the various definitions provided by practitioners and identifies key themes that emerged from their perspectives. This gives a basis for understanding the other chapters.

Key themes and insights

Practitioners provided diverse definitions of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. A few common themes emerged that can be divided into social and economical characteristics. Social factors include age, gender, disability, health, literacy, education, race and ethnicity, and language and literacy (Brock et al., 1986; Phillips et al., 2009). Economical factors are about income and having access to other financial resources. including demographic characteristics, socio-economic factors, health and well-being, resilience, and being overlooked. Table 12 provides an overview of which characteristics were mentioned at least once.

Table 12: Key Themes in Practitioners' Definitions of Vulnerability (obtained from interviews)

Theme	Characteristic	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Demography	Elderly	•		•	•	•	•	•	•		
	Youth	•	•		•	•	•			•	
	Children			•		•	•	•			
	Young parents									•	
Education	Lower level of education			•			•	•			
	Digital illiteracy									•	
Environmental	Physical	•		•							
Health	Psychologically/physically impaired		•								
Housing	Social housing			•							
Income	Financial	•		•		•		•	•		
Language	Non-Dutch				•		•			•	
Overlooked	Self-created						•	•			
	Anyone you do not include by default				•					•	
Resilience	Not keeping up with changes							•	•		
	Illiterate						•			•	
	Unstable life					•					
	Survival							•			
Socio-economic	Socio-economic		•	•		•				•	
	Energy poverty							•	•		
	Fewer opportunities		•								
Variation	Varies by project			•	•	•		•	•		
	Different types		•	•			•				

Demographic characteristics

There are multiple demographic characteristics that can describe a person: age, marital status, education, income, occupation, and work and retirement status (Brock et al., 1986). Elderly people were described most often as being part of the disadvantaged population (P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8). In the participation process, they may not be able to attend public meetings or workshops if the location is not accessible. On the opposite, children and youth can also be seen as vulnerable in

participation processes (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7). This group does not easily let itself be heard. Children are often dependent on their parents in these situations and teenagers can be vulnerable due to a lack of support systems.

Socio-economic factors

The term socio-economic vulnerability is used to cover a broader range of characteristics by the practitioners. Practitioner 2 described it as: 'in all walks of life, there are people who have been a little bit unlucky, who have had less opportunities than us.' People who experience financial difficulties, due to lower income or unemployment are also vulnerable during participation processes (P1, P3, P5, P7, P8). These people have to worry about paying their rent and having food on the table and as a result may not have to time to worry about a public meeting or workshop in their neighbourhood. Another type of poverty that was mentioned by P7 and P8 is energy poverty. These are people who have difficulties paying their energy bills, which impacts their quality of life. Next, people who live in social housing are also mentioned as being vulnerable (P3).

Education and language literacy

Having a lower level of education also makes one vulnerable, since they are less likely to understand all aspects of a project. People who are illiterate are limited by their ability to access information and services. Furthermore, people who are originally not from the Netherlands and who are not proficient in the Dutch language, are vulnerable, due to much of the communication happening in Dutch (P4, P6, P9). Next, digital literacy also makes someone vulnerable (P9).

Health and well-being

People dealing with physical or mental disabilities are also described as vulnerable (P2).

Resilience

In terms of resilience, people who have unstable life regarding their income, housing, or other important aspects, are described as vulnerable (P5). This ties in with people who are not able to keep up with changes in their environment (P7, P8). Practitioner 7 states it as people who are trying to survive each day in the first place, where it is not always possible to spend time on participating in a project.

The overlooked

As seen from the perspective of participation, anyone who is not included by default becomes disadvantaged (P4, P9). The way participation is organised also creates vulnerable groups (P6, P7). If one only organises activities throughout the day, everyone who works will become vulnerable, because their voice is not included in the project.

Varying definitions

In general, when asked whether their definition of vulnerability is the same for each project, most practitioners mention that the vulnerable group varies in each project (P3, P4, P5, P7, P8). Others mention that there are different types of vulnerable groups, also referring to the dynamic nature of the definition (P2, P3, P6).

Another perspective

Practitioner 10 had a different definition than all others: 'We often say vulnerable residents or vulnerable people and I know by now that many people, they do not consider themselves vulnerable, they are in a vulnerable situation. So, I think it is much better to speak from vulnerable situations rather than vulnerable people or disadvantaged neighbourhoods.' This explains that people may not see themselves as vulnerable and that it is just a term that experts use to describe them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, most practitioners use varying definitions depending on the type of project and agree that there are many different groups that can be seen as vulnerable in participation processes. Age was mostly mentioned as a factor of vulnerability, next to financial status and education level.

4.3.3 Challenges of public participation

This chapter discusses the different challenges when it comes to engaging residents from disadvantaged neighbourhoods that were mentioned during the interviews with the practitioners. Six themes emerged when analysing the perceived challenges: engagement, expectations, outside influence, participation design, representation, and understanding the neighbourhood. Each of these themes is discussed below with further explanation and exemplary quotes from the interviews.

Engagement

Several practitioners mentioned difficulties in engaging the disadvantaged residents. Table 13 gives a summary of these specific challenges. First of all, experts expressed that many residents do not feel the need to participate, while others do not understand the necessity or usefulness of the projects or participation activities. It is not clear for professionals how to convey this necessity when residents have many other urgent concerns, which puts participation lower on their priority list. Additionally, maintaining residents' attention is difficult, especially when they feel their previous input was ignored. Practitioners also highlighted the struggle of finding balance between too much and too little engagement. Online methods tend to reach more people, but the collected input can lack meaningful dialogue. Moreover, one practitioner mentioned that there is a noticeable difference in the amount of reaction they get from vulnerable and highly-educated residents. Lastly, practitioners sometimes have to manage bad reactions stemming from a general mistrust of authorities, past negative experiences, or other reasons. When practitioners face such reactions, it can be challenging to maintain a constructive dialogue and keep residents involved in the participation process.

Table 13: Engagement challenges of public participation

Challenge	Details	Said by	Illustrative quote
No need	Some citizens do not feel the need to participate	P5, P7	'Why do we always want everyone to participate? Some people just really don't feel the need to.' (P5)
Usefulness	Citizens do not see the necessity or usefulness of participation or the project	P4, P5	'With river dikes, people are quick to think, why does [the project] have to be done? The water is never that high.' (P4)
Keep attention	It is hard to keep the citizens' attention for long after they gave input	P8	'For them, they feel they have already given a lot of information, but not much, at least not in the short term, has been done with it. So how do you keep the attention?' (P8)
No conversation in digital methods	Lack of meaningful dialogue and one-way communication.	P3	'Online participation, […]. It's not a conversation, it's very much one-sided.' (P3)
No priority	Residents prioritise other urgent concerns over participation.	P2, P5	'People have completely different things on their minds than a large area development […] because they are just busy with 'how do I get through the month?' (P2)
Little substantiation and context in digital methods	Received input has insufficient context and depth	P3	'Online participation is the most effective. […] I also think the danger is that you just pick up a lot, but with little substantiation and little context.' (P3)
Little response	Residents from disadvantaged neighbourhoods give little reaction	P5	'What we see is that also vulnerable groups, if there is something in their environment, react very little to it. […] Whereas an educated person jumps right into the pen.' (P5)

Challenge	Details	Said by	Illustrative quote
Bad reactions	Negative reactions from residents are hard to deal with during engagement but are part of the job.	P7	'Sometimes I also get shouted at, "What are you doing here? Get lost. Do something else."' (P7)

Expectations

The next group of challenges that was mentioned by practitioners is related to *expectations*. A summary of the different expectation challenges can be found in Table 14. Three challenges came forward. The first one is having to deal with false expectations. If the expectations from the practitioners towards the citizens and vice versa are not clear from the start, it can lead to frustrations and misunderstandings later on. The second difficulty is to make a project that is supported by the community. The project can fail when there are different expectations from various residents and these differences are not well addressed. Lastly, negative prejudices from previous experiences can hinder effective collaboration.

Table 14: Expectation challenges of public participation

Challenge	Details	Said by	Illustrative quote
False expectations	Residents have wrong expectations about the participation process.	P3	'That people were not satisfied or were not properly informed and then felt they could have wished for something and if that did not come true they were wronged.' (P3)
Making a supported project	Balancing the different expectations of the neighbourhood to make a supported project.	P6	'How to tackle [participation] so that the neighbourhood embraces [the project]?' (P6)
Negative prejudices	Previous experiences can lead to negative prejudices towards participation.	P1	'The expectations are so low that everything that is proposed, […] is actually already not good unless it is executed exactly to all the wishes of the residents,' (P1)

Outside influence

In designing and conducting participation processes, some things can be out of our control. Four different challenges related to outside influence were mentioned by the practitioners, as shown in Table 15. A first key challenge is the loss of active local residents. This can halt the existing access to local community networks and disrupt project continuity and support. Therefore, it is important to keep investing in a strong network in the neighbourhood. The next challenge mentioned is the policy of municipalities to have all communication in Dutch. Assuming that everyone understands B1-level (simple) Dutch will exclude many non-Dutch speaking residents from participating. Additionally, when others, such as students or housing associations, handle participation but fail to provide follow-up, it can harm future engagement. Another challenge is accessing renters in participation processes since the housing corporation is then responsible for it. This makes it hard to manage the quality of the process. Finally, bureaucratic delays and slow municipal systems can interrupt timely and effective participation.

Table 15: Outside influence challenges of public participation

Challenge	Details	Said by	Illustrative quote
Active local resident leaves	Loss of key active residents disrupts	P6, P7	'[…] you agreed something with that person, who was very actively involved, but who is

	project continuity and support.		moving. So, who takes over? Who will ensure that the enthusiasm for the square remains in the neighbourhood […]?' (P6)
Everything in Dutch	Communicating exclusively in Dutch can exclude non-Dutch speaking residents.	P9	'The fact that you have to communicate everything in Dutch,' (P9)
No past follow-ups	Lack of follow-ups from past projects can reduce trust and engagement.	P8	"We also hear from some residents that they have participated before with a housing association survey or with a student survey, and then hear nothing back from them."
Someone else responsible for participation	Quality of participation can vary when others manage participation.	P7	'[…] the most vulnerable group, very often live in a housing corporation building and [there] the landlord is in charge of participation,' (P7)
Slow systems	Bureaucratic delays hinder effective participation.	P9	'The municipality's system can be quite delaying at times,' (P9)

Participation design

Even though there are many principles on how to design participation processes, several challenges still emerged from the interviews, shown in Table 16. A big difficulty that was mentioned by four practitioners was deciding on the right time to involve residents. Involving them too early may make residents confused and involving them too late may cause them to think everything has been decided. Next, multiple practitioners explained that they are still unsure what the best methods are for participating with vulnerable residents. Related to this is the challenge of involving the different target groups the right way. Producing different methods for each group in the neighbourhood requires a lot of creative thinking. Additionally, it is important to find the right words and language so that most people in the neighbourhood can become engaged. This is a challenge because using simple language can help reaching vulnerable residents, but at the same time it may demotivate other residents to come because there is not enough depth. Moreover, participating too often can have negative outcomes, since people can get participation fatigue. Similarly, the last challenge is about deciding how broad a public meeting should be. Making it too broad can scare people off because they do not understand what they should be doing there.

Table 16: Participation design challenges of public participation

Challenge	Details	Said by	Illustrative quote
When to involve	Finding the right moment to engage residents.	P1, P6, P7, P8	'They say: "You're involving us too early, it's your expertise and we want to get involved later." That is often tricky, what is the right time?' (P1)
How to participate	Uncertainty about the best methods to engage vulnerable residents.	P5, P6, P10	'We don't really know how to participate with them [the vulnerable residents],' (P5)
Involving everyone in the right way	Ensuring all groups are involved appropriately.	P4, P8	'How you involve everyone in the right way, that takes some thinking,' (P4)
Writing simple language	Balancing complex and simple language to reach all target groups and choosing the right language.	P2, P8	'You have different target groups. One can be very interested because of his profession, with whom you can use difficult words. While the people you really want to reach need a translation into something a large proportion of people understand better,' (P2)

Over-participating	Balancing over-participation and under-participation.	P8	'I think there is a fine line between over-participation and under-participation,' (P8)
Too broad a meeting	Broad meetings can overwhelm participants.	P8	'By organising such a broad meeting, we also scared off a few people at first because they said: "That's way too broad, so I have no idea what I'm doing here."' (P8)

Representation

One of the biggest challenges in public participation is to gather input from people that form a true representation of the neighbourhood. Seven challenges emerged from the interviews, presented in Table 17. Practitioners struggle to reach everyone, especially the vulnerable residents. Big and complex projects also make it harder to identify the various interested parties. Oftentimes, the same people will come to residents' evenings, which is mostly elderly people or the people with the most time. At these meetings, the most vocal residents tend to overshadow the other people in the room. This skews participation and might lead to a project that does not fit the neighbourhood's needs. These challenges show the need for targeted strategies to make sure all community voices are heard.

Table 17: Representation challenges of public participation

Challenge	Details	Said by	Illustrative quote
Not reaching everyone	Not being able to reach everyone in the neighbourhood.	P2, P3, P5, P10	'We don't always succeed in including everyone. […] My idea is that vulnerable groups don't have the feeling that they can participate,' (P3)
Always the same people	Repeated participation by the same individuals.	P5, P7, P9	'You always see the same people at walk-in meetings and then we realised that this makes participation vulnerable,' (P5)
The right representation	Challenges in reflecting community diversity.	P1, P2, P4	'It is quite challenging to reflect the diversity in participation,' (P2)
Reaching the vulnerable group	Difficulty reaching the most vulnerable residents.	P7, P9	'That group is the hardest to reach. […] that's why I like my job, I have to think quite creatively sometimes about how on earth I am going to reach that group,' (P9)
Only elderly	Predominance of elderly participants at participation activities.	P4, P9	'In other projects with a more mixed community, we do encounter mainly older people in participation,' (P4)
Vocal residents	Vocal residents dominate the conversation	P3, P8	'You see that the most outspoken residents always have the last word,' (P3)
Not everyone in sight	Difficulties in identifying all the interested stakeholders	P4	'Do you have everyone in sight? Once we started in North Friesland with a dike section of almost 50 kilometres. […] Consider how many plots of land are involved, […] and how many interested parties you have,' (P4)

Understanding the neighbourhood

The last group of challenges that emerged from the interviews are about understanding the neighbourhood. A summary is shown in Table 18. It is hard for practitioners to imagine the mindsets of residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Participation processes are often designed from behind a desk and the perspective of the 'higher-educated,' which leads to out-of-touch results. Next, it is essential to understand that a neighbourhood is embedded in complex social dynamics with a lot of history. Unknown neighbourhood rivalries for example can hinder participation. If an urban professional does not have a lot of experience or knowledge on the neighbourhood, they will not know who to approach in the neighbourhood or how to build trust. Additionally, residents have varied needs and preferences during the participation process, which are often difficult to balance out. Lastly, knowing which cultures and languages are present in the area and how to collaborate with them was found to be a difficult undertaking.

Table 18: Challenges in understanding the neighbourhood of public participation

Challenge	Details	Said by	Illustrative quote
Other way of thinking	Different mindsets make it hard to understand the residents.	P5, P7	'They have such a different mindset. […] As long as we design participation processes from our bubble, it is very hard to approach those vulnerable groups,' (P5)
Neighbourhood complexity	Neighbourhood has complex social dynamics and history.	P6	'You fall into a neighbourhood, you hear all kinds of stories from someone who got stabbed to youth work that doesn't want to come anymore. How do you make a successful project there?' (P6)
Expert does not have enough experience	Lack of experience and knowledge about the area and its people.	P9	'It is about experience, area and people knowledge and organisational knowledge. It is difficult if you are dropped here and are told: "this is your job," because you have no idea who to turn to,' (P9)
Different needs	Balancing the different needs and preferences among residents is hard.	P8	'A young couple found the meetings pleasant, but thought older people tended to overshadow the conversation. […] While the older person told us that he preferred plenary meetings over small groups to hear everyone and speak to the whole group,' (P8)
Different cultures	Practitioners have to understand many different cultures present in the neighbourhood.	P2	'You have different cultures, different language barriers,' (P2)

4.3.4 Strategies to organise participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods

This section shows the various strategies, mentioned by the experts, to improve the inclusion and participation of disadvantaged citizens in urban projects. These strategies are obtained from 10 interviews with different experts in the field regarding participation. The different practical approaches are subdivided into six categories: accessibility, communication, existing networks, human aspect, location, and rewards. Each category is discussed more in depth below, complemented with translated quotes from the expert interviews. Figure 16 shows an overview of which strategy categories were mentioned at least once by each Practitioner. A summary of the specific strategies per category are shown in Figure 17.
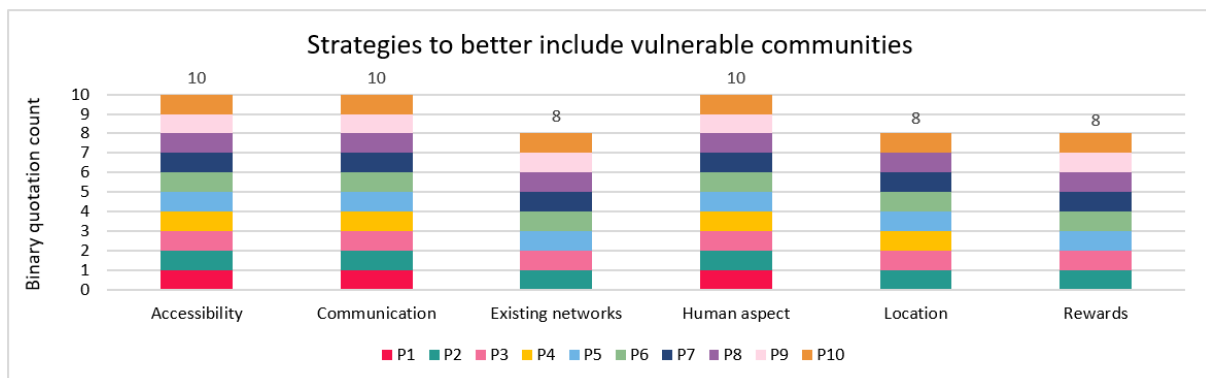
Figure 16: General strategies to better include disadvantaged communities, obtained from interviews

Figure 17: Strategies for public participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, obtained from interviews

Accessibility

The first category that came forward from the interviews are strategies related to improving the accessibility of the participation process and methods. An overview of all strategies mentioned by the Practitioners can be seen in Figure 18. The main concept for this category is 'the more accessible, the better,' (P3).
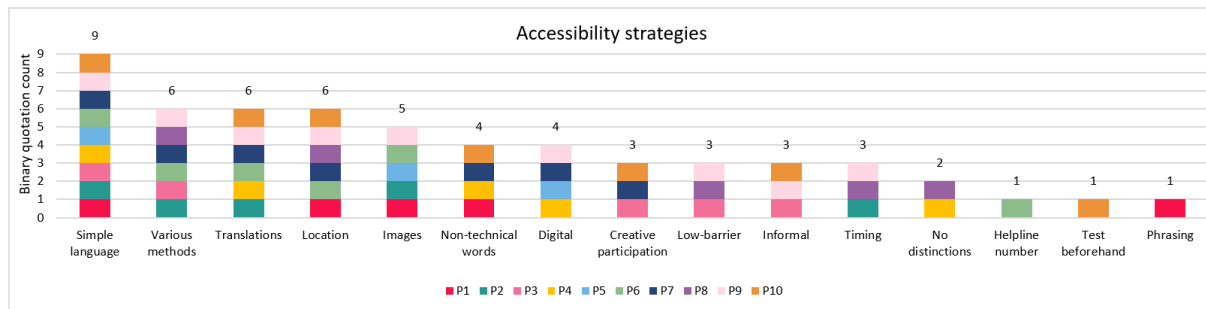
Figure 18: Accessibility strategies to improve participation processes, obtained from interviews

Language

Almost all interviewees emphasised the importance of using easy-to-understand language, that also non-technical people can understand. This applies to both written communication and physical interactions, such as during residents' evenings or workshops. Urban professionals may find it challenging to identify which words are too complex, so it is good practice to let someone else review the language used (P4). One strategy is to write at a B1 language level, which consists of simple Dutch that the vast majority of the population understands and uses daily.

A second strategy is selecting the appropriate language for the neighbourhood. Not every citizen speaks Dutch as their first language, and using only Dutch in participation can exclude a significant group. Translated documents, websites, and events can increase accessibility (P2, P4, P6, P7, P9, P10). Practitioner 6 mentioned: 'You kind of have to find the identity of that neighbourhood. [...] If it means that everyone there speaks English, then we will have to do it in English.' This highlights the importance of understanding which languages are being spoken in the neighbourhood and accommodating these languages whenever possible.

Visuals and Digital methods

In addition to using simple language and translations, visual aids such as images and infographics can help convey complex information (P1, P2, P5, P6). Images can replace large blocks of text that may otherwise be ignored (P5). Three practitioners also mentioned using digital methods to make the participation process more accessible (P4, P5, P7). When using digital tools, it is important to provide enough support to the elderly people to ensure they can make their voice heard. For example, practitioners can go around the neighbourhood with a tablet to help those who are unable to fill out a survey on their own (P7). Practitioner 5 noted that since COVID-19, more people are familiar with digital tools: '[...] that did change enormously because of corona. Because as a result, it has become much more digitalised. And that only brings advantages because everyone now understands how it works.' Despite the advantages of digital methods, they can also lead to too much input with little substantiation and context and one-sided conversations (P3). Digital methods and images have to be used in a balanced way to support participation activities.

Creative and multiple forms of participation

Using various participation methods strengthens the accessibility of a participatory process (P2, P6, P7, P8, P9). When informing people, each person has different preferences on how to be reached, so a mix of communication channels is key. Practitioner 6 explained how they informed everyone about an upcoming participation evening:

> We knew there were some illiterates among them, elderly people as well. [...] So we also knew that if we did it exclusively online, we would also miss a group. [...] We made some sort of cards, which just went into mailboxes, on which we announced at least that participation

evening. […], and then we did both an online survey and gave the opportunity to drop by the community centre to pass on your choices. We always had a phone number open**.**

These different methods complement each other, ensuring almost everyone receives the communication and can participate. Practitioner 3, 7, and 10 noted that choosing the right participation method also requires creativity, which can reach more people than traditional forms of participation. Practitioner 3 talked about a more creative way of participating with children: 'So we stood at one of those playgrounds with a kind of market stall. Then children could drop by and get some treats. And they could put stickers on what they liked, but also make their own drawings.'

However, Practitioner 3 also mentioned that clients might resist creative methods, due to potentially higher costs or longer time requirements, and it is not always clear if a new method will be successful. Practitioner 7 shared another example of creative participation with a *Participation Bicycle*, which provides coffee, has a television, and a parasol. This bicycle can attract curiosity and help starting conversations. He explained that it is a good way to start conversations with people. Another example was from a project in Utrecht where people used disposable cameras to take pictures of things they liked and disliked in their neighbourhood, which were then used to analyse the area.

These examples show that a multifaceted approach can reach a more diverse group of people. Using various methods ensures that all groups are catered to, while creative participation techniques can break down barriers and foster deeper engagement.

Timing of events

Finally, accessibility can be improved by considering the appropriate timing of public presentations or workshops (P2, P8, P9). Practitioner 2 mentioned organising activities in the evening to accommodate people who work during the day. Practitioner 8 explained that it does not matter which day of the week the activity is held. Practitioner 9 emphasised offering a range of meting times to increase accessibility: 'Then we will stand there three days in a row, […]. If you can't go in your neighbourhood on Tuesday, we'll be in the neighbourhood next door on Wednesday.'

Communication

Clear communication is fundamental to successful participation processes. There are a few strategies that can be taken into account to create better and more effective communication during participation processes. Figure 19 shows the different communication strategies mentioned by the experts.
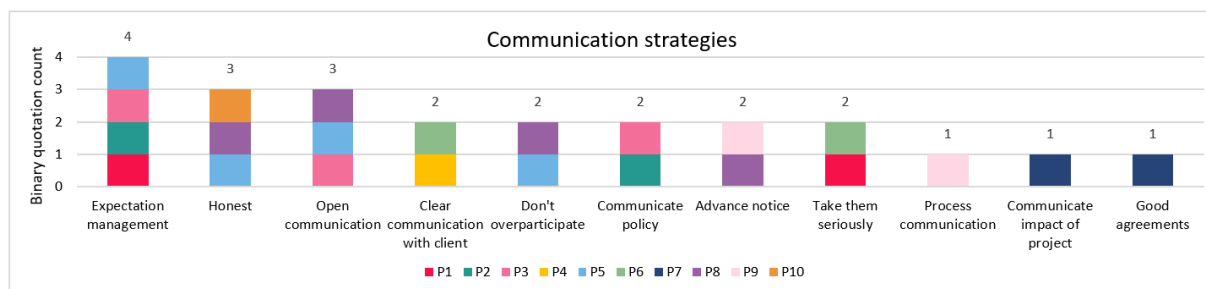
Figure 19: Communication strategies to improve participation strategies, obtained from interviews

Expectation management

Practitioner 1, 2, 3, and 5 talked about good expectation management with the community. Practitioner 1 mentioned: '[…] you clearly indicate in advance what is and what is not possible, you make the room for negotiation a bit clear in advance.' Citizens need to know which aspects they can influence and which they cannot. Practitioner 3 added that clear communication of the project's starting points, such as policy principles, is essential.

Proper expectation management also applies to the client. This is one of the stakeholders that is able to steer to the participation in a certain direction. Practitioner 6 highlighted the need to explain at the start that participation should be done carefully and may take more time and space than planned. Having a flexible plan that can be adjusted when needed is beneficial.

Open and honest communication

In addition to proper expectation management, honest and open communication during the whole process is important as well (P3, P5, P8, P10). Practitioner 5 explained that giving false promises can lead to frustrations:

> Because we are so used to *poldering*, taking everyone along and saying to everyone, yes, we will do something with that. But very often we can't do anything with it at all. Which actually leads to irritation and that group is no longer interested in participating at all, because nothing they say will ever be implemented.

Targeted communication

A next strategy is to know what to communicate in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. It may not always be possible to make everyone understand a complex project. Therefore, it is important to convey only the most relevant information in a clear and straightforward manner. Practitioner 7 highlighted three crucial elements to communicate clearly to residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. First, explain the financial implications of the project for them and whether they will lose out or improve financially. Second, point out the available support and whether they need to take action themselves or if the project will handle it. Lastly, communicate how big the changes in their environment will be and whether these changes will have a positive or negative impact on their daily lives.

Respect and value input

It is important to take people's ideas and suggestions seriously (P1, P6). This is not only to avoid irritations from the community, but to show that their input is respected, valued, and valid. Sometimes, these suggestions cannot be realised during a specific project, but they can be realised later on in a new project. Practitioner 6 explained: 'By taking such a question seriously and seeing if you can fit it in and if you can't, looking for another solution, is also good. Ultimately, by doing that, you take a question seriously and you can also answer it that way.' Communicating about the process can help improve this aspect by explaining what will be done with their opinions and when they will receive feedback on the final decisions (P9).

Timely communication

Lastly, two practitioners highlighted the importance of sharing information and invitations to participation events early in advance and sometimes multiple times, so people can block their agendas (P8, P9). Practitioner 8 explained that announcing in advance when they would go door to door encouraged people to stay home during those times. Leading up to an event it can also be good to create momentum by communicating at different times and in different ways (P9).

Existing networks

Leveraging existing networks can significantly impact participation and the ability to contact certain hard-to-reach groups in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. It can be challenging for a stakeholder manager to enter a new neighbourhood where nobody knows them and try to reach and motivate people to participate. Figure 20 shows an overview of the different network strategies.
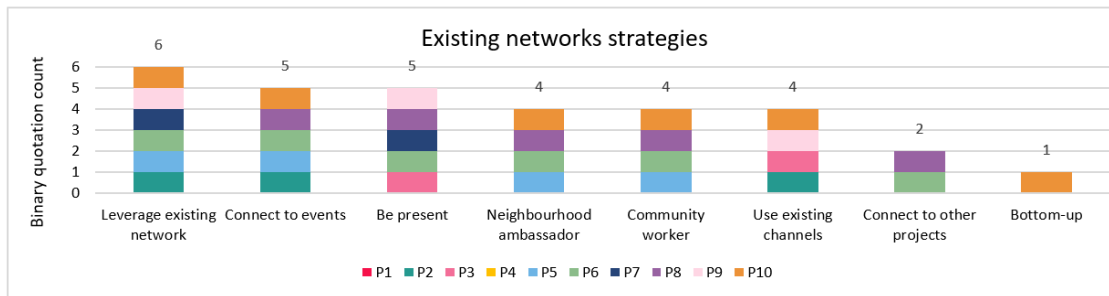
Figure 20: Network strategies to improve participation strategies, obtained from interviews

Connecting to local networks and events

A first strategy is to connect with existing networks and associations in the neighbourhood. They know best how to reach their own people, eliminating the need to reinvent the wheel. Practitioner 2 explained the importance of building a network in the neighbourhood: 'I am not under the illusion that I can reach everyone, but I do think that there are a lot of good organisations, a lot of people, sometimes individuals, who do have access to these target groups.' This can be done by contacting the local community association or a cultural or sports association.

Every organisation has a different target group. A second strategy is to collaborate in upcoming local events, by being there or supporting them. 'We approached young people. There was a festival where we were and at the sports clubs we just interviewed them and asked questions,' Practitioner 5 told. Likewise, local community centres often have events where neighbours gather for coffee, lunch, or other activities. Practitioner 6 mentioned: 'By including the community centre, we had a much bigger reach than we could have anticipated. From the elderly to the illiterate, to people who are less interested or come there for something completely different.'

Including active citizens

A third strategy is to look for active citizens in the neighbourhood, also known as ambassadors or key figures. 'In every neighbourhood, no matter how vulnerable, there are always a few frontrunners, a few trackers. You look for those and they can help you reach out to the others,' Practitioner 5 stated. Without accessing the local network, it may be hard to reach certain communities in the first place. However, urban professionals in the tender phase face challenges in defining a proper participation strategy, as there is no time to go engage with the neighbourhood until after being awarded the project. Practitioner 5 explained:

> We often get a call for tender and then you already have to write a participation plan. "How do you plan to participate?" And then I start making up all sorts of things. But I know it won't turn out like that. Because if you really dig in, it won't happen like that at all. So ideally I would write down, "We'll determine [the strategy] when we've started." But we won't get any points for that in our offer.

Being present

It is crucial to simply be present in the neighbourhood in different ways. This helps people to recognise and trust you (P3, P6, P7, P8, P9). 'We were just there all afternoon. Anyone could just walk in. Then we also distributed flyers saying, come say hi, have a cup of coffee and a biscuit. That works a bit better instead of making it so formal with a presentation,' Practitioner 3 described.

Using existing communication channels

Every neighbourhood has certain communication channels that they already use for sharing local information. Instead of only sending a formal letter to residents, a message with an invite can also be

placed on the local Facebook or Instagram pages, but also in a neighbourhood WhatsApp group (P2, P3, P9, P10). Practitioner 10 explained that if you are connected to key figures in the neighbourhood, they can be the ones sharing flyers or invitations in group chats, since it may not always be possible to join such chats as an outsider.

Human aspect

The next approach focuses on the human aspect of participation processes, which is essential for effective engagement, as mentioned by seven out of ten practitioners. Figure 21 provides an overview of all strategies mentioned at least once by the interviewees. Effective participation processes go beyond merely collecting opinions about a project and addresses the broader concerns of the residents.
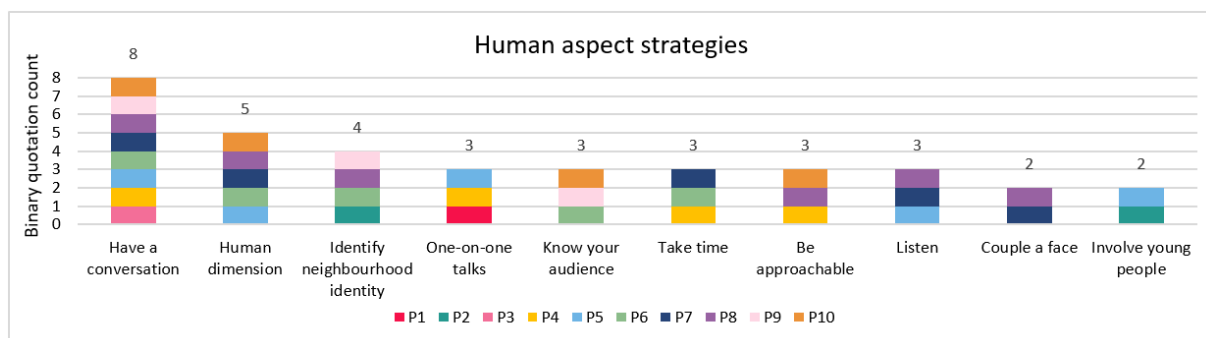
Figure 21: Human aspect strategies to improve participation processes, obtained from interviews

For instance, Practitioner 6 highlighted that while they try and execute the project, residents have bigger worries on their minds that affect their perception and acceptance of the project:

> I once did a quay wall and these people just asked me for coffee. Then you would stop by and in the meantime, they would express their concerns about their house, vibrations or whatever. [...] I once sat with someone who had just lost his wife. [...] He just wanted to tell his story. But afterwards he was a very good supporter.

This quote illustrates the importance of recognising and addressing emotional needs on an individual level to create support for a project, but also to ensure that a project does not worsen a situation of someone.

One-on-one conversations

A strategy to evoke the human aspect is using one-on-one conversations with citizens. This approach allows for more personal and impactful interactions compared to large public presentations (P1, P4, P5). Practitioner 1 said about this: 'You try to visit people one-on-one, home visits, instead of one of those residents' evenings. Then the atmosphere is a bit different.' Such interactions help stakeholder managers address individual concerns of residents and to find common ground with them. For example, Practitioner 5 shared a situation where personal attention made a big difference:

> We had one man whose wife had cancer and was told she was seriously ill, who then asked if the work can be postponed. No, we can't, because you have a whole connection of kilometres long. You can't suddenly take out a link. But then that's quite complicated, because you can't go along with it. So, what you do then is figuring out in a one-on-one conversation, how can we make this as easy and as comfortable as possible?

This example demonstrates how personal conversations can improve flexibility and empathy in managing residents' concerns, leading to more cooperative relationships.

Physical presence and personal connection

Being physically present in the neighbourhood and adding a personal touch to communication can significantly improve engagement. This can be done by adding a face on communication letters or posters distributed in the neighbourhood (P7, P8). Practitioner 7 discussed the impact of this strategy: 'The communication consultant thought of putting my photo in the letter. At first, that's very exciting. […] But in retrospect, it was an incredibly good move. Because people came and they recognised me right away.' This strategy makes stakeholder managers more recognisable and approachable, fostering a sense of trust and making conversations easier.

Understanding Local Culture

Learning about the local culture is another crucial aspect for effective participation. Understanding the unique characteristics and needs of different communities helps tailor the approach to better fit the local residents (P2, P6, P8). Practitioner 6 explained the importance of knowing your audience: 'I have just done a tender for Volendam. Volendam is […] really a village with its own identity. Then you speak a different language than when I do a residents' evening in Amsterdam with articulate Amsterdammers.' Recognizing and respecting local culture can lead to more effective and meaningful participation. Once the local culture is known, it is possible to adapt the chosen approach and communication to better suit local needs.

Investing Time in Communities

Understanding a community's dynamics takes time, which is often limited in project timelines (P4, P6, P7). Practitioner 6 explained that it takes a lot of time to understand a community: 'Because a project is relatively short of course. It may well take two years, but that is not long in the time of such a neighbourhood. It's too short actually to completely make it your own.' Effective participation requires a genuine commitment to the community, beyond merely completing a project checklist. Clients need to realize that participation is about engaging with the people who will live with the outcomes of the project and that it may take more time than originally planned.

Location

The second to last strategy is choosing the appropriate location to reach the desired target group. Selecting a location that is convenient and familiar to the target group can improve attendance. Figure 22 shows the different locations mentioned during the interviews.
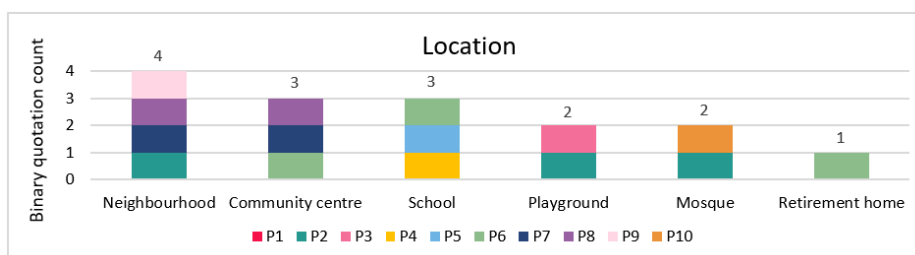
Figure 22: Location strategies to improve participation processes, obtained from interviews

To reach children and youth, classes and workshops can be held at schools or in collaboration with the school (P4, P5, P6). Playgrounds are effective locations where children and their parents gather after school and during weekends (P2, P3). Young adolescents can be reached better at community centres or at sport or cultural events. Parents can be approached at various locations, such as when they pick up their children from school or at events their kids attend. Grocery stores can also be a good place to connect with adults. Lastly, elderly can best be reached through retirement homes (P6).

Choosing the right location is crucial to finding the right target group. Practitioner 6 gave an example of reaching the Ghanaian community during a participation process. They did not know where to approach them, but they realised that people from Ghana often visit blood transfusion centres due to anaemia. While being there, they successfully engaged this group in conversation about the project.

This example highlights the importance of identifying the community you want to reach and determining where these people often gather. This can be challenging, which is why it is important to connect with the neighbourhood and talk with locals to find out about this. A good place to start and find this connection with the neighbourhood are the community centres (P6, P7, P8). Here it is possible to hang up posters or distribute flyers and staff can provide additional help. Also, unconventional locations can be used to reach a new group of residents. Practitioner 7 provided an example of using restaurants as a place for participation:

> What should the playground look like? They had made three set-ups. […] Then at the snack bar and at the restaurant, they could give you a placemat. On the placemat you could then tick which option you liked best and then you could hand in the placemat.

Rewards

Lastly, experts mentioned providing different forms of rewards to the citizens as a strategy. Figure 23 shows an overview of the different rewards.

Figure 23: Reward strategies to improve participation processes, obtained from interviews

Food and drinks

Providing food and drinks during participation activities was mentioned most often (P2, P3, P5, P6, P9). Practitioner 2 noticed that this helps to grab citizens' attention: 'We also have a coffee cart that we use to go into the neighbourhoods. Then you can just get a free cup of coffee and in the meantime, you can chat about what you are doing and that works very well.' Practitioner 6 also confirmed that food can really connect people. It can provide an accessible environment where trust can be gained:

> I am now reminded of the Community Centre that organised another soup afternoon and all sorts of people come to it. […] Those are the perfect times to discuss your draft or a plan or whatever, just alongside the soup. […] Then you are accepted, you are taken seriously for what you say.

Compensation

Another reward strategy involves compensation in the form of money or coupons to local shops. Practitioner 5 used this incentive to reach people who normally would not participate: 'In a neighbourhood where we knew people don't […] come at all, we simply put surveys through the letterbox and they could win five vouchers. Then suddenly we saw a lot more people who participated.' Practitioner 7 added that providing these rewards is a fair way to compensate people for their time. Given their vulnerability, this type of compensation may also help reduce their vulnerability, even in small ways, which can be seen as a key objective of the participation process (P7).

4.4 Conclusion

Chapter 4 has examined the engagement methods that are now in place in disadvantaged neighbourhoods through an analysis of policy papers and expert interviews. The analysis of 28 municipal participation handbooks revealed a strong emphasis on inclusivity, accessibility, and the need for clear communication to ensure diverse and representative participation processes. Though many municipalities want to put these concepts into action, practical challenges remain.

Expert interviews highlighted that while practitioners use a range of techniques, they mostly concentrate on informing and consulting rather than involving or empowering people. Practitioners had varying definitions of vulnerability, underscoring the complex and multifaceted nature of vulnerability in participation contexts. In addition, practitioners deal with significant challenges, including engagement issues, managing expectations, outside influences, and designing effective participation processes. The difficulty in maintaining residents' attention, addressing personal priorities, and overcoming bureaucratic delays, compound these challenges.

To address these challenges, practitioners have developed strategies focusing on accessibility, effective communication, leveraging existing networks, emphasizing the human aspect, choosing appropriate locations, and providing rewards. These strategies aim to increase engagement by improving processes' inclusivity and responsiveness to the needs of disadvantaged communities.

Overall, the results show that even though there is a strong theoretical and policy-based commitment to inclusive participation, practical implementation requires ongoing effort and adaptation to overcome the diverse challenges faced by practitioners in the field.

5 The citizens' perspective

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the perspectives on public participation of citizens from two disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. First, the two Dutch neighbourhoods are introduced and their vulnerability is assessed. Second, the interview data is presented and analysed. The chapter closes with an overview of the citizens' perspective.

5.2 The neighbourhoods

The empirical study from this research focuses on two neighbourhoods in the Netherlands that can be considered to be disadvantaged. The first neighbourhood is Feijenoord, located in Rotterdam, South Holland. The second neighbourhood is Meerwijk, located in Haarlem, North Holland. By exploring their demographics, socio-economic indicators and other vulnerability factors, the aim of this section is to provide a comprehensive context for the later analysis of the interviews conducted with residents from these areas. All statistical data is taken from CBS (2024a). The most recent available data was always chosen.

5.2.1   Feijenoord

Context

Feijenoord is one of the nine neighbourhoods in city quarter Feijenoord in Rotterdam, home to 7,795 citizens (See Figure 24). The other neighbourhoods are: Afrikaanderwijk, Bloemhof, Hillesluis, Katendrecht, Kop van Zuid, Kop van Zuid – Entrepot, Noordereiland, and Vreewijk (AlleCijfers, 2023). Feijenoord was the first expansion district of Rotterdam on the south side of the Nieuwe Maas river. Most of the neighbourhoods in quarter Feijenoord are densely populated and 70% of its residents has a non-Dutch background.
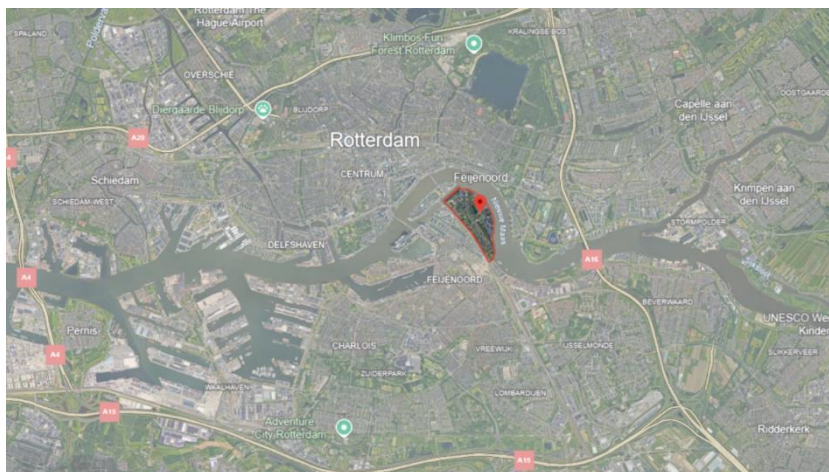
Figure 24: Location of Feijenoord (own work, 2024), based on Google Earth (2024)

Vulnerability of Feijenoord

Understanding the vulnerabilities of a neighbourhood could benefit the public participation design. Below, the vulnerability of Feijenoord is discussed based on demographics, health, income,

employment rates, housing tenure, safety, and education level. An overview of al the demographic statistics can be found in Table 20 presents the overview of all the statistical data, retrieved from CBS (2024a).

Feijenoord, with 7,795 residents in 2023, shows significant demographic differences compared to Rotterdam. 33% of Feijenoord's population falls into the vulnerable age groups (0-15 years and over 65 years), compared to 30% in Rotterdam. Gender distribution in Feijenoord shows 48% women and 52% men, which is similar to the gender distribution in Rotterdam. Significant ethnic diversity is another characteristic of the area, with the majority of the population coming from outside of Europe (72%), contracting the 43% of Rotterdam.

In terms of health, 9% of the population are WMO (Social Support Act) clients, indicating a slightly higher proportion of disabled or chronically ill residents compared to the rest of Rotterdam. Economic indicators show a significant disadvantage for Feijenoord. 25.9% of households are living around or below the national poverty line, in contrast to 'only' 13% in Rotterdam. The average standardised household income in Feijenoord is €25,300, substantially lower than Rotterdam's €31,800. The net employment rate of Feijenoord, being 50%, is also far lower than the 60% in Rotterdam.

Data of housing tenure shows that Feijenoord has a predominantly renting population, with 89% of residents renting their homes. This is a big difference with the 66% of renters in Rotterdam. Next, Feijenoord has slightly higher crime rates than Rotterdam with 7 crimes per 1000 inhabitants.

Lastly, education levels are much lower in Feijenoord than in Rotterdam. 33% of the population in Feijenoord has a low level of education, contrasting the 23% in Rotterdam. Rotterdam and Feijenoord have a similar percentage of residents with a secondary education level. Meanwhile, only 14% of Feijenoord's residents has a high level of education.

Altogether, Feijenoord can be considered a disadvantaged neighbourhood, based on the framework of Chapter 3.3.3.

Table 19: Vulnerability analysis of Feijenoord neighbourhood in comparison to municipality Rotterdam (CBS, 2024a)

Vulnerability factor	Metric	Feijenoord 7,795 inhabitants (2023)	Rotterdam 663,900 inhabitants (2023)
Demography	Vulnerable age group:		
	0 – 15 years	20%	15%
	> 65 years	13%	15%
	Gender:		
	Women	48%	49%
	Men	52%	51%
	Origin:		
	Dutch	19%	44%
	European	9%	12%
	Outside of Europe	72%	43%
Health	% of wmo-clients	9%	8%
Income and employment	Share of households living around or under national poverty line	25.9%	13.0%
	Average standardised household income	€25,300	€31,800
	Net employment rate	50%	60%
Housing tenure	Owners	11%	34%
	Renters	89%	66%

Safety	Crime rates	7 crimes per 1000 inhabitants	4 crimes per 1000 inhabitants
Education	Education level:		
	Low education	33%	23%
	Secondary education	28%	29%
	High education	14%	25%

5.2.2 Meerwijk

Context

Meerwijk is one of the sub-districts in Schalkwijk, which is located in the southern part of Haarlem (See Figure 25). Over 9,000 Haarlem residents from diverse backgrounds call this place their home. This area contains a large amount of apartment buildings and social housing units, which are built in the 1960s and the 1970s (Onencan et al., 2024). In 2023, the municipality of Haarlem published a report for a Neighbourhood Approach in Meerwijk for 2023-2026 (Gemeente Haarlem, 2023). During this period, they want to invest more in the liveability and safety of the area. The neighbourhood is described as a socioeconomically disadvantaged area with much potential. In the near future, the public space of Meerwijk will be renewed by replacing roads, renewing sewers, and making the area greener. It will also be the first district in Haarlem with a heating network in place. These changes will take place in a neighbourhood where the government and police have a hard time getting in contact with the residents. A lack of trust from the residents towards the government and the social neighbourhood team is perceived as well. All this makes this neighbourhood an interesting location to interview local residents. In the next part, an analysis of the vulnerability of this area is made based on the vulnerability metrics defined in Chapter 3.3.3.
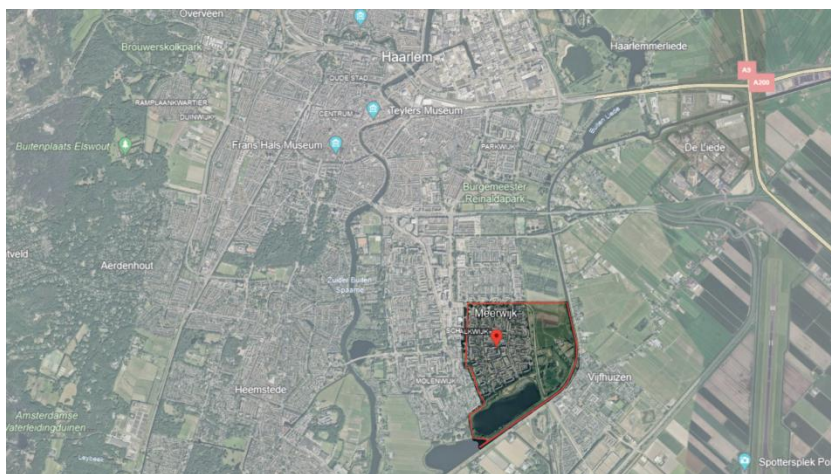
Figure 25: Location of Meerwijk (own work, 2024) based on Google Earth (2024)

Vulnerability of Meerwijk

Understanding the disadvantages of a neighbourhood could benefit the public participation design. Below, the vulnerability of Meerwijk is discussed. An overview of al the demographic statistics can be found in Table 20. All statistical data is retrieved from CBS (2024a).

Meerwijk has a population of 9,035, of which 52% are women and 48% are men. From this group of people 38% falls within the vulnerable age group of 0-15 years and over 65 years. This is slightly higher than the overall demographics of Haarlem. The area also experiences great ethnic diversity, with 53% of the population coming from outside of Europe, compared to 23% in Haarlem.

In terms of health, Meerwijk has 11% of its population as WMO (Social Support Act) clients, indicating a higher percentage of disabled or chronically ill persons compared to Haarlem (7%). A substantial difference between Meerwijk and Haarlem can be found in the percentage of households living below or near national poverty line, 13.9% of the residents in Meerwijk compared to 6.2% of the population in Haarlem. Meerwijk's average household income is €27,900, which is considerably lower than Haarlem's €37,6000. The net employment rate, which is 56% in Meerwijk, is another indicator of this economic inequality.

Housing in Meerwijk is predominantly rented (80%), contrasting with Haarlem's 52% homeownership rate. The crime rate in Meerwijk is a little higher than in Haarlem, 6 crimes per 1,000 inhabitants compared to 4 crimes in Haarlem. This is also reflected in the percentage of people who do not feel safe in their own area, being 4.7% for Meerwijk (Gemeente Haarlem, 2023).

The last component is the level of education in the neighbourhood. This is noticeably lower in Meerwijk than in the whole of Haarlem. 28% of the population in Meerwijk has low education, 31% middle education, and only 12% has had high education.

In summary, Meerwijk shows a higher degree of vulnerability in areas such as demography, ethnic diversity, health, economic conditions, housing, safety, and education compared to Haarlem. These factors reflect the disadvantaged position of the neighbourhood.

Table 20: Vulnerability analysis of Meerwijk neighbourhood in comparison to municipality Haarlem (CBS, 2024a)

Vulnerability factor	Metric	Meerwijk 9,035 inhabitants (2023)	Haarlem 165,396 inhabitants (2023)
Demography	Vulnerable age group: 0 – 15 years > 65 years	 19% 19%	 17% 17%
	Gender: Women Men	 52% 48%	 51% 49%
	Origin: Dutch European Outside of Europe	 40% 6% 53%	 65% 12% 23%
Health	% of wmo-clients	11%	7%
Income and employment	Share of households living around or under national poverty line	13.9%	6.2%
	Average standardised household income	€27,900	€37,600
	Net employment rate	56%	67%
Housing tenure	Owners	20%	52%
	Renters	80%	48%
Safety	Crime rates	6 crimes per 1000 inhabitants	4 crimes per 1000 inhabitants
Education	Education level: Low education Secondary education High education	 28% 31% 12%	 17% 25% 33%

5.3   Insights from local residents

In this section, the results from the interviews with local residents in Meerwijk and Feijenoord are discussed. First, the voiced complaints are presented, as these can hinder citizens to participate in the future. Second, the barriers are examined. Third, motivators that citizens indicated are shown. Fourth, an overview is given of the preferred ways of communication. Lastly, citizens were asked whether they had additional tips to improve participation processes.

5.3.1   Complaints about previous participation processes

Various complaints about participation processes were expressed by the citizens. Various key themes emerged, including lack of effective communication, disregard for citizen input, one-sided decision-making, and little trust in authorities.

A common dissatisfaction is the feeling of not being heard (Citizen 5, 7) and the perception that officials and the municipality do not listen (Citizen 1, 3). Both reflect a broader issue of **poor communication**. One citizen mentioned: 'That feeling is alive and well here. People feel like they are not being heard,' (Citizen 5). Another citizen said: 'Because I feel you can say things now and then, but that they're not really listened to,' (Citizen 1). Additionally, two citizens noted the **lack of information** about ongoing construction projects in their neighbourhoods (Citizen 7, 10). Other citizens also mentioned that there is a **lack of follow-up** after participating. They mentioned: 'There have also been several surveys here in the neighbourhood about certain things. But you participate and then you never really hear anything else about it,' (Citizen 5). This shows that citizens find it important to know what happened with their input.

Closely related to the issue of ineffective communication, is the complaint that citizens feel like **authorities often push their plans through** without considering the opinion of the citizens (Citizen 3, 5, 7). This frustration is aggravated by the feeling that participation is often a one-time event (Citizen 8). One citizen felt like the **voice of the citizen has little impact**: 'I think citizens' influence is quite low. Ultimately, what I think and what I also see, especially with that new housing, [...] I see that the citizens have quite almost nothing to say,' (Citizen 7). This sentiment also demotivated this citizen to participate when asked whether they would be easily able to join a residents' evening.

One citizen expressed a **lack of trust in municipality officials**, which hinders their participation efforts. This citizen mentioned: 'Those people [officials] I don't think highly of as doing much. There is a lot of chatter and nonsense. But whether anything really comes out of it and whether they know what they are doing… I sometimes have my doubts about that,' (Citizen 3). This shows a feeling of scepticism and a lack of confidence in the participation process amongst citizens.

These complaints highlight critical areas that need to be addressed to improve the participation process. Currently, these issues may prevent residents from participating in residents' evenings or other activities of a participation process.

5.3.2   Barriers to participation

During the interviews, citizens were asked whether they would easily be able to come to a residents' evening or workshop about a new project in their neighbourhood. Seven out of thirteen residents stated that it would be easy to do this. After this question, they were asked about what would hinder them to show up. First, they would have the opportunity to answer this question freely, then the researcher showed them a few options to help them think broader. In examining the replies of the

citizens, four themes came out: time and timing, ability, communication, and interest. The findings are summarised in Table 21.

Table 21: Key barriers for citizens to participate, obtained from interviews

Theme	Barrier	Details	Citizens
Time and timing	**Lack of time**	Busy schedules with work and family obligations, especially during rush hours.	Citizen 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 10
	Event timing	Inconvenient scheduling of participation events during the day.	Citizen 1, 8, 13
	Childcare availability	Need for a babysitter to be able to attend.	Citizen 1
Ability	**Language barrier**	Difficulty understanding or speaking Dutch, especially in multicultural neighbourhoods.	Citizen 2, 3, 4, 5
	Health issues	Physical health problems, such as asthma, limit participation.	Citizen 3
	Distance	Difficulty traveling to event locations due to disability or distance.	Citizen 6
	Digital skills	Limited ability to use online platforms or social media for participation.	Citizen 3, 5, 8, 14
	Knowledge	Lack of specific knowledge needed to engage in participation.	Citizen 3
Communication	**Access to information**	Difficulty finding information about participation activities, aggravated by language barriers.	Citizen 1, 4, 5, 8, 14, 15
Interest	**Lack of interest**	No desire to participate because the subject is not interesting.	Citizen 3, 5, 7
	Perceived ineffectiveness	Belief of residents that their input will not have an impact or that participation is useless.	Citizen 7, 8
	General lack of interest of the community	Noted lack of participation interest among other residents, leading to the dissolution of the neighbourhood council.	Citizen 5

Before explaining the barriers, many residents also responded immediately that they did not feel any barrier to participate (Citizen 2, 10, 12, 14 and 15). Additionally, when asked about how confident they are to participate in building projects in the neighbourhood, nine of them replied with very confident and the other four replied that they are confident. Even though they are not educated in architecture, urban planning, construction, or any other related studies, all residents feel confident enough to give their opinion.

The most frequently mentioned barrier was the lack of time, which six citizens confirmed. Most of them mentioned that if they would have the time, they would definitely participate. One citizen explained: 'If I have time, then I like to join,' (Citizen 10). Another one said: 'If it's offered and I have the time, I would just do it,' (Citizen 1). The lack of time goes together with the timing of the event. Some residents indicated that they would be available during the day, and others during the evening. 'So not during rush hour time with kids. Between five and eight is usually a no-go,' notes Citizen 8. Having kids and a job limits one time to participate and one resident mentioned that when they find a babysitter, they would be able to come (Citizen 1). A work schedule is also a time barrier for some residents. For time not to be a barrier, one citizen remarked that you have to find the natural moments where you can encounter residents. This could be during the weekends or during upcoming neighbourhood events (Citizen 8).

Another barrier perceived by citizens to participate is their ability to do so. Four citizens mentioned that they or others are hindered by their ability to speak and understand the Dutch language (Citizen

2, 3, 4, and 5). In multi-cultural neighbourhoods with many immigrants, such as Meerwijk and Feijenoord, this is an essential barrier to keep in mind. Another resident said that their health issues, such as asthma, hinders them to join many participation events (Citizen 3). The distance of the location can also form a barrier for some residents, as some are disabled and cannot travel far, but also the time that it takes to get there (Citizen 6). Digital skills regarding online websites or social media were also mentioned as a potential barrier by some residents (Citizen 3, 5, 8, 14). This also came forward when residents were asked about which way they would like to be informed, which is discussed later. Lastly, one resident indicated that not having the right knowledge could be a barrier for them (Citizen 3).

Effective communication and the availability of the right information are important during participation, especially when half of the residents indicated that information about activities in the neighbourhood is not easy to find (Citizen 1, 4, 5, 8, 14, 15). One resident mentioned that they cannot find information easily because of their language barrier (Citizen 4).

Interest in the topic and to participate in general is the last common barrier that was found from the interview data. Two residents indicate that they don't feel like participating. While for one resident this is due to not wanting to be present everywhere (Citizen 3), for the other resident it is because of not seeing the use of it since they think their voice has no impact (Citizen 7). Citizen 5 also noticed a general lack of interest to think along in Meerwijk, which even caused the neighbourhood council to dissolve.

Understanding these barriers can help practitioners in overcoming them when designing a new participation process. Figuring out the right time, taking into account different levels of abilities or limitations, communicating effectively, and increasing interest are the first steps in engaging more citizens.

5.3.3 Motivators for participation

The citizens were not only asked about what would hinder them to participate, but also what would encourage or motivate them to participate in new (construction) projects in the neighbourhood. They had the opportunity to reply to this as an open question and afterwards they were shown extra options that could encourage them. The different motivators that emerged from the interviews can be grouped in five themes: perceived impact, personal relevance, rewards and recognition, social aspect, and logistics. The summarised version can be seen in Table 22.

Table 22: Key motivators for citizens to participate, obtained from interviews

Theme	Motivator	Details	Citizens
Perceived impact	Opinion has impact	Motivation increases when residents feel their opinions have influence on the final decisions.	Citizen 1, 5, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14
	Feeling heard	Administrators have to show that they are genuinely listening.	Citizen 5, 7, 13
	Being taken seriously and feeling important	Citizens need to feel important during the participation process.	Citizen 3, 7, 14
Personal relevance	Interest in the project	Higher motivation when the project directly affects their daily lives.	Citizen 3, 5, 7, 8
	Influence on the decision	Desire to have a say in neighbourhood decisions.	Varying levels of importance
	Enjoyment	Participation should be fun to do and personally interesting.	Citizen 12

Rewards and recognition	Tangible incentives	Rewards such as money, coupons, or free food and drinks can encourage citizens to participate.	Citizen 1, 3, 5, 6, 13, 14
	Feeling recognised	Having a clear follow-up, recognising the citizens' efforts and providing contact details for further questions.	Citizen 7
Social aspect	Presence of friends, family, or neighbours	Participation is more appealing when friends, family, and neighbours are involved.	Citizen 13, 14
	Building social relations	Having a social relationship before working together improves motivation to help.	Citizen 2
Logistics	Timing	Events should not be during working hours or evenings, preferrable during weekends or other natural moments when citizens meet.	Citizen 5, 6, 8, 13, 14
	Transportation and accessibility	The easy of getting to the event location influences participation, especially for elderly.	Citizen 5, 6, 8, 10
	Translated documents and events	Providing translations helps on-Dutch speakers to participate more easily.	Citizen 4, 14
	More information and invitations	Residents want to receive more information.	Citizen 14

The most significant motivator is the belief that their opinion has an impact on the project. Nine out of thirteen residents indicated that they would participate more often if they knew that their opinion is important. One citizen mentioned: 'If I'm going to be able to actually impact something and make a change, then that's good,' (Citizen 6). This feeling goes together with being heard and being listened to. Citizen 5 said about this: 'If you feel that you are heard, you also become more enthusiastic.' The residents also indicated that they would participate more if they are taken seriously (Citizen 3, 14). They want to feel important during the process, otherwise their motivation will go down because they think that their opinion will not be taken into consideration.

Personal interest in the project at hand, cited by multiple residents, is an important motivator for them (Citizen 3, 5, 7, and 8). When a project directly impacts their daily life, residents will feel more motivated to voice their opinions. 'If there is something like parking, it will be close to my heart. So, then I'll go,' explained one citizen (Citizen 3). Five residents stated that it is very important for them to have influence on the decisions in the neighbourhood, two stated it is important, two stated that it was a little bit important, and the other residents indicated that it was not that important for them to have direct influence on the decisions, but that they would like to think along. One resident explained this very well: 'I think it's also important to know that you can influence. Look, if it's just to transfer information, […] just send me a link to the website and I'll take a look, because then I won't be able to do anything at all,' (Citizen 8). Another motivator that can increase interest in participation is that it should be fun for the residents to join (Citizen 12). They should have a direct interest to participate, which is possible through knowing the impact of the project but it is also possible through knowing that joining this event will be a good time.

Various forms of rewards and recognition can also serve as motivators for residents. While three residents stated that they would not get extra motivated by a reward (Citizen 1, 3, and 12), other residents mentioned that more tangible incentives could be encouraging (Citizen 5, 6, and 13). This reward could be actual money, but also a coupon for a local shop. Providing free food and drinks can also help encourage citizens to come out of their house. 'Love goes through the stomach. So, I always say: "Add food and drinks,"' mentioned one resident (Citizen 14). Feeling recognized also plays a role in citizens' motivation to participate. As mentioned before, citizens would like to be taken seriously. One aspect that can help in showing that their opinions are taken into account is to provide more follow-up of what is actually decided with their input. One of the residents said that they feel like their

opinion is not used: 'You call and then it's gone, like you throw it in a deep well, your narrative. It shouldn't be like that. You have to give feedback. You have to show that the citizen is important,' (Citizen 7). By providing a clear contact person and concrete next steps, citizens will stay more encouraged to be involved.

The presence of friends, family, and neighbours, as mentioned by two residents, can also act as a motivator for participation (Citizen 13 and 14). Another resident explained that having an actual social relationship is very important for their motivation: 'Second for me, is work. First, friendly social relationship. I get that energy, when you get that with your friends, colleague. You get that energy. After that, work is very easy,' (Citizen 2). After one resident was asked whether it was a positive thing when neighbours and citizens participate in projects in the area, they explained that it could bring the neighbourhood more together (Citizen 1).

The last theme of motivators are logistical or practical aspects of participation. The most mentioned motivator was the timing of participation activities. Seven out of thirteen residents explained that timing has a big influence on whether or not they can come. One of them noted: 'right time of day does matter, so not on a working day at two o'clock,' (Citizen 8). Three residents indicated that transportation could also influence whether people can participate (Citizen 5, 6, and 10). It could be hard for elderly people to show up if the location is not sufficiently accessible (Citizen 10). The location of the participation activity thus plays a crucial role in attendance and motivation. Providing translated documents or events is also indicated as a motivator by two residents (Citizen 4 and 14). Lastly, more information and being invited can also serve as motivators, noted one resident (Citizen 14).

Residents have different motivators to participate in projects. The biggest one that most agreed upon was the feeling of having an impact on the decision making. They should have a personal interest in participating and rewards and recognition also help. Lastly, adding a social aspect to participation and making sure the logistics are thought out well, will motivate citizens.

5.3.4 Preferred communication channels

Knowing what hinders and motivates citizens to participate is an essential step in creating a more engaging and inclusive participation process. However, citizens still need to be reached with the information that there is such a process happening. Therefore, during the interviews residents had to first indicate how they were up to date with new events or projects in the neighbourhood, such as upcoming road constructions or building projects. Then they were asked about how they would prefer to be approached about participation projects. Lastly, they were asked about their preferences regarding giving their opinion through online or physical means. The outcomes of these three questions are presented in this section, a summary can be seen in Table 23.

Table 23: Insights in communication preferences from citizens, obtained from interviews

Theme	Barrier	Details	Citizens
Current awareness channels	**Local newspaper**	The local paper is still read by residents to be informed about their neighbourhood.	Citizen 1, 3, 13
	Social media	Group chats in WhatsApp, Facebook pages	Citizen 1, 7, 8
	Community hubs	Information is shared at places like the mosque, community centre, library, and sport canteens.	Citizen 3, 10, 12, 15
	Job or local role	Information obtained through their job as a social worker or through involvement in the neighbourhood council	Citizen 5, 14
	Public bulletin board	Posters and boards in the streets inform passing citizens	Citizen 1

	Flyers and letters	Information received through mailbox	Citizen 10
Preferred communication channels	**Email**	Most preferred digital communication method, though some residents struggle with digital tasks like filling out surveys.	Citizen 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 14, 15
	Social media	Facebook and WhatsApp are commonly preferred, but some dislike using these platforms entirely	Citizen 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 14
	Letters	Letters through the mailbox remain a vital communication channel	Citizen 3, 6, 8, 12, 13
	Direct personal contact	Residents prefer being called, approached on the street, or having their doorbell rung	Citizen 5, 6, 15
	BouwApp	A specialised app used during construction projects	Citizen 7
Participation preference	**Physical participation**	Most residents prefer face-to-face interactions for more personal connections	Citizen 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15
	Online participation	Preferred for convenience in certain situations, especially with children or for a quick survey or information dissemination.	Citizen 1, 3, 5, 6

Residents are aware of activities and projects in the area through various channels. Two residents indicated that they were not really informed about upcoming projects (Citizen 4 and 6). One of them explained that work kept them from being updated: 'Not really, because I work like 5 days a week,' (Citizen 6). The local newspaper was the most frequently cited way of being informed (Citizen 1, 3, and 13). Some residents also have a group chat with their neighbours through which they inform each other (Citizen 7 and 8). Another digital form that was mentioned was the use of Facebook to stay up to date, by following the local neighbourhood page (Citizen 1). Different locations were mentioned as important hubs for sharing information, such as the mosque (Citizen 10), the community centre (Citizen 3), the library (Citizen 15), or even sports canteens (Citizen 12). Other residents were informed through their job as social worker or being on the neighbourhood council (Citizen 5 and 14). Another resident also noted that public bulletin bords in the streets and squares kept them aware of projects (Citizen 1). Lastly, citizens also received information through flyers and letters in their mailbox (Citizen 10).

The preferred communication channels for the local residents were a mix of both traditional and digital methods. In the digital realm, email is the most preferred method of reaching citizens, as indicated by eight residents (Citizen 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 14, and 15). This is a good method to invite or inform residents. However, one of the citizens indicated the following disadvantage: 'I do check my phone often via e-mail or Facebook could be done. But if I have to fill something out, I have to do it some other way,' (Citizen 3). This shows that not everyone has the necessary digital skills to for example fill out a survey through their phone. Social media, such as Facebook or WhatsApp, was also frequently indicated as a good way to reach citizens (Citizen 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 14). One resident explained: 'I am on Facebook sometimes, so then I pass by those things,' (Citizen 1). On the other side of the spectrum are people who don't use social media at all and can not be reached through these platforms: 'I just don't like it through a phone. You have to be able to talk to people too. I hate phones,' indicating a strong aversion towards Digital methods (Citizen 12). A last digital tool that was suggested is the BouwApp (Citizen 7). This is an application that is developed to communicate transparently with the project environment (BouwApp, 2024).

On the other hand, physical communication channels remain vital, especially for those who lack digital skills or prefer tangible forms of information. Receiving letters through the mailbox was indicated by many residents as a possible way to reach them (Citizen 3, 6, 8, 12, and 13). One resident mentioned

that even though they receive a lot of mail, they will always look at it (Citizen 13). Previously mentioned means are often impersonal and some residents indicated that they would rather be called (Citizen 5, 6, and 15), or approached on the street (Citizen 5 and 15), or ring their doorbell (Citizen 15).

When asked whether they have a preference for online or physical means of participation, ten out of thirteen residents chose for real life experiences. One resident explained: 'I feel like I can see the person. […] I can read facial expressions. I can read the whole-body posture. If someone does mean it. Then I feel like, they're going to do something […] I have more confidence in that,' (Citizen 13). Another resident explained that if it is important, they would prefer real life activities, but if it were just for a survey they would prefer online (Citizen 6). Arguments for online participation were that it is easier when someone has children (Citizen 1), or that it is easier to see when it suits them best to participate (Citizen 3).

The preferred communication channels reflect a broad range of preferences, indicating that a multi-channels approach is necessary to effectively reach all segments of the residents. Not everyone in the neighbourhood has digital literacy, so traditional means of communication should always be employed. A balanced approach that includes both digital and physical communication channels is necessary to effectively engage all citizens.

5.3.5   Tips from citizens to improve participation

In the last part of the interview, residents were asked whether they had concrete tips to improve public participation. Their tips can be grouped into four themes: communication, accessibility, personal, and impact. An overview of the citizens tips can be found in Figure 26. One of the residents made an interesting comment: 'Before any construction project starts in the neighbourhood, all residents should be informed that you want their contribution and that you are doing this project for them and that it is in a benefit for them. After that, 100% of their support will be with you,' (Citizen 2).

Communication
Provide clear and transparent communication and information in time, preferably in multiple languages. Do not only use social media and other digital means, also keep using traditional communication means, such as letters.

Accessibility
Use familiar and accessible locations. Pick different times of the day and week. Be present in the neighbourhood instead of expecting the neighbourhood to come to you. Organise a picknick, be spontaneous, have food and drinks.

Personal
Be approachable and visible. Ring the doorbell. Drink a coffee with the citizens. First build a relation, then start working. Approach the local key figures or the religious groups. Work in smaller groups instead of big masses.

Impact
Listen attentively to the citizens' opinions. Take them seriously and respect their time and effort. Communicate clearly what they can decide on and what not. Show how participating will directly impact their daily lives and provide follow-up afterwards.

Figure 26: Tips to improve public participation from local citizens (own work, 2024)

5.4 Conclusion

The previously discussed insights from local residents are important to understand for practitioners who design participation processes. Although the residents live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, most of them mentioned that they are quite confident in their ability to participate. The local residents experience certain barriers, like not having time or a language barrier. Others have biases towards participation processes, sometimes due to previous negative experiences, which could also hinder their support during participation activities. However, multiple motivators were presented that could increase engagement levels among the citizens. Additionally, citizens indicated that they prefer in-person interactions over digital participation methods. Lastly, an overview was made available of advice for urban professionals on how to improve public participation.

6 Validation of results

6.1 Synthesised member checking

6.1.1 Introduction

A synthesised member check (SMC) is performed after the first results from the interviews were analysed. As mentioned in Chapter 3.4, only the experts are contacted again to fill in the SMC report. Experts were presented with their own results of Participatory methods, Challenges in public participation, and Strategies to organise participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Themes, details and illustrative quotes were presented to them and after each topic they could fill in a box, such as shown in Table 24, with three questions that guided them to give extra insights. The complete overview of the SCM form can be found in Appendix 6: SMC form.

Table 24: Synthesised member checking box

Synthesised member checking	Reply:
Does this overview of [participation methods] reflect your experience and thoughts?	
Would you like to change or clarify anything in this theme?	
Do you have anything to add that was not covered?	

The SMC report was sent to all 10 interviewed practitioners and seven out of ten replied back. An overview of who replied and with what level of detail is presented in Table 25. In the following sections, their reflections and extra input on the three topics are presented.

Table 25: Overview of who returned the Member Check Document and who provided additional comments

Experts	Practitioner profile	Replied?	Input
P1	Team leader urban climate adaptation	Yes	No remarks
P2	Stakeholder manager	No	-
P3	Urban development advisor	No	-
P4	Stakeholder manager	Yes	Filled in form
P5	Strategic stakeholder advisor	No	-
P6	Team leader Urban Stakeholder management and infrastructure	Yes	No remarks
P7	Energy transition participation advisor	Yes	Minimal remarks
P8	Energy transition advisor	Yes	Filled in form
P9	Stakeholder manager	Yes	Filled in form
P10	Project leader neighbourhood approach Meerwijk	Yes	No input, too busy

6.1.2 Insights on Participation Methods

This section discusses the additional insights that the practitioners provided on the overview of the participation methods.

Practitioner 4 clarified that the overview of participation reflects their experience, but that the individual answers do not give a complete overview of all available methods. They believe that most of the people use more methods than mentioned during the interviews.

Practitioner 7 agreed with the overview and gave additional thoughts to this challenge: most participation methods are either at the inform or consult level, rarely involving, collaborating, or empowering participants. Which can be seen as both a conclusion and a problem if you believe in participation.

Practitioner 8 shared extra insights from their work in the energy transition, where multiple consultation rounds with citizens determined the subsequent participation methods (which was often consult or inform). They recognised the importance to collaborate with or empower citizens when possible. Therefore, they work closely with colleagues who work on social themes and who organise meetings to help citizens organise activities for their neighbourhoods.

Practitioner 9 acknowledged that the overview reflected their experience and added that there are some projects that incorporate empowerment, despite the limited room for it in many projects. They cited the project 'reorganisation Meerwijk' as an example where empowerment is applied through a stakeholder panel that is informed and consulted throughout the year.

6.1.3   Insights on Expert strategies

This section discusses the experts' reflections on strategies to organize participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Practitioner 4 and 6 affirmed that the overview of strategies reflected their experience and thoughts without any changes or additions.

Practitioner 8 agreed with the overview but suggested to make sure that there is a continuous point of contact for any (follow-up) questions, as people may seek support at different times, even after a project has ended.

Practitioner 9 agreed with the overview, stating that it is a comprehensive list.

6.1.4   Insights on Expert challenges

This section gives an overview of the experts' input on the challenges faced by experts in public participation.

Practitioner 4 mentioned that some challenges seemed out of context. For example, it is not clear what is meant by 'How to design participation.'

Practitioner 8 clarified the quote of the challenge 'no past follow-ups.' They explained that residents have often participated before (with housing associations, municipality, or students) and feel like they give more input than they get back. 'Hearing nothing back' specifically relates to student surveys. Additionally, they addressed the quote about landlords and 'someone else is responsible for participation.' In their experience, landlords are responsible for the building, but not necessarily solely responsible for participation. They also added a challenge that was not covered yet in the overview: 'organising future follow-up,' stating that it is unknown whether priorities will change in the future and whether proper follow-up can still be provided.

Practitioner 9 commented on the challenge of 'always the same people' suggesting that having good conversations with these people make it possible to find out the interests and views of others in the neighbourhood, though there is a risk of this being biased information.

6.1.5 Conclusion

The Synthesised Member Check proved to be an effective tool for validating the initial interview results and enriching the outcomes with new perspectives. Valuable insights were added to the participation methods, strategies, and challenges in organising public participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The feedback showed that the overview of participation methods may not be complete and highlighted the importance of collaboration and empowerment. One extra strategy is suggested to make sure that there is a continuous point of contact for any (follow-up) questions, even after a project ended. Several clarifications were given to the expert challenges, indicating that these are more nuanced than what was provided in the overview.

6.2 Validation workshop

6.2.1 Introduction

As explained in Chapter 3.4.2, the final iteration of the results was obtained through a validation workshop at the graduation company, conducted during a knowledge-sharing session on stakeholder management. Seventeen participants were split into six teams and asked to reflect on one of the strategies. They were prompted with the following questions:

- 'How would you improve your current approach in relation to [strategy X], and which concrete steps would you take?'
- 'What are the biggest challenges you encounter in implementing [strategy X], and how would you overcome these?'

Due to a 30-minute time limit, most groups focused on the first question. Their reflections and additional insights are presented below.

Accessibility

The 'accessibility group' discussed a dyke reinforcement project where citizens received a lot of information filled with complex jargon. Although these large documents need to be comprehensive, the group suggested adding a digital guide to simplify the process of finding relevant information. They suggested to do this through a video tutorial, a flowchart diagram or other tool. Additionally, they recommended providing one-on-one explanations to improve the accessibility of these large documents. One of the biggest challenges they identified in this aspect is simplicity versus completeness. Another point this group raised was improving the accessibility of digital methods.

Communication

The 'communication group' consisted of colleagues who did not have experience with public participation yet but were interested in learning about it. This made it harder to reflect on this strategy directly, so they were prompted to think about communication with clients instead of with citizens. In a recent project, they identified expectation management with the client as a significant challenge.

They came up with two solutions to address this issue. Firstly, internal expectation management within the team should be covered. They explained that sometimes the services offered do not align with the actual capabilities of the proposed team. Secondly, they suggested involving the right people from the start of the tender phase to ensure better alignment and communication.

Existing networks

The 'existing networks group' identified several challenges. Firstly, they struggled with explaining the usefulness and necessity of the project to citizens. Secondly, it can be hard for experts to think from

the citizens' point of view. To address these challenges, they proposed to engage in conversations with citizens earlier in the process.

To further improve their approach, this group emphasised the importance of mapping out what is currently going on in the neighbourhood at the start of the project. Additionally, they suggested connecting with the neighbourhood director or council to better understand and integrate into the community.

Human aspect

The 'human aspect group' discussed the challenge of balancing individual concerns versus the general interests of the community as a whole. They want to avoid that solving a single person's concerns lead to a less suitable project. They also explained that 'being approachable' sometimes means that you need someone in the project teams who speaks the local dialect or language, e.g. Frisian in Friesland.

Location

The 'location group' shared several interesting insights during the workshop. Firstly, they recognized digital space as a significant location, particularly for individuals who are unable to attend evening sessions. In their project, they held a digital session before a physical one, but they would change this order in the future. Having the physical session first allows the team to sense the mood and atmosphere of the neighbourhood, which can help the subsequent digital session run more smoothly.

Secondly, they emphasised the importance of avoiding using 'loaded' locations, such as a location of one of the stakeholders. This can lead to other stakeholders also wanting to host a participation event at their location. To mitigate this, they suggested using more neutral venues, such as community centres or festivity locations. Additionally, they proposed holding events at the project location to engage both citizens and recreational users of the space. Lastly, they remarked that all chosen locations should be accessible to disabled persons.

Rewards

The 'rewards group' shared a story about going door-to-door during a participation process, where citizens were often reluctant to open their doors. They believe that offering rewards could help lowering the threshold to start a conversation with citizens. To make interactions more inviting, they suggested using local specialties for food or drinks. Additionally, they suggested using an ice cream cart, or a coffee or chocolate milk cart. The other participants of the workshop noted the importance of checking this with the legal department in terms of bribery issues.

6.2.2 Conclusion

To summarise, the validation workshop showed that the initial results were helpful to reflect on inclusive participation, but that the strategies were not yet complete. The additional insights from the workshop participants enriched the results and made them more comprehensive. Difficult documents can be complemented with simplified guides. The accessibility of digital methods is also important to keep in mind. It can be valuable to have someone in the project team who speaks the local language or dialect. Choosing a location to host participation events is also a delicate task. The group advised to choose a neutral location instead of locations that are linked to stakeholders of the project. The digital space can also be seen as a location. Lastly, insights were shared about how food and drinks can be used to start conversations and the potential impact of using local delicacies.

This workshop showed that it is important to keep sharing insights from other projects with each other, because each project is unique but general lessons can be learned.

6.3 Conclusion

The SMC and validation workshop were important tools to refine and validate the proposed strategies of Chapter 4.3.4. The collaborative feedback process led to a more nuanced and context-specific set of strategies, enhancing their relevance and effectiveness. The culmination of this process is a comprehensive guide, visually represented in Figure 27, which outlines actionable steps for practitioners to enhance public participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

6 strategies towards inclusive participation with vulnerable citizens

Accessibility
- Simple language (B1 level)
- Translations for documents and during events
- Images and videos
- Digital participation methods
- Digital accessibility
- Creative methods
- Multiple forms of participation
- Timing of events
- Informal setting

Communication
- Expectation management
- Honest and open communication with citizen and client
- Advance notice
- Process communication
- Respecting and valuing input
- Targeted communication
- Explain usefulness and necessity
- Provide feedback

Existing networks
- Connect with local networks and organisations
- Link up with existing neighborhood events and projects
- Contact key figures
  - e.g.: wijkregisseur
- Make use of existing communication channels

Human aspect
- One-on-one conversations
- Be physically present
- Make personal connections
- Understanding local culture
- Investing time in communities
- Being approachable
  - e.g.: sometimes translator is needed
- Listen

Location
- Be present in the neighbourhood
- Community centres
- School
- Playgrounds
- Retirement homes
- Mosques and churches
- Project location
- Digital
- Avoid 'colored' locations
- Be where the community meets

Rewards
- Provide food and drinks
  - e.g.: local specialties
  - vb: ice cream cart / coffee cart / chocolate milk car
- Prices or coupons
- Leave them less vulnerable then before the project

Figure 27: Final version of strategies towards inclusive participation (own figure)

7 Discussion

This chapter discusses the results of chapters 4 and 5 in three different ways. First, an analysis is made from the citizens' perspective, examining which expert strategies address the citizen barriers and enhance the citizen motivators. This will also be linked to the push and pull framework of Franklin (2020), discussed in Chapter 2.2.7. Then, expert challenges are analysed in relation to expert strategies and citizen barriers that can be seen as potential causes for the challenges. Lastly, the expert strategies are assessed by mapping them onto the CLEAR framework of Lowndes et al. (2006), discussed in Chapter 2.2.6.

7.1 Addressing citizen barriers

This section critically examines how expert strategies address citizen barriers, enhancing their motivation to participate. By integrating the push and pull factors, discussed in Chapter 2.2.7, the effectiveness and shortcomings of these strategies are explored. Table 26 provides an overview of this analysis, which this section further discusses with a critical lens.

Table 26: How expert strategies address citizen barriers and enhance push and pull motivators

Theme	Citizen barrier	How experts currently try to solve this barrier (Expert strategy):	What effect would be solving this barrier potentially have for the citizen (Citizens' motivator):	Push factor	Pull factor
Time and timing	**Lack of time**	Multiple forms of participation	Timing	Resources	-
		Digital methods	Timing	Resources	-
	Poor event timing	Timely communication	Timing	Resources	-
		Attach to local events	Timing Enjoyment	Resources	-
		Timing of events	Timing	Resources	-
		Invest more time	Building social relations	Resources	-
		Food and drinks	Tangible incentives	Resources	-
	Childcare availability	Digital methods	Timing, Accessibility	Resources	-
Ability	**Language barrier**	Simple language	More information	Resources	-
		Translations	Translations	Resources	-
		Visual aids	-	Resources	-
		Connect to local networks	Translations, Presence of social relations	-	Other active stakeholders
	Health issues	One-on-one conversations	Feeling heard, Building social relations	Stakeholder efficacy	-
		Digital methods	Timing	Resources	-
	Distance	Choosing the right location	Accessibility, Transportation	Resources	Active venues
	Lack of digital skills	Physical presence	Feeling heard, Building social relations	Stakeholder efficacy	-
		One-on-one conversations	Feeling heard, Building social relations	Stakeholder efficacy	-

Theme	Citizen barrier	How experts currently try to solve this barrier (Expert strategy):	What effect would be solving this barrier potentially have for the citizen (Citizens' motivator):	Push factor	Pull factor
		Multiple forms of participation	Timing, Enjoyment	Resources	-
	Lack of knowledge	-	-	Resources	-
Communication	**Access to information**	Timely communication	More information	-	Issue salience
		Use existing communication channels	More information	-	Issue salience
Interest	**Lack of interest**	Connect to local networks	More information and invitations, Presence of friends, family, neighbours	Group membership	Other active stakeholders
		Targeted communication	More information	Stakeholders' profile	
		Food and drinks	Tangible incentives	-	Participation incentives
		Prices and coupons	Tangible incentives	-	Participation incentives
	Perceived ineffectiveness	Expectation management	Opinion has impact, Being taken seriously	Stakeholder efficacy	-
		Honest and open communication	Being taken seriously	Stakeholder efficacy	-
		Process communication	Being taken seriously	Stakeholder efficacy	-
		Respecting and valuing input	Feeling recognised, Opinion has impact, Being taken seriously	Stakeholder efficacy	-
		Be approachable	Building social relations	Stakeholder efficacy	-
		Listen	Feeling heard	Stakeholder efficacy	-
	General lack of interest of the community	Contact key/active citizens	Presence of friends, family, neighbours	-	Other active stakeholders
		Connect to local networks	Presence of friends, family, neighbours	-	Other active stakeholders

7.1.1   Time and timing

A common barrier in participatory processes is lack of time or poorly scheduled events. Moreover, the lack of childcare can hinder young parents from attending participatory events.

Experts defined multiple strategies, such as offering multiple forms and moments of participation (e.g. online and in-person) and timely communication about events. While these strategies aim to enhance accessibility of the participation process, their effectiveness varies. For example, digital methods can include parents who would otherwise need childcare but may exclude those without digital skills. This indicates a need for complementary in-person methods. Experts also explained that it helps to latch

on to local events, so that more residents can be reached. Taking more time for participation in general can help build more social relationships in the neighbourhood, improving trust in the process. Lastly, providing food and drinks when an event is happening during lunch or dinner hours can help persuade residents to come. Solving these timing barriers can help building social relations, can enhance enjoyment, and motivate citizens to attend. The concept of enjoyment in public participation is also not broadly discussed yet (Gosman & Botchwey, 2013).

Push/pull factors: Relating this back to theory, the push factor 'Resources,' highlights the importance of time, transportation, digital skills, and childcare as important resources (Franklin, 2020).

7.1.2 Ability

Multiple barriers can hinder citizens' ability to participate. Language barriers, health issues, distance, lack of digital skills, and lack of knowledge make it harder for citizens to make their voice heard.

Experts address these barriers by using simple language, providing translations, and using visual aids in their communication. Moreover, connecting to local networks can be useful because these community leaders know how to help their people best and which resources are needed. Conducting one-on-one conversations and digital forms of participation helps to reach people who cannot attend in-person meetings due to health reasons for example. Choosing an appropriate location can also motivate more people to come, especially when it is close to their homes or community. Next, difficulties to attend because of a lack of digital skills is resolved by in-person interactions and through providing multiple ways of participating.

The lack of knowledge is not addressed by any expert strategy.

The most important motivators in relation to ability are having more information, the ability to participate in their own language, participation close to home, and finding time to engage. Moreover, presence of other residents, feeling heard, and building social relations are also motivators that stem from the strategies mentioned before. Lastly, multiple forms of participation can also enhance the 'fun' element of participation when more creative forms are used.

Push/pull factors: Two push factors are tackled in this section: resources and stakeholder efficacy. Other active stakeholders and active venues are seen as pull factors (Franklin, 2020).

7.1.3 Communication

During the interviews, citizens indicated that there is too little information about events happening in the neighbourhood.

This barrier is tackled by communicating enough in advance. Moreover, by using existing communication channels to spread information and sending invites, more citizens can be reached.

Push/pull factors: The pull factor that can be related to this is 'Issue salience.' This means that citizens will be more motivated to participate if the issue is prominently covered by different types of media and organisations in their neighbourhood. Moreover, it also helps if the issue is controversial or if the decision agenda is exciting to them (Franklin, 2020).

7.1.4 Interest

Citizens experience three barriers related to interest. Some citizens indicated that they are not interested in participating because the topic is just not interesting to them. Other citizens expressed that they feel like their input would not have an impact. Lastly, one citizen noted that there seems to be a general lack of interest from the neighbourhood to participate in anything.

Experts aim to tackle the lack of interest barrier by connecting to local networks. These networks usually know how to make a project sound more interesting and how to correctly communicate it to their people. Next, targeted communication can help to provide a clear message through only conveying the necessary information. Moreover, providing food and drinks may spark interest to come to participation events, together with monetary compensation. Additionally, expectation management, maintaining honest and open communication, and ensuring that citizens' input is respected and valued should help with the perceived ineffectiveness of participation. Besides this, being approachable and really listening to what the citizens have to say are very important strategies. Lastly, to capture the general interest of the neighbourhood, experts can contact active citizens, who have more ties in the area and could motivate more people to participate.

These strategies address multiple motivators of the citizens. Citizens become more informed and are more interested, especially when there are tangible incentives. It is really important for them to feel recognised and have an actual impact on the project. Additionally, they will feel heard, which enhances motivation. Lastly, building social relations during participation and the presence of friends, family, and neighbours plays a critical role in community engagement.

Push/pull factors: Stakeholder efficacy is a significant push factor, as citizens want to feel that their contributions matter and can influence decisions (Franklin, 2020). Group membership, meaning that some citizens will be motivated because they are already part of a certain organisation, is also a push factor that can motivate citizens. Other active stakeholders function as a pull factor, sparking interest in their fellow neighbours. Issue salience is another pull factor that can increase motivation if the subject of participation is interesting enough for the citizens. Lastly, providing participation incentives can also enhance motivation, which can be material, solidary (affiliating with someone is rewarding), or purposive (achieving the goal is rewarding).

7.1.5 Conclusion

The strategies found in this research address several push and pull factors. Strategies, such as multiple forms of participation, one-on-one conversations, and expectation management, increase intrinsic motivators (push factors) such as 'Stakeholder profile,' 'Stakeholder efficacy,' 'Group membership,' and 'Resources.' 'Demographics' as a push factor, which depends for example on a person's age, ethnicity, and education, is currently not addressed by any strategy. 'Transaction/interaction salience' is also not addressed by the current strategies. This factor can increase motivation by showing citizens that they can achieve a desired outcome or reduce certain complaints they have about their neighbourhood. Moreover, the feeling of participating itself can be rewarding for citizens. Further research could look into how citizens could feel that participating is rewarding for them.

Furthermore, strategies as timely communication, connecting to local networks, and rewards, trigger extrinsic motivation. 'Other active stakeholders' can be a strong motivator, together with 'Issue salience' which makes the opportunity for participation visible and important. Moreover, 'Active venues,' can draw people into participation, meaning that choosing the right location is a very important step in participation design. Further research could look into what the natural places are where certain groups meet, in order for the location to better suit the patterns and needs of the community. 'Participation incentives' is already considered in the strategies as well, but it is not yet clear how big the impact is of these incentives on motivation. The experts already see 'Stakeholder invitation' as a standard element of the process, but further insights are needed to know the best way to reach each type of citizen. Lastly, 'Participant development' was not addressed by any of the strategies, indicating it is an underutilised motivator that could be improved in the future.

While experts have a variety of strategies at their disposal to address citizen barriers and enhance motivation, there is still a big disconnect between knowing what to do and successfully implementing it.

7.2 Addressing experts' challenges

This section starts from the expert perspective and the challenges they experience during participation processes, as detailed in Chapter 4.3.3. When possible, these are linked to the citizen barriers. Next to this, the expert strategies that can be related to the challenge or barrier are also mentioned. The relations between challenges, barriers, and strategies are based on observed connections from the interview data. The result of this qualitative analysis can be seen in Table 27 and is discussed below.

Table 27: Relation between expert challenges, citizen barriers, and expert strategies

Theme	Expert challenge	Optional: Is caused by (Citizens' barrier):	Challenge exists despite (Expert strategy):
Engagement	No need	Lack of interest	Targeted communication
	Usefulness	Perceived ineffectiveness	Targeted communication
	Keep attention	Lack of interest	Rewards
	No conversation in digital methods	-	-
	No priority	Lack of time	Digital methods
	Little substantiation and context in digital methods	-	-
	Little response	Lack of interest	Multiple forms of participation Rewards
	Bad reactions	-	One-on-one conversations
Expecta-tions	False expectations	Not enough access to information	Expectation management
	Making a supported project	-	Contact key/active citizens Connect to local networks
	Negative prejudices	Complaints about previous participation processes	One-on-one conversations Honest and open communication
Outside influence	Active local resident leaves	-	Connect to local networks
	Everything in Dutch	-	-
	Someone else responsible for participation	-	-
	No past follow-ups	Complaints about previous participation processes	Process communication
	Slow systems	-	-
Participation design	When to involve	-	-
	How to participate	-	Multiple forms of participation
	Involving everyone in the right way	-	Multiple forms of participation
	Writing simple language	Lack of knowledge	Simple language
	Over-participating	-	-
	Too broad a meeting	-	Targeted communication
Representation	Not reaching everyone	Lack of interest	Multiple forms of participation Connect to local networks, events Be present in the neighbourhood Go to different locations Translations
	Always the same people	Poor event timing	
	The right representation	Language barrier	
	Reaching the vulnerable group	-	
	Only elderly	Poor event timing	

Theme	Expert challenge	Optional: Is caused by (Citizens' barrier):	Challenge exists despite (Expert strategy):
	Vocal residents	-	One-on-one conversations
	Not everyone in sight	-	Understand local culture
	Other way of thinking	-	Understand local culture
Understanding the neighbourhood	Neighbourhood complexity	-	Understand local culture
	Expert does not have enough experience	-	-
	Different needs	-	Understand local culture
	Different cultures	-	Understand local culture

7.2.1 Discussion of the challenges

Engagement challenges

Many engagement challenges can be linked to a lack of interest from the neighbourhood and the perceived ineffectiveness of participating. Despite implementing strategies such as rewards, multiple forms of participation, and targeted communication—which focuses on highlighting a project's impact—these challenges can still persist. Therefore, catching and holding citizens' interest in a project remains an important challenge. Additionally, the use of digital methods should help with people who have little time to participate. However, it often results in one-sided conversations lacking substantiation and context. These challenges are not caused by any citizen barrier and are also not tackled by any current strategies. This indicates that there is a need for improvement in digital participation methods.

Expectation challenges

Practitioners indicated in the interviews that they have to cope with false expectations. These could stem from citizens not receiving enough information. However, one of the strategies is expectation management, which should be able to prevent these false expectations. This shows a contradiction between perceived challenges and implemented strategies. Next, practitioners indicated that it is hard to build support of the neighbourhood for certain projects. Connecting with local networks and active citizens could help with spreading the importance or the need for the project. Lastly, experts sometimes have to handle citizens' negative prejudices about participation. These often stem from negative past experiences. One-on-one conversations and honest and open communication could aid this, so that citizens get more trust in the process. This underscores the need for continuous improvement in managing citizens' expectations and providing honest feedback.

Outside influence

Challenges related to outside influences are not related to any of the citizens barriers. The challenge 'active local resident leaves' – maybe because they move out of the neighbourhood – can be tackled by maintaining a strong connection with others in the local community, so the support for the project is not lost. The other challenges are currently not tackled by any strategy. This is probably because they are out of the expert's control.

Participation design

Several experts indicated during the interviews that the biggest challenge for them is to know how to participate with disadvantaged residents and involve everyone the right way. One strategy that could be used is to provide a range of different methods. These challenges underscore the importance of the research conducted.

Representation

Representation challenges are about always seeing the same people, which are often elderly or vocal residents, and not being able to reach everyone. These challenges could be related to poor event timings, causing certain groups of citizens not to attend. Language barriers exclude certain groups from participating as well. These challenges are again related to the topic of this research and multiple strategies emerged to tackle them.

Understanding the neighbourhood
The interviews showed that several experts have difficulties in understanding the neighbourhood and all its complexity, different cultures and needs. Multiple practitioners indicated that it is important to take time to untangle the unique characteristics of a neighbourhood. For someone with little experience, this can be a hard task to accomplish.

7.2.2 Conclusion

This analysis shows the complexity of public engagement and the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by experts. It becomes clear that even though experts know the right strategies, they still struggle to implement them. This could indicate that there are skill issues or that they do not learn from previous experiences.

7.3 The CLEAR framework analysis

This section assesses the effectiveness of the expert strategies by using the CLEAR framework of Lowndes et al. (2006), discussed in Chapter 2.2.6. This is a comprehensive tool for systematic mapping and evaluation of participation strategies. To quickly repeat, citizens participate when they:

- **Can do**: they have the necessary resources and knowledge;
- **Like to**: they have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation;
- **Enabled to**: groups or organisations provide them with the opportunity to participate;
- **Asked to**: they are mobilised by official bodies or voluntary groups;
- **Responded to**: they see evidence that their views have been considered.

Table 28 shows the overview of mapping the strategies to the CLEAR framework. As discussed in Chapter 3.3.2, the mapping of the strategies is based on the personal interpretation of the underlying theory and the aim of the strategies.

Table 28: Mapping of the expert strategies to the CLEAR framework

	Expert strategy	Can do	Like to	Enabled to	Asked to	Responded to
Accessibility	Simple language	✓				
	Translations	✓				
	Visual aids	✓				
	Digital methods	✓				
	Multiple forms of participation	✓			✓	
	Timing of events	✓				
	Informal setting		✓			
Communication	Expectation management					✓
	Honest and open communication					✓
	Timely communication	✓			✓	
	Process communication					✓
	Respecting and valuing input					✓
	Targeted communication				✓	
Existi	Connect to local networks		✓	✓	✓	
	Attach to local events and projects		✓	✓		

	Expert strategy	Can do	Like to	Enabled to	Asked to	Responded to
	Contact key/active citizens		✓		✓	
	Use existing communication channels			✓	✓	
Human aspect	One-on-one conversations		✓			✓
	Physical presence		✓			✓
	Understand local culture		✓			
	Invest time	✓	✓			
	Be approachable		✓			
	Listen		✓			✓
Location	Be present in the neighbourhood		✓	✓		
	Community Centre		✓	✓		
	School		✓	✓		
	Playground		✓	✓		
	Retirement home		✓	✓		
	Mosque		✓	✓		
Rewards	Food and drinks				✓	
	Prices and coupons				✓	
	Leave them less vulnerable				✓	

7.3.1 'Can do'

According to Lowndes et al. (2006), 'Can do' refers to socio-economic characteristics of citizens. Having the appropriate skills and resources enable people to participate. Examples are public speaking skills and being able to read and write letters. Since these skills and resources are more present in communities with a higher socioeconomic status, 'Can do' is an important factor to focus on in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Multiple strategies related to accessibility can enhance this factor, such as using simple language, images, and multiple forms of participation. These strategies accommodate to the citizens' skills and available resources. Lowndes et al. (2006) stated that this factor can also be enhanced by capacity building efforts, a strategy that was not specifically mentioned during the interviews.

7.3.2 'Like to'

When people 'Like to' participate, they feel a sense of community as a basis for engagement (Lowndes et al., 2006). Citizens are more likely to participate if they feel a sense of togetherness or shared commitment. Different strategies fall under the 'Like to' factor. Having an informal setting can help citizens feel more comfortable and connected to others. Local networks and active local residents can also enhance this feeling, because of their existing relations with the residents. Strategies from the 'Human aspect' category can also create this sense of belonging because of the personal connections that are made. Lastly, people can feel a bigger sense of community when they can meet at their trusted and familiar places, such as the mosque or their school.

7.3.3 'Enabled to'

The 'Enabled to' factor in the CLEAR framework states that most participation is facilitated through groups or organisations (Lowndes et al., 2006). Strategies that provide opportunity structure for participation through groups and networks are included in this factor. Examples of this are collaborating with various local networks and organisations and utilising their communication channels. Moreover, certain locations, such as mosques, community centres, and sport clubs are also (religious) organisations and can help enable their members to participate.

7.3.4 'Asked to'

When people are 'Asked to' participate, they are mobilised and much more likely to become engaged. Mobilisation is most powerful when those responsible for a decision ask others to participate with them in the decision-making (Lowndes et al., 2006). A variety of invitations and participation options is key, because every person has different needs and preferences as to how they want to participate. Incentives, a sense of obligation, or offering bargains can mobilise people. Providing multiple forms of participation is thus a first strategy that enhances this CLEAR factor. Lowndes et al. (2006) do not talk about timely or targeted communication in their tool, but these strategies can be placed in the 'Asked to' element since it is crucial for making sure citizens know when, how, and why to participate. Existing networks can help enhance the 'Asked to' element by knowing how to approach their members about participation opportunities. Lastly, different types of incentives can mobilise people to participate.

7.3.5 'Responded to'

The last element of the CLEAR framework is 'Responded to,' representing that people have to believe their involvement has impact on the project (Lowndes et al., 2006). Citizens have to feel listened to and receive feedback o their involvement. Providing feedback means explaining how participation played a role in the final decision. Effective communication strategies, such as expectation management, valuing input, and honest communication, all enhance the 'Responded to' element. These strategies can ensure that citizens feel listened to. One-on-one conversation, physical presence, and active listening help increase this aspect as well, because these strategies provide opportunities to convince people that their views will be taken into account.

7.3.6 Conclusion

The analysis of Table 28 shows that all the elements of the CLEAR framework are covered by the suggested strategies of the experts. This means that if experts follow their own strategies, the participation process should be effective. No single strategy that can tackle all five elements, so experts should always make us of a combination of several strategies.

7.4 Justifying public participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods

This research and its research questions were derived from the assumption that public participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is essential. However, as Irvin & Stansbury (2004) discussed in their research (see Chapter 2.2.3), it is crucial to consider whether public participation is always beneficial. Under what conditions is it ideal to incorporate citizens from disadvantaged neighbourhoods?

If experts really want to incorporate a diverse range of opinions in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, it is important to make the topic interesting and relevant enough for these residents and that they are not there to waste their time. In some situations, it may not be worth the effort to try to incorporate everyone in the decision-making process. During interviews, citizens from these neighbourhoods indicated that their likelihood to participate decreases if they perceive the project as irrelevant or non-problematic.

Nevertheless, presence of high-cost and low-benefit indicators should not discourage attempts to engage these residents. Vulnerable residents will most likely participate at the time and in the way it suits them. Therefore, it is essential to create flexible and adaptive participation strategies that align with their preferences and circumstances.

7.5 Practical and scientific relevance

This thesis considerably increases both theoretical and practical understanding of public participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. It offers actionable insights and validates existing theoretical frameworks in real-world settings, by incorporating new empirical data from both experts and citizens.

7.5.1 Practical Relevance

Improving Public Participation Strategies: The findings from this research conclude in practical strategies that municipalities and urban planners can adopt to improve public participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The strategies help practitioners adapt their participation methods to address the unique needs and barriers of these communities, such as providing translations or childcare, resulting in more inclusive and effective engagement. This is particularly relevant in the context of the new Environment and Planning Act in the Netherlands, which mandates public participation but leaves the 'how' open.

Inclusion of insights from citizens: Previous research has often interviewed experts or conducted extensive literature reviews. The strategies from this research are enriched by the needs, barriers, and tips from citizens, making them more nuanced, applicable, and comprehensive.

Blueprint for other neighbourhoods: The context-specific insights derived from this study, can serve as a blueprint for other disadvantaged communities. These strategies can be adapted and applied in different urban settings to improve the inclusivity and effectiveness of participation processes, thereby ensuring that the voices of marginalized groups are heard and considered in decision-making.

Practical implementation: The final strategies already proved to be helpful for practitioners by discussing them in the validation workshop, described in Chapter 6.2. They are simple yet effective strategies that show that effective public participation does not have to be overly complicated. The added impact of the practical overview in this research is that it encourages practitioners to think about it.

Exposing practical challenges: The results also showed how experts still face challenges in conducting participation processes in the Dutch context. Understanding these will help experts overcome them in the future. Future research or organisations can look at how these challenges can be minimised or eliminated.

Implications for policy: Policymakers can use the research insights to work towards more inclusive participation frameworks and policies that comply with the new legislative requirements while genuinely engaging disadvantaged communities.

7.5.2 Scientific Relevance

Bridging theory and practice: This thesis bridges the gap between theoretical models of public participation and their practical application. By assessing the practical strategies with the CLEAR model and the push and pull factors, it validates these frameworks and provides a nuanced understanding of their effectiveness. This contribution can help advance theory on participatory governance, stakeholder engagement, and motivation to participate.

Adding to the research on public participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods: This research addresses a significant gap in the literature by focussing on the inclusion of disadvantaged communities in participation processes. Previous studies have highlighted the barriers faced by disadvantaged communities to community engagement, but few have provided concrete strategies to

overcome these barriers. This thesis fills that void by offering evidence-based recommendations and illustrating how they might be used in real-world situations.

Empirical contribution: The empirical data collected from both experts and citizens enriches the existing body of knowledge on public participation. This data not only corroborates previous findings but also introduces new insights that can inform future research. For instance, understanding the specific motivators and barriers experienced by citizens in disadvantaged neighbourhoods can lead to the development of more targeted and effective participation strategies.

Confirming existing knowledge: The expert challenges, strategies, and citizen's barriers and motivators also confirm existing research. This research shows for example that similar barriers are found across countries. Finding similar results also makes previous research more trustworthy and robust.

Tool for evaluating qualitative data: Previously, the SMC tool was used for assessing qualitative data in research on the health sector. This research demonstrates its utility in evaluating and refining participation strategies based on expert feedback. Practitioners can widely adopt this tool to assess the effectiveness of their participation processes and make data-driven improvements.

In conclusion, this thesis offers a detailed analysis of public engagement in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which makes a substantial contribution to both the scientific and practical realms. It offers concrete strategies for improving engagement, validates theoretical frameworks, and highlights the importance of inclusive participation for achieving sustainable urban development.

7.6 Research limitations

While this thesis presents valuable insights and guidelines to improve public participation processes in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the research also has its limitations:

Geographical limitations: This research was focused on two disadvantaged neighbourhoods, Meerwijk and Feijenoord. While the interviews provide rich outcomes into these contexts, the findings of the research may not be completely generalisable to other neighbourhoods or countries that have different social, economic, or cultural dynamics.

Sample size: Although ten experts were interviewed for this thesis, most of them work for the same company, meaning that they may have similar strategies to execute public participation. Thirteen citizens were interviewed as well, which provides rich but limited insights.

Interview moments: Residents were approached during the day on weekdays and not during the evenings or weekends. This affected the variety of citizens that was interviewed, since workers were mostly not reached. These perspectives may not fully reflect the diversity of experiences and opinions withing the broader population in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Language barriers: Even though some interviews with citizens were conducted in different languages with the help of Google Translate, working with a translator during the interviews could have helped reaching more people and getting their insights.

Methodology: Choosing a qualitative approach through conducting semi-structured interviews gave very rich data, but from a limited set of people.

Case study design: This research could have benefited from choosing a very specific case study instead of interviewing participants on a more general level about multiple projects. This was due to practical limitations of not finding or getting access to any case study in time.

Time constraints: Because of the duration of this thesis, the final guidelines have not been tested yet.

Acknowledging these limitations is important to understand the research results and their applicability in various contexts.

7.7 Recommendations for future research

Based on the outcomes, research methods and limitations of this thesis, there are multiple things that could be considered to be researched in the future.

Test the implementation of the guidelines: The guidelines provided in this research are not yet tested on how effective they are. Future research could look into how successful the strategies are by implementing them in a real-life project or pilot project and evaluating the real-world impact. This can lead to further refinements.

Feasibility in practice: Subsequent studies could look into how feasible it is to implement the guidelines. Some guidelines may be too costly or time consuming and because of that not practical to implement them. It would be good to research which strategies have the highest impact and the lowest effort.

Incorporate quantitative methods: For this study, data mostly came from semi-structured interviews, which limited the number of responses. The use of surveys amongst a larger number of citizens from disadvantaged neighbourhoods could quantify the dominance of the barriers and motivators, making the results more generalisable.

Digital participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods: From the citizen interviews it became clear that not everyone is in favour of digital tools in participation processes. It would be valuable to explore the accessibility and inclusiveness of these methods compared to traditional in-person approaches.

The impact of social networks: An important strategy from this study is to make use of the already existing social networks in the neighbourhoods by approaching informal community leaders and cultural organisations. Understanding the reach of these groups on their communities and the impact of it on public participation could lead to more effective engagement strategies.

Motivation to participate: This research touched upon how motivation factors (push and pull factors) can be used to engage more residents. Further research could look into the impact that each motivation factor has and how strong the impact, for example by conducting surveys. Additionally, further research could look into how motivation factors differ between varying levels of socio-economic characteristics.

Learning from the people: More can be learned from the different unique communities. Further research could gather input from specific target groups by surveying or interviewing individuals.

Creative participation methods: Most participation methods tend to be the traditional ones, such as residents' evenings, forums, and surveys. Further research could look into creating an overview of the more innovative and creative ways to do participation, so participation can become more fun.

7.8 Recommendations for practice

Several actionable recommendations for practice can be made based on the research findings.

Invest more time in understanding the local context: Every project should start with a clear understanding of the neighbourhood. This means contacting the local networks and key residents to figure out the target group's preferences, skills, availability, and meeting locations.

Tailor participation methods to local context: Provide a mix of digital, in-person, and creative participation methods to appeal to different target groups within the neighbourhood, based on the knowledge of the previous analysis. Experts should use simple, non-technical language and images to make information more accessible. Additionally, provide translated materials and events in the primary languages spoken in the community.

Emphasise the possible impact of their input: Citizens need to know that their input can have an impact on the project and on which aspects of the project input is possible. Additionally, it should be made clear what the impact of the project on their daily lives could be, so citizens can properly assess whether participating is worth their time or not. During and after the project, enough feedback should be provided so citizens know how their opinions were incorporated in the final decisions.

Invest more resources in training on inclusive public participation: The results showed that experts have a lot of knowledge on how to design inclusive participation processes, but sometimes lack the knowledge on how to implement it. Extra trainings could help improve this aspect.

Create flexible participation frameworks: Experts mentioned that they are often required to provide a detailed participation framework in the tender phase of a project. Policy makers should accept the dynamic nature of public participation and foresee enough time for urban professionals to tailor the participation design to the unique local conditions.

Make participation fun: Experts should try to make public participation events enjoyable for the residents. It is not only the project that should gain from their input, but residents also need to gain something out of it. Having a good time where residents also have the opportunity to connect with each other will increase motivation and keep residents' attention.

Build social relations: Many citizens expressed their preference for in-person interactions over digital forms for various reasons. While some struggled with digital literacy, others emphasised that physical interactions make it easier to assess the urban professionals' honesty. Moreover, social relations also foster a sense of trust and tie in with the very strong social culture of some groups of residents, such as Turkish and Syrian communities.

Learn from past experiences: The interviews showed that improvements can be made in organisational learning about past participation processes. Organisations and municipalities should invest in standardised methods to learn from projects and share this knowledge within the organisation.

Invest in local organisations: The government has a hard time reaching the citizens compared to the local organisations who can reach them more easily. This means that governments need these local organisations to reach the intended target group. Investing in these organisations can help empower residents to play an active role in ongoing urban development projects. This could also include training and capacity-building programs for local leaders.

Encourage collaboration across municipal departments: Policies should promote collaboration between different governmental departments (e.g., housing, social services, urban planning) so that participation process provide an opportunity to address residents' broader needs and worries beyond the immediate scope of a project.

Promote participation incentives: Multiple residents indicated that monetary incentives would increase their motivation to participate. Municipalities should foresee financial support in their budgets dedicated to participation processes, boosting engagement from (economically) disadvantaged groups. These budgets could also include support for childcare and transportation.

8 Conclusion

This thesis researched how citizens in disadvantaged neighbourhoods can be involved and included more effectively in public participation processes. Ten expert interviews and 13 citizen interviews, additional to an analysis of policy documents and an extensive literature review, provided insights to the main research question:

How can public participation processes of projects in the urban environment in disadvantaged neighbourhoods be improved such that the opinions of vulnerable citizens from these neighbourhoods become more represented than today?

The main research question is subdivided into four sub questions and the conclusions to each question are presented below. The chapter closes with the answer to the main question.

8.1 The characteristics of a disadvantaged neighbourhood (SQ1)

In literature on public participation, various terms such as 'deprived,' 'disempowered,' 'vulnerable,' and 'marginalised' are used to describe communities or neighbourhoods that are often left out of decision-making processes. These adjectives appear in combination with the following nouns: neighbourhoods, areas, communities, citizens, groups, voices, societies, stakeholders, and people. Common characteristics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods include higher rates of poverty and unemployment, ethnic diversity, and lower levels of education. Other factors such as gender, age, disability, crime rates, and housing tenure also contribute to the marginalisation of these communities.

Experts largely agree with these definitions, but they emphasised that vulnerabilities often vary by project and community. Key indicators of disadvantage include age, low education, language and digital literacy, and health conditions (both physical and mental). The dominant presence of social housing, energy poverty, and economic poverty are more factors used to describe disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Some experts framed disadvantaged residents as those who are not able to keep up with societal changes, who have an unstable life and have had fewer opportunities than others. People can also be made vulnerable by the participation design by overlooking them or not including them by default. One expert had a different view where these people do not see themselves as vulnerable, but they are in a vulnerable situation. Additionally, it is the experts who put that label on them.

This synthesis of literature and expert insights reveals a broad understanding of disadvantage, but it also highlights the fluid nature of vulnerability depending on context. Together, these factors illustrate the complexity of defining and addressing the needs of disadvantaged neighbourhoods in participation processes.

8.2 Current challenges and practices in engaging citizens of disadvantaged neighbourhoods (SQ2)

Challenges in engaging citizens of disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Six themes of challenges emerged during the interviews: engagement, expectations, outside influence, participation design, representation, and understanding the neighbourhood.

Practitioners identified various challenges related to **engagement**. Experts perceive that citizens do not feel the need to participate, see it as a priority, or see the usefulness of it. It is also hard to keep their attention. Digital methods also provided challenges, because too many opinions are collected with little substantiation. Experts also struggle with receiving too little response and bad reactions during participation processes.

Next, experts feel like residents have false **expectations** about participation or negative prejudices. This can make it difficult to create support for the project.

Outside influences can also hinder participation processes. When one of the active residents leaves, project continuity and support can get disrupted. Moreover, bureaucracy can slow down participation. The fact that some municipalities insist on Dutch-only communication also clashes with the ethnic diversity in most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Even with established principles for successful participation, **participation design** challenges remain. Finding the right time to involve residents – too early and they may feel overwhelmed; too late and they may feel like everything has been decided already. Experts are unsure of the best methods for engaging vulnerable residents. Balancing simple language with enough depth and avoiding over-participation were also mentioned as key challenges.

One of the biggest challenges for experts is to have a **representative group** of people in participation processes. They fail to reach everyone, sometimes because they do not have all the relevant stakeholders in sight. Moreover, they tend to encounter the same people, such as vocal residents and elderly people. This can skew the participation process, resulting in projects that do not represent the entire community.

Lastly, practitioners noted difficulties in fully **understanding the neighbourhood** and dealing with its complex social dynamics and history. Practitioners without enough experience will not know how to build trust or make contact with the right people. Understanding the various needs, preferences, and cultural backgrounds of residents adds to the complexity of the process.

These insights highlight the multifaceted challenges that practitioners face when engaging residents from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, emphasizing the need for adaptable, inclusive, and well-designed participation strategies.

Strategies in engaging citizens of disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Experts make use of several strategies to engage citizens of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. They can be grouped into six categories: accessibility, communication, existing networks, human aspect, location, and rewards.

Various strategies ensure the **accessibility** of participation processes. Experts make use of simple, non-technical language and try to replace text with images where possible. They provide translations so

that non-Dutch speakers are reach as well. Digital tools are used to engage people who have less time to attend in-person meetings. Creative forms of participation, together with employing a broad range of methods, can help reach more people. Lastly, experts are considered about the timing of their events, for example by organising things in the evening, and try to create an informal setting to make people feel comfortable.

Multiple strategies establish **clear communication** with the citizens. First of all, expectation management with the community sets clear boundaries on what they can give input on and what not. It is important to not give citizens falls promises and to be honest with them. Experts also try to respect and value residents' input and make sure to provide feedback afterwards on how their opinions were used. Lastly, information is distributed in time and one expert highlighted that they only communicate the information that will impact the residents and leave out redundant messages.

Experts highlighted the importance of making connections with the local **existing networks** and organisations. These organisations know better how to reach their audience. Attending or collaborating on local events can help reach a diverse range of people. Most neighbourhoods also have certain active citizens who may aid increasing outreach. Experts also try to make use of the already existing communication channels, such as WhatsApp groups or Facebook groups. Lastly, urban professionals also aim to build trust by often being present in the neighbourhood of the project, so people start recognising them.

Experts' strategies also take the **human aspect** of public engagement into account. One-on-one conversations allow for more personal connections, where individual concerns can be heard and listened to. Building a personal connection by being present in the neighbourhood makes professionals more approachable. Experts also mentioned that it is important to understand local culture and adapt the participation design to it. Lastly, experts recognise that getting to know the community's social dynamics can take time, but that this is crucial for effective participation methods.

Another important strategy is choosing the appropriate **location**. Different target groups tend to gather at specific locations. The community centre is a good place to start. Schools and playgrounds are appropriate for reaching children. Experts also mentioned to go to a church or a mosque to engage with diverse communities. Lastly, retirement homes can be a good place to connect with elderly people.

The last set of strategies is providing **rewards** for participation. These rewards can be monetary, by providing compensation or coupons to local stores as a fair way to compensate people for their time. Free food and drinks can also serve as rewards. An important remark from one of the experts was to leave the community less disadvantaged than before the participation process started.

These strategies were mapped onto the CLEAR framework, which showed that together, they ensure that citizens can participate, like to participate, are enabled to participate, are asked to participate, and are responded to after participating.

8.3 Citizens' barriers and motivators during participation processes (SQ3)

Citizens' barriers

Citizens experience various barriers to the participation process, however some citizens indicated that they felt no barriers at all. The found barriers can be divided into four themes: time, ability, communication, and interest.

The biggest reason for citizens not to participate is because they do not have enough **time**. Additionally, their attendance depends on the timing of the event. When it is organised during the day, the working class gets excluded. In the evenings, mothers with children are busy as well. The lack of available childcare can also be a barrier.

The **ability** to participate can form a barrier for residents as well. Some citizens mentioned that they face a language barrier when everything is organised and communicated in Dutch. Health problems, far locations, the lack of digital skills and a lack of knowledge can all limit the ability to get involved.

In general, most citizens noted a lack of information in their neighbourhoods. They indicated that there is not enough **communication** about upcoming events or that communication only happens in Dutch.

Lastly, multiple citizens explained that they have no desire to participate because it they are simply not **interested**. Others believe that their opinion will have no fundamental impact on the outcome of the project. Additionally, some residents found that there is a general lack of interest of the community to engage at all, which caused them to halt the neighbourhood council.

Citizens' motivators

This research identified five key motivators for citizens to participate: perceived impact, personal relevance, rewards and recognition, social aspect, and logistics.

The biggest motivator for citizens is knowing that their opinion will have **impact** on the final project. They want to feel heard and taken seriously during the decision-making process. Personal **interest** in the project also plays a crucial role, as citizens are more likely to participate when the project directly impacts their lives. Moreover, citizens are more motivated when participation is enjoyable and engaging to do.

Citizens also mentioned various forms of **rewards** as motivators, such as food and drinks or monetary compensations. They also want to feel **recognised** for their efforts by receiving clear follow-up after the project decision has been made. The **social aspect** is another key factor. The presence of friends, family, or neighbours, or the opportunity to build social relations during participation events reinforces their willingness to participate.

Lastly, **logistical factors** such as the right event timing, accessible locations, provision of transportation, and translated information also make it easier for citizens to participate. When these logistical needs are met, citizens are more likely to engage actively in the participation process.

These citizen motivators can be linked to specific push and pull factors, or internal and external motivators. **Push factors**, such as having the time, knowledge and building social relations, are intrinsic motivators that encourage participation. Feeling heard and believing that their opinion will have an impact, also reinforce the willingness to participate.

On the other hand, **pull factors** or external motivators, also play an important role in motivating engagement. Tangible rewards like food, drinks, and coupons, as well as the presence of friends and family, act as important extrinsic motivators. Next, the salience of the topic can be a valuable motivator, the more impact a project has on someone's daily life, the more motivation there is.

8.4 Adapting participation processes so that citizens in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are included (SQ4)

This research made eleven recommendations to adapt participation processes in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Policy makers and urban professionals should keep the following adaptations in mind for future projects:

1. Invest more time in understanding the local context
2. Tailor participation methods to this local context
3. Emphasise the possible impact that citizens can have when they participate
4. Invest more resources in training on inclusive public participation
5. Start making use of various participation incentives
6. Create flexible participation frameworks
7. Make participation fun
8. Learn and share knowledge from past experiences
9. Invest in local organisations
10. Encourage collaboration across municipal departments
11. Build social relations with the residents of the neighbourhood

These eleven recommendations are a combination of the insights from the experts and local residents. These adaptations can help create more inclusive, effective, and context-sensitive participation processes.

8.5 Answering the main research question

The findings highlighted in the final sub-question serve as a crucial starting point for addressing the main question. The research showed that many Dutch municipalities already emphasise the importance of inclusivity, particularly for vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups, by employing clear communication, reducing barriers, and ensuring accessibility through various means, including digital tools.

The expert interviews also revealed that they know several strategies to conduct public participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However, the experts also indicated that they still face many challenges during these participation processes. Additionally, citizens indicated that they experience several barriers towards community engagement. Through analysis it became clear that not all barriers and motivators of citizens are addressed by the strategies. This shows that there are many improvements to be made by experts and policy makers.

Public participation processes in disadvantaged neighbourhoods can be improved by taking more time to understand the local context; employing tailored and accessible participation methods; incentivising engagement; investing in building social relations with citizens and local organisations; increasing organisational learning from past experiences; demonstrating the impact citizens can have; and by continuing to increase awareness of the strategies that are already known to work.

9 Reflections

It is easy to underestimate qualitative research and after this thesis, that is something I will not do anymore in the future. The most challenging part of this research was to make contact with the local residents. In Feijenoord, I got help from one of the active local citizens. She speaks Turkish, which made it possible to talk to Turkish citizens. She asked the questions in Turkish and they replied in Turkish. However, what I did not take into account beforehand was how I was going to process these recordings. Transcribing Dutch interviews already took a lot of time due to editing all the mistakes from automatic transcriptions. Doing this in a language I do not master, made this almost impossible without the help of a translator. Tools such as Google Translate are also not perfect, which made it very hard to draw conclusions from the completely Turkish interviews. This situation shows how difficult it can be to engage with certain groups in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, such as non-Dutch speakers, when one is not properly prepared. In hindsight, it would have been better to conduct these interviews through using google translate during the interviews themselves, so I had more control of the input and output.

This research also thoroughly confronted me with my privilege as a white, middle-class women who is able to go to university. Going into the neighbourhoods and talking with the residents gave me new perspectives on society that I will take with me for the rest of my life. At one point I was asked to give advise on immigration documents. They were written in Dutch, and the family did not speak Dutch, but even for me it was hard to read these documents due to difficult terminology and I was not able to help them that much. Next to that I also got to experience the very welcoming culture of Turkish and Syrian people for the first time. During the interviews on the street, it also became clear that many neighbours know each other and help each other in different ways. They are a connected social network that looks out for each other

One last reflection is that I had no previous experience with public participation when I started this thesis. This made it harder to sometimes grasp all the complexities surrounding it and it influenced how I interpreted the results of this research.

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Appendix 1: HREC checklist

Delft University of Technology
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS
CHECKLIST FOR HUMAN RESEARCH
(Version January 2022)

IMPORTANT NOTES ON PREPARING THIS CHECKLIST

1. An HREC application should be submitted for every research study that involves human participants (as Research Subjects) carried out by TU Delft researchers
2. Your HREC application should be submitted and approved **before** potential participants are approached to take part in your study
3. All submissions from Master's Students for their research thesis need approval from the relevant Responsible Researcher
4. The Responsible Researcher must indicate their approval of the completeness and quality of the submission by signing and dating this form OR by providing approval to the corresponding researcher via email (included as a PDF with the full HREC submission)
5. There are various aspects of human research compliance which fall outside of the remit of the HREC, but which must be in place to obtain HREC approval. These often require input from internal or external experts such as Faculty Data Stewards, Faculty HSE advisors, the TU Delft Privacy Team or external Medical research partners.
6. You can find detailed guidance on completing your HREC application here
7. Please note that incomplete submissions (whether in terms of documentation or the information provided therein) will be returned for completion **prior to any assessment**
8. If you have any feedback on any aspect of the HREC approval tools and/or process you can leave your comments here

I. Applicant Information

PROJECT TITLE:	**Participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods**
Research period: *Over what period of time will this specific part of the research take place*	**April 2024 – October 2024**
Faculty:	**Civil Engineering & Geosciences**
Department:	**Construction Management & Engineering**
Type of the research project: *(Bachelor's, Master's, DreamTeam, PhD, PostDoc, Senior Researcher, Organisational etc.)*	**Master's Thesis**
Funder of research: *(EU, NWO, TUD, other – in which case please elaborate)*	**Witteveen+Bos (company)**
Name of Corresponding Researcher: *(If different from the Responsible Researcher)*	**Lisabeth Huysentruyt**
E-mail Corresponding Researcher: *(If different from the Responsible Researcher)*	
Position of Corresponding Researcher: *(Masters, DreamTeam, PhD, PostDoc, Assistant/ Associate/ Full Professor)*	**Master student**
Name of Responsible Researcher: *Note: all student work must have a named Responsible Researcher to approve, sign and submit this application*	**Audrey Esteban**
E-mail of Responsible Researcher: *Please ensure that an institutional email address (**no Gmail, Yahoo, etc.**) is used for all project documentation/ communications including Informed Consent materials*	
Position of Responsible Researcher : *(PhD, PostDoc, Associate/ Assistant/ Full Professor)*	**PhD**

II. Research Overview

II.**NOTE:** *You can find more guidance on completing this checklist here*

a) Please summarise your research very briefly (100-200 words)

III. What are you looking into, who is involved, how many participants there will be, how they will be recruited and what are they expected to do?

IV.

Add your text here – (please avoid jargon and abbreviations)

My research aims to investigate how (socio-economically) vulnerable communities can be included and involved more effectively in public participation processes in the context of urban development projects. The study will involve a collaboration with employees of engineering firm Witteveen+Bos. These employees (3 to 5 people) will be interviewed for there expertise in participation projects. Firstly, to assess how they currently practice participation and secondly to validate guidelines that I will create. Secondly, local residents (4-6) will be interviewed to see how they view participation processes, what challenges do they see, how do they want to be involved in these processes, and how can the overall participation process be better adapted to their needs.

b) If your application is an additional project related to an existing approved HREC submission, please provide a brief explanation including the existing relevant HREC submission number/s.

Add your text here – (please avoid jargon and abbreviations)

III.   Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan

     V.**NOTE:** *You can find more guidance on completing this checklist* [*here*](#)

     VI.

  VII.Please complete the following table in full for all points to which your answer is "yes". Bear in mind that the vast majority of projects involving human participants as Research Subjects also involve the collection of **Personally Identifiable Information (PII)** and/or **Personally Identifiable Research Data (PIRD)** which may pose potential risks to participants as detailed in Section G: Data Processing and Privacy below.

  VIII.

   IX.To ensure alignment between your risk assessment, data management and what you agree with your Research Subjects you can use the last two columns in the table below to refer to specific points in your Data Management Plan (DMP) and Informed Consent Form (ICF) – **but this is not compulsory**.

    X.

   XI.It's worth noting that **you're much more likely to need to resubmit your application if you neglect to identify potential risks**, than if you identify a potential risk and demonstrate how you will mitigate it. If necessary, the HREC will always work with you and colleagues in the Privacy Team and Data Management Services to see how, if at all possible, your research can be conducted.

ISSUE	Yes	No	RISK ASSESSMENT – what risks could arise? *Please ensure that you list ALL of the actual risks that could potentially arise – do not simply state whether you consider any such risks are important!*	MITIGATION PLAN – what mitigating steps will you take? *Please ensure that you summarise what actual mitigation measures you will take for each potential risk identified – do not simply state that you will e.g. comply with regulations.*	DMP	ICF
If YES please complete the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan columns below.					*Please provide the relevant reference #*	
A: Partners and collaboration						
1. Will the research be carried out in collaboration with additional organisational partners such as: • One or more collaborating research and/or commercial organisations • Either a research, or a work experience internship provider[1] *[1] If yes, please include the graduation agreement in this application*	yes		**The research will be carried out with the internship company Witteveen+Bos. What if the company wants to get access to the interview transcripts? Could have negative impact on work relationships.**	**All personal data of employees and citizens will be made anonymous after analysis of the interviews. Data is stored on TU Delft OneDrive. Full recordings are not shared with the company.**		
2. Is this research dependent on a Data Transfer or Processing Agreement with a collaborating partner or third party supplier? *If yes please provide a copy of the signed DTA/DPA*		no				
3. Has this research been approved by another (external) research ethics committee (e.g.: HREC and/or MREC/METC)? *If yes, please provide a copy of the approval (if possible) and summarise any key points in your Risk Management section below*		no				
B: Location						
4. Will the research take place in a country or countries, other than the Netherlands, within the EU?		No				
5. Will the research take place in a country or countries outside the EU?		No				
6. Will the research take place in a place/region or of higher risk – including known dangerous locations (in any country) or locations with non-democratic regimes?		No				
C: Participants						
7. Will the study involve participants who **may** be vulnerable and possibly (legally) unable to give informed consent? (e.g., children below the legal age for giving consent, people with learning difficulties, people living in care or nursing homes,).		no				
8. Will the study involve participants who **may** be vulnerable under specific circumstances and in specific contexts, such as victims and witnesses of violence, including domestic violence; sex workers; members of minority groups, refugees, irregular migrants or dissidents?		no				

ISSUE	Yes	No	RISK ASSESSMENT – what risks could arise? *Please ensure that you list ALL of the actual risks that could potentially arise – do not simply state whether you consider any such risks are important!*	MITIGATION PLAN – what mitigating steps will you take? *Please ensure that you summarise what actual mitigation measures you will take for each potential risk identified – do not simply state that you will e.g. comply with regulations.*	DMP	ICF
			If YES please complete the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan columns below.		*Please provide the relevant reference #*	
9. Are the participants, outside the context of the research, in a dependent or subordinate position to the investigator (such as own children, own students or employees of either TU Delft and/or a collaborating partner organisation)? *It is essential that you safeguard against possible adverse consequences of this situation (such as allowing a student's failure to participate to your satisfaction to affect your evaluation of their coursework).*		no				
10. Is there a high possibility of re-identification for your participants? (e.g., do they have a very specialist job of which there are only a small number in a given country, are they members of a small community, or employees from a partner company collaborating in the research? Or are they one of only a handful of (expert) participants in the study?		no				
D: Recruiting Participants						
11. Will your participants be recruited through your own, professional, channels such as conference attendance lists, or through specific network/s such as self-help groups		No				
12. Will the participants be recruited or accessed in the longer term by a (legal or customary) gatekeeper? (e.g., an adult professional working with children; a community leader or family member who has this customary role – within or outside the EU; the data producer of a long-term cohort study)		No				
13. Will you be recruiting your participants through a crowd-sourcing service and/or involve a third party data-gathering service, such as a survey platform?		No				
14. Will you be offering any financial, or other, remuneration to participants, and might this induce or bias participation?		No				
E: Subject Matter *Research related to medical questions/health may require special attention. See also the website of the CCMO before contacting the HREC.*						
15. Will your research involve any of the following: • Medical research and/or clinical trials • Invasive sampling and/or medical imaging • Medical and *In Vitro Diagnostic Medical* Devices Research		No				
16. Will drugs, placebos, or other substances (e.g., drinks, foods, food or drink constituents, dietary supplements) be administered to the study participants? *If yes see here to determine whether medical ethical approval is required*		No				
17. Will blood or tissue samples be obtained from participants? *If yes see here to determine whether medical ethical approval is required*		No				

ISSUE	Yes	No	RISK ASSESSMENT – what risks could arise? *Please ensure that you list ALL of the actual risks that could potentially arise – do not simply state whether you consider any such risks are important!*	MITIGATION PLAN – what mitigating steps will you take? *Please ensure that you summarise what actual mitigation measures you will take for each potential risk identified – do not simply state that you will e.g. comply with regulations.*	DMP	ICF
			If YES please complete the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan columns below.		*Please provide the relevant reference #*	
18. Does the study risk causing psychological stress or anxiety beyond that normally encountered by the participants in their life outside research?		No				
19. Will the study involve discussion of personal sensitive data which could put participants at increased legal, financial, reputational, security or other risk? (e.g., financial data, location data, data relating to children or other vulnerable groups) *Definitions of sensitive personal data, and special cases are provided on the TUD Privacy Team website.*		No				
20. Will the study involve disclosing commercially or professionally sensitive, or confidential information? (e.g., relating to decision-making processes or business strategies which might, for example, be of interest to competitors)	Yes		Risk could be that a competitor finds specific business strategies that would give them an advantage over the initial company.	The final thesis document will be send to the company for a final review on this topic, before anything is made public.		
21. Has your study been identified by the TU Delft Privacy Team as requiring a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA)? *If yes please attach the advice/ approval from the Privacy Team to this application*		No				
22. Does your research investigate causes or areas of conflict? *If yes please confirm that your fieldwork has been discussed with the appropriate safety/security advisors and approved by your Department/Faculty.*		No				
23. Does your research involve observing illegal activities or data processed or provided by authorities responsible for preventing, investigating, detecting or prosecuting criminal offences *If so please confirm that your work has been discussed with the appropriate legal advisors and approved by your Department/Faculty.*		No				
F: Research Methods						
24. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (e.g., covert observation of people in non-public places).		No				
25. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? (For example, will participants be deliberately falsely informed, will information be withheld from them or will they be misled in such a way that they are likely to object or show unease when debriefed about the study).		No				
26. Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study? And/or could your research activity cause an accident involving (non-) participants?		No				
27. Will the experiment involve the use of devices that are not 'CE' certified? *Only, if 'yes': continue with the following questions:*		No				

Appendix 1: HREC checklist

ISSUE	Yes	No	RISK ASSESSMENT – what risks could arise? *Please ensure that you list ALL of the actual risks that could potentially arise – do not simply state whether you consider any such risks are important!*	MITIGATION PLAN – what mitigating steps will you take? *Please ensure that you summarise what actual mitigation measures you will take for each potential risk identified – do not simply state that you will e.g. comply with regulations.*	DMP	ICF
			If YES please complete the Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan columns below.		*Please provide the relevant reference #*	
• Was the device built in-house?		/				
• Was it inspected by a safety expert at TU Delft? *If yes, please provide a signed device report*		/				
• If it was not built in-house and not CE-certified, was it inspected by some other, qualified authority in safety and approved? *If yes, please provide records of the inspection*		/				
28. Will your research involve face-to-face encounters with your participants and if so how will you assess and address Covid considerations?	Yes		Covid infection is a possible risk.	We will keep considerable distance during the interviews or conduct them online if one of the two shows symptoms.		
29. Will your research involve **either:** a) "big data", combined datasets, new data-gathering or new data-merging techniques which might lead to re-identification of your participants **and/or** b) artificial intelligence or algorithm training where, for example biased datasets could lead to biased outcomes?		No				
G: Data Processing and Privacy						
30. Will the research involve collecting, processing and/or storing any directly identifiable PII (Personally Identifiable Information) including name or email address that will be used for administrative purposes only? (eg: obtaining Informed Consent or disbursing remuneration)	Yes		The name of the interviewed person might get leaked	All PII will be deleted once the thesis is finished. + explain security measures during research		
31. Will the research involve collecting, processing and/or storing any directly or indirectly identifiable PIRD (Personally Identifiable Research Data) including videos, pictures, IP address, gender, age etc and **what other Personal Research Data** (including personal or professional views) will you be collecting?	Yes		Strong opinions might be perceived as problematic by the employer.	Anything that might indicate who is talking will be excluded from the final document. Only the necessary things from the interviews will be included. PPI (video etc) will be deleted.		
32. Will this research involve collecting data from the internet, social media and/or publicly available datasets which have been originally contributed by human participants		No				
33. Will your research findings be published in one or more forms in the public domain, as e.g., Masters thesis, journal publication, conference presentation or wider public dissemination?	Yes		The research will be published on the TU Delft Repository. Other students might be able to find out who was interviewed, which brings the identity of the interviewed people in danger.	This will be mitigated by ensuring that all PPI and PIRD won't be available in the thesis that is published on the Repository.		
34. Will your research data be archived for re-use and/or teaching in an open, private or semi-open archive?		No				

Appendix 2: informed consent form

Beste,

U wordt uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan een onderzoek genaamd "Listening to every voice: Participation in disadvantaged neighbourhoods" (Luisteren naar elke stem: participatie in kwetsbare buurten). Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd door Lisabeth Huysentruyt van de TU Delft in samenwerking met Witteveen+Bos.

Het doel van dit onderzoek is om kwetsbare groepen beter te kunnen betrekken bij participatieprocessen van projecten in de publieke ruimte met klimaat adaptieve maatregelen. Hiervoor neem ik interviews af en dit zal ongeveer 60 minuten in beslag nemen. De data zal gebruikt worden voor richtlijnen te kunnen opstellen over hoe het participatieproces beter kan worden ingericht naar de toekomst toe.
U wordt gevraagd om de vragen die u op voorhand hebt ontvangen te beantwoorden in een (online) interview.

Zoals bij elke online activiteit is het risico van een databreuk aanwezig. Wij doen ons best om uw antwoorden vertrouwelijk te houden. We minimaliseren de risico's door de opname van het interview met niemand anders te delen. Nadat het interview is uitgetypt zal deze opname ook verwijderd worden. Een volledige transcriptie van het interview wordt niet toegevoegd aan de thesis en er zullen enkel quotes/stukjes van het interview worden gebruikt voor argumentatie. Uw naam en andere persoonlijke data zullen geanonimiseerd worden.

Uw deelname aan dit onderzoek is volledig vrijwillig, en u kunt zich elk moment terugtrekken zonder reden op te geven. U bent vrij om bepaalde vragen niet te beantwoorden.

Contactgegevens: Lisabeth Huysentruyt,

Gelieve de juiste vakjes aan te kruisen	Ja	Nee
A: Algemene overeenstemming - onderzoeksdoelen, deelnemerstaken en vrijwillige deelname		
1. Ik heb de informatie over het onderzoek gelezen en begrepen, of deze is aan mij voorgelezen. Ik heb de mogelijkheid gehad om vragen te stellen over het onderzoek en mijn vragen zijn naar tevredenheid beantwoord.	☐	☐
2. Ik doe vrijwillig mee aan dit onderzoek, en ik begrijp dat ik kan weigeren vragen te beantwoorden en mij op elk moment kan terugtrekken uit de studie, zonder een reden op te hoeven geven.	☐	☐
3. Ik begrijp dat mijn deelname aan dit onderzoek niet zal worden gecompenseerd.	☐	☐
4. Ik begrijp dat mijn deelname aan het onderzoek betekent dat het interview zal worden opgenomen zodat hier een transcriptie van gemaakt kan worden. Deze opname zal niet verder worden gedeeld en wordt verwijderd van zodra het onderzoek is voltooid.	☐	☐
5. Ik begrijp dat ik een transcript zal ontvangen om na te kijken op onnauwkeurigheden of fouten, die binnen een week na ontvangst kunnen worden doorgegeven.	☐	☐
6. Ik begrijp dat de studie in oktober/november eindigt.	☐	☐
B: Mogelijke risico's van deelname (inclusief gegevensbescherming)		
7. Ik begrijp dat mijn deelname betekent dat er persoonlijke identificeerbare informatie en onderzoeksdata worden verzameld, met het risico dat ik hieruit geïdentificeerd kan worden aan de hand van mijn positie.	☐	☐
9. Ik begrijp dat de volgende stappen worden ondernomen om het risico van een databreuk te minimaliseren, en dat mijn identiteit op de volgende manieren wordt beschermd in het geval van een databreuk: opname van het interview wordt verwijderd na afronden van het onderzoek, de transcriptie wordt niet publiek gedeeld, citaten worden anoniem gemaakt.	☐	☐
10. Ik begrijp dat de persoonlijke informatie die over mij verzameld wordt en mij kan identificeren, zoals naam, email en positie, niet gedeeld worden buiten het studieteam.	☐	☐
11. Ik begrijp dat de persoonlijke data die over mij verzameld wordt, vernietigd wordt na het afronden van het onderzoek.	☐	☐
C: Publicatie, verspreiding en toepassing van onderzoek		
12. Ik begrijp dat na het onderzoek de geanonimiseerde informatie gebruikt zal worden voor citaten.	☐	☐
13. Ik geef toestemming om mijn antwoorden, ideeën of andere bijdrages anoniem te citeren in resulterende producten.	☐	☐
14. Ik geef toestemming om mijn positie te vermelden voor citaten in de finale masterproef.	☐	☐

Gelieve de juiste vakjes aan te kruisen	Ja	Nee
D: (langdurige) opslag, toegang en hergebruik van gegevens		
16. Ik geef toestemming om de geanonimiseerde data (citaten) die over mij verzameld worden gearchiveerd worden in de publieke TU Delft onderwijs repository opdat deze gebruikt kunnen worden voor toekomstig onderzoek en onderwijs.	☐	☐
17. Ik begrijp dat de toegang tot deze repository open is.	☐	☒

Signatures

_____   _____ _____
Naam deelnemer   Handtekening   Datum

Ik, **de onderzoeker**, verklaar dat ik de informatie en het instemmingsformulier correct aan de potentiële deelnemer heb voorgelezen en, naar het beste van mijn vermogen, heb verzekerd dat de deelnemer begrijpt waar hij/zij vrijwillig mee instemt.

_____   _____   _____
Naam onderzoeker   Handtekening   Datum

Contactgegevens van de onderzoeker voor verdere informatie:
Lisabeth Huysentruyt

Appendix 3: Solutions and best practices to inclusive urban development

Table 29: Recommended solutions and best practices for overcoming barriers and challenges to inclusive urban development, adapted from Geekiyanage et al. (2020)

Theme	Barrier/challenge/issue	Solutions/Best practices
		Context
Community capacity	Communities themselves reluctant to engage due to incapacities associated with them. These incapacities mainly include psychological/internal factors; the level of knowledge, awareness, and skills; negative thoughts; consultation fatigue; physical and/or mental impairment	- Community training to involve citizens in formal government procedures - Early advertising of engagement opportunities through multiple channels to increase awareness - Educate communities of the importance and benefits of participation and let them feel that the processes are transparent and worthy of their trust - Conduct community development programmes to overcome poverty - Offer additional incentives such as welfare facilities to participate
Quality of existing relationships: inter-communities and between communities and policymakers	Negative experiences from previous participatory decision-making events make both communities and decision-makers less interested in community engagement. This factor represents untrustworthy relationships: among different types of stakeholders; between communities, between communities and decision-makers and urban planners.	- Establish working groups to identify barriers to involvement in planning - Communicate regularly to discuss the scope and potential influence of the participation process - Implement the knowledge-based urban development (KBUD) paradigm to increase trust - Third-party rights of appeal for communities should be introduced to empower communities - Community councils should be given a statutory right to be consulted on development plans to address the power imbalance between communities and decision-makers - Develop a strong social capital (e.g. improved communication and cohesion between different groups residing in one settlement, strengthening existing or establishing new social networks such as self-help groups, youth clubs etc.)
Organisational culture, attitudes, and knowledge	Organisational boundaries and little experience in working across scales make professionals physiologically and practically backward in accepting community representatives within decision-making in government procedures.	- Decentralised decision making, with responsibilities spread over different stakeholder organisations - Implementing a multi-disciplinary approach that takes into account the dynamic relationship between the bottom-up and top-down dimensions - A continuing commitment to early engagement of communities in planning - New institutional discussion forums operating on urban scales are required for effective participation - Offering opportunities for community decision-making and partnerships - Public bodies must demonstrate a willingness to trust the public and take the results of participation seriously - Strengthen accountability and inclusiveness by devolving authority to the local level communities and their representatives

Theme	Barrier/challenge/issue	Solutions/Best practices
		• A review of the skills and participation competences of the administration • The identification of relevant experts from various disciplines to ensure the quality of decisions • Implement the main elements of effective community engagement such as inclusion, support, planning, working together, methods, and communication, as suggested in local
Infrastructure		
Investment in infrastructure and planning to support community engagement	A lack of financial investment as well as limited resources (such as experienced personnel, information, communication, and technology) constrain the successful implementation of community engagement.	• Use of citizen science to identify community challenges and solutions • Allocate enough time and resources to sustain communication channels between different community groups • Use mass media (e.g. newspapers printed in main local languages) as an important information channel and agenda-setter • Use social media and mobile applications as a means of communication • Establish a fixed budget for community participation • Personnel, time, and financial resources need to be reviewed and assessed • Use of horizontal initiatives such as shared funding among departments to encourage collaborative working • Provide a forum to encourage dialogue, share information, and create strategies and actions that promote rural development • Investment in improving human capital (e.g. providing education and vocational training and increasing awareness)
Process		
Stakeholder engagement process	The existing engagement process appears to be complicated with ill-defined aim and objectives, no proper timeline, weak administrative structures, and policy breakdowns.	• Planners and policymakers should not set unrealistic targets for participation • Related laws and regulations regarding the community participation process in the municipal processes and services should be issued • Ensure giving sufficient time for obtaining the results from new participatory organisations for sustainable development • Use of three key measures for the evaluation of community suggestions regarding urban development: (1) public satisfaction; (2) a better final product; (3) community empowerment • Communities should be empowered to bring forward local place plans, and these plans should form part of the development plan • Use of quantitative participatory methods and participatory numbers to identify appropriate stakeholders • Stakeholder mapping for integrating different forms of knowledge • Implementation of co-production models • Focus on making the planning process more accessible, user-friendly and relevant • Generate community engagement processes that can adapt to a variety of urban, regional and rural settings • Careful preparation of the consultation process
Inclusive and accessible practice	Community participation structures finalized by decisionmakers are not always productive since they have the potential to exclude some communities due to event logistics, partisanships, cultural	• Consider (a) the timing of events, childcare provision, wheelchair access and transport, and (b) how events are publicised, how the material is distributed, jargon-free language, braille and large print formats, translation into other languages • Using familiar places and creating an informal atmosphere

Theme	Barrier/challenge/issue	Solutions/Best practices
	and language discriminations, and administrative delays.	• The community engagement activity needs to go out into the community • Plain language and provision for non-native language speakers • Determine: who should be involved; what form of participation is appropriate, and when to involve

Appendix 4: Terminology on disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Table 30: Extended literature review of terminology used to describe disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Adjective	Noun	Source	Title	Key words
	Deprivation	(Dacombe, 2021)	Doing Democracy Differently: How Can Participatory Democracy Take Hold In Deprived Areas?	Participatory democracy; inequality; deprivation
Deprived	Neighbourhoods	(Tonkens & Verhoeven, 2019)	The civic support paradox: Fighting unequal participation in deprived neighbourhoods	citizens' initiatives, deprived neighbourhoods, front-line workers, inequality
		(van de Wetering, 2024)	Facilitating citizen participation in marginalised neighbourhoods: selective empowerment in between vulnerability and active citizenship	Urban marginality; participatory governance; urban professionals; vulnerability; active citizenship; selective empowerment
		(Bonomi Bezzo & Jeannet, 2023)	Civic involvement in deprived communities: A longitudinal study of England	Community, deprivation, England, membership, social cohesion
	Areas	(Dacombe, 2021)	-	-
	Communities	(Bonomi Bezzo & Jeannet, 2023)	-	-
Disadvantaged	Neighbourhoods	(de Graaf et al., 2015)	Enhancing Participation in Disadvantaged Urban Neighbourhoods	Participation, neighbourhood governance, citizenship, disadvantaged neighbourhoods, exemplary practitioners
	Areas	(Gosman & Botchwey, 2013)	Community Engagement: Challenges & Tools from the Planner's Perspective	-
	Citizens	(Železnik, 2017)	Towards Political Equality in the Context of Participatory and Deliberative Democratic Theory	Political equality, representation, participation, participatory democracy, deliberative democracy, civil society
	Communities	(Adamson, 2010)	Community empowerment: Identifying the barriers to ''purposeful'' citizen participation	Citizen participation, Community development, Partnership, Poverty, Regeneration, Wales
	Groups	(Mahjabeen et al., 2009)	Rethinking Community Participation in Urban Planning: The Role of Disadvantaged Groups in Sydney Metropolitan Strategy	-
Disempowered	Voices	(Železnik, 2017)	-	-

Adjective	Noun	Source	Title	Key words
Excluded	Citizens	(van de Wetering, 2024)	-	-
	Sections of community	(Lowndes et al., 2006)	Diagnosing and Remedying the Failings of Official Participation Schemes: The CLEAR Framework	-
Hard to reach		(van de Wetering, 2024)	-	-
Marginalised	Communities	(Gosman & Botchwey, 2013)	-	-
	Groups	(van de Wetering, 2024)	-	-
		(Lowndes et al., 2006)	-	-
		(Upali, 2015)	Excluding the Worthy: The Need of Marginalized Groups in the Decision Making Process	Decision Making Process, Governance, Marginalised Groups, Social Exclusion
		(Ianniello et al., 2019)	Obstacles and solutions on the ladder of citizen participation: a systematic review	Citizen participation; stakeholder inclusion; interactive decision-making; deliberative engagement; interactive governance
		(Juarez & Brown, 2008)	Extracting or Empowering? A Critique of Participatory Methods of Marginalized Populations	Participatory methods, citizen participation, marginalized populations, theoretical frameworks
	Neighbourhoods	(van de Wetering, 2024)	-	-
	Societies	(Jagtap, 2019)	Key guidelines for designing integrated solutions to support development of marginalised societies	Marginalised societies, Design guidelines, Integrated solutions, Product service systems, Design process, Life cycle phases
	Stakeholders	(Eikelenboom & Long, 2023)	Breaking the Cycle of Marginalization: How to Involve Local Communities in Multi-stakeholder Initiatives?	Multi-stakeholder initiatives, Community involvement, Action research
Seldom-heard	Groups	(Yellow Book Limited, 2017)	Barriers to community engagement in planning: a research study	-
Underprivileged	Groups	(Železnik, 2017)	-	-
Under-represented	Groups	(Juarez & Brown, 2008)	-	-
		(Michels & de Graaf, 2010)	Examining Citizen Participation: Local Participatory Policy Making and Democracy	Citizen participation, local democracy, participatory policy making, neighbourhood
	Vulnerability	(van de Wetering, 2024)	-	-
Vulnerable	Groups	(van de Wetering, 2024)	-	-
	Neighbourhoods	(van de Wetering, 2024)	-	-
	People	(van de Wetering, 2024)	-	-
	Position	(Eikelenboom & Long, 2023)	-	-

Appendix 5: Interview protocols

Interviewleidraad W+B employees

Introductie van het onderzoek en mezelf

Interview checks
- Bedankt dat je wilt deelnemen aan mijn afstudeeronderzoek
- Mag ik het interview opnemen?

Introductie
- Hoelang werk je al bij W+B?
- Welke functie heb je bij W+B en wat zijn je voornaamste werkzaamheden?

Onderzoeksvragen

Definities
- Hoe versta of definieer jij kwetsbaarheid binnen een gemeenschap?
- Verandert deze definitie van project tot project of hanteren jullie hierin een vaste definitie?

Participatiepraktijken
- Wat voor soort klimaatadaptatieprojecten voer jij uit?
- Bij welke (klimaatadaptatie) projecten hebben jullie al kwetsbare groepen betrokken?
- Hoe betrek je momenteel kwetsbare gemeenschappen bij (klimaatadaptatie)projecten?
    - Wie wordt er dan vooral betrokken? (vrouwen, mannen, leeftijdsgroep,…)
    - Wanneer worden zij betrokken?
        - In welke projectfases? (Initiatie, definitie/planning, ontwerp, voorbereiding, realisatie, nazorg)
    - Hoe worden zij geïnformeerd om deel te nemen?
- Welke participatiemethoden worden gebruikt in deze projecten?
    - Plaats de methode onder een categorie (uitleg over elke categorie wordt gegevens tijdens het interview): (1) inform; (2) consult; (3) involve; (4) collaborate; and (5) empower
    - Zijn deze gebaseerd op bestaande theorie of meer praktijkervaring?
    - Hoe effectief waren deze methoden?
    - Welke methodes gebruiken jullie het meest en waarom?
    - Wat is het doel meestal bij jullie participatieprocessen?
- Welke uitdagingen of barrières ervaar je gebruikelijk tijdens het participatieproces?
    - Hoe overwon je deze uitdagingen en barrières? Welke strategieën paste je toe?
    - Zijn er specifieke interventies of strategieën die in de toekomst kunnen helpen bij het overwinnen van deze drempels of barrières?
- Welke concrete stappen nemen jullie om kwetsbare groepen beter te bereiken en betrekken?
- Hoe sluiten jullie participatieprocessen meestal af? Is er een moment van reflectie of een leermoment om verbeterpunten voor de volgende keer te implementeren?

Afsluiting
- Zijn er nog andere aspecten of inzichten die je wilt delen met betrekking tot dit onderwerp?

Interviewleidraad andere werknemers

Introductie van het onderzoek en mezelf

Interview checks
- Bedankt dat je wilt deelnemen aan mijn afstudeeronderzoek
- Mag ik het interview opnemen?

Introductie
- Waar werk je en hoelang werk je daar al?
- Welke functie heb je daar?
- Wat zijn je voornaamste werkzaamheden?

Onderzoeksvragen
Definities
- Hoe versta of definieer jij kwetsbaarheid binnen een gemeenschap?
- Verandert deze definitie van project tot project of hanteren jullie hierin een vaste definitie?

Participatiepraktijken
- Wat voor soort (klimaatadaptatie)projecten voer je uit?
- Bij welke (klimaatadaptatie) projecten hebben jullie al kwetsbare groepen betrokken?
- Hoe betrek je momenteel kwetsbare gemeenschappen bij (klimaatadaptatie)projecten?
    - Wie wordt er dan vooral betrokken? (vrouwen, mannen, leeftijdsgroep,…)
    - Wanneer worden zij betrokken?
        - In welke projectfases? (Initiatie, definitie/planning, ontwerp, voorbereiding, realisatie, nazorg)
    - Hoe worden zij geïnformeerd om deel te nemen?
- Welke participatiemethoden worden gebruikt in deze projecten?
    - Plaats de methode onder een categorie (uitleg over elke categorie wordt gegevens tijdens het interview): (1) inform; (2) consult; (3) involve; (4) collaborate; and (5) empower
    - Zijn deze gebaseerd op bestaande theorie of meer praktijkervaring?
    - Hoe effectief waren deze methoden?
    - Welke methodes gebruiken jullie het meest en waarom?
    - Wat is het doel meestal bij jullie participatieprocessen?
- Welke uitdagingen of barrières ervaar je gebruikelijk tijdens het participatieproces?
    - Hoe overwon je deze uitdagingen en barrières? Welke strategieën paste je toe?
    - Zijn er specifieke interventies of strategieën die in de toekomst kunnen helpen bij het overwinnen van deze drempels of barrières?
- Welke concrete stappen nemen jullie om kwetsbare groepen beter te bereiken en betrekken?
- Hoe sluiten jullie participatieprocessen meestal af? Is er een moment van reflectie of een leermoment om verbeterpunten voor de volgende keer te implementeren?

Afsluiting
- Zijn er nog andere aspecten of inzichten die je wilt delen met betrekking tot dit onderwerp?

Interview protocol citizens

HOE WIL JIJ MEEDENKEN OVER PROJECTEN IN JOUW BUURT?

Introductie: *elkaar leren kennen*

Vraag 1: Kan u me wat meer vertellen over uzelf en hoelang u al in deze buurt woont?

_____

Vraag 2: Leeft u hier graag? Waarom wel/niet?

_____

Participatie ervaring: *Participatie betekent dat burgers, bedrijven en maatschappelijke organisaties invloed uitoefenen op plannen en besluiten van de overheid.*

Vraag 3: Ik heb opgevangen dat er de aankomende tijd veel gaat veranderen in de buurt. Bijvoorbeeld het winkelcentrum gaat vernieuwd worden, maar ook sommige straten gaan vernieuwd worden. Bent u daar van op de hoogte? Hoe weet u dit?

_____

Vraag 4: Sinds u hier woont, hebt u al mogen meedenken of meewerken aan een (bouw)project in de wijk?

- *Indien **ja**, wat was uw ervaring hiermee?*

☐ Enquête / vragenlijst ☐ Workshop

☐ Bewonersavond ☐ Interview

☐ Social Media (Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram,…) ☐ Online op een website

- *Indien **nee**, zou u het leuk vinden om mee te denken aan bouwprojecten in de wijk?*
  - *Waarom?*

_____

Drempels om te participeren

Vraag 5: Stel dat u wordt uitgenodigd voor een bewonersavond of workshop (georganiseerd om bijvoorbeeld mee te denken met bouwprojecten), Zou je daar makkelijk aan kunnen deelnemen?

- Om welke redenen zou het moeilijk zijn om hieraan deel te nemen? Bijvoorbeeld:

☐ Te weinig tijd   ☐ Je hebt niet de juiste kennis

☐ Te moeilijk onderwerp   ☐ Mijn cultuur

☐ Je voelt je niet welkom   ☐ Het is te ver

☐ De taal   ☐ Niet weten wanneer het plaatsvindt

☐ Geen interesse   ☐ Iets anders, vul aan:

_____

Vraag 6: Vindt u informatie over activiteiten of bewonersavonden in de wijk makkelijk te vinden? *Heel makkelijk, makkelijk, moeilijk, heel moeilijk*. Waarom?

_____

Vraag 7: Op welke manier kan u het beste worden bereikt over een project in de wijk?
Waarom?

☐ Email   ☐ Poster / flyer in het buurthuis

☐ Brief / flyer in de brievenbus   ☐ Facebook

☐ Website   ☐ WhatsApp

☐ Bericht in de lokale krant   ☐ Ik wil niet bereikt worden

☐ Iets anders, vul aan: _____

Motivatie om te participeren

Vraag 8: Wat zou u aanmoedigen of motiveren om mee te denken aan projecten in uw omgeving?

☐ Meer informatie   ☐ Samen met vrienden / familie meedoen

☐ Hulp bij transport naar de locatie   ☐ Een beloning: geld / eten & drinken

☐ Vertalingen   ☐ Het gevoel hebben echt impact te kunnen maken

☐ Het juiste moment van de dag   ☐ Bijleren

☐ Iets anders, vul aan: _____

Vraag 9: Hoe belangrijk is het voor u om invloed te hebben op de beslissingen in de wijk?

☐ Heel belangrijk
☐ Belangrijk
☐ Een beetje belangrijk
☐ Niet belangrijk

Vraag 10: Zou u vaker meedenken of meewerken aan projecten als u weet dat uw mening impact heeft?

☐ Heel zeker
☐ Waarschijnlijk
☐ Misschien
☐ Nee
- *Heeft u het idee dat uw mening belangrijk is in deze projecten?*

Vraag 11: Zou u liever online of in het echt uw mening geven over een project? Waarom?

☐ Online
☐ In het echt

Vraag 12: Denkt u dat als buurtbewoners meedenken en meewerken aan projecten in de buurt, dit positief is voor de buurt? Waarom?

Vraag 13: Hoe zelfverzekerd bent u om mee te denken aan bouwprojecten in de wijk?
Waarom?

- ☐ Heel zelfverzekerd
- ☐ Een beetje zelfverzekerd
- ☐ Niet zo zelfverzekerd
- ☐ Helemaal niet zelfverzekerd

De laatste vragen:

Vraag 14: Heeft u nog tips om participatie bij bouwprojecten in de wijk te verbeteren voor de bewoners?

_____

Vraag 15: Is er nog iets anders dat u wilt delen over ons gesprek?

Wilt u de resultaten van het onderzoek ontvangen, laat dan uw emailadres achter:

_____

Bedankt om deel te nemen!

TUDelft   Witteveen+Bos

Appendix 6: SMC form

Public participation in vulnerable neighbourhoods

Nogmaals bedankt voor uw waardevolle inzichten aan mijn afstudeeronderzoek. Als onderdeel van het waarborgen van de nauwkeurigheid en betrouwbaarheid van de resultaten, voer ik een proces uit dat Synthesized Member Checking (SMC) wordt genoemd. Dit houdt in dat ik een samenvatting met u deel van de thema's die uit ons interview naar voren zijn gekomen, samen met enkele representatieve citaten.

Het doel van dit rapport is om deze bevindingen met u te valideren. Uw inzichten zullen helpen bevestigen of de analyse een accurate weergave is van uw ervaringen en meningen en of er aanpassingen of aanvullingen nodig zijn. Er zal ruimte zijn om opmerkingen achter te laten, of u het eens of oneens bent of elementen wilt toevoegen.

Ik verzoek u vriendelijk de volgende samenvatting te bekijken en uw feedback te geven. Het zal wel in het Engels zijn, aangezien de scriptie ook in het Engels geschreven is.

1. Overview of participation practices

I found that the participation methods that are mostly used are either on the inform or consult level and barely in the involve, collaborate or empower level (See Figure 15).

The interviews revealed a high variety of participation methods that are used in practice. There is a preference for Inform and Consult over Involve and Collaborate methods. None of the practitioners mentioned methods in the level of Empower. This suggests that practitioners may prioritise informing and consulting with communities, potentially due to resource limitations or the nature of the projects.

In the level of informing, flyers and letters in residents' mailbox and different types of information evenings are most frequently used.

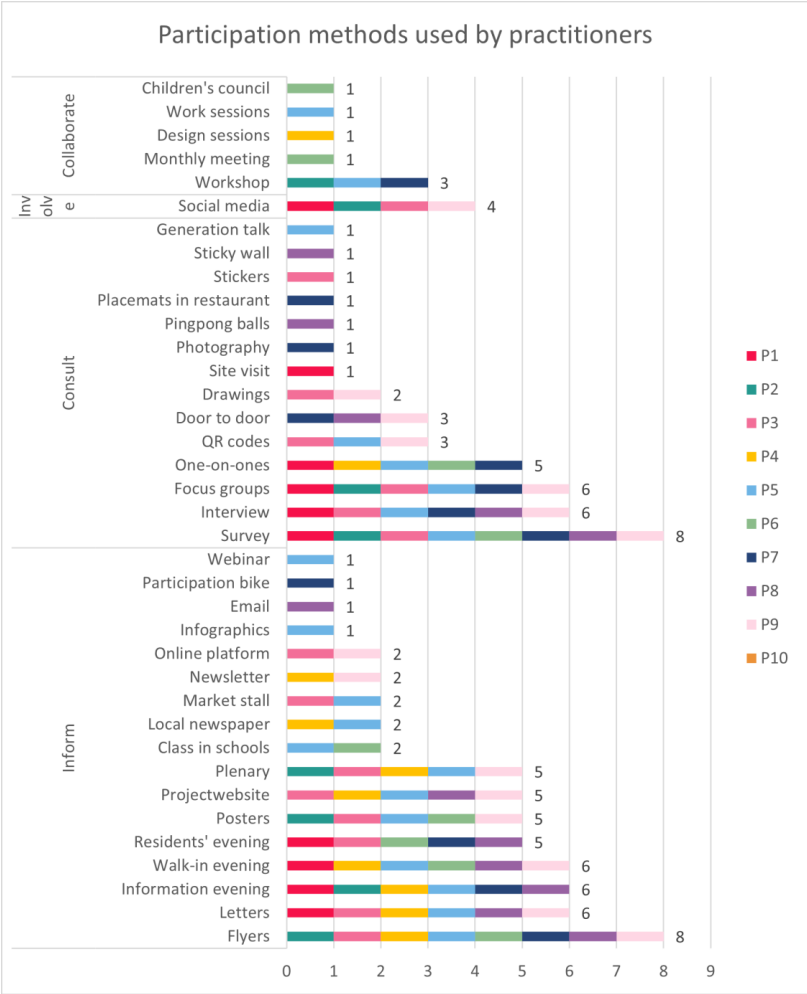| Synthesized member checking	Reply:
Does this overview of participation methods reflect your experience and thoughts?	
Would you like to change or clarify anything in this theme?	
Do you have anything to add that was not covered?	

Figure 28: Participation methods used by practitioners and their participation level, obtained from interviews

2. Strategies to organise participation in vulnerable neighbourhoods

Through the interviews, six themes emerged when talking about how to organise participation in vulnerable neighbourhoods: accessibility, communication, existing networks, human aspect, location, and rewards. An overview of these themes and their respective strategies and illustrative quotes can be found in the table below.

Strategy	Details	Quotes
Accessibility		
Simple language	Use B1 level communication and non-technical explanations.	"Also adjust language to B1 level so people understand what we are communicating." "What I very often do with colleagues is ask the test question of is it B1? And it's very funny how difficult it is for our colleagues to write and talk B1."
Translations	Tailor communication to fit the neighbourhood's demographics.	"So we try to provide information in the easiest possible language, in different languages as well." "For example, the Moroccan community. We speak there and we can leave simple messages that they can then translate to their target groups."
Visuals	Images and infographics can help convey complex information.	"A classic one, in your communication don't use too much text, use a lot of images, a lot of pictures, a lot

Strategy	Details	Quotes
		of infographics to convey the information and not in a lot of written texts."
Digital means	Implement digital tools for participation, with adequate support for elderly or less tech-savvy participants (e.g., helping them fill in surveys via tablets).	"Not everyone has a computer. But everyone does have a smartphone." "I like online platforms, such as In Beeld what we have, pieces of text, infographics via the internet. I am very internet-minded these days. Especially because children don't know any better. For the older ones, it's sometimes a bit trickier."
Creative and multiple forms of participation methods	Use a diverse range of creative methods to reach different groups.	"I think participation with vulnerable groups requires creativity, even more creativity." "That's a mix, that's the whole mix of means to achieve good coverage."
Timing of events	Schedule activities at times that are convenient for the neighbourhood. Also offer a range of meeting times across different days.	"Then we stand three days in a row, because we do seven residential neighbourhoods. If you can't do your neighbourhood on Tuesday, we'll be in the neighbourhood next door on Wednesday." "We always do things in the evening."
Communication		
Expectation management	Clearly communicate to citizens what aspects of the project they can influence and which aspects are non-negotiable. Manage expectations with both the community and clients to ensure alignment and avoid future conflicts.	"I also think good expectation management beforehand [is important], that you clearly indicate in advance what is and what is not possible, that you make the room for negotiation a bit clear in advance" "Always communicate clearly the policy principles, because those are actually the principles of the project. Sometimes there are just facts you can't escape"
Honest and open communication	Avoid overpromising or creating false expectations. Ensure that communication is straightforward and truthful to build trust.	"At least be clear about what you are participating in. So what is what they can do?" "You should always communicate openly, no matter how annoying it is."
Targeted communication	Only communicate the most relevant information in a clear and understandable way. Highlight key aspects such as financial implications, available support, and changes that might affect their daily lives. Also communicate the participation process.	"Keeping people informed, by the way, it's also very technical to think that's important, but it is, keeping people informed about the process."
Respecting and valuing input	Show that the community's ideas and suggestions are respected and valued, even if they cannot be implemented immediately.	"by taking such a question seriously and seeing if you can fit it in and if you can't, looking for another solution, is also good. Ultimately, by doing that, you take a question seriously and you can also answer it that way"
Existing networks		
Connect to local networks and associations	Build connections with existing networks and associations in the neighbourhood, such as community, cultural, and sports organizations. Utilise these networks to better reach diverse target groups, especially those that are harder to engage.	"I am not under the illusion that I can reach everyone, but I do think that there are many good organisations, many people, sometimes individuals, who do have access to these target groups." "Once you have that network and you know how to hold that network well, but also give it what that network needs, then you have gold in your hands."
Attach to local events and activities	Engage with citizens during community centre events or local festivals, where people naturally gather, to increase reach and engagement.	"We try to link up actually always with events that are already happening in the area."
Active citizens	Find and collaborate with active citizens or ambassadors in the neighbourhood who can help reach out to others, especially within vulnerable neighbourhoods.	"You look for the ambassadors. In every neighbourhood, no matter how vulnerable, there are always a few forerunners. You look for those and they have to help you reach out to the others."

Strategy	Details	Quotes
Being present	Maintain a consistent and visible presence in the neighbourhood to build recognition and trust.	"We were just there all afternoon. Anyone could just walk in."
Human aspect		
Address emotional needs	Recognize and address residents' broader concerns and emotional needs beyond the project itself.	"I once sat with someone who had just lost his wife. He just wanted to tell his story. But afterwards he was a very good supporter."
One-on-one conversations	Use one-on-one conversations instead of large public presentations to create a more personal and impactful interaction.	"You try to visit people one-on-one, home visits, instead of one of those residents' evenings. Then you can do more anyway, the atmosphere is a bit different of course."
Physical presence and personal connection	Be physically present in the neighbourhood to build trust and improve engagement. Add a personal touch to communication by including a photo or personal details in letters or posters.	"I think what's most important is to be a face of that physically as well. The communications consultant thought of putting my picture in the letter. It was an incredibly good move, because people came and they recognised me right away."
Understanding local culture	Learn about and respect the local culture to tailor participation approaches that fit the unique characteristics of the community.	"I've just done a tender for Volendam. Volendam is of course [...] really a village with its own identity. Then you speak a different language than when I do a residents' evening in Amsterdam with articulate Amsterdammers. Those are really two different worlds and I think we still have a lot to learn. You really have to understand who you're talking to."
Investing time in communities	Dedicate sufficient time to understanding the dynamics of the community, as a short project timeline may not allow for full integration.	"A project is relatively short of course. It may well take two years. But in the time of a neighbourhood, that is not long." "Personal contact is key. Although there are a lot of people, if you were living there yourself, you would also want to be approached individually. Accept that there are really a lot of people and that you might need to free up more capacity or have to free up more time for people going out."
Location		
Schools and playground	Connect with children and their parents at the same time in a familiar environment.	"We developed a lesson for the under-12 age groups for school. To talk about what is spatial planning, what is a vision and what do you want your village to look like."
Community centre	Community centres can be used to connect with locals, hang up posters, distribute flyers, and gain insights from people who run the centres.	"We made a conscious decision to use the community centre. Not only for the community centre itself. But also because it has to be within walking distance."
Retirement homes	Retirement homes are ideal for reaching the elderly population.	"There was also a retirement home, so we reached that group as well"
Cultural locations	Go to the mosque or other cultural places where people naturally gather every week.	"With that alliance, they also said: come to the mosque, come to prayer on a Friday afternoon then I will have 200 men for you and go and tell them."
Rewards		
Food and drinks	Offering food and drinks (e.g., through a coffee cart or soup afternoon) can make the environment more inviting and facilitate conversations about the project.	"What you notice is that people, especially in the neighbourhoods where we work, really like to get something to eat or drink. So we also have a coffee cart that we use to go into the neighbourhoods."
Monetary compensation or coupons	Offering money or local shop coupons as incentives can encourage participation, especially in communities that are usually less engaged. Can be combined with winning vouchers for filling in surveys.	"In a neighbourhood where we knew people didn't actually come at all, we simply put surveys through the letterbox and they could win five vouchers. Then suddenly we really saw a lot more people who participated."

Strategy	Details	Quotes
Support vulnerable groups	In general it could be good practice to leave a neighbourhood less vulnerable than it was.	"Make sure when you go into a neighbourhood like that with a project and start building something, the moment you go out, make sure you don't harm more than you have built up."

This is the complete overview of all strategies found to engage with citizens from vulnerable neighbourhoods. Please fill in the SMC form below:

Synthesized member checking	Reply:
Does this overview of strategies reflect your experience and thoughts?	
Would you like to change or clarify anything in this theme?	
Do you have anything to add that was not covered?	

3. Identification of challenges

Challenge	Details	Quotes
Diversity and inclusion		
Representing diversity	It is a challenge to properly represent the diversity of the community in participation processes.	"It is quite a challenge to really reflect the diversity in participation very well"
Only elderly	In some cases, it is only older people who participate, leading to a lack of representation of younger populations.	"People over 50 or very committed people usually attend. You don't see young people then, you don't see young parents then."
Involve everyone appropriately	It is difficult to effectively involve all the different groups within the community.	"The challenge is also how do you involve all your stakeholders?"
Reaching the vulnerable group	Reaching vulnerable groups, such as low-income or disabled people, can be challenging.	"The biggest barrier I experience is reaching the vulnerable group. That is the very hardest."
Not reaching/including everyone	It is often difficult to reach and involve everyone in the community in participation processes.	"That it doesn't always work out to include everyone"
Different needs	People have different needs and expectations, making it difficult to satisfy everyone.	"there are different needs and that's why we tried to accommodate that by organising different forms of meetings."
Always the same people	It is often the same people who participate again and again, which can lead to limited representation of the community.	"You always see the same people at such a walk-in meeting."
Communication and interactions		
Poor reactions/interactions	Negative reactions or interactions make participation processes harder to execute.	"On the other hand, sometimes I also get shouted at, 'What are you doing here? Get lost. Go and do something else. But that's part of the job."
Little response	Little response from the community can be frustrating and make it difficult to move forward.	"what we see is that also vulnerable groups, if there is something in their environment, react very little to it."
Creating a supported project	Creating a project that is supported by the whole community is often difficult.	"How do you tackle that so that the neighbourhood embraces it?"
Which moment to involve citizens?	Choosing the right moment to involve people is crucial but often difficult to determine.	"you're involving us too early, it's your expertise and we don't want to be involved until later. That is often a very tricky one, what is the right time?"

Challenge	Details	Quotes
No past follow-ups	Lack of follow-ups from past projects can reduce trust and engagement.	"We also hear from some residents that they have participated before with a housing association survey or with a survey by students, and then hear nothing back from them."
Active local resident leaves	When an active local resident leaves, it can be a great loss for the continuity and support of the project.	"The annoying thing is that then one of them leaves and suddenly your support base is gone. Because then you agreed something with that person, who was very actively involved, but who is moving. So who takes over?"
Over-participation	Too much participation can lead to participation fatigue and a decline in engagement.	"I think there is also a bit of a fine line between over-participation and under-participation."
Expectations and Understanding		
Different mindsets	Differences in ways of thinking and perspectives can lead to misunderstandings.	"We actually just don't really know how to participate with them. That's such a different mindset. As long as highly educated people come up with the participation, it's very difficult to question those vulnerable groups."
Creating wrong expectations	Unrealistic or wrong expectations can lead to disappointment and lack of commitment.	"I do see that the municipality finds it exciting to enter into dialogue with the surrounding area at such an early stage, because sometimes you give the area the idea that they can determine everything themselves."
Low expectations	Low expectations of outcomes can reduce motivation to participate.	"That actually the expectations are so low that anything that is put forward, is actually already no good unless it is executed exactly to all the wishes of the residents."
Negative biases	Prejudices can negatively affect willingness to participate.	
No need	Some people feel no need to participate in participatory processes.	"Some people also just really don't need it."
Usefulness and urge	It can be difficult to make the usefulness and need for participation clear to the community.	"With river dykes, people are quick to think, why does that have to be done? The water is never that high."
Language		
Everything in Dutch	If everything is in Dutch, this can be a barrier for non-Dutch speakers.	"The fact that you have to communicate everything in Dutch. In itself a clear position and an understandable one, but it does complicate things."
Language	Language barriers can make it difficult for some people to participate in participation processes.	"So that one I think is another tricky one. Language. Do you already take a language coach along on such a neighbourhood day? And which languages then?"
Not feeling they can participate	People may feel they cannot participate because of language or communication problems.	"My view is that vulnerable groups just don't feel they can participate enough."
Accessibility		
Unable to complete surveys	Some people have difficulty completing surveys, for example due to a lack of digital skills.	"if it didn't work out with that survey, I'll be there to help out with you on the iPad as well. Because we also see that the age there is also a bit higher, for example."
Access to internet	Limited access to the internet can be a barrier to online participation.	"But vulnerable groups don't always have access to the internet. Although we do see, if you look at the state in the Netherlands, basically everyone has a phone and internet these days."

Challenge	Details	Quotes
Too high-barrier	Barriers that are too high can discourage people from participating.	"I think whole groups of vulnerable residents don't even go there too, because they might find that too high a barrier."
Not everyone in sight	It is difficult to have everyone in the community in sight and involved.	"The challenge is also how do you involve all your stakeholders? And do you have everyone in sight?"
Not a priority	Participation is not a priority for some people, which can reduce their involvement.	"people have completely different things on their minds than a large area development or than a project that will come to their backyard because they are just busy with 'how do I get through the month?'"
No time	A lack of time can be a major barrier to participation.	"For example, people who don't have time to participate because they are indeed busy with just their everyday household, working, making sure food gets on the table,...."
Too broad meeting	Too broad meetings can lead to unfocused discussions and less effective participation. It can also scare people off to join the next time.	"by organising such a broad meeting, we also put a few people off a little bit at first because they said, that's way too broad, so I have no idea what I'm doing here, I don't want to come anymore either."
Slow systems	Slow or inefficient systems can hinder participation.	"The BouwApp can work very quickly, though. The council's system is quite slowing down at times."
Complexity of the neighbourhood	Complexity of the neighbourhood may make it difficult to organise effective participation.	"You hear all kinds of stories from, someone who has been stabbed to youth work that already doesn't want to come there anymore. So how do you go about making that a successful project."
Participation and engagement		
How to design participation	People sometimes do not know how to design the participation process.	"That we actually just don't really know how to participate with them."
Someone else responsible for participation	Responsibility for participation is sometimes placed on others, such as housing associations, making it hard to involve all citizens.	"Because when you talk about the most vulnerable group, they very often live in a housing corporation. And in a housing association house, the landlord is about participation."
Vocal citizens	Empowered residents can dominate participation, making less empowered residents feel excluded.	"But then you see that always the most empowered residents have the last word."
Not enough experience	Lack of experience can make it hard to know how to participate in vulnerable neighbourhoods.	"it's mostly an experience thing. Knowing who to find. Walking the right route."
Collecting too many opinions	Getting too many responses can be overwhelming to analyse.	"the danger is that you just pick up a lot, but with little substantiation and little context."

This is the complete overview of all challenges found to engage with citizens from vulnerable neighbourhoods. Please fill in the SMC form below:

Synthesized member checking	Reply:
Does this overview of challenges reflect your experience and thoughts?	
Would you like to change or clarify anything in this theme?	
Do you have anything to add that was not covered?	

Appendix 7: workshop slides

Witteveen+Bos

Programma

- Introductie inclusieve participatie   5 min
- Aan de slag met inclusieve participatie   15 min
- Plenaire terugkoppeling   10 min

2

Witteveen+Bos

Introductie

Toegankelijkheid
- Simpele taal
- Vertalingen
- Afbeeldingen en infographics
- Digitale participatie
- Creatievere methodes
- Gebruik een combinatie van methodes
- Timing van events
- Informele sfeer

Communicatie
- Verwachtingsmanagement
- Eerlijk en open communiceren met bewoner & opdrachtgever
- Vroeg genoeg aankondigen
- Proces communicatie
- Respecteer en waardeer input
- Enkel belangrijke zaken communiceren

Bestaande netwerken
- Connect met lokale netwerken en organisaties
- Sluit aan op bestaande buurtevenementen en projecten
- Contacteer sleutelfiguren
- Maak gebruik van bestaande communicatie kanalen

Menselijke maat
- Eén op één conversaties
- Wees fysiek aanwezig
- Maak persoonlijke connecties
- Achterhaal de identiteit van de buurt
- Investeer genoeg tijd in de buurt
- Wees aanspreekbaar
- Luister echt naar de bewoners

Locatie
- Sta in de wijk
- Ga naar buurt centrum
- School
- Speeltuin
- Bejaardentehuizen
- Moskee
- Zoek uit waar de buren elkaar ontmoeten

Beloningen
- Voorzie eten en drinken
- Compensatie via geld, bonnen of prijzen
- Laat hen minder kwetsbaar achter dan voorheen

3

Witteveen+Bos

Aan de slag met inclusieve particpatie

- 1 strategie per groep
- Vragen tijdens deze ronde:
  - "Hoe zou je je huidige aanpak verbeteren met betrekking tot [strategie X], en welke concrete stappen zou je daarbij nemen?"
  - "Wat zijn de grootste uitdagingen die je tegenkomt bij het implementeren van [strategie X], en hoe zou je deze uitdagingen kunnen overwinnen?"

4

Witteveen+Bos

Plenaire terugkoppeling

- Toegankelijkheid
- Communicatie
- Bestaande netwerken
- Menselijke maat
- Locatie
- Beloningen

5