

The Future of Citizen Participation in Public Decision-Making in the Netherlands



Milu Termaat
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The Future of Citizen Participation in Public Decision-Making in the Netherlands

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By

L.X.Y. (Milu) Termaat

Student number: 4720938

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Graduation Committee

Chairperson	: Prof. dr. C. P. van Beers, Section Economics of Technology and Innovation
First supervisor	: Dr. Mr. N. Mouter, Section Transport and Logistics
Advisor	: PhD-candidate J. Turkenburg at the University of Twente
External advisor	: S. Hollanders, Populytics



Preface

Before you lies the master's thesis "The Future of Citizen Participation in Public Decision-Making in the Netherlands." This master's thesis is the final deliverable in order to graduate from the master Complex Systems Engineering and Management at Delft Technical University, the Netherlands. I have been conducting this research and writing this thesis from February 2023 until August 2023.

During my exchange in Stockholm from August 2022 to January 2023, I was looking for an internship to combine writing my thesis with gaining experience with working at a company. I wanted my research to not only contribute to the scientific community, but to also have added value to a company. The projects that I was involved with during my master's degree were oriented toward existing situations and problems, though the actual impact was often hypothetical. Therefore I wanted my thesis to have practical implications besides the scientific ones.

I came in contact with Niek Mouter, who gave me lectures about project evaluation methods, including the PVE, during my bachelor's and my master's degree. During our first meeting about possibilities for a master's thesis in collaboration with Populytics, I was immediately enthusiastic about the topic and the internship. After my return to the Netherlands, I started my master's thesis as soon as possible. The first few weeks were somewhat of a struggle with trying to find a suitable scope since citizen participation is a very broad concept. Luckily I had supervisors and advisors with whom I could brainstorm about possibilities and who could give me advice. The research topic was relatively new to me, thus throughout the past few months I have been learning a lot about citizen participation. Besides, I was able to gain more experience with conducting interviews, which is very valuable to me. Overall, I experienced conducting my master's thesis as a process with ups and downs. Though in the end, I am proud of the end result and I hope you enjoy reading it!

Milu Termaat

Den Haag, August 2023

Summary

In the Netherlands, citizen participation is perceived to be an important element of the Dutch democracy. To design policies that are aligned with society, policymakers need to be aware of what is happening in society and what citizens value. Citizen participation is perceived to anticipate this need and the current lack of trust in the government and politics.

Current literature is mainly focused on exploring the added value of specific participatory methods or processes. Improvements that are identified are thus often based on a single case. In addition, scientific literature about future developments that impact citizen participation is scarce. Therefore this master's thesis aims at identifying future developments and improvements in citizen participation in public decision-making in the Netherlands based on the perspectives of Dutch practitioners. In this research, the emphasis is on the perspective of Dutch practitioners. They have a lot of experience since they have been involved in multiple participatory processes. Hence they are able to give more in-depth insights into the practice of citizen participation, including challenges and improvements. This master's thesis is conducted in collaboration with Populytics, a small start-up from TU Delft, which is involved in citizen participation. Their main service is the application of the Participatory Value Evaluation (PVE) in various contexts. The following main research question is addressed:

How can citizen participation be improved in the coming decade according to Dutch practitioners?

This research question is approached from two perspectives. The first perspective analyses the current practice of citizen participation in the Netherlands. Subsequently, challenges and suitable solution strategies are identified for the future. The other perspective explores future trends that are likely to impact citizen participation. Moreover, strategies are identified that anticipate these trends, either enhancing positive trends or limiting the negative impact on citizen participation. Both perspectives result in insights that can improve citizen participation in the future.

Hence the scientific relevance of this research is that it explores future trends that impact citizen participation. Besides challenges and improvements of citizen participation the current system are identified from the perspective of leading Dutch practitioners. Consequently, the contribution of this research is that it focuses on the entire system of citizen participation instead of a specific case of method. The societal relevance of this research is that the findings of this research offer practitioners guidelines to shape citizen participation in the future. Thereby taking into consideration current challenges and the impact of future trends. The connection to the master's degree can be found in the fact that a socio-technical system is analysed, being citizen participation in the Netherlands, and interventions are suggested to improve the system. The social component refers to the individuals who design citizen participation and who actually participate, and their interaction. The technical component entails technical elements to facilitate citizen participation.

The general approach to answering the research question is a case study. Citizen participation in public decision-making in the Netherlands is the case. Features of this case include the fact that the Netherlands is a representative democracy and that it is known for its striving for consensus (poldermodel). Another characteristic is that citizens are viewed to have a very strong opinion and can come across as direct in their communication. The case is analysed by exploring scientific literature and conducting semi-structured interviews with leading Dutch practitioners.

An exploration of scientific literature resulted in being able to narrow the scope of the research and clarify what citizen participation entails in this context. Besides, an overview of the objectives of citizen participation that are mentioned in the literature can be derived. There are a few key points that can be learned from the literature. Citizen participation refers to the involvement of citizens in the public decision-making process. The role of citizens may vary from solely being informed to given the opportunity to make the decision. In what way citizens are involved in the public decision-making process is related to the type of democracy in which it takes place. Several democratic frameworks can

be identified, among which the representative democracy, the direct democracy and the deliberative democracy. There are various methods to involve citizens in public decision-making with one of the distinguishing elements being small-scale and large-scale citizen participation. Possible participation methods include PVE, referendum, polls, surveys, participatory budgeting, citizens' assemblies and citizens' forums.

The exploration of literature regarding objectives resulted in three main categories of objectives, being normative, substantive and instrumental objectives. The normative category contains objectives related to legitimacy and collaboration between citizens and politicians. The substantive rationale includes objectives related to an exchange of knowledge and information, a contribution to designing public policies, and an improvement of the quality of public policies. Lastly, the instrumental category includes objectives related to increasing trust in the government, increasing acceptance of public policies and inclusivity.

The semi-structured interviews are conducted with thirteen leading Dutch practitioners to gain insights the current practice of citizen participation and future developments. Among the interviewees are policymakers, former politicians, researchers, authors and individuals that are involved in foundations engaged with citizen participation. During the interviews the following topics were generally discussed: objectives of citizen participation, positive aspects of citizen participation, challenges of citizen participation, improvements for citizen participation, future developments that might impact citizen participation, strategies to anticipate future trends and the PVE. These topics were used to draft structured summaries from the interview transcripts that were anonymous. These summaries had to be approved by the interviewees before included in this thesis. Twelve out of thirteen interviewees approved the summary. One interviewee did not respond to the request, thus the corresponding summary is not included.

Practitioners introduce various challenges, future trends, and improvements. Nonetheless, there are issues and matters addressed by multiple practitioners. The most important findings include that practitioners emphasise the substantive and normative objectives of citizen participation. Instrumental objectives are hardly mentioned. Mainly policymakers point out that support for the policies should not even be seen as an objective of citizen participation, while literature indicates that it could be a possible aim. Visionaries emphasise the importance of the normative objectives, though amongst them there are different perspectives on how citizen participation should be related to the democracy.

Furthermore, the combination of different participation methods is stressed. This topic can be related to the lack of inclusiveness in the current participatory system. Different methods appeal to different groups of citizens, thus a combination of methods could maximize the group of citizens that is targeted. Possible aspects that could differ per method are the extent to which digital tools are used and whether it is characterised as large-scale or small-scale method.

In addition, communication throughout the phases of the participatory process remains a challenge according to policymakers and visionaries. Policymakers should be open and honest in their communication towards citizens, especially regarding the scope of the participatory process and the role of citizens in the decision-making process.

The most frequently mentioned future trends include further digitalization and the shift towards more interactive policy-making. Digitalization offers new ways to involve citizens in the decision-making process, though it can also result in an increase of polarisation amongst citizens. Interactive policy-making refers to emerging trends like co-creation and citizens initiatives. Nevertheless, a contradicting trend that could arise is that citizens perceive policy-making to be a responsibility of the government. In such case, citizens assign less value to the involvement in the decision-making process.

Ultimately, the findings of this research can be used to answer the research question, and thus address how citizen participation can be improved in the future. In summary, Dutch practitioners perceive citizen

participation to be of added value for the decision-making process. Citizen participation can be improved by using different participation methods to involve different groups of citizens, improving communication towards citizens in order to prevent misaligning expectations and increase understanding of the process, learning how to deal with digitalization to prevent falling behind in competence compared to society, facilitating new methods of citizen participation to anticipate the changing preferences of citizens, being a reliable government who honours agreements, and having a fundamental discussion about the functioning of the democratic system in order to determine what role citizen participation has in the system.

Additionally, a general observation can be derived from this research. Practitioners have different perspectives on the role of citizen participation in the Dutch democracy. These differences are not likely to be resolved, rather it is important to reflect on the role of citizen participation for every participation process.

Even though the findings of this master's thesis are able to contribute to scientific literature regarding citizen participation, there are also limitations. One of the limitations is the generalizability of the research since it is scoped to citizen participation in public decision-making in the Netherlands. Besides, citizen participation is researched from the perspective of practitioners. Therefore, further research could be focused on the perspective of citizens and citizen participation in other contexts, such as different countries, democratic systems, or non-public decision-making processes.

Furthermore, there are limitations related to the methodology and the findings. The literature exploration and the interviews with practitioners could both be more extensive to increase validity. This refers respectively to reviewing more literature and interviewing more practitioners in future research. It should be noted that the impact of this limitation on the findings does not have to be significant. When additional literature and interview results substantially contradict the current findings, it is certainly a limitation. Otherwise, it can be regarded as a confirmation of the findings of this research. This relates to the concept of saturation. Besides, a limiting factor for validity is that the overview of future trends that impact citizen participation is incomplete. The findings mainly provide insights into future trends that emerge from current situations and to lesser extent into completely new trends that have yet to be conceptualized. Further research should therefore consider other methods to address this limitation.

In addition, recommendations can be made for practitioners. The findings of this research offer practitioners issues that need to be discussed and responded to in order to improve citizen participation. Recommendations include the suggestions to create awareness among policymakers about the usage and added value of citizen participation. Besides, the effectiveness of combinations of different participation methods should be explored.

Since this research is done in collaboration with Populytics, recommendations for Populytics include the clarification of the usage of different formats of the PVE in different contexts. For policymakers, it would be useful to understand when and how a PVE can be useful in the decision-making process, and how it complements the usage of other participation methods. An important implication of the findings for Populytics is that the PVE is often conducted with the argument that it increases support for policies, though the findings indicate that support should not be perceived as a goal, but rather as a beneficial side-effect.

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1. Introduction

The Dutch government has stated that it seeks to increase citizen participation in societal challenges as it is perceived to be important in a parliamentary democracy (Michels & de Graaf, 2010; Rijksoverheid, 2023). The functioning of such a system involves the election of representatives by the public on different organisational levels. Citizens expect their chosen representatives to represent their interests (Rijksoverheid, n.d.-b). To be able to do this, these representatives need to be aware of what the public considers important. A fundamental way to gain insights into these aspects is the notion of citizen participation. Furthermore, involving citizens in decision-making trajectories creates the opportunity for citizens to increase their understanding of different opinions regarding a certain topic. Being able to successfully include citizens' values and needs in the decision-making process could potentially result in more supported decisions (Michels & de Graaf, 2010).

Society is always changing, which includes shifts in the importance of values that the government should incorporate in its policies and institutions, such as the increasing emphasis on sustainability and the adaptation to the consequences of climate change (Cox & Béland, 2013). Though changes in interests and needs will not only happen in socially relevant issues but also in the way citizens want to participate in the decision-making process. Since the government is responsible for safeguarding that future policies and decisions reflect the interests of its citizens, it is important to have a participatory process that acquires relevant information and possibly achieves other objectives. Identifying innovative aspects and trends in this participatory process is just as important as identifying the actual opinions of the citizens.

Existing methods that enhance citizen participation address the needs from the governmental organisations, as well as the public. This is also experienced by the company Populytics, with whom this research is conducted with. Populytics is a startup (as a spin-off of the TU Delft) which offers to facilitate citizens consultations, often related to public decision-making. They aim at engaging a large, diverse group of citizens in the decision-making process, such that final decisions consider the values and concerns of the citizens that are affected by the policy. From the demand that Populytics experiences in terms of clients and the fact that thousands of citizens have already participated in their projects, it becomes clear that citizen participation is a relevant topic.

The next sub section of this chapter uses literature to identify a knowledge gap and formulate a research question. Subsequently the objectives and relevance of this research are discussed. This is followed by an overview of the general research approach. Thereafter sub-questions that structure the research are determined. Lastly, an outline will be given of the remainder of this master's thesis.

1.1 Knowledge gap and research question

A brief exploration of the existing literature on citizen participation is conducted, though it should be noted that only literature with a focus on developed countries is included. As this research will mainly focus on the Netherlands, literature about participation in developing countries is less relevant.

From a scientific point of view, it can be derived that extensive research has been done on citizen participation. Often research explores the usefulness of a participation method or trajectory for a specific case. For example, an elaborate case study in France by Gouache (2022) states that making participation (in the context of agenda-setting) a pleasurable experience for citizens and pledging to concrete output can contribute to the success of the process. Pellizzone et al. (2017) studied public engagement in innovations in the geothermal sector in Italy and concluded that there was a lack of trust in decision-makers and there was confusion regarding communication processes. They suggest that these insights can be applied in public engagement for renewable energies. Another example is a case study about co-creation in the context of a digital platform economy in Barcelona by Fuster Morell and Senabre Hidalgo (2022). This study concludes that including co-creation in the participatory process can result in aligning diverse perspectives on a topic.

As this research focuses on the Netherlands, it is relevant to explore what research has been conducted in relation to citizen participation in this context. For example, d'Hont and Slinger (2022) investigate citizens engagement in the context of coastal policy interventions in the Netherlands. From their theoretical framework and case studies, they derive the challenge of combining local and expert knowledge. Besides, Bouw et al. (2023) show the effectiveness of combining different tools in the decision-making process by testing their designed planning process in the context of heat planning. Itten and Mouter (2022) also derive possible advantages of combining different tools from a case study in a municipality in the province of Friesland. According to their research, one of the benefits of combining maxi- and mini-publics is that policymakers gain a better understanding of the position of the citizens regarding a certain topic.

An example of a participatory method that has been researched is the Participatory Value Evaluation (PVE). This method can be used to involve citizen and is the main method used by Populytics. Briefly explained, this method allows citizens to express their preferences for policies as if they were the decision-maker, given a constraining factor such as a monetary budget (Mouter, Koster, et al., 2021b, 2021a). After selecting the preferred policies, the citizens have the opportunity to clarify their choices and make suggestions. The development of digital technologies has facilitated the use of such a participation method (Hovik & Giannoumis, 2022). The usefulness of the PVE has been studied in different contexts in the Netherlands, sometimes in comparison to other methods for participation. These contexts include creating policies related to COVID-19 measures, healthcare, flood risk mitigation and the energy transition (Mouter, Hernandez, et al., 2021; Mouter, Shortall, et al., 2021; Mouter, et al., 2022; Mouter, Koster, et al., 2021b; Mulderij et al., 2021; Rotteveel et al., 2022). These (case) studies generally find that participation and the usage of PVE are of added value for the decision-making process. They state that the PVE is, amongst other things, useful to identify citizen preferences and to compare different packages of interventions. As is stated by Mouter, Shortall, et al. (2021), the PVE can be useful for a two-way information sharing between governments and citizens.

Besides there are papers that have a broader perspective, focussing on participation in general. In their literature review, Marzouki et al. (2017) identify several challenges and issues with the implementation of citizen participation processes. They create a theoretical framework with an emphasis on how to fulfil the objectives of citizen participation, without specifically targeting one objective. Glucker et al. (2013) conduct a literature review to identify and structure objectives of citizen participation in the context of environmental impact analysis. They argue that the objectives can be categorised according to underlying rationales, distinguishing normative, substantive and instrumental rationale. These categories are subsequently used by Uittenbroek et al. (2019), who link the objectives more explicitly to the design of public participation. Additionally, case studies are used to analyse the relation between design, objectives and outcome based on their conceptual framework.

Although these papers to some extent research the objectives of citizen participation, they are all based on existing literature or case studies in which participation played a role. Thus none are actually analysing the general system of citizen participation and how it could develop in the upcoming years. One paper that does give some thought to the future developments of citizen participation is written by Fung (2015). In this paper, after looking back on the developments in citizen participation, challenges and expectations regarding citizen participation are addressed. Among the challenges are the understanding of the value and importance of citizen participation, and the triviality of citizen participation. Moreover, the article expects coproduction of policies and its potential contribution to increase. Though these insights do not emerge based on practitioners, but existing literature.

Thus, based on this initial overview of the existing literature, it can be derived that it is not yet explored how citizen participation might develop and can be improved in the future, based on insights from practitioners. It is relevant to research this since it could identify a more general trend in citizen participation. The knowledge of such a general trend can be used to improve citizen participation. Practitioners are closely involved in citizen participation and likely to have experienced various

participatory processes and methods for citizen participation. Thus their knowledge about this topic could be different and just as relevant compared to existing literature. Hence the research direction will be analysed from the perspective of Dutch practitioners. The focus of this research will therefore be on the following research question:

How can citizen participation be improved in the coming decade according to Dutch practitioners?

In this research Dutch practitioners refer to individuals that are highly engaged in the topic of citizen participation. In this case, this includes mainly experts and policymakers that are involved with the participatory process. The insights and knowledge gained can be used to establish how citizens participation can be improved in order to deal with challenges and anticipate future developments.

1.2 Research objectives and relevance

1.2.1 Research objectives

Ultimately, this research explores citizen participation in a broader context instead of a particular case, as done by various scientists. The main objective is then to identify improvements for the participatory process in the Netherlands. This main objective can be divided into two subobjectives. On the one hand, this research aims to analyse the current participatory process for public decision-making and explore improvements for the future. On the other hand, future trends that are likely to impact citizen participation are explored and used to identify improvements to anticipate this. Insights in these trends are relevant as they can be used to explore ways to further develop citizens such that it aligns with preferences of policymakers and citizens.

1.2.2 Societal relevance

From this brief introduction of the context and challenge, it can be derived that it is important for policymakers to know what is happening in the society and what preferences citizens have regarding policies. Citizen participation is used to gain these insights, though it is vital that the way in which participation is designed, results in the right insights. Besides, citizen participation is used in improving the relation between citizens and government (Rijksoverheid, n.d.-a). Giving the relatively low level of trust in Dutch politics and the Dutch House of Representatives, it is important to invest in this relation since it is fundamental for the Dutch democracy (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, n.d.). Identifying challenges and possible solutions related to citizen participation can ultimately result in better insights and better policies. Thus the societal relevance can be found in the fact that this research might contribute to improving citizen participation and the Dutch democratic system.

1.2.3 Scientific relevance

The scientific relevance of this research can be found in the fact that this research analyses the entire system of citizen participation from the viewpoint of leading Dutch practitioners. To this moment, scientific literature has mainly been focused on specific cases or methods as previously argued when explaining the knowledge gap that this research addresses. Until now, insights from Dutch practitioners are not included substantially. Their perspective is relevant for science, since it entails all their experiences with various methods and participation trajectories. The resulting perception of citizen participation can therefore be regarded as well-founded in the current practice of citizen participation.

Besides this research contributes to the existing scientific literature regarding citizen participation by exploring future trends that affect citizen participation, which has not been done in other scientific literature. Based on these future developments improvements can be identified based, thereby adding to the literature about improvements for citizen participation.

Moreover, this research offers insights into the importance of objectives of citizen participation in practice. A comparison is made between objectives of citizen participation that are mentioned in literature and by Dutch practitioners.

1.2.4 Educational relevance

Identifying interventions that anticipate current challenges and future developments in citizen participation relates to the master ‘Complex Systems Engineering and Management’ as there is an institutional setting that consists of the current process rules and regulations that determine the extent to which citizens need to be consulted in order to make an informed and supported decision. The specific system relevant to this research is to the overarching system for citizen participation in public decision-making. Considering the characteristics of a socio-technical system, given by Baxter and Sommerville (2011), it can be derived that relevant aspects of this socio-technical system related to a societal side including the citizens that participate in the decision-making process and policymakers that often bear the responsibility of the decision-making process. The technical side refers to the technical elements that facilitate the citizen participation; this could well be software (like the specific software for the PVE) or other physical elements (Bauer & Herder, 2009). Additionally, organisations can consult citizens with regard to the configuration of a technical system. For example, a PVE has been used in the context of the energy transition and infrastructure; thus involving citizens in design choices and value trade-offs related to technical systems (Mouter, Shortall, et al., 2021; Mouter, Koster, et al., 2021b). Interventions will take place within this system, considering both the social and the technical side. Apart from the actual intervention(s), it is important to take into account how the intervention can be implemented in the socio-technical system.

1.3 Research approach

The research gap is the lack of knowledge about future trends, challenges and possible ways to anticipate these trends and challenges based on the perspectives of leading Dutch practitioners. Answering the main and sub-questions requires a qualitative research approach. To be more specific, a case study approach would be a suitable approach with the case being the way citizen participation is organized in the Netherlands. Since the objective is to identify improvements that intervene in the current system, there is also a design element to this research. A more extensive explanation of the selection of this research approach and method is provided in 2. Methodology 2.

1.4 Sub-questions

The previous section identified the overarching research approach. This section continues with deriving sub-questions that contribute to answering the main research question. Being able to answer these questions contributes to the objective and subobjectives formulated in section 1.2.1.

1. How can citizen participation be defined for his research?

Citizen participation is a broad concept that is used in various contexts. Therefore it is necessary to further explore the concept of citizen participation, define this concept as used in this context and narrow the scope of the research. Having a clear understanding of the concept is helpful in interpreting the results and identifying the relevance of the research.

2. What are the objectives for which a participatory process is used?

The second sub-question requires understanding of different objectives of a participatory process. Before obtaining insights from Dutch practitioners on citizen participation and possible improvements, it is important to have an overview of common objectives of citizen participation. Subsequently, it is possible to analyse how citizen participation should be improved in order to achieve the objectives.

3. What are the most important goals of citizen participation and to what extent are they achieved according to Dutch practitioners?

The third sub-question contributes to understanding the objectives of citizen participation in practice. Besides, it gives insights into the relative importance of certain objectives and the extent to which they are achieved. Having this knowledge allows for identifying improvements to the participatory process such that the process aligns with the goals.

4. What are current challenges of citizen participation and how to deal with those challenges according to Dutch practitioners?

This sub-question is necessary to answer the main research question as it investigates elements that can be improved in the current participatory process. In order to be able to actually improve citizen participation, it is relevant to gain insights into possibly strategies that deal with the challenges.

5. What are the implications of future developments for citizen participation according to Dutch practitioners?

Since it is likely that the current system for citizen participation will change over time, it is also relevant to take into account possible future development that impact citizen participation. Having this understanding contributes to answering the main research question since this knowledge can be used to anticipate developments. Besides, such development can be enhanced and might be beneficial for citizen participation.

1.5 Research outline

The remaining report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 addresses the methodology and the research methods used to obtain the appropriate data for answering the main research question and its drafted sub-questions. Subsequently, chapter 3 contains a literature review aimed at defining the concept of citizen participation and narrowing the scope of the research. Thereafter, chapter 4 provides a literature review of the objectives of citizen participation. In chapter 5, the results are presented that follow from the interviews. Chapter 6 contains a discussion, limitations and recommendations for further research. Lastly, chapter 7 presents the conclusion of this research, including answers to the main research question and the sub-questions, and recommendations for practitioners.

2. Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology will be presented that is used to acquire relevant data to answer the main and sub-research question. Firstly, the overarching approach used in this thesis is explained. Subsequently, the main methods for this research are presented and explained, being an exploration of scientific literature and semi-structured interviews.

2.1 General approach

From the initial exploration of literature regarding citizen participation, it can be derived that the research gap is the lack of knowledge regarding challenges and future developments in citizen participation in general. To be more specific, this research direction has not yet been explored from the perspective of Dutch practitioners and their knowledge regarding participatory processes. Insights in these trends are relevant as they can be used to explore ways to further develop citizen participation.

When selecting the appropriate approach for this research, it becomes evident that some approaches do not fit this research. A quantitative approach does not align with the research objectives because the focus is not on understanding a relationship between two concepts based on theory. An exploratory approach implies a lack of theory, which does not hold for this context. There are plenty of theoretical notions related to citizen participation that can be the foundation for this research and the resulting conclusions. Moreover, the modelling approach is not used for this research. The modelling approach is about understanding how a socio-technical system functions, which is not the emphasis of this research. Grounded theory could have been a suitable approach since acquiring data is an important element. Nonetheless, grounded theory presupposes that data is used for theory building, which does not align with the purpose of this research (Meyer, 2001; Mfinanga et al., 2019).

For this qualitative research, a case study approach is ought suitable as this research is about investigating a complex phenomenon in its real-life context (Harrison et al., 2017). Instead of trying to control the environment around the element of interest (like with an experimental design), the emphasis is on studying the element in its natural environment (Crowe et al., 2011). The case considered is citizen participation in policy-making in the Netherlands. Real-life information is used to explore the importance of different objectives of citizen participation, future trends in citizen participation and more concrete improvements to anticipate these trends. In addition, elements of this research relate more to a design approach which is focused on the degree of functioning of the system itself. Design science states that an object is designed to solve the research problem. Relating this concept to this research implies that identifying improvements that might be integrated into the participatory process could be perceived to match a design approach (Peffer et al., 2007).

Thus a case study approach, complemented with parts of a design approach, is applied for this research. An advantage of this approach is that takes into account the real-life context of the system, thus not only focusing on theory and theoretical presumptions. The downside of this approach is that the extent to which conclusions can be generalised is limited (Crowe et al., 2011; Meyer, 2001; Mfinanga et al., 2019). Flyvbjerg (2006) mentions the limited sample size to be a disadvantage, compared to the large sample used in for example questionnaires.

Based on the Stake's (1995) classification into three main types of case studies (intrinsic, instrumental and collective), this research might best be categorised as intrinsic. This type of research typically puts emphasis the specific context in which the concept is investigated. As for this research, the case is citizen participation in the Netherlands, thus focussing only on the Netherlands. Though, it could also be argued that this research is more fitting to the instrumental case study approach since citizen participation in the Netherlands is analysed to derive improvements of citizen participation in general (Crowe et al., 2011).

The identified sub-questions that contribute to answering the main research question are presented below in Table 1. Besides, this table gives an overview of the corresponding research method for each sub-question.

Table 1: Overview of sub-questions and research methods

	Sub-question	Method
1	How can citizen participation be defined for this research?	Literature exploration
2	What are the objectives for which a participatory process is used?	Literature exploration
3	What are the most important goals of citizen participation and to what extent are they achieved according to Dutch practitioners?	Semi-structured interviews
4	What are current challenges of citizen participation and how to deal with those challenges according to Dutch practitioners?	Semi-structured interviews
5	What are the implications of future developments for citizen participation according to Dutch practitioners?	Semi-structured interviews

The first sub-question is mainly focused on giving theoretical background to this research by clarifying what certain concepts entail based on what is already known in scientific literature. It positions this research within the existing theory and context. For the second sub-question an overview is needed of the objectives that are frequently identified in research. Thus, as well as for the first sub-question an exploration of the existing scientific literature is done. The three remaining sub-questions require data that reflect the experiences of Dutch practitioners. Semi-structured interviews allow for an in-depth conversation and are suitable for gaining the relevant insights for answering the sub-questions and eventually the main research question. In the next sub sections of this chapter, the use of these methods will be substantiated. Besides, it is explained in more detail how the research is conducted.

2.2 Exploration of the literature

Literature research is used for several purposes in this research. The aim of the first sub-question is to define a concept and position the research within the literature. Thus the appropriate research method for this sub-question is an exploration of scientific literature with the purpose of establishing the context of and understanding citizen participation (Randolph, 2009; Snyder, 2019). The second sub-question uses literature to give an overview of objectives of citizen participation. Snyder (2019) state that a literature review can be used to provide an overview of a topic, in this case the objectives of citizen participation.

Relevant scientific papers were identified using the databases Scopus and Google Scholar. The exact search strings that were used to retrieve literature for the various sub-questions are presented in Appendix A: Search strings literature research. After having an initial overview of relevant literature, snowballing was used to identify other relevant papers, based on the ones that were already found through the search strings. Additional relevant papers were obtained via a supervisor and advisors as a result of meaningful meetings. Considering that this research is narrowed down to citizen participation in the Netherlands, only literature that focuses on developed countries is included. Since citizen participation has been a topic of interests for over decades, with Arnstein publishing her framework “*ladder of participation*” already in 1969, a restriction on publication year is not set to avoid leaving out papers that are relevant. Another search criteria was that the papers were published in English or Dutch.

2.3 Case study

2.3.1 Case study scope

This master’s thesis focuses on citizen participation in the Netherlands. In general the Netherlands is regarded to have a western culture and democracy. The Dutch democracy can be characterised as a representative democracy with a selected parliament representing the Dutch population (Rijksoverheid,

n.d.-c). Dutch politics is known for striving for consensus between actors in its decision-making process, which is characterised by the well-known *Poldermodel*. In general, Dutch citizens have been relatively active as volunteers, which reflects their interest into social engagement (Dekker, 2019). Besides, Aerts (2010) indicates that the Netherlands has a history in which relatively a large part of the population has been a member of voluntary associations. Though with the end of the pillarization in the Netherlands in the 1960s, participation increased from then onwards (Michels, 2006). According to Dekker (2019), the emphasis of policymakers and citizens shifted from volunteering to citizen participation. The concept of volunteering gained a different interpretation, referring to the type of volunteering for sport clubs and temporary tasks such as doing the dishes. Citizen participation encompasses types of participation where citizens organise something themselves and where citizens exert influence on public policies. The Netherlands Institute for Social Research investigated how Dutch people are perceived by foreigners (Kooiker & Feijten, 2019). They find that Dutch people have a strong opinion compared to Belgian citizens. Besides, according to expats, one of the main characteristics of Dutch citizens is their straightforwardness in interactions.

2.3.2 Case study interviews

To answer sub-questions 3, 4 and 5, and present both scientific and societal relevant insights into the future of citizen participation, relevant data is required. There are various methods that can be used to gain the right insights. As stated before interviews offer the possibility to gain first-hand information from people that are closely involved with a specific topic, such as participatory processes related to public decision-making. Since this research studies citizen participation from the perspective of practitioners, the target group consists of Dutch practitioners.

Interviews are regarded as a means to collect data for a case study research (Harrison et al., 2017; Marginson, 2004). Conducting interviews is a well suited method to gain detailed and relevant information from participants within the target group. Compared to, for example, questionnaires that also extract information from a target group, the two-way communication between interviewer and interviewee is an advantage (Jones et al., 2008). This interaction results in a better understanding of the subject and thus a better quality of the answers. However, a limitation of conducting interviews is the fact that it is relatively time consuming and that the number of participants is lower compared to a survey (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

Another possible method to gain the knowledge to answer the main and sub research questions is to conduct focus groups. This method involves gathering a selective group of individuals to have a discussion about a certain topic. Rabiee (2004) points out that the social discussion that arises can result in insights that are more useful than those obtained from interviews. Various researchers point out that having a relatively homogeneous group participating in a focus group is preferable (Nyumba et al., 2018; Rabiee, 2004). Some even recommend including individuals that do not know each other to have an open discussion without previous interactions influencing the results. Nevertheless, others have an opposite opinion, stating that individuals that already know each other can result in a challenging conversation (Rabiee, 2004). In addition, Wilkinson (1998) indicates that the use of focus groups is less appropriate if the research aims at comparing the perspective of various individuals. Even though a focus group could result in insights comparable to those from individual interviews, there are three main arguments why this method is not used for this research. Firstly, it is unlikely to get all individuals together at the same time at the same place. The target group consists of Dutch practitioners, working for the government or having another strong connection to citizen participation. They have a tight schedule and might have to change plans last minute due to other obligations, which makes it almost impossible to organise a joint meeting. Secondly, for answering the main and sub research questions, it is relevant to gain insights into different perspectives. This implies that the group of individuals is not homogeneous. The differences can become an obstacle to having a meaningful discussion. Lastly, each individual's work relates to citizen participation, thus it is very likely that individuals know each other to some extent. Literature points out that this does not have to be a problem, though given the possibly

large differences in opinions, it might affect the discussion negatively. Therefore, focus groups are not appropriate for this research and interviews are conducted.

Semi-structured interviews seem most suitable since this allows for follow-up questions based on the interviewee's answer (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Jamshed, 2014). This allows the exploration of a topic more in-depth by having the flexibility to deviate from the prepared questions compared to a fully structured interview which has a strict format which cannot be deviated from. Unstructured interviews result in inconsistencies and variability in the outcomes of the interviews (Segal et al., 2006). Since this makes it hard to compare interviews and answer the main and sub research questions, this type of interview is not conducted.

Since citizen participation is researched from the perspective of practitioners; policymakers, academic researchers and visionaries are the target group for interviews. Based on their knowledgeable experience, they are likely to be able to envision what developments will impact citizen participation in the future.

2.3.3 Selection of interviewees

There are two perspectives that are used to investigate the future of citizen participation. One perspective uses the starting point of the current situation, including its challenges and solution strategies. The other perspective emphasises future trends that might impact citizen participation in a positive or negative way.

Thus, to answer the main research question from the first-mentioned perspective, knowledge is needed from people that are closely involved with current citizen participation trajectories. As this research is focused on citizen participation for public policy making, it is evident that people working for governmental organisations, such as ministries, with specific knowledge in citizen participation have relevant insights. Therefore the target group for the interviews contains policymakers. The second perspective requires insights from people that are able to envision the future and the purpose of citizen participation within the society. These interviewees should also have a strong affinity for citizen participation, though their level of involvement with actual citizen participation trajectories is less important. Instead it is important that practitioners are also able to look beyond the current practice and visualise future developments. As such, the target group should also contain visionaries and individuals with an academic background in citizen participation.

It should be noted that in selecting relevant interviewees, it is important to take into account the background of interviewees to create a diverse spectrum of perspectives on the topic. Some variety in interviewees is needed to have a range of opinions and perspectives on citizen participation. This could include the governmental organisations where the policymakers are employed. In the Netherlands, there are some supporting organisations that are not strictly governmental, but provide the government with advice. These organisations are also involved in citizen participation and might have a different view on the topic (for example Rijkswaterstaat and Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving).

Based on the target group, practitioners that are likely to have a relevant perspective on citizen participation are selected and contacted. There were three steps in identifying and recruiting relevant individuals for the interviews. The first step included identifying individuals who have been present in the media regarding citizen participation. These individuals could have published books or columns that show their involvement. Thereafter, the supervisors and advisors of this master's thesis were consulted. The last step is that interviewees were asked whether there were other (relevant) individuals that were relevant to interview. These individuals were contacted as well to ask if they would like to participate on this research.

2.3.4 Data collection

Various relevant individuals were contacted with different functions and backgrounds. Among them are policymakers working at Dutch ministries, individuals that work at other government institutions,

former politicians and individuals involved in foundations devoted to citizen participation. Several have a background in academia and have published papers or other reports. Some have written books about citizen participation. The aforementioned recruitment strategy resulted in thirteen conducted interviews. All interviewees are characterised as either a policymaker, a visionary or an academic researcher, as shown in Table 2. Policymakers include individuals that are highly involved with giving advice regarding public policy making.

Table 2: Characteristics of interviewees (total number of interviews is 13)

Characteristics	Number of interviewees
Policymakers	5
Visionaries	5
Academic researcher	3

On average, the interviews lasted an hour and were conducted via Microsoft Teams or on a physical location. Besides, sometimes a third person, a supervisor from the Populytics, attended the interviews. For one of the thirteen interviews, the transcript is used from another interview, with both permission from the interviewee and the interviewer. Another one of the interviewees was not able to schedule an interview, thus (s)he referred to his/her book in which all his/her knowledge and vision on citizen participation was bundled.

The questions that were guiding the semi-structured interview are included in Appendix B: Interview questions. Since it is a semi-structured interview, the content of the interviews differed, depending on one's background and expertise. Though in general four topics were discussed, being the objectives of citizen participation, challenges in citizen participation, future developments that might impact citizen participation and possible improvements that anticipate the challenges and developments. Given the collaboration with Populytics, another topic that was sometimes discussed was the PVE.

2.3.5 Data analysis

The interview data is needed to provide insights into the importance of the objectives, the challenges, the future trends and possible solution strategies of citizen participation. Therefore the interview data, consisting of the transcripts of the interviews, is analysed. Firstly, for every interview an anonymous summary was drafted, which was largely structured according to the aforementioned interview topics. The reason for anonymity is that interviewees could be critical towards citizen participation and by anonymising the summaries, results could not be traced back to a specific person. This is important since some of the interviewees have a public function for which critical remarks would be inconvenient and perhaps they would be more open in their answers knowing they are anonymised. It should be noted that these summaries were not coded based on main codes and sub codes. Since all summaries are structured similarly by the researcher, they are already partially an interpretation of the interview and the perspective of the interviewee. Coding these summaries would imply drafting a second interpretation of the interview. It is doubtful whether this would lead to more meaningful results. Therefore only the structured summaries are used as results. These summaries were sent to the interviewees, who had to officially approve them before they could be included as results. Appendix D: Anonymous summaries contains twelve summaries that have been approved for usage. One interviewee has not responded to the request of approval and therefore has not been included in the appendix. Thus this individual will not be quoted.

2.3.6 Data management and ethics

On a practical note, it is relevant to mention that the interviewees signed an informed consent, which can be found in Appendix C: Informed consent form. Within this form, it states that the interviews will be recorded and automatically transcribed using Microsoft Teams. Subsequently, a summary is made from the recordings, transcripts and notes that the interviewer has made during the interview. This summary will be anonymously and, after approval of the interviewee, be used for this research. The recordings and transcript will not be used directly and stored in the OneDrive of the TU Delft. Only the researcher and a supervisor have access to these files.

3. Defining citizen participation

This chapter aims to define citizen participation for this research and therefore contributes to answering the first sub-question ‘*How can citizen participation be defined for this research?*’. It is relevant to remark that this research focuses on citizen participation as part of the policy-making process, thus only looking at public decision-making processes. Scientific literature is consulted with a focus on relevant theories and frameworks that are related to the concept of citizen participation. This ultimately leads to an understanding of the positioning of this research within the concept of citizen participation. Firstly this chapter positions the research in existing literature regarding the transition of a system. Thereafter the concept of citizen participation is explored. Subsequently, different democratic frameworks and their connection to citizen participation are covered. Next, different ways in which citizens can be involved in the decision-making process are briefly explained. Lastly, some concluding remarks are presented.

3.1 Positioning of the research

The objective of this research is to explore citizen participation in public policy making in a broader context instead of a particular participation trajectory, as has already been done by various scientists. Two perspectives to analyse citizen participation and identify improvements, are previously introduced. One of the perspectives explores future trends and strategies to anticipate those, while the other analyses the current system to identify challenges and improvements. The possible improvements that this research aims to identify could imply a transition in the system of citizen participation.

There are various frameworks that could be used to analyse the development of innovations and the transition of systems, such as Dahmen’s Development blocks. His framework suggests that a series of forces results in transformation, this transformation creates an imbalance which pressures the current system to adjust (Dahmén, 1988; Garau, 2012). Perhaps some tensions in the current system include the changing needs of the citizens regarding participation, the emergence of new participation methods and the varying importance of societal topics.

In this context, one of the ways to explain the perspective of this research is by using the multi-level perspective (MLP) as introduced by Geels. This MLP framework is widely adopted and used to analyse innovative transitions in a socio-technical system (Geels, 2002). This framework can be used to distinguish elements that can be influenced by the system from trends that cannot be influenced. It is relevant to have such a distinction as it creates awareness and knowledge about what course of action can be taken. The framework is used to create understanding about what can be influenced and what cannot, from the perspective of Dutch practitioners.

Systems that are analysed using this framework include (renewable) energy systems, transportation systems and digital systems (Becker et al., 2022; Dannenberg et al., 2020; Di Lucia & Ericsson, 2014; Geels et al., 2016; van Bree et al., 2010; Verbong & Geels, 2010). One of the distinctive features of this framework is that, contrary to Dahmen’s development blocks, it distinguished different (interacting) levels on which developments take place over time (Geels, 2012). Briefly explained, a systems transition is viewed as an interactive process on three levels: niches, socio-technical regime, and landscape. The socio-technical regime represents a stable alignment of various elements related to technology and social elements like regulations and user patterns (Geels, 2012). Transitions in the regime result from interaction and co-evaluation of the three levels (Geels, 2010). Shifts in the landscape represent a change in the external factors which puts pressure on the regime. Combined with tension between the various dimensions of the socio-technical regime, this can result in an opportunity for an innovation (created at the niche level) to be integrated into the regime incrementally. This induces a reconfiguration of the regime over time (Geels, 2002).

Applying this framework on citizen participation, this research will try to gain insights into the developments on landscape level and challenges on regime level. In addition, improvements and other strategies are identified in dealing with both the developments and the challenges. This research will

include a more general perspective by not focusing on a participation trajectory but instead identifying general trends and developments regarding citizen participation.

3.2 What is citizen participation?

Regarding the positioning of this research within the concept of citizen participation, it is relevant to point out that citizen participation has been a topic of interests for scientists for quite a while. Nevertheless, literature does not identify one interpretation of the concept. Research by Rosener (1978) argues that citizen participation has a different meaning to different citizens; for some it refers to sharing the decision power, while for other it only includes the expression of their opinion.

Baum (2001) indicates that citizen participation refers to the involvement of citizens in public decision making. Other authors have similar definitions, though all have in common that the concept implies citizens taking part in the process of designing and implementing public policies (Boudjelida & Mellouli, 2016; Huitema et al., 2010; Van Eijk, 2014). Michels (2011) adds to the interpretation of citizen participation by identifying five possible ways in which citizen participation influences the democracy. These include the influence of citizens in decision-making, the inclusion of citizens in the policy process, civic skills and virtues, deliberation, and the legitimacy of the decisions.

Within the domain of citizen participation, literature also refers to concepts like public deliberation and public engagement. These concepts are sometimes used interchangeably of each other, while other scientific articles indicate (slight) differences in their definition. For this research it is relevant to point out the (subtle) difference between concepts and arrive at one concept that is used for citizen participation in this research.

Firstly the difference between citizen engagement and participation is addressed. Various studies use the concepts engagement and participation as substitutes of each other. Though when the meaning of the concepts are studied more in depth, it becomes apparent that there is a difference. In general, literature suggests that engagement is more than participation (Blok et al., 2023; Bouma et al., 2023; Hoffman et al., 2005). Engagement is an overarching concept that encompasses participation, but also concepts like consultation (Lukensmeyer & Hasselblad Torres, 2006; Ross et al., 2016). Participatory trajectories can be designed in order to engage the citizens (Smith, 2009). Olphert and Damodaran conceptualise engagement as “*active participation of citizens, in partnership, in decision and policy making processes*” (2007, pp. 494).

The other concept that is often mentioned in relation to participation, is deliberation. Deliberation refers to a discussion and an exchange of arguments among individuals, possibly resulting in a change of preferences of the citizens involved (A. Michels, 2011). Besides, a deliberative discussion is used to seek and recommend a collective solution to policymakers (Blacksher et al., 2012; Farrell et al., 2020; Fung, 2006; Lukensmeyer & Hasselblad Torres, 2006). When comparing participation with deliberation, literature suggests that participation is a broader concept than deliberation, which is regarded as a feature of or a category within participation (Abelson et al., 2003; Delli Carpini et al., 2004).

Understanding the differences between citizen participation, engagement and deliberation makes it is possible to specify that citizen participation in the context of this research refers to the involvement of citizens in public decision-making. Having narrowed down the interpretation of citizen participation, it can be derived that the concept could result in various, very different participatory processes, which can all be typified as citizen participation. Thus the concept itself does not provide the suggestion of how participation is structured or what results are expected in practice (Bryson et al., 1979). In addition, the actual role of citizens might differ from its theoretical ideal. There are numerous frameworks to give some structure to the different types of citizen participation, including Arnstein’s (1969) “*Ladder of participation*” (Schrögel & Kolleck, 2018). This framework reflects the extent to which citizens have the power to determine the outcome of the decision-making process. Within this framework, Arnstein distinguishes that participation can either be regarded as “*tokenisms*” or “*citizen power*”. The former

concept implies that citizens' perceptions and opinions are indeed heard, but there is no formal obligation to include them in the decision-making process. The latter one allows citizens to actively be involved in decision-making. Arnstein includes a third category called "*nonparticipation*", which refers to practices that seem like participation but in practice do not enable people to participate. Instead powerholders use those opportunities to indirectly impose their perspective. In her paper, Arnstein also highlights the fact that the types of (non)participation she identified might not be easy to distinguish in reality and that there might be various other types as well on the intersection of the distinguished types.

This research takes on the perspective of the policymakers, putting a slight emphasis on processes in which policymakers have the final say in the outcome of the decision-making process. As stated before, there are various ways to shape citizen participation. Therefore it is likely that different ways to organise citizen participation enhance different types of citizen participation. For example, the PVE method is mainly a combination of informing and consulting, where every citizens is enabled to participate, but the outcome does not hold formal power in the decision-making process.

The usage of spectrums to classify citizen participation has increased since Arnstein first published her framework. This mainly resulted in various adjustments being made to the original ladder to include developments in society, new insights and arising complexities. Garau (2012) gives an overview of developments and adjustments of Arnstein's typology, including adjustments by Wiedemann and Femersb (1993) and Wilcox (1994). Since that paper describes the adjustment and evolvement of Arnstein's original theory, not all adjustments will be included in this background section. A development that is relevant to mention is the impact of new technologies on the concept of participation. Emerging technologies have had influence on the way individuals communicate and therefore on the way citizens participate. Besides, Kingston (2002) adjusts the framework to digital developments, distinguishing two main categories: one-way communication (informing citizens) and two-way communication in which citizens can give feedback. Moreover, the International Association for Public Participation (2018) published an adaptation that shows an increasing impact on the final decision with every distinguished category; respectively the categories are inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower.

Another framework related to citizen participation is established by Fung (2006) and is referred to as the democracy cube. Instead of visualising the degree of citizen participation as a one-dimensional ladder Fung introduces three dimensions that represent the space in which participatory mechanisms can be positioned. The first dimension is "*participant selection*" and ranges from exclusivity ("expert administrators") to inclusivity (involving the public as a result of the issue being diffused through society). The second dimension is "*communication and decision*" which can range from listening to a public meeting or community event to officials with technical expertise making decisions. The third dimension is "*authority and power*" which is about the impact of the participation. This dimension ranges from participants only having personal benefits, thus no formal influence on the policy, to direct authority of participatory bodies. Applying this framework for this research, it can be derived that the scope of this research would likely be on the inclusive half of the first dimension. The emphasis is on having citizens involved, thus not on exclusively involving experts or elected officials. Regarding the second dimension, it is harder to indicate the point on the continuum where this research is positioned. Nonetheless, this research will not be on one of the extremes, but is likely to range between expressing preferences and deliberating/negotiating. On the third dimension, none of the possibilities are excluded from this scope.

3.3 Democratic frameworks

Eventually, the interview results could be connected to democratic frameworks to explore whether there is a general trend or tendency regarding the democracy and the integration of citizen participation. Therefore this subsection gives a short overview of the democratic frameworks that are relevant.

There is an extensive amount of scientific literature available that is dedicated to distinguishing different types of democracies. Examples include the Cube framework by Doorenspleet and Pellikaa (2013) who identify eight types of democracy which differ on three elements: the political system, the structure of society and the electoral system. Another example is the categorisation by Smooha (2002), who distinguishes five types of democracies based on different characteristics of society, including the State's character and collective rights. The main focus of this research is not the development of the Dutch democracy, thus it is not relevant to have insights into all different democracies and their (sometimes marginal) differences. Therefore only a few main frameworks are introduced.

The first democratic framework is the foundation for the Dutch democracy, namely the representative (or indirect) democracy. In a pure representative democracy, elected individuals are representing the citizens (Coffé & Michels, 2014; Junius et al., 2020). This government is entitled to make decisions and trusted to make those decisions in line with the preference of the citizens (Linder & Mueller, 2021). In the Netherlands, every four years elections are held on different government levels; national, provincial, local and European. Every citizens can vote, excluding individuals under eighteen and others that are legally not entitled to vote.

The direct democracy is characterised by the direct influence citizens on decisions and policies (Scarow, 2001). In a pure direct democracy, the policy decision are made by the citizens, not by elected officials (Noam, 1980). Compared to the representative democracy, the direct democracy implies a higher level of involvement of citizens in the public decision-making process (Coffé & Michels, 2014).

Several scientific papers highlight the integration of aspects that are essentially part of a direct democracy into the representative democracy (Coffé & Michels, 2014; Trüdinger & Bächtiger, 2023). This could be in response to dissatisfaction with the institutionalised representative democracy (Geurtz & van de Wijdeven, 2010; Leemann & Stadelmann-Steffen, 2022). Thus instead of letting elected representatives take all policy decisions, citizens are more involved and sometime given the mandate to decide. An often mentioned instrument is the usage of referendum. Leemann and Stadelmann-Steffen (2022) find that integrating such institutions in a representative democracy closes the difference in satisfaction between winners and losers of the elections.

Another democracy is the deliberative democracy, which can be characterised by putting emphasis on discussing an issue, and less on actually resolving the issue (LeDuc, 2015). According to Chwalisz (2019) the outcomes of such a discussion should be input for the political decision. This framework evolved from the participatory democracy framework (Elstub, 2018). Compared to their role in a representative democracy as being consulted by policymakers, citizens should have more influence on the decision-making (Ryfe, 2005). Michels (2011) indicates that deliberation is used to gain insights into citizens' opinions and preferences resulting in rational decisions being made based on public reasoning.

3.4 Introduction to citizen participation in the Netherlands

Within the Netherlands, there are various ways in which citizens are able to participate. In general, the government uses participatory methods regularly to involve citizens in the public decision-making process. There are different methods used by the government, some are more traditional, while others are relatively innovative. This subsection contains a short overview of different methods. Evidently it is not complete, though it gives an overview of some common methods. Since it is likely that different methods will be referred to during the interview, it is relevant to have a brief synopsis. Firstly a distinction between large-scale and small-scale participation will be made, before discussing specific methods.

3.4.1 Distinction between large-scale and small-scale participation

Pointing out the difference between large-scale and small-scale participation is relevant because one of the decision in designing a participation process is related to who is going to be involved and why. Given

that a significant part of the Dutch population is rather discontent with the policies, it might be important to seek more input from citizens in decision-making processes (Culver & Howe, 2004; Kemmers et al., 2019). Using small-scale participation is potentially easier to organise, though it is characterised by excluding other citizens and thus their knowledge and contribution (Bailey et al., 2011). Hence large-scale participation could potentially result in a better reflection of the preferences of a large group of citizens (TU Delft, n.d.-b). Additionally, Clarinval et al., (2021) argue that large-scale participation methods could also deal with some representativity issues that arise when using small-scale participation.

In general, scientific literature about citizen participation frequently mentions the usage of large-scale citizen participation in decision-making processes. Nevertheless, these papers do not explicitly explain what 'large-scale' entails. The main distinction between small-scale and large-scale participation that can be derived from literature is the mechanism of selection. Small-scale participation implies some kind of selection mechanism where an organisation decides who gets to participate. Large-scale participation on the other hand refers to open-participation where citizens decide whether they want to participate or not (Bailey et al., 2011; Elstub & Escobar, 2019). Online platforms can facilitate by reaching a large, diverse group of citizens (Aboucaya et al., 2022).

The difference in selection is also used to distinguish mini- and maxi-publics. Mini-publics are relatively exclusive, only held with randomly selected citizens, while maxi-publics are inclusive in the fact that all citizens can participate if they want to (Farrell et al., 2020; Itten & Mouter, 2022; Jacquet & Reuchamps, 2018; Reuchamps & Suiter, 2016). Although only a relatively small part of the population can attend, mini-publics ensure the presence of different segments of society (Jäske, 2018). Besides, mini-publics are often more of the deliberative kind, implying and emphasizing a group discussion (instead of the outcome), which is easier to facilitate in a smaller group (Michels, 2019).

3.4.1 Methods to enhance citizen participation

Since this research aims at identifying improvements for citizen participation, it is useful to have a brief overview of commonly used methods to enhance citizen participation. Perhaps one of the most well-known methods to enable citizen participation is the usage of surveys. A survey is generally described as an approach to gather information from a sample of the target group by asking them the same questions. There are various ways to conduct such a survey, e.g. telephone surveys, paper surveys and internet surveys (Check & Schutt, 2012; Ponto, 2015; Qualtrics, n.d.; Scheuren, 2004). Dalati and Marx Gómez (2018) describe that the advantages of surveys include the cost-efficiency, the invariability of the questions and the accessibility to a large group of individuals. However, surveys often offer limited possibilities to respondents to elaborate on their answers.

A relatively new survey method is the aforementioned Participatory Value Evaluation, which enables policymakers to digitally consult the public. All citizens are able to express their preferences and compose their preferred portfolio of policies (Itten & Mouter, 2022; Mouter, Koster, et al., 2021b). This method gives policymakers insights regarding the desirability of policies, gives citizens the participate in a nuances way, and it could potentially increase acceptance of the resulting policies (Mouter, Hernandez, et al., 2021). Compared to a regular survey, a PVE puts the citizen on the chair of the policymaker by presenting a realistic choice task similar to the one that the policymaker is facing (Populytics, n.d.). It forces the respondent to make trade-offs regarding ongoing policy proposals instead of simply asking respondents to indicate whether they agree with a certain proposition. Additionally PVE offers more opportunity for two-way communication (Mouter, Shortall, et al., 2021; TU Delft, n.d.-a).

Other methods to facilitate participation are the usage of polls and referendums. Although these methods are also used to reach a large target group and gain insight into the public opinion regarding a topic, there are differences with a PVE (Billiet, 2000; Mouter, Hernandez, et al., 2021). The main difference is the fact that polls and referendums often present the issue as if there is only one binary choice to make:

whether to implement a policy or not. This leaves no option for nuance (Hendriks & Michels, 2021). Besides, polls in particular do not offer insights in the extent to which one policy option is preferred over another, taking into account the effects of implementing the policy (Mouter, Hernandez, et al., 2021). In comparison with polls and referendums, a PVE is able to incorporate limiting factors (such as a budget), the possibility to motivate choices, a preference regarding the impact of the results and the possibility to suggest ideas (Populytics, n.d.).

Additionally, participatory budgeting can be used to include participation in a public decision-making process. This method was first used in Brazil and involves citizens in the management task of a governmental organisation by dividing a public budget (Mouter, Hernandez, et al., 2021; Sintomer et al., 2012; Souza, 2001; Tomás, 2013). Research by Sintomer et al. (2012) identifies additional aspects of this method, including repetitiveness of the process and accountability of the results. The application of participatory budgeting in Calgary shows that digital tools can facilitate the process and activate communities (Levenda et al., 2020).

Other methods to involve citizens are citizen assemblies and citizens forums. Citizen assemblies are considered to be a process in which citizens support the government in making decisions. Both methods are fairly similar; citizens are randomly selected and they deliberate during multiple sessions about societal issues. During those sessions, they learn from each other and can have the possibility to consult experts. Based on this deliberation and discussion, an advice is drafted. The main difference is the way in which the resulting advice is used by the policymakers. By definition, the advice from a citizens forum is non-binding, while the usage of the advice of a citizens assembly depends on the predefined mandate of the method in a specific context (Den Ridder et al., 2021; Klösters et al., 2022; Nederlands Platform Burgerparticipatie en Overheidsbeleid, n.d.-b, n.d.-a).

Sparse research is available about the mix of large-scale and small-scale citizen participation. Research by Cohen (2009) indicate that there might be a potential in combining deliberation with mass democracy. Itten and Mouter (2022) conclude that having both a deliberation with a small group of citizens and an open participation tool (PVE) within the participation process, can reduce the disadvantages of using one of the participation methods. Besides, research shows that a mini-public can even influence a maxi-public, as was the case in Ireland (Farrell et al., 2020).

Another, relatively new, method of participation are citizens observatories, enabled by ICT developments. This method implies that observations made by citizens are integrated in the decision-making process, for example the data is used for knowledge exchange or the involvement in the decision-making (Wehn et al., 2015).

3.5 Concluding remarks

Thus from this chapter, a few highlights can be derived. Firstly in this research, future developments mainly concern external developments that impact citizen participation. It is assumed that these developments are not within the control of the system. Besides, challenges can be related to the system itself. Furthermore, citizen participation is interpreted as the involvement of citizens in the public decision-making process. Since this research focuses on the perspective of the policymakers, the main focus is on decision-making initiated by the government where the government is mainly responsible for designing policies.

In addition, from this literature research, it can be derived that there is a multitude of opportunities to involve citizens into the decision-making process. A relevant distinction is between large-scale and small-scale participation. Small-scale participation implies some kind of selection mechanism (initiated by an authority on higher level) to select participants beforehand, and thus exclude part of the target group. Large-scale participation refers to a situation where citizens can decide whether they want to participate or not. Regarding the used participatory methods, there are a lot of different ways to organise citizen participation, including PVE, referendum, polls, surveys, participatory budgeting, citizens'

assemblies and citizens' forums. Besides, combinations between these different methods are experimented with.

Based on this literature overview, it is interesting to investigate what methods are emphasised (positive aspects and challenges) by practitioners. Besides, the different ways citizen participation can be integrated into a democracy are relevant to take into account when conducting interviews.

4. Objectives of citizen participation

This section will study the objectives of participatory processes as defined in the previous chapter. Thereby it contributes to answering the second sub-question: ‘*What are the objectives for which a participatory process is used?*’. Citizen participation itself should not be regarded as the main objective, it should be perceived as a concept to achieve something else (Royo et al., 2011). Therefore it is important to define this goal, and thereby managing expectations of the outcomes. Once the objectives are clear, the participatory process can be designed, accordingly Boudjelida and Mellouli (2016). Based on existing literature, an overview will be given of the goals of citizen participation.

From the literature study, it becomes apparent that numerous objectives are mentioned in articles. To structure the specified goals of citizen participation, the goals are categorized according to the three main functions of citizen participation, referred to as the substantive, normative and instrumental rationale (Mouter, Hernandez, et al., 2021). This categorization is also made by ‘Kennisknooppunt Participatie’, which is platform established by the Directorate Participation of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, 2020). In the next subsection, each category of objectives is discussed in more detail; starting with the normative objectives, followed by substantive, instrumental and project-specific objectives.

4.1 Normative objectives of citizen participation

From a normative rationale citizen participation is perceived to contribute to democratic values (Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, 2020). Citizens should therefore be involved in decisions that impact their way of living (Geurtz & van de Wijdeven, 2010; Liu et al., 2022; Mouter, Hernandez, et al., 2021; Mouter, Shortall, et al., 2021). Thus objectives related to the normative rationale can be connected to the functioning of the democracy itself. Citizen participation is then viewed to impact the democracy (Mouter, Hernandez, et al., 2021). Michels (2011) gives five ways in which citizen participation connects to the democracy, including the influence of citizens in decision-making, the inclusion of citizens in the policy process, civic skills and virtues, deliberation, and the legitimacy of the decisions.

Besides, a normative objective of citizen participation that is frequently mentioned is legitimacy (Adams et al., 2015; Huitema et al., 2010; Innes & Booher, 2004; A. Michels & Binnema, 2018; OECD, 2020; Van der Heijden & Ten Heuvelhof, 2012; Van Eijk, 2014; Wijnhoven et al., 2015). Citizen participation could aim at increasing legitimacy of the policy making process or the implementation (MacArthur, 2016). Lukensmeyer and Hasselblad Torres (2006) indicate that the perceptions of those impacted by the policy, should be made known and addressed. Other authors emphasise the cooperation between citizens and politicians that contribute to legitimacy (Bellò & Downe, 2022; Font & Blanco, 2007; Hendriks & Michels, 2021). Related to this objective, a Dutch case study about the Rhine Basin argues that citizen participation is used to improve collaboration (Huitema et al., 2010). Additionally citizen participation is viewed to improve acceptance by the public (Van der Heijden & Ten Heuvelhof, 2012).

4.2 Substantive objectives of citizen participation

The substantive reason for citizen participation argues that participation results in an increase of the quality of public policies (Innes & Booher, 2004; Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, 2020; Van der Heijden & Ten Heuvelhof, 2012). Three objectives that stem from a substantive rationale are identified based on literature.

The first objective involves the exchange of knowledge and information. Citizen participation can be used to bring different stakeholders or groups of citizens together have a meaningful discussion about the issue at stake (Bryson et al., 1979; Innes & Booher, 2004; International Association for Public Participation, 2018; Lukensmeyer & Hasselblad Torres, 2006). Culver and Howe (2004) specifically focus on citizens consultation and argue that one of the objectives is for policymakers to gain insights

into the opinion of the public regarding the topic. This element of learning due to citizen participation is also emphasised by Huitema et al. (2010).

Some papers identify exclusively informing the public as one of the objectives of citizen participation, such as Bryson et al. (1979) and Lukensmeyer and Hasselblad Torre (2006). Though the impact of the results on the actual decision is in such a situation relatively low (International Association for Public Participation, 2018).

The second objective that is typified as a substantive rationale is the usage of citizen participation to design public policies, as argued in various articles (Culver & Howe, 2004; International Association for Public Participation, 2018; Lukensmeyer & Hasselblad Torres, 2006). Citizens can introduce new and relevant insights and knowledge that can be used in designing the policies (Liu et al., 2022; Mouter, Shortall, et al., 2021). Bryson et al. (1979) also acknowledge that using the results of a participatory process as input for a planning process can be an objective of citizen participation. An example of a process with such an aim is set in the city of Enschede where planners intended to use the input of former residents to plan the rebuilding of the neighbourhood after the devastating explosion of a fireworks storage depot (Denters & Klok, 2010). Research by Marzouki et al. (2017) indicates that the objective can be to involve citizens in decisions that will affect them. They argue that the participatory process strives to contribute the quality of life of citizens and the individual objectives of citizens.

This line of reasoning is connected to the third objective, being that citizen participation aims to increase the quality of policies and decisions (Bryson et al., 1979; Huitema et al., 2010; Innes & Booher, 2004; Lukensmeyer & Hasselblad Torres, 2006; A. Michels & Binnema, 2019). From the perspective of policymakers, having a better overview of people's preferences can be used as input in the decision-making process and can result in policies that are better aligned with people's preferences (Mouter, Hernandez, et al., 2021). Bovenkerk (2012) and Michels and Binnema (2018) refer to this objective in the context of deliberation, which is an element of participation as argues in the previous chapter.

4.3 Instrumental objectives of citizen participation

The instrumental rationale implies that citizen participation is included as a means to achieve a predefined end (MacArthur, 2016). This goal could be the increase of public support for a specific policy (Bryson et al., 1979; Geurtz & van de Wijdeven, 2010; Huitema et al., 2010; Mouter, Hernandez, et al., 2021; Mouter, Shortall, et al., 2021). Citizens might be more accepting of policies if they were involved in the decision-making process (Liu et al., 2022). If citizens are more involved in the decision-making process, they might feel more responsible and attached to the resulting policy (Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, 2020). This objective includes support of the policies and their implementation (Michels & Binnema, 2019).

One of the objectives with a more instrumental rationale is trust in the government, as is stated in papers by Font and Blanco (2007) and Špaček (2022). OECD (2020) gives an indication of the reasons for deliberation and the need for representativeness, including enhancement of public trust in the government. Lukensmeyer and Hasselblad Torres (2006) also mentions trust of citizens as an aim, though they view the enhancement of trust as a way to improve the quality of public life.

Van der Heijden and Ten Heuvelhof (2012) add that concepts of interest related to the instrumental rationale include inclusiveness of different stakeholders, accessibility to citizens, and information availability. Various articles mention inclusiveness as an objective, including Bryson et al. (2013), Hall et al. (2016) and Michels and Binnema (2018). Inclusiveness refers to a process in which the emphasis is on engaging different groups of citizens, and in particular groups that are harder to reach to gather the various opinions and perspectives (Bovenkerk, 2012). Akkerman et al. (2004) also mention that inclusion can serve as an aim of citizen participation. Though they point out that processes aimed at inclusion can have an opposite effect if such a process is organised top-down. A closely related objective is citizen participation to advance social justice (Bryson et al., 2013). Although Bryson et al. (1979) do

not mention inclusiveness specifically, they do incorporate representation as an objective. This is similar to inclusiveness since it is explained to refer to the fact that the input should be representative of the community (thus including all different perspectives).

4.4 Project-specific objectives of citizen participation

Lastly, it is relevant to note that there are also project-specific objectives. The use of citizen participation in a particular context often has objectives that are related to the ones that are mentioned in this chapter. Though, those objectives could be specified to the characteristics of a specific case. An example is the educational campaign ‘Reduce and Save’ in Malta which aimed at informing citizens and making them aware of (among other things) sustainability (Refalo et al., 2017). A Dutch case in Hoogeveen suggests that their participation strategy (main method: participatory budgeting) has a social objective, besides the goal of involving citizens in local projects and decision-making. Their approach aims to enhance social cohesion and collaboration between stakeholders and citizens (Geurtz & van de Wijdeven, 2010). A case of participatory budgeting in Calgary concerns three phases, each with a different role for citizens. The overall aim was to generally to involve citizens of Calgary in a problem-solving process (Levenda et al., 2020).

4.5 Concluding remarks

Ultimately, this chapter results in having an overview of high-level citizen participation goals. Besides, it is important to take into account that there may be project-specific objectives. There might be related to the objectives on a higher level, but can also be unique for the project. An overview of high-level objectives is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Overview of common objectives of citizen participation

Objectives of citizen participation
<i>Normative rationale</i>
Support of democracy
Legitimacy
Collaboration between citizens and politicians
<i>Substantive rationale</i>
Exchange of knowledge and information
Contribution to designing public policies
Improvement of the quality of public policies
<i>Instrumental rationale</i>
Increasing acceptance of public policies
Increasing trust in the government
Inclusiveness

As for the relevance of these insights for the remainder of this research, it is interesting to explore to what extent practitioners emphasise these objectives. Moreover, practitioners might be able to indicate the degree to which objectives are achieved in practice.

5. Results of the interviews

Within this chapter, the results of the interviews are presented. These insights from the interviews contribute to answering sub-questions 3, 4 and 5. Thus the results should give insight into the objectives of citizens participation, challenges, improvements and future challenges. Being able to answer these sub-questions contributes to answering the main question which focuses on improvements of citizen participation. Appendix D: Anonymous summaries contains all the summaries from the interviews. Every interview is randomly numbered and the number of the interviews correspond to the number of the interviewee in this chapter.

In this section, relevant results will be discussed per topic. First, the objectives of citizen participation are presented. Thereafter, the positive elements of citizen participation are shown. Subsequently, challenges and possible ways to deal with these challenges are addressed. Next, future developments are presented, along with strategies to anticipate the developments. Besides, interviewees often mention the usage of the participatory value evaluation, thus a separate section includes relevant result regarding this participatory method.

5.1 Objectives of citizen participation

Interviewees point out various objectives of citizen participation. Majority of the interviewees mention that citizen participation is used to involve citizens in the decision-making process (for example by interviewees 6, 7 and 9). The reason for this involvement can be related to the three general categories introduced in chapter 4; being the substantive, normative and instrumental rationale. Before giving an overview of the results, it is important to consider that several interviewees emphasise that the objectives and other aspects of citizen participation are context dependent. Thus the objectives or the prioritization of objectives differ per participatory process. Interviewees mention for example that the phase of the decision-making process, the target group and the policy space can influence the objectives and the design of a participatory process (interviewees 3, 6, 7 and 8). This context-specificity also makes it hard for interviewees to identify the extent to which objectives are achieved in practice.

The most often mentioned objectives of citizen participation can be categorized as being of normative and substantive nature. Interviewees who emphasise the normative reason for citizen participation perceive citizen participation as something that contributes to a healthy democratic system (interviewees 4 and 5). Interviewee 11 argues that it could strengthen the Dutch democracy. Even so, citizen participation is perceived to anticipate the increasing capabilities and needs of citizens to be involved, or more involved than just voting during elections. Thus they believe that every citizen should be able to participate. Additionally, it was emphasised that it is desirable to jointly work with citizens towards a solution, instead of implementing policies top-down (interviewees 8 and 9).

Moreover, there are interviewees who perceive the substantive objective of citizen participation to be of high importance (interviewees 1, 2, 4 and 10). They stress that citizen participation gives citizens the opportunity to express their preferences, values and needs. As a result, policymakers are able to obtain relevant knowledge from society (interviewee 11) and insights into different perspectives of people on issues and values (interviewee 8). Having this knowledge subsequently leads to an improvement in the quality of their policies. Essentially, the policy will be better aligned with the needs and preferences of citizens.

Something that was addressed during multiple interviews was the objective of gaining support. A clear distinction was made between support for the resulting policy and support for the decision-making process. It is emphasised that support for the policy itself should not be the goal of citizen participation (interviewee 3). Interviewee 2 remarks that it is not possible to manufacture support. Nevertheless, it is perceived to be a possible, positive consequence. Interviewees agree that it is possible to strive for a supported decision-making process, which implies that the resulting policy does not necessarily have to

be supported (interviewees 7 and 10). Nonetheless, interviewee 1 argues that proper citizen participation could in fact aim at creating support.

The participation methods could also have objectives that are more concrete according to interviewees 2 and 5. Possible sub-objectives of citizen participation can be generating ideas, testing a designed policy to understand how people will respond, or to let people prioritize policies or values. When considering large-scale citizen participation in specific, it becomes apparent that there is a certain overlap in objectives. According to interviewee 10, the general goal should be to create a better policy together with the people that are affected by it. Interestingly, this interviewee points out that although the goals of large-scale citizen participation should be the same as for participation in general, in practice, large-scale citizen participation is often used to test/poll what citizens think of a certain policy. Interviewee 3 has a different perspective on the goals of large-scale citizen participation and argues that the emphasis is on normative and substantive objectives. Large-scale citizen participation can increase legitimacy since a large group of citizens is involved and this provides substantive insights.

An interesting perspective on the objective of citizens participation is described by interviewee 7: *“The goal is to establish the basis for the subsequent participatory process”*. Citizens should be engaged and results should be brought along to the next process. Ultimately, this whole trajectory, consisting of subsequent participatory processes, should lead to the policy implementation that is understood by the citizens.

Although there were hardly objectives mentioned that were rooted in the instrumental rationale, one of the interviewees (interviewee 3) indicates that citizen participation can be used to structure the process of decision-making. This could make the whole process more clear and predictable for everyone involved.

5.2 Positive aspects of the current practice of citizen participation

Although the main focus of this research is to identify improvements and suggest some next steps, it is relevant to include some elements of citizen participation that are going well and that interviewees agree that should be sustained.

Interviewee 9 stresses that the current Dutch representative democracy should be appreciated more for the simple reason that it is actually doing quite all right; considering the fairly high election turnout for national elections which is steadily around 80%. The turnout for local, provincial and European elections is lower (around 50%-60%), but in absolute numbers it is still a considerable size of the population.

Additionally, interviewees highlight that there are already many participation methods available. New and existing methods that are continuously being developed in order to improve accessibility for citizens are each suitable for a specific context (interviewees 8 and 10). For example, the advantage of participatory budgeting is that people come together and decide what the budget should be used for. Elections have low barriers to participate (interviewee 9). Referendums stimulate internal trade-off and could trigger a broad societal discussion about the topic, according to one of the interviewees. Citizen forum can increase inclusivity since this is taken into account during the selection of participations (interviewee 11). An advantage of internet consultation is that a broad range of citizens can be included (interviewee 7). A civil council has the advantage of deliberation, where people can exchange different perspectives and might even shift slightly in their opinion (interviewee 4).

Another positive development is that municipalities are already shifting towards actively contacting and inviting citizens by personally visiting them instead of sending a letter. This way of reaching out to citizens is more personal and could persuade citizens to become more involved (interviewee 10)

Besides, people are often more nuanced than assumed and they are willing to invest in a collective project. Thus there might be less resistance than is currently thought (interviewee 8).

5.3 Challenges for citizen participation

When asked about the challenges for citizen participation, interviewees raise awareness to a variety of challenges. First these are explained, after which a summary is shown in Table 4 on page 29.

During one interview (interviewee 2), the ideal structure of a participatory trajectory was described. In general, this participatory trajectory runs parallel to the decision-making process and consists of multiple phases. At important milestones within the public decision-making process, it is evaluated whether there is possibility for participation, and if so, a participation plan is drafted. It should be noted that multiple interviewees even indicate that it is even possible to have citizens participate in designing such a plan (interviewees 3, 4 and 5). Back to structuring the ideal trajectory, this should be an alternation between communication and participation. In the beginning there should be communication towards the citizens to inform them about the participation, which can be regarded as part of the preparation of the participation. Thereafter there is the actual conduct of participation. Subsequently the results of the participation should be linked back to the policy (what is done with the outcome) and that should be communicated towards the citizens (and participants). It is possible that another participatory process follows after this process and a different phase in the decision-making process is entered. In such case, this process is repeated, starting with informing citizens about the possibility to participate and the issue. This process is visualised in Figure 1 below.

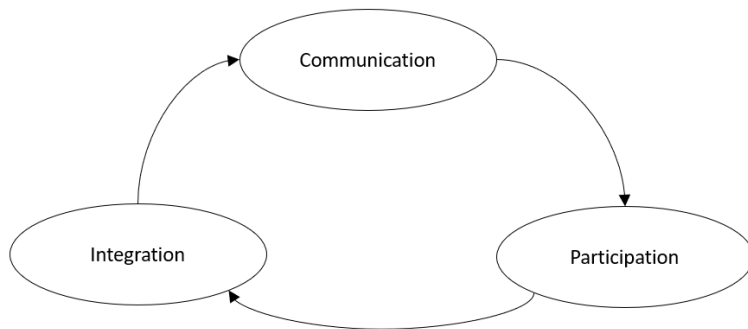


Figure 1: Ideal participation feedback loop

The challenges that are mentioned can be related to phases of this process; preparation, participation and output. Additionally, interviewees point out improvements to the entire structuring of the trajectory and to the role of citizen participation in the Dutch democratic system. The different categories of challenges are visualised in Figure 2 below.

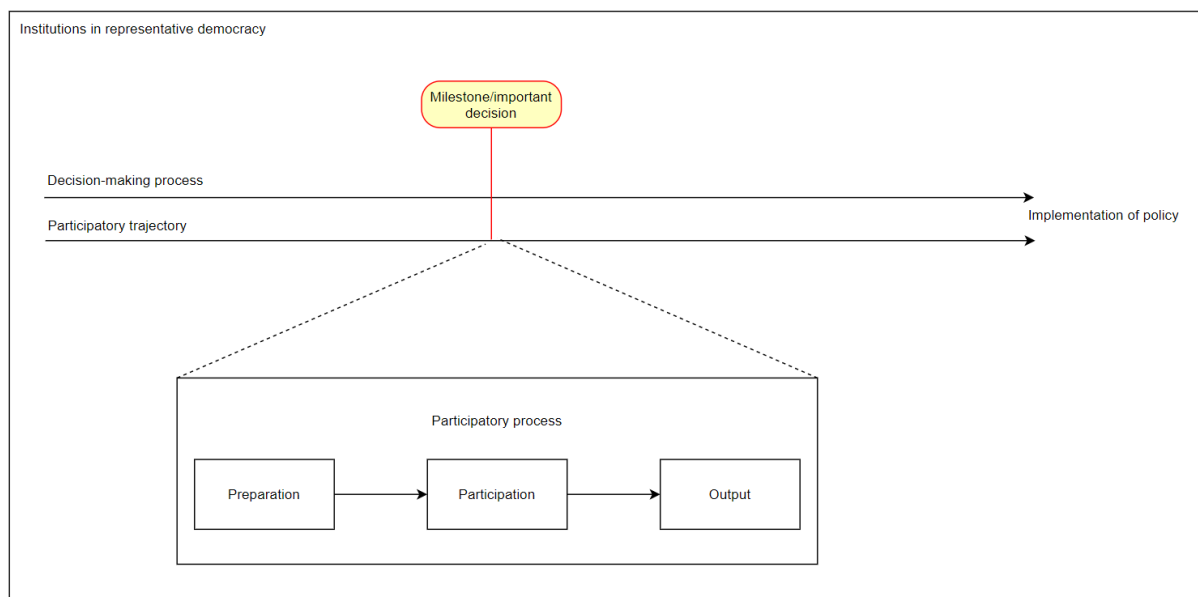


Figure 2: System of citizen participation

5.3.1 Challenges in the preparation phase

First of all, challenges are presented that relate to the preparation of the participation. In this stage, the most frequently mentioned challenge is the representation and inclusiveness (interviewee 9). Majority of the interviewees, including interviewees 1, 5 and 10, agree that policies are made for all people and that their preferences and values should therefore be considered in policy-making. It is problematic if only a specific group of citizens gives input to these policies because policymakers get a biased view of citizens' opinions (interviewees 3 and 11). There is not just one group that is to lesser extent involved in participation processes. During the interviews, there were two groups of citizens that were emphasised slightly more than others as being less involved. These were the group of citizens that have a nuanced opinion about the topic and the younger generation (interviewees 2, 3, 8, 10 and 11). One of the interviewees (interviewee 2) mentions the representation in areas outside the Randstad to be a challenging thing to achieve when citizen participation is conducted in real life.

As of the cause of this representation issue, three possible causes were mentioned during the interviews. The first one is that the Dutch government, and thus the group of policymakers that design participatory processes, is homogeneous (interviewee 4). Since this group is in itself not representative for society, it is hard to design a participatory process for a highly heterogeneous society. The second explanation is that official institutions that are currently embedded in the system are not aligned with the participatory needs of these groups. Traditional methods of participation are too often literally translated to a digital version, still appealing to the same group of people (interviewee 12). Thirdly, sometimes, people exclude themselves from participating, because they feel unqualified or they believe that their perspective does not matter (interviewee 4).

Although this challenge is referred to by multiple interviewees, they also remark that the exclusion of a group of citizens is a characteristic of every participation instrument, with one interviewee (interviewee 2) arguing that a degree of exclusion is inherent to every participation method. Another interviewee (interviewee 3) states that *"by definition, every participation tool excludes a certain group"*.

Another challenge that should be considered during in preparation of the actual participation, is the fact that it is important to select a participatory method based on the predefined objectives (interviewees 3 and 9). In practice, it turns out that in the vast majority of participatory processes, the objectives are not clear (interviewee 5). As a consequence, it is challenging to determine whether a process was successful or not.

Additionally, half of those interviewed regarded communication to be a challenge in this stage (interviewees 4, 5, 8, 10 and 11). The way in which citizens are informed about the process, the scope of the issue and possible consequences sometimes lacks clarity which might result in expectations that cannot be met. Subsequently citizens can be left feeling disappointment or frustration. Interviewee 3 even indicates raising false expectations among citizens as one of the biggest challenges.

5.3.2 Challenges during participation

During a participatory process, the main challenge is the familiarity and publicity among the citizens within the target group (interviewee 1). This aspect is especially important when participants are not selected beforehand, but the participation is open for everyone to be involved, such as a survey or PVE. The awareness of citizens about the possibility to participate should be improved.

Another challenge is related to the communication during participation. Sometimes the subject of the participation is rather complex, though important elements should be clarified in such a way that citizens understand, regardless of their knowledge or educational background. Information sharing is important in order for citizens to give meaningful input (interviewee 3).

5.3.3 Challenges after participation

After the actual participation has taken place, there is also a challenge, especially from the perspective of policymakers, in coping with the outcome. Interviewee 10 states that the outcome should be taken seriously. Interviewees indicate that currently, there is not always enough policy space to integrate the outcome of the participatory process (interviewees 3, 4, 7 and 11). Perhaps, this is related to the fact that there is cautiousness with giving citizens more responsibility to decide (interviewee 4). Thus the extent to which the results are actually used to adjust a designed policy can be improved. This is connected to the scope that is set in designing the participatory process which should indicate the aspects of the policy that are not finalized yet.

Besides, regardless of the extent to which the outcome is incorporated into the policy, the communication to the citizens can be improved. Citizens might not be informed in a clear and transparent manner about decisions that have been made. In this regard, even if the outcome of the participation has not been included in the policy, or the government decides to go in a different direction with the policy, the challenge is to inform and explain the decision that has been made. Citizens are otherwise disappointed about the limited impact of their efforts in the participatory process (interviewees 3, 4, 5).

Another challenge is the feedback of the outcomes of the participation for policymakers and politicians (interviewee 7). Interviewee 5 suggests that the government should reflect on the decision-making process which includes the participatory part. There is some knowledge about which aspects of the process are going well and which should be improved. However, the feedback from this experience from a process to evaluating current policies and creating new ones is not yet very strong.

5.3.4 Challenges of the whole participatory trajectory

With regards to the entire participatory trajectory, a challenge is to determine at what stage citizens should be involved. In this decision, there is a trade-off between early involvement and the level of concreteness of the issue. The tendency is to involve citizens as early as possible (interviewees 2 and 10), though if citizens are involved in very early stages of the decision-making process, the topic might still be too broad. In such a case, involvement of citizens might have an adverse impact; raising fears and averseness towards something that is not clear yet (interviewees 8 and 11).

Additionally, a challenge is to ensure continuity in the entire participatory trajectory, going from one participatory process to another. Citizens should be guided throughout this process and it should be clear how different processes are connected in terms of outcomes that serve as input for the next phase (interviewee 7). Interviewee 5 argues that in general, there are two challenges to large-scale citizen

participation. These are the fact that the government should be open and explain choices during large-scale citizen participation. Though it is disputed whether full openness is desirable, since political agreements cannot take place all should be open (interviewee 5).

As beforementioned, a possible reason for the lack of inclusiveness in participatory processes might be the lack of heterogeneity within the government (interviewee 4). In general, civil servants are high-educated, and while their knowledge is of value, it might not be enough. One interviewee (interviewee 4) argues that “*academic knowledge is not the only knowledge you need to make good policies*”. It is suggested that perhaps in response to the lack of expertise, the government turns to its citizens (interviewee 6).

Besides a need for improvement regarding the diversity in employees, there is also a challenge in the way government and citizens interact. Often participation is organized in a top-down matter (interviewee 9); civil servants decide the scope and the target group, and are possibly focused on the needs of their superior (the one with the mandate to decide). This government strategy may have contributed to the lack of confidence towards the government. Instead policymakers should be in contact with society and what are important issues and perceptions, to communicate this to their superior (interviewee 8).

Interviewee 4 stresses that a challenge is the fact the government is not experimenting with participation methods. This might be caused by the required resources and effort, or fear for the possible outcomes of such processes. The lack of experience is also something that interviewee 5 points out, though it is related to a specific participatory method, being citizens initiatives. There appears to be limited knowledge and experience of this arising methods of citizen participation among policymakers.

5.3.5 Challenges of the democratic system

On an even higher level of abstraction, interviewees mention the challenges that are related to the Dutch representative democracy. Interviewees 8 indicate that participation might be used in response to failing elements of the Dutch representative democracy (interviewees 6 and 9). The challenge lies in identifying what issues the representative democracy has and whether and how citizen participation is necessary. A problem with citizen participation in the current democracy is that it potentially weakens the political system since the mandate to decide is passed on from representatives to citizens (interviewee 6).

Additionally, interviewee 6 argues that it seems as if politicians and public administrators are not sufficiently aware of their function in the democratic system. There is a lack of vision for the country and the democratic system. Interviewee 12 also points out that there is some dissatisfaction regarding the current representative democracy, mainly regarding the role of politics.

Another challenge is the structure of the government itself. Interviewee 5 explains that the Dutch government has a sectorial breakdown. Therefore the emphasis is on the different systems. However, if citizens want to initiate something, they have an integrated perspective and consider multiple systems. Policymakers are often not aware of the fact therefore citizens need to arrange things at different institutions. Thus, if citizens have an integrated perspective on issues, then there is a challenge for governmental institutions to work together. Collaboration is also pointed out by interviewee 11, who states that there is tension between different levels of the government regarding the mandate to make decisions. Some decisions are made on national level, leaving hardly any policy space for local governments if they organise citizen participation

5.4 Suggestions for dealing with the identified challenges

During the interviews, interviewees also identify ways that deal with the challenges. Since some challenges are quite extensive and there are a lot of contextual factors that should be considered as well, interviewees indicate that off-the-shelf solutions are hard to identify. Thus sometimes just a first step towards solving the issues is identified. A summary of challenges and corresponding solution directions are given in Table 4 Table 4 on page 29.

5.4.1 Suggestions for improving the preparation phase

Regarding the challenges in the preparation phase of the participation process; in order to make citizen participation more inclusive, different strategies are proposed by the interviewees. An often mentioned strategy is to differentiate citizen participation, meaning that different methods are used to appeal to different audiences (interviewees 2, 3, 4, 9). Interviewee 4 specifically mentions that to involve the majority of the citizens that is difficult to reach, an active approach is necessary. This implies not only using the standard communication methods such as a letter of a message on a governmental website. Participation methods and ways to recruit participants should match the needs of the target group. Essentially, this would imply that society moves to tailored participation. The importance of having different participation methods is described by an interviewee (interviewee 3) as follows:

“By definition, every participation tool excludes a certain group, so then what you really need to look for is the mix of participation tools to minimize the group you are excluding”

The fact that different participation tools tend to appeal to different groups of citizens, became clear during the COVID pandemic. Out of necessity, meetings were held online instead of on a predefined location and the observation was made that a different group of people attended than was usually the case with face-to-face meetings (interviewee 3).

In dealing with the discrepancy between expectations from citizens and their influence in practice, there are two main strategies (interviewee 3). The first one is that the policymakers should carefully prepare the process and have knowledge about the context and content of the participation process. Secondly, it is important to clearly communicate this to the citizens. Policymakers should make clear what the participation process is about, what is included in the scope and what is not (interviewee 11). One of the interviewees assigns the sometimes failing communication to the fact that policymakers want to be nice to the citizens. However, this interviewee experienced that citizens rather wanted the truth instead of a friendly conversation (interviewee 8).

Sometimes clear communication might be even better than participation. This is also related to the beforementioned trade-off of when to involve the citizens. Sometimes participation is used, while there is no policy space available for adjustments, thus leading to disappointment of the citizens (interviewee 2). An example of a case where the policy space turned out to be limited is Lelystad Airport. Citizen participation was conducted as a response to the growing turmoil in society about the issue while decisions had been made and there was no possibilities for adjustments (interviewee 3).

Additionally, several interviewees stress the importance of investing in the process upfront to prevent issues. This suggestion for improvement can be related to a specific participatory process, but also to a whole societal transition. For example, interviewee 7 mentions that investing in the energy transition upfront is a useful investment for the rest of the trajectory. Even though this probably takes more time, it could lead to a more positive experience for citizens which may result in a supported decision. One interviewee proposes to use more knowledge in the development of a participatory process; by using all relevant knowledge and consulting experts, the chance to success of a trajectory is higher (interviewee 1). Besides, interviewee 8 suggests that the government should give people time to let the impact of policies on their life's sink in. The government can use the time to get to know the environment and the citizens. This is useful for further collaboration, even though the output is less tangible.

5.4.2 Suggestions for improving the participation

During the participatory process, one of the challenges was the familiarity of citizens with the possibilities to participate. To improve familiarity of citizens with the different ways in which they can participate and thus reach more people, is to create a central website (interviewees 1 and 2). This website could give an overview of how and when people can participate.

Another way to improve participation is to encourage participants to gain confidence regarding their involvement. Interviewee 4 argues that it should be emphasised that their input is valuable. Although

this is an improvement during the participation process, it could also result in more people wanting to be involved (preparation of the participation).

5.4.3 Suggestions for improving the post-participation phase

In order to strengthen the feedback loop from the outcomes of the participation process to the policymakers and the integration into the policy, a first step is to communicate within government levels about how outcomes should be integrated in a policy (interviewee 5). Various interviewees mention that there should be policy space to integrate the outcomes in the final policy (interviewee 9). This could be accomplished in two ways; it is possible to leave more policy space, as a policymaker, or make adjustments based on the outcome of the participation. Interviewee 5 argues that there should be clear communication with different governmental levels about this. Another way is to leave the decision up to the citizens, thereby giving them a mandate to decide. An example of such a participation method is participatory budgeting (interviewee 4). To be able to conduct such a way of making policies, the government should have more faith in the capabilities of citizens, as mentioned by interviewees 4 and 12. The government should facilitate initiatives that are established by citizens, for example by offering financial support or taking over part of the administration. Doing this shows that they can collaborate with citizens on equal terms. Additionally, it can be efficient for policymakers to develop some standard strategy to deal with citizen initiatives (interviewee 5).

Regardless of the final policy, the government should clearly explain why certain decisions have been made. These decisions should be substantiated from the vision from the government and important norms (interviewee 5).

5.4.4 Suggested solutions related to the overall participatory trajectory

As for the entire participatory trajectory, continuity should be ensured. The government should take charge of this process and guide citizens through the whole trajectory (interviewee 7).

In anticipation of certain caution of policymakers in using citizen participation, a first step in improving the content of policies through citizen participation is to emphasise successful projects and use successful elements in subsequent processes (interviewee 1). This could decrease the negative perception that policymakers often have of citizen participation. If these positive examples result in more positive experiences by policymakers, the practice of designing and conducting citizen participation could professionalize, which could again result in more positive experiences. This process could be disrupted by a (very public) misstep or failing project. Although such a situation might be inevitable, having a lot of positive experiences and examples would be helpful to put things into perspective.

Another way to improve participation is to create new experiences that can be diffused throughout the organization. The government must make time and resources available for this (interviewees 8 and 11). Policymakers should become aware of how to use citizen participation and its results for public policy making (interviewee 10). Having this experience and knowledge lowers the barriers to conducting citizen participation.

Besides the government should invest in how citizen participation is conducted. Interviewee 11 suggests that there should be government policies regarding major social issues which includes how the government deals with the interests and ideas of citizens. This could include a standardized strategy for the usage of citizen participation where the first step in creating this strategy would be to think about how the government views citizens and what role citizens have in a participation process (interviewee 4). In addition, instruments could be developed (for both policymakers and citizens) that will support them in certain situations and in the choice for a participation method.

Policymakers should sustain more contact with the citizens and communicate their needs and concerns to the one responsible for making the final decision, instead of trying to please the responsible one. They should dare to invest in a solid relationship with the environment in which change needs to be realized

(interviewee 8). Possible ways to do this are to put the policymakers in the position of the citizens, for example by visiting them to gain more insights into their perspective (interviewee 2).

5.4.5 Suggested solutions related to the democratic system

Lastly, some of the interviewees mention solution directions for citizen participation that are related to the Dutch democracy (interviewees 6, 9 and 12). Structural changes to the democracy are needed. A fundamental discussion should be aimed at reflecting at the purpose of the government and the function of the parliament. One interviewee (interviewee 6) indicated that the following question should have a central role in the discussion of “*institutional innovation*”:

“So how do we make sure that the whole political process, as it was officially intended to be, will perform better?”

When the public administration functions well, subsequently consideration can be given to (new) ways to involve citizens. Interviewee 9 indicates that it is not only important that citizens are involved, but that they are involved in a meaningful way. Elected officials should engage in having a clear vision for the Dutch society. Thus, they should be in contact with citizens for which there are already institutions in the representative democracy. This implies that citizen participation may not be necessary. If citizen participation is nevertheless integrated in the democracy, careful consideration must be given to the purpose and the way in which outcomes are used by policymakers (interviewee 9).

Besides, interviewees 11 and 12 mention that signs of resistance from the public should be taken seriously. There are emerging methods of how citizens find like-minded and how they express themselves, for example on social media. Perhaps new ways in which they express themselves should be institutionalized. The problems that they address should be taken seriously instead of just explaining a governments decision.

5.4.5 Overview of challenges and solutions

Table 4 below gives an overview of the challenges and solutions mentioned respectively in subsections 5.3 and 5.4. It is possible that a solution direction can be used for multiple challenges.

Table 4: Challenges and possible solutions

Phase of the process	Challenge	Possible solution direction
Preparation	Inclusiveness/representation	Differentiate participation methods and align the methods with the audience
	Participatory method	Actively approach the underrepresented target group
		Policymakers should experiment more to gain experience to make the right decision
		Communication about the scope
Participation	Familiarity	Consulting experts
		Clear and open communication
	Complexity of issues	Central website
Output	Extent to which outcome is integrated in policy	Leave policy space as a policymaker to shape after participation
		Use participatory methods that transfer (part of) the decision-making mandate to the citizens
	Communication towards citizens about the usage of the outcome	Make citizens realise that their input matters

	Feedback to policymakers/government regarding the process	Communicate within government and between government levels.
Overall process	When to start citizen participation	Policymakers should be aware of the context
		Institutionalise how government deals with interests and ideas of citizens
	Continuity	Government should guide the process
	Openness	
	Explanation of decisions	Policymakers should have the in-depth knowledge about the issue
	Lack of heterogeneity	Reform the government structure
	Interaction between government and citizens	Actively approach the underrepresented target group
		Government should invest (time and money) in the relationship with citizens
		Mediation skills to manage the relation
		Government should have more trust in citizens that they are able to make right choices
Lack of expertise	Emphasise successful projects such that more experiences are created	
	Diffuse experiences throughout the government	
	Standardized strategy for usage of citizen participation	
Democratic system	Flaws of representative democracy	Fundamental discussion about democratic system and thereafter about the role of citizen participation
		Institutionalise new ways of participating
	Lack of awareness among politicians and public administrators of function	
	Sectorial breakdown of the government vs integrated perspective of citizens	Gain experience in handling trade-offs as a government

5.5 Future developments

Besides analysing the current way participation is organized and identifying challenges and solutions, it is also important to consider future trends that might impact citizen participation. Being aware of potential trends makes it possible to anticipate these trends in such a way that citizen participation can make use of positive trends and limits the impact of negative trends. This could lead to an improvement of citizen participation in the future. In general, the results can be divided into three categories; digitalization, the role of citizens in the decision-making process and other future developments.

5.5.1 Digitalization

The most frequently mentioned future trend is the ongoing digitalization. One interviewee (interviewee 12) even described the rise of a digital democracy; which is characterised by *“the use of digital technology to support democratic decision-making processes”*. Such a democracy is ought to complement the current democracy. Interviewees indicate that this development could have a positive

influence on the way citizen participation is organised. Interviewee 4 indicates that the opportunities that digitalization and the internet have to offer in the context of citizen participation are underused. Though interviewees also nuance the possible large impact of digitalization and appoint risks for citizen participation in public policy making.

Digitalization could influence communication in both ways; for the government to inform citizens, but also for citizens to reveal their preferences (interviewee 6). The advantage of digitalization is the fact that it offers more and different ways to communicate and to participate. New ways of participating arise because citizens become more articulated and express themselves in different ways using digital tools. The development of concepts like Digital Twist, augmented reality and artificial intelligence can be used to support citizens in their understanding of topics (interviewee 4). This development could be fostered by the changing needs of citizens in the way they participate. Digital tools offer the opportunity to participate independent of time and location (interviewee 2). This could lower the barriers for citizens to participate, thus appealing to a larger group of citizens (interviewee 4). Besides, digitalization could result in more tailored participation (interviewee 10).

Although digitalization makes it easier to inform citizens, digital platforms also create an enormous amount of information. With having access to this information also comes the challenge of managing the amount of available information and identifying truthful information to ensure that the debate within the decision-making process is based on valid information (interviewees 3 and 6). Interviewee 12 expresses concerns for the spreading of disinformation on social media platforms.

Another interviewee argues that a deliberative component will hopefully be integrated in current digital platforms in the future (interviewee 4). Currently citizens that participate are doing that isolated from other citizens, making it harder to get insights into other perspectives and work together towards a solution. Interestingly, another interviewee (interviewee 7) questions the relevance of such a deliberative aspect in current digital tools, stating that sometimes the goal is not to reach a joint solution. It might be more useful to gain insights into the different perspectives that exist among citizens.

Besides, technology impacts the degree of polarisation. Interviewees have a different view on the effect with one interviewee arguing that polarisation is enhanced and thereby negatively impacting policies (interviewee 4). Interviewee 12 argues that citizens are confronted with diverse perspectives on a topic, but can view it as a confirmation of their own perspective. Besides, social media make it easier to have contact with like-minded citizens, which could also result in a stronger belief in their own perspective. On the other hand, technology could also have a limiting effect on polarisation if it contributes to having a group of participants that is a balanced representation of the society (interviewee 5).

Even though it is largely agreed upon that digitalization is impactful, several interviewees highlight that it is likely that physical meetings and participation methods will not disappear. Thus accessibility remains a point of concern (interviewee 5). With the rise of digital methods, there will always be a group of citizens that can only be reached using physical methods, such as face-to-face meetings. This is in line with the previous quote that stated that every participation method excludes a group of citizens. There is likely to be a group of citizens that is not digitally skilled (enough); thus the challenge of inclusiveness and accessibility will remain. Interviewee 2 indicates support for a mix between the use of digital and traditional participation methods.

5.5.2 Role of citizens in the decision-making process

In general, one interviewee (interviewee 2) indicates that a trend that should be strived for is the fact that citizen participation should become a standard practice in public policy making. Conducting citizen participation should not be the exception.

Besides interviewees mention the interactive way of policy making, which could develop towards co-creation, thus citizens have more responsibility and ownership (interviewees 3 and 8). This development has already started on a local level, but is yet to break through on a national level. The underlying

rationale is “*that policies improve through collaborating with others*” (interviewee 3), thus creating a common urgency for a topic and supported solutions. One interviewee also emphasises the collaboration between citizens and governments, by arguing that ideally they jointly come to an agreement regarding policies instead of governments using a top-down method to implement policies (interviewee 8).

Moreover, the rise of citizens initiatives and the voluntary involvement of elderly people is regarded as a possible development (interviewee 5). Such initiatives can be perceived as government participation which brings along the risk of investing for the government. There is uncertainty about the continued existence of these initiative. One of the reasons is that there are often a lot of volunteers involved in managing the initiative. Since it is not mandatory to be involved there is a risk that a prominent member quits (e.g. due to age) which might have a huge impact on the organization. Besides, a barrier to this kind of government participation is the lack of a standardized contract format to organise the practical side of a citizen initiative.

Another development is combined usage of mini-publics and maxi-publics (interviewee 2). In such a case, the results of a mini-public can be tested in a maxi-public, to determine whether the results are in line with the interest of a larger group. This concept has already been applied before and it is conceivable that the usage of these combinations will be explored more.

Interestingly, some interviewees mention the possibility of a decrease in the level of citizen participation (interviewee 8). This could result from both developments on the side of policymakers and citizens. From the perspective of policymakers, the multitude of methods and tools make it increasingly difficult for governments to use them in the right way. As a result, the motivation to conduct citizen participation could decrease (interviewee 6). From the perspective of citizens, there might be a growing sentiment that governments, not citizens, are responsible for creating policies (interviewee 8). This group of citizens do not appreciate to be highly involved, especially in the early stages of the decision-making process when the topic is still relatively broad.

5.5.3 Other future developments

A development that should be monitored is the relatively low level of trust and even distrust in the government and society in general (interviewees 2 and 10). Interviewee 8 mentions the influence of digitalization on trust. Trust could be negatively influenced if digital means are used for the wrong ends. Though digitalization also offers the opportunity to shape the involvement and communication with citizens in a new and better way. Besides, interviewee 7 argues that an increase of trust in the added value of citizen participation by policymakers, should be strived for in the future. This interviewee also states that awareness should increase about the possibility to solve issues deliberatively. If individual and public interests are aligned, then it offers an opportunity to create a supported outcome using citizen participation. Otherwise, governmental institution are needed to balance the different interests.

Additionally, almost half of the interviewees express interests in the development of the Dutch democracy in itself and the way citizen participation would fit system. One interviewee states that the current system is designed in such a way that elected officials feel the need to prove their relevance to voters within the four years for which they are chosen (interviewee 4). Nevertheless, most of the current issues require long-term solutions and cannot be solved within four years. Apparently citizens are able to participate in creating long-term solutions for these issues with proper guidance (interviewee 4).

The impact of (social) media on citizen participation is also brought up during the interviews (interviewee 1). The media put pressure on the elected officials to organize successful participation trajectories. Besides, the media can give insights into government processes and might reveal cases of misconduct. In response to this misconduct, the need for citizen participation and the involvement of the public could increase.

5.6 Strategies in anticipation of future developments

Several strategies are suggested by interviewees to anticipate future trends. Increasing the low level of trust can be difficult, since citizen's beliefs are often deeply embedded in their perspective. Nevertheless, there are some strategies that could deal with the decreasing level of trust. One approach is that the government should be trustworthy and truthful to what has been agreed on (interviewees 2 and 10). Besides, interviewee 2 argues that applying more participation might not be the right response to this development. Instead, the government is already investing in improving mediation skills of policymakers. The purpose is not per se to act as a mediator, but rather to use the skills to improve the relationship between government and citizens. Citizen participation is perceived to possibly limit the impact of this trend combined with creating a shared understanding and necessity of the problem. An example of a societal transition for which this can work is the energy transition (interviewee 10).

In addition, interviewee 4 indicates that citizens also need the government to trust citizens to organise things themselves. A potential strategy for the government is to facilitate citizen initiatives by for example offering financial support or taking over administrative tasks. Besides, the government should create a standardised contract format for agreements between the government and citizens initiatives. Currently this is an obstacle and addressing it would facilitate the collaboration (interviewee 5). The advantage of this strategy for the government is that they positively improve their image by showing that they can work together with citizens as equal partners.

Furthermore, interviewee 3 highlights that digitalization will impact society and citizen participation. Thus for a government it is important to learn how to deal with it. This interviewee argues that digitalization is a trend that should not be ignored or shut out. On top of that, interviewee 12 suggests strategies to deal with disinformation by warning individuals for the possibility of encountering disinformation, and increasing the knowledge about how digital platforms work.

To stimulate a change in the democratic system, interviewee 4 states that the first step should be a national civil council. In organising such a civil council, experiences with this method on local level can be used. The insights from this civil council, combined with insights from civil councils in other countries are important for moving towards a different democratic system.

5.7 Perspective on the Participatory Value Evaluation

The PVE has been mentioned in previous chapters as an emerging method of citizen participation; focusing on the involvement of a large group of citizens using a digital tool. Since interviewees were aware that this research is conducted in collaboration with Populytics, the PVE was a method that was mentioned by several interviewees. Possibly this could result in recommendations specifically aimed at this method.

Interviewee 5 describes the advantage of the usage of a PVE as follows: *“You are putting the citizen in the seat of the policymaker and that it is not black and white as in a referendum”*. Thus the PVE lets citizens reason from a different perspective. This results in insights into the nuanced opinion of citizens and the relative importance of certain societal values. Besides, citizens can experience the complexity of the decisions that the policymakers need to make. Regarding the design of a PVE, there are different formats available, which offers the possibility to design a PVE in alignment with the context and objectives of a specific issue (interviewee 2).

It should be noted that this method also has its limitations or challenges, with one of them being the fact that it is still addressing a certain group of citizens, namely people who are digitally skilled (interviewee 6). One interviewee indicates that the method lacks the possibility to make a clear decision; whether to implement the policy or not. Additionally, from the perspective of policymakers, there are a few challenges or barriers to the usage of a PVE. Firstly, the different formats of the method make it confusing for policymakers to know which one is suitable for a specific issue. If indeed a PVE is used, it can be difficult for policymakers to interpret and use the results in their policy design. One suggestion

is that this might also depend on the stage in which a PVE is used. In addition, when a PVE is used in the beginning of the decision-making process, the results may be too abstract to be of usage because in this stage there are several uncertainties (interviewee 2). Conducting a PVE in a more concrete phase of the trajectory might generate more concrete results.

In dealing with these challenges, interviewees suggest to clarify which formats of a PVE are available and the situations in which each format is useful (interviewee 5). Additionally, it is important to emphasise in what way a PVE can assist the decision-making; thus how can the results be used in the policy design? One interviewee (interviewee 2) suggests to try to point out what possible results can be and what they could mean for the policy. Another recommendation from an interviewee is to increase the feedback from participants themselves on the method (interviewee 5).

6. Discussion

Based on the literature research and the results, this chapter will focus on discussing the results. Firstly, the implications of the results will be explored. Thereafter the contribution of the results and the implications for the scientific community are discussed. Lastly, limitations of this research are reviewed.

6.1 Implications of the results

From the results can be derived that interviewees identify a wide range of objectives. In general, there is agreement that citizens should be involved and that involvement is part of the Dutch democracy. This confirms the general scientific perspective on citizen participation, such as stated by Michels (2006). Interestingly almost every interviewee referred back to (one of) the three main categories of objectives; normative, substantive and instrumental. Nevertheless, mainly objectives that align with a normative or substantive rationale are mentioned, while the instrumental rationale is least pointed out. Interestingly, in general the interviewees that are characterised as visionaries put more emphasis on normative objectives. More often they relate citizen participation to the Dutch democracy. Among policymakers, the substantive goal is mentioned more often than among visionaries and academic researchers. Academic researchers point out both objectives of citizen participation and an overall emphasis cannot be derived.

From the interviews it can be derived that even the interviewees that put more emphasis on the normative aspect of citizen participation have a different perspective on the role of citizen participation in a democracy. Thus, their view of citizen participation in the democracy varies significantly. There are interviewees who rationalize from the perspective of the representative democracy. From their point of view, the institutionalized ways through which citizens can currently be involved, should be appreciated and those should be the baseline. Other participatory methods can be used in addition to those, though they should have a clear purpose with regards to the principles of a representative democracy. In contrast to those, there are interviewees whose reasoning aligns with the direct democracy, which implies that citizens should be more directly involved in policy making. Voting in official elections is not sufficient compared to the needs of citizens. Besides, some interviewees value the deliberative democracy in which deliberation is a central element.

Accordingly, as indicated previously, instrumental objectives are barely appointed by practitioners. In fact, the literature indicates that support is a goal of citizen participation, such as the article by Geurtz and Van de Wijdeven (2010). However, practitioners indicate that support should not be seen as an objective. Rather, it should be perceived as a beneficial side effect. This perspective is mainly shared by policymakers while practitioners from the other categories barely emphasise the relation between citizen participation and support of the resulting policy. There is one practitioner, who is not categorised as a policymaker, who argues that support of the policy could be an objective of citizen participation.

Based on solely the finding of this research, the implication for scientific literature would be to continue with two main rationales instead of three; being the normative and the substantive rationale. Apparently, the instrumental rationale is not emphasised in practice. However, this research does not include the perception of all Dutch practitioners. The sample of leading Dutch practitioners offers insights into how citizen participation is perceived in practice, though it is not complete despite efforts to include a diverse group of leading practitioners in this field. Therefore it might be that a group with a deviating perception, who attach a high value to the instrumental rationale, has not been interviewed. Thus leaving out the instrumental rationale in scientific literature based on this research is disputable.

From the differences in perspectives, it can be concluded that it is impossible to strive for a democracy in which citizen participation is organized in such a way that everyone is satisfied. It is clear that even Dutch practitioners are not aligned in their view on the role and development of citizen participation. This is particularly noticeable in the interviews with visionaries, who in general view citizen participation in the context of the Dutch democracy. Nonetheless, in general there is a prevailing

sentiment that the current democratic system needs to change; either by introducing new institutions for citizen participation or by firstly reflecting on the foundations of the representative democracy. Geurtz and Van de Wijdeven (2010) identify two similar reactions to discontent with the democracy on local level in the Netherlands; being the reaffirmation of the representative democracy or the integration of elements of the direct participatory democracy. This research shows that these perspectives are also hold for a national level. Besides, there is other scientific literature that explores the integration of direct-democratic aspects into the representative democracy (Coffé & Michels, 2014; Trüdinger & Bächtiger, 2023). Among practitioners, a similar tendency can be identified. Transferring (part of) the decision-making mandate to citizens and wanting to implement the right to have a referendum are direct democratic elements that are mentioned by practitioners. These suggestions are related to giving more decision-making power to the citizens.

The results indicate that there are a lot of ways to involve citizens. Practitioners that reason more from the perspective of a deliberative or direct democracy often stress the advantages of methods such as a citizens' assemblies and referendums. These methods delegate part of the decision-making mandate to the citizens instead of the elected officials, which is in line with the characteristics of these democratic frameworks (Ryfe, 2005; Scarrow, 2001). This is opposite to the practitioners that reason from the perspective of the representative democracy, who argue that the mandate should be with the representatives.

The introduction of new methods for citizen participation does not imply that current participation methods will be replaced by new methods. The results indicate that there will always be a need for more traditional methods as well, such as face-to-face meetings or discussions. The choice for a participation method depends on the context, including the phase in the decision-making process and the target group. Besides every method excludes part of the population. Therefore practitioners emphasise that a mix of methods is a solution to maximize the target group of the participation. This combination could include using both large-scale citizen participation and small-scale citizen participation.

Practitioners also point out advantages and limitations of specific methods. They argue that a referendum has the advantage of a low entry barrier to participate and can be used to increase legitimacy of the decision-making, as is also stated in literature (Mouter, Hernandez, et al., 2021). Moreover, referendums internalise the individual decision-making process and could even result in a broader public discussion. Besides, the PVE is mentioned to have its advantages and disadvantages. Practitioners experience the PVE as a suitable method to let citizens experience the perspective of the policymakers, which is also mentioned as an advantage in literature (Mouter, Shortall et al., 2021). In addition, it offers a nuanced insight into the perspective of citizens on a specific topic. The PVE has been used in various context, such as the COVID-19 measures and mobility investments (Mouter et al., 2019; Mouter, Hernandez, et al., 2021). Practitioners add to the literature that the flexibility in the format of a PVE is an advantage, though it also causes confusion in selecting a format that is suitable for a specific context. Another point of concern of practitioners is the interpretation of the results, which can be difficult and abstract. Therefore they argue that there should be more clarification regarding the usage of the PVE in practice.

Referring back to the MLP framework by Geels (2002), one of the research perspectives focused on the identifying challenges and improvements of the socio-technical system. In this case the system refers to the system of citizen participation in public decision-making in the Netherlands. On the other hand, improvements can be identified on a landscape level. These developments influence the way the system is operating, though the developments can hardly be deliberately influenced by the system. Though changes on both levels of the framework cannot be viewed as completely separate from each other.

From the identified challenges, it becomes clear that the system in itself needs changing. Practitioners, mainly policymakers and visionaries, indicate that throughout the whole participation process communication is a major challenge. Part of this change is up to policymakers themselves. They should communicate more clearly to citizens what the participation is about, how much decision-making power

citizens have and how results are integrated in the policy. Besides, inclusiveness and representation of the public prevails to be a challenge. To improve this aspect, it is beneficial to use various participation methods that appeal to different groups of citizens. Moreover, there is also a responsibility to the general government to offer policymakers resources (time) to gain experiences (both positive and negative) and use this to improve citizen participation.

On a landscape level, one of the main developments is going to be further digitalization according to policymakers and visionaries. The implications of this development for the regime are positive in the way that it offers opportunities to complement the existing participatory system. Digital developments can result in new ways to communicate with citizens, to inform citizens about complex issues and to involve citizens in the decision-making process (Manoharan & Holzer, 2012). Besides it is a way to connect people and make them aware of different perspectives on a specific topic. Nonetheless, it could also facilitate further polarisation. On a system-level, it is important for policymakers not to ignore such digital technologies, but instead learn how to deal with them. There should be awareness about new developments within this sector. In addition, digitalization offers new methods to conduct citizen participation on a system level. Though practitioners agree that the need for traditional participation methods will remain. Every method appeals to a certain group of citizens, including the traditional methods. An emerging trend that adds to this is combining different participation methods. This includes the combination of maxi-public and mini-public (also referred to as large-scale and small-scale methods). Currently, there is sparse scientific literature available about this, with the article by Itten and Mouter (2022) being an example.

Another possible development concerns the role and responsibility of citizens in the decision-making process. Practitioners indicate that concepts like co-creation and citizens initiatives are likely to continue to develop in the future. This confirms scientific literature about these concepts (Rădulescu et al., 2020; van Aalderen & Horlings, 2020; Van Der Knaap et al., 2019; Voorberg et al., 2017). If the need for such concepts indeed increases, then on a system level, the government should consider how it can be facilitated. This can include creating institutions to standardise the processes and offer ways to facilitate the citizens initiatives. A contradictory trend is that citizen participation decreases because citizens perceive public decision-making to be a task for policymakers and the government. Besides, the multitude of participation methods makes it harder for policymakers to select suitable methods for a specific context.

The improvement of citizen participation is sometimes bigger than improvements of single elements of citizen participation. Involving citizens is in general important in the democracy, though the way in which citizen participation is used, should align with the underlying democratic system in the Netherlands. Perhaps instead of improving citizen participation in itself, it is more important to analyse the functioning of the democratic system. In response to discontent about the representative democracy, there is already a shift towards integrating direct democratic aspects. Nonetheless, other practitioners argue that the foundation of the representative democracy should be reflected upon first. Thereafter the role of citizen participation should be reviewed.

Additionally, the results can be related to frameworks for citizen participation. When considering Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969), it can be derived that partnership in the form of co-creation and citizens initiatives, is an emerging trend, thus increasing the extent to which citizens have power over decisions. This trend complements the currently state of practice of citizen participation that is largely focused on consulting citizens. Within the democracy cube framework by Fung (2006) this implies that there would be a general shift towards co-governing and direct authority on the dimension of authority and power. Besides, on the dimension of communication and decision mode, the emphasis would be on deliberate and negotiate, and aggregate and bargain. Thus in general, citizen participation is moving away from letting citizens develop preferences and letting them advise policymakers (in a non-binding way) and instead might be evolving towards government participation in initiatives by citizens.

6.2 Contribution of the research

6.2.1 Scientific contribution

The findings of this research contribute to the existing research regarding citizen participation in public decision-making. The fact that this research derives conclusions from Dutch practitioners distinguishes it from other scientific articles about this topic. By gaining insights from experienced practitioners that have been involved in a variety of different participatory processes, this research offers a broader view on citizen participation instead of one case. One of the main challenges throughout the participation process is the communication towards citizens. Policymakers need to provide clarity regarding the scope of the participation process which include the decisions that have already been made and the role of citizens in the decision-making process. This requires policymakers to have sufficient knowledge of the specific situation.

Furthermore, this findings of this research emphasise the importance of the combination of and coherence between different participation methods. Practitioners indicate that every method excludes a part of the target group and that a mix of different participation methods maximizes the group of citizens that is approached. There are various participation methods, including digital, offline, large-scale of small-scale methods.

Besides, a contribution to science is made in identifying future developments that are likely to impact citizen participation. These developments are difficult to influence by practitioners. An often-mentioned development is further digitalization, which impacts how policymakers and citizens communicate. This development offers new possibilities to organise citizen participation, though it could also facilitate polarisation. The impact of this trend is inevitable, thus policymakers should learn how to cope with digital developments instead of neglecting this development.

In addition, the findings confirm scientific literature that emphasises the development of co-creation in public decision-making and the emergence of citizens initiatives. Policymakers should facilitate such developments and could even develop suitable institutions to make the process more efficient for themselves and citizens.

Lastly, findings indicate that most practitioners are aware of the different objectives for which citizen participation can be used. Though the findings of this research add that in practice the emphasis is on normative and substantive objectives, and that citizen participation is to lesser extent used for an instrumental objective. Majority of the practitioners even highlight that creating support should not be regarded as an objective itself, it is rather a positive side effect. Amongst the practitioners with a normative rationale, there are significant difference in the perspective on the role of citizen participation in society.

6.2.2 Societal contribution

For practitioners and society, the relevance of this research can be found in the fact that it offers practical implications and recommendations. These are combined insights from practitioners with different perspectives on the topic. Nonetheless, they address similar issues and strategies to deal with them. This might show that, differences aside, there are also common points that need to be worked on. Various practitioners indicate that citizen participation is such a broad and context-depending topic that a solution is not easy to find and there might not even be one correct solution. Therefore the recommendations might not entail off-the-shelf solutions for the challenges. The findings of this research do offer some solutions directions and issues that need to be discussed before the challenges can be resolved. If practitioners embrace, concretise and integrate these outcomes into the current system, it can result in an improvement of the usage citizen participation and hence the Dutch democratic system.

6.3 Limitations and recommendations for further research

6.3.1 Limitations and recommendations regarding the scope of the research

With conducting this master's thesis, several decisions have been made which has implications for the research outcomes. Firstly, this research focuses specifically on the development of citizen participation in the Netherlands and possible improvements. The Dutch democratic system and the role of citizen participation within this system, have some characteristics that might limit the generalizability of the outcome of this research. In general, the Netherlands has a western democracy, with specific aspects, such as the poldermodel. Besides the citizens can be characterised as outspoken and direct, thus they might behave differently in relation to participation. To improve this generalizability, similar research should be conducted within a different context to compare whether the outcomes hold for different systems as well. This can be addressed by conducting the research in a non-western democracy, though it is also relevant to conduct it in a western democracy to analyse whether it characteristics of the citizens themselves impact the outcome of the research.

Besides a deliberate decision was made to conduct this research from the perspective of Dutch practitioners, who are mainly involved with top-down participation rather than bottom up. With several practitioners indicating that there could be a shift to bottom-up citizen participation (e.g. citizen initiatives), it is equally relevant to explore this research topic from the perspective of citizens. Hence, it is recommended to investigate whether there is a shared perception of challenges, of future developments and of improvements. This is a recommended research direction for follow-up research. This research has less emphasis on topics such as what citizens need to participate or how they prefer to participate. For gaining the right insights from citizens, it is important that participation is aligned with the needs of citizens.

Another decision related to the scope of this research is the fact that it is focused on citizen participation in public decision-making. Nevertheless, participation and citizen participation are not concepts that are only used in the context of public decision-making. Similar research also has added value for decision-making processes that do not involve the government. Employee participation within a company is a different context in which participation can be organized. It is disputable to what extent the outcomes of this research are generalizable to these kind of decisions given their differences. One of the main differences is that employees are officially employed by the company and they deliver certain services or products. It could be interesting to focus future research on identifying improvements and future development in the context of a company's decision-making process. A possibility is to research this from the perspective of practitioners of citizen participation related to companies and compare findings.

6.3.2 Limitations and recommendations regarding the methodology and findings

Additionally, there are limitations to the methodology used to acquire relevant knowledge to answer the main research question. An exploration of the literature is used to gain insights into the concept of citizen participation and its frequently mentioned objectives. Since this was not a structured literature review, it is possible that some relevant scientific articles are missing. Thus this literature exploration could be more extensive if this research was conducted again, including a wider range of scientific papers. This could have influenced the general overview of objectives that are mentioned in literature. At the same time, it is important to note that this is mainly problematic if there are very contradictory articles missing. If additional articles include similar objectives, the overall perception does not change significantly.

Another limitation of this research is the validity of this research, which can be connected to several aspects of the methodology. Having interviews as a main research method implies that individuals within the target group should be willing to be part of this research. In this case the target group consisted of leading Dutch practitioners, because it is impossible to consider all practitioners in this sector. Thus this research started out with important practitioners. Besides the thirteen Dutch practitioners that have been interviewed, other practitioners with interesting perspectives were contacted as well. However they either did not respond or indicated that they were not able to contribute. Thus although a range of

different perspectives are included in this research, it is not and may never be complete. Just as for the definition of citizen participation, there are a plethora of perspectives on the usage and implementation of citizen participation. When conducting similar research, this aspect can be improved by interviewing more practitioners. Nonetheless the fact that multiple practitioners sometimes identify the same issues or topics can be perceived as a form of validation. Furthermore, the fact that interviewees had to approve the summaries can be considered to contribute to the interpretive validity (Johnson, 1997). The approval by the interviewees can be regarded as approval of the interpretation and understanding of the interview as summarized by the researcher.

Since this research was conducted as master's thesis, the time period was limited, hence future research should take more time to contact and interview practitioners. This can increase validity of the research. It should be noted that it is disputable whether an increase of practitioners would have led to significantly different insights. If this research lacks the input from practitioners with a very contradictory perspective compared to the current findings, it could be a problem. However, if practitioners with similar perspectives are missing, then it would be less of an issue. Those practitioners would be confirming the findings rather than leading to substantially different insights. Literature refers to this as the concept of saturation which broadly denotes the point at which no new insights are gained by conducting an additional interview (Hennink et al., 2017).

Moreover, an aspects that might limit validity is related to the identification of future trends by practitioners. It was expected that the interviewees would be able to use their experience and knowledge to identify future trends or developments. Nevertheless, those developments were often based on the current state of practice, thus the first signs of the possible development were already visible in the current situation. Interviewees hardly identified future trends that still need to be developed and might only be a concept (in words) at this moment in time. In speculating a possible reason for why respondents did not identify completely new and not-yet-existing trends, there are various possibilities. It is likely that the method and interview questions might not be a suitable way to gain the right insights. Perhaps another method would have been better to gain insights into future trends. The implication for further research is that a wider range of methods should be considered for identifying future developments. Another explanation is that the future is simply unknown and therefore practitioners cannot give information about possible future trends. Perhaps the Dutch society is situated right before an unexpected break-through of a very impactful trends, but individuals are not aware of this until it is actually in their lives. This is a difficult limitation to deal with in further research, though it is something that researchers should be aware of when conducting research about the future.

Regarding the reliability of the outcome and interpretation of the results, the interview questions and some of the outcomes were shared with supervisors. Getting their perspectives on the results was an external check to examine whether their interpretation was aligned with that of the researcher. Nevertheless, this external reliability check could be more extensive by letting multiple external individuals review all the summaries.

In addition, from the results it can be derived that practitioners have not indicated a solution for every challenge. Therefore this research does not offer improvements that relate to all the presented challenges. Future research should try to gain more insights into how certain solutions or strategies are able to deal with challenges of citizen participation.

7. Conclusion

Having answered the sub-questions, conclusions can be drawn. The aim of this research was to give substance to the existing knowledge gap. There is a lack of insights into how citizen participation is going to develop in the upcoming decades, based on the experiences and perspectives of Dutch practitioners. In this chapter, conclusions are presented that answer the following main research question:

How can citizen participation be improved in the coming decade according to Dutch practitioners?

In order to answer the main research question, several sub-questions were formulated. Both literature research and interviews were used to gain the relevant knowledge needed to answer the questions. Scientific literature was explored to shape the scope and content of the interviews that were conducted. Once the sub-questions have been answered, the main research question can be answered, taking into account the knowledge gained by answering the sub-questions. This chapter first addresses the sub-questions, after which an answer to the main research question can be formulated.

7.1 Answering sub-questions

The first sub-question is '*How can citizen participation be defined for this research?*'. This sub-question aims at positioning this research in the broader research area and scoping the concept of citizen participation. An exploration of scientific literature was used to answer this sub-question. The main points to which this literature review led, are the fact that, following the Multi-Level Perspective Framework by Geels (2002), this research focuses on challenges and improvements on a system level, as well as trends that develop on a landscape level. Besides citizen participation is, in this research, interpreted as the involvement of citizens in public decision-making. There are various frameworks available for characterising citizen participation of which this research focuses on Arnstein's ladder of participation and Fung's democracy cube (Arnstein, 1969; Fung, 2006). Besides, the purpose of citizen participation can be related to the type of democracy. Literature distinguishes numerous democratic frameworks with distinctive characteristics; including the representative democracy as known in the Netherlands. Other widely-known frameworks are the direct democracy and the deliberative democracy. A last element that is relevant for this sub-question is the different methods that are used for citizen participation. There are many ways to involve citizens into public decision-making processes, though some are more known than others. In preparation of the interviews with Dutch practitioners, it is relevant to have an overview of known and commonly used methods, including the Participatory Value Evaluation, polls, surveys, referendums, participatory budgeting, citizens' assemblies and citizens' forums.

The second sub-question is '*What are the objectives for which a participatory process is used?*'. The goal of this question was to gain insights into the objectives that were mentioned in literature. From the literature exploration, three main categories of objectives can be distinguished; substantive, normative and instrumental. Every main category entails sub objectives. The normative rationale entails the objectives legitimacy and collaboration between citizens and politicians. The substantive rationale includes the exchange of knowledge and information, the contribution to shaping/designing public policies, and the improvement of the quality of public policies. The instrumental rationale distinguishes the objectives of increasing trust in the government, increasing acceptance of public policies and inclusiveness.

The third sub-question is '*What are the most important goals of citizen participation and to what extent are they achieved according to Dutch practitioners?*'. In general, it can be concluded that the involvement of citizens in public policy-making is important. The substantive and normative objectives are emphasised among Dutch practitioners, while the instrumental objectives are mentioned less. Thus, practitioners value the instrumental reasons for citizen participation less. Results indicate that the objectives differ per participatory process and that sub objectives are often defined per project. This

makes it difficult to clearly indicate whether they are generally achieved or not. Hence there is not one answer to this sub-question. From the objectives, it becomes clear that there is no predominant vision of the position of citizen participation in the Dutch democracy.

The fourth sub-question is *‘What are current challenges of citizen participation and how to deal with those challenges according to Dutch practitioners?’*. This sub-question is aimed at identifying challenges and points of improvements of the current way in which citizen participation is designed. The answer to this question is acquired by conducting interviews. Regarding the challenges, these can be structured in five categories that are related to the participatory process: preparation phase, participation phase, output phase, overall participatory process, and the democracy.

Within the preparation phase, the most important challenges are representation and inclusion of different groups of citizens. Complete inclusion is not possible, since every participation method excludes a part of the citizens. The main solution strategy to deal with this challenges is to explore different and new participation methods that appeal to the target groups that are currently absent during participation processes.

During the participation, the main challenge is the awareness among citizens about the fact that participation is possible. An approach to improve this is to create a central website which gives an overview of the ways citizens can participate.

Regarding the output phase, the most important challenge is the extent to which results are integrated in the policy, the way in which participants are informed about this and how policymakers use the experience in subsequent processes. Policymakers should be aware of the context and the policy space to integrate the outcome of citizen participation. If policymakers have this knowledge, it should be communicated to citizens as well. In learning from participation processes, communication about positive aspects and points of improvement between government levels should be enhanced.

The main challenges related to the overall participation process include the communication with citizens, the trade-off with regards to when to involve the citizens, and the governmental system. Practitioners indicate that policymakers should have sufficient knowledge about the issue and communicate to citizens in an open and honest way. This includes communicating about issues that are sensitive or may not align with the preferences of citizens. To determine when to conduct citizen participation, policymakers should be aware of the context and of the added value that citizen participation could bring in a specific phase of the decision-making. Dealing with the governmental system includes strategies to increase heterogeneity within the government to make it a better reflection of society, and make it possible for policymakers to create new experiences with citizen participation.

With regards to the Dutch democracy, the main challenge is the way in which citizen participation and the involvement of citizens is institutionalized. Practitioners argue that it is important to reflect upon the functioning of the democratic system. If there is a clear vision about the Dutch democracy, then the role of citizen participation should be discussed in relation to this democracy.

The fifth sub-question is *‘What are the implications of future developments for citizen participation according to Dutch practitioners?’*. The purpose of this sub-question is to identify future trends that will impact citizen participation as it is currently conducted. The answer to this sub-question is based on the interview results. From these results, the most frequently mentioned development is digitalization. Although this trend can offer positive opportunities, it can also facilitate polarisation within the society. The findings suggest that it is better for policymakers to learn how to cope with new technologies, instead of blissful ignorance. Policymakers should view this trend as an opportunity to reshape the way they communicate and inform citizens. In addition, a possible future development is the further development of co-creating policies and citizens initiatives. In such cases the government should support citizens in organising themselves. Another possibility is a reverse development of citizen participation,

which entails that citizens' need to be involved in public decision-making will decrease. This group of citizens views making decisions to be the responsibility of the government.

7.2 Answering main research question

Having answered the sub-questions, makes it possible to answer the main research question: *How can citizen participation be improved in the coming decade according to Dutch practitioners?*

The question will be answered from two perspectives, based on the findings generated by interviews with leading Dutch practitioners. On the one hand, improvements are identified based on the current state of practice. On the other hand, improvements are identified in anticipation on future trends.

Firstly, within the current system of citizen participation, inclusivity and representativity of citizen participation should be improved. Some target groups are barely involved in citizen participation, thus it is necessary to actively approach those underrepresented groups of citizens. This can be achieved by using participation methods that align with the preferences of these citizens, actively seeking contact with the target group and exploring combinations of different participation methods. Improving inclusivity and representativity may also require a change of government structure. Moving towards a more heterogeneous group of policymakers could improve the design of participatory processes. Since the design reflects the heterogeneity of its designers, it could be more appealing for the heterogeneous society.

Besides, communication should be improved in every phase of the participatory process. Policymakers should be more clear towards citizens about the scope of the participatory process, what decisions have already been made and how the outcome is going to be used in the decision-making process. To improve this communication, an important task is with the policymakers and the supporting governmental system. Before being able to communicate those points to citizens, it is important for policymakers themselves to reflect whether they have the all the necessary information to communicate it to citizens. Additionally, they should be aware of the added value of citizen participation and be given the opportunity to gain experience with citizen participation. This experience can subsequently be diffused through the governmental system.

The other perspective was to identify future developments that influence citizen participation. The main trend is further digitalization, which can facilitate new ways to communicate and organize citizen participation. It should be noted that putting effort in coping with digital technologies should not be the only focus in improving citizen participation. There will still be a need for physical ways to participate. Another trend is the emergence of government participation and citizens initiatives. Enhancing this trend can improve citizen participation since the concept aligns with the apparent participation needs of citizens and requires a supporting government. Policymakers should be open to giving responsibilities and trust to citizens. Besides, institutions for arranging such collaborations should be improved on a system level.

Trends such as digitalization on landscape level that result in changing methods for citizen participation can require changes on system level. New ways through which citizens express their opinions and perspectives should be taken seriously and perhaps even be institutionalized. This improves citizen participation because if methods align with the citizens' needs, the outcomes could be more meaningful for policymakers.

The improvement of citizen participation is sometimes bigger than improvements of single elements of citizen participation. Involving citizens is in general important in a democracy. Though the Dutch democracy can also develop in the future, which impacts the role of citizens in the decision-making process. Thus instead of improving citizen participation in itself, it is perhaps relevant to analyse the functioning of the democratic system. Findings indicate that in response to discontent about the representative democracy, there is already a shift towards integrating direct democratic aspects. While some practitioners perceive this as an improvement, others argue that the foundation of the

representative democracy should be reflected upon first. Thereafter the role of citizen participation should be reviewed.

In addition to the identified improvements and recommendations, this research provides a more general insight regarding the usage of citizen participation in public decision-making. In general, practitioners agree that citizen participation could be of added value to the decision-making process and that there are opportunities for improvement. An important aspect in organising citizen participation is the interaction and relation between policymakers and citizens. Understanding each other's role and communicating clearly could be beneficial for the participation process.

When citizen participation is used, it is essential to reflect beforehand upon why and in what form citizen participation is applied in a specific context. The findings indicate that there are differences of opinion among practitioners about the exact role that citizens should have; be it a mandate to decide, to advise or something else. During the design of each participation process, this should be discussed. Besides, there are fundamentally different perspectives on the function of citizen participation in relation to the representative democracy. The diversity regarding the future development of the democracy cannot be eliminated and should therefore be accepted. This also implies that a framework of the ideal democracy, including the function of citizen participation, that everyone supports probably does not exist.

7.3 Recommendations for practitioners

The recommendations for practitioners that follow from this research are twofold. Firstly, recommendations can be given for Dutch practitioners that are involved with designing participatory processes. Since this research was conducted from the perspective of policymakers and those with the mandate to make decisions, this research could contain relevant points of action. To realize the improvements, the first step would be to create awareness among policymakers about the usage of citizen participation methods and to allow them to gain positive experiences with it. Evidently, not all experiences will be positives, but it is important to accomplish a change in how participation is organised by policymakers. Another recommendation for Dutch practitioners is to explore what combinations of participation methods are effective. The findings indicate that it is likely that a combination of methods is needed to involve different groups of citizens.

In addition, since this research is conducted in collaboration with Populytics, some specific recommendations can be given regarding the service that they offer. Populytics is mainly responsible for conducting a PVE, analysing the results and communicating this in a report. Interviewees recognize the added value of the PVE, including the fact that it is able to bring some nuance into the perspectives of citizens and that it is able to appeal to a large audience. As for all participation methods, also the PVE excludes a part of the citizens, being the ones that are not digitally skilled. To limit the excluded group of citizens, it might be valuable to experiment with different durations of PVE's, so that citizens are able to participate in a way that suits their preferences (and time resources). Moreover, various practitioners argued that a PVE is part of a larger participatory trajectory parallel to the public decision-making process. Thus the usage of a PVE cannot be seen in isolation from this entire trajectory, even though Populytics is often only responsible for part of the trajectory.

Besides, it is recommended to clarify when and how the PVE and its results can be used by policymakers. There are different formats of the PVE and the usage of a format depends on the context. Thus, from the perspective of the policymakers, the barrier for usage might be lowered if insight is given in the circumstance under which a specific format of the PVE is useful. This information can be provided based on past experiences and projects of Populytics.

Additionally, Populytics indicated that they perceive one of the objectives of the PVE to be the contribution to support for the resulting policymakers. According to practitioners, this objective is not a priority and citizen participation is deployed for mostly normative and substantive reasons. Hence, this difference might be something to reflect upon in relation to their strategy and service.

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Appendix A: Search strings literature research

As stated before, literature research was needed regarding several topics related to citizen participation. In short, scientific literature was needed regarding the concept of citizen participation, democratic frameworks, participatory methods and objectives. The literature research was done by using relevant search strings in SCOPUS. These search strings are presented in Table A.1 by topic. The resulting papers which were quick scanned (title and abstract) for relevance. After selecting relevant articles, those are read in search for relevant information that has added value for the literature research. Moreover, based on these results, snowballing was used to retrieve other relevant articles. Sometimes, Google Scholar was used to find additional papers about specific topic, based on the literature from SCOPUS.

Table A.1: Search strings in SCOPUS

Topic	Search string (in SCOPUS)	Number of papers
Citizen participation	"citizens participation" OR "citizen participation" AND "success factors"	20
	"citizen participation" AND "literature review"	4
	Only search in title "citizen participation" OR "citizens participation" OR "public participation") AND (decision-making) AND (LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY , "Netherlands")) AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD , "Netherlands")	44
Democratic frameworks	types AND of AND democracy AND "representative democracy" AND "direct democracy"	26
	"direct democracy" "participatory democracy" "representative democracy"	30
Participatory methods	"participatory value evaluation"	11
	design AND innovation AND citizen AND participation AND policy AND making	34
Objectives	(goal OR objective) AND ("citizen participation" OR "citizens participation") AND ("decision making" OR "decision-making") Non-western/non-developed countries are excluded. Sorted by publication date	105

Appendix B: Interview questions

This appendix contains the interview questions for the semi-structured interview and were send to the interviewees before the interview took place.

Het interview zal semigestructureerd zijn, waarbij de volgende vragen structuur geven aan het interview:

Op dit moment wordt/is grootschalige burgerparticipatie voor verschillende maatschappelijke vraagstukken gebruikt in publieke besluitvormingsprocessen. Bij grootschalige burgerparticipatie krijgt iedereen de mogelijkheid om deel te nemen en vindt er vooraf geen selectie plaats op deelnemers. Een voorbeeld is de nationale Klimaatraadpleging.

Wat vind je goed gaan bij de inzet van grootschalige burgerparticipatie? Welke aspecten zou je willen behouden voor de toekomst? Zijn er aspecten die minder goed gaan en verbeterd moeten worden (noem de 2 belangrijkste)?

Wat zijn de doelen van burgerparticipatie? En wat beschouw je als de belangrijkste drie?

Worden deze doelen in de praktijk ook vaak behaald? Zo niet, zou er een verklaring kunnen zijn voor het niet behalen van een bepaald doel? Zijn er wellicht conflicterende doelstellingen?

Hoe kunnen we ervoor zorgen dat doelen die momenteel niet behaald worden, in de toekomst wel behaald kunnen worden?

Een wat concretere vraag; wat was het laatste participatietraject waar je bij betrokken was? Stel het budget voor dit project wordt verdubbeld; waar zou je dit extra budget aan uitgeven?

De afgelopen jaren is burgerparticipatie veranderd, mede door grote ontwikkelingen op digitaal gebied. Als we vooruit gaan kijken naar burgerparticipatie over 10 of zelfs 20 jaar; wat zijn (maatschappelijke) ontwikkelingen die een grote invloed gaan hebben op het succes of falen van burgerparticipatie?

Hoe kunnen we omgaan met deze ontwikkelingen? Ofwel hoe kan burgerparticipatie inspelen op positieve trends en hoe kan burgerparticipatie anticiperen op ontwikkelingen die wellicht een negatieve impact gaan hebben op burgerparticipatie?

En tot slot; zijn er andere experts of beleidsmakers met wie ik in gesprek kan gaan over dit onderwerp?

Vraag die mogelijk gesteld kunnen worden als er tijd voor is:

Stel je bent 80 jaar en je kijkt terug op veranderingen die tijdens je leven hebben plaatsgevonden. Natuurlijk zullen dit veel persoonlijke dingen zijn; wellicht reizen die gemaakt zijn of bijzondere familiemomenten. Als we nu kijken naar burgerparticipatie; welke veranderingen in burgerparticipatie hoop je te hebben gezien?

Ben je betrokken geweest in een participatietraject waarbij de Participatieve Waarde Evaluatie gebruikt is? Zou je kunnen aangeven in hoeverre de resultaten bruikbaar zijn bij het opstellen van beleid? Is er nog iets dat ontbreekt bij de PWE en de resultaten daarvan dat relevant kan zijn bij het opstellen van beleid?

Appendix C: Informed consent form

This appendix contains the informed consent form that interviewees have to sign before the interview took place. All signed forms are stored in the OneDrive of the TU Delft and can be shown if requested.

Beste Dhr./Mevrouw. [achternaam],

U wordt uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan een onderzoek genaamd ‘The Future of Large-Scale Citizens Participation in Public Decision-Making in the Netherlands. Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd door Milu Termaat, studente aan de TU Delft. Ik (Milu Termaat) voer dit onderzoek uit ter afronding van de masteropleiding Complex Systems Engineering and Management aan de TU Delft. Dit onderzoek wordt in samenwerking met Populytics, een spin-off van de TU Delft, uitgevoerd en is gespecialiseerd in grootschalige online publieke participatie.

Het doel van dit onderzoek is om de toekomst van grootschalige burgerparticipatie te verkennen en op basis daarvan verbeterpunten te identificeren. Het in kaart brengen van verbeterpunten zal vanuit twee perspectieven worden benaderd. Enerzijds is het doel om te analyseren welke vooraf bepaalde doelstellingen niet worden gehaald en wat er momenteel ontbreekt in participatieprocessen. Anderzijds is het relevant om te onderzoeken welke toekomstige trends naar verwachting een grote impact gaan hebben op burgerparticipatie en hoe hierop geanticipeerd kan worden. Belangrijk om aan te geven is het feit dat dit onderzoek zich focust op participatietrajecten waarbij grootschalige participatie een rol speelt (zoals PVE).

Het interview zal ongeveer 60 minuten in beslag nemen. Het interview zal opgenomen worden en er zal een automatisch transcript gemaakt worden. De audio-opname en het transcript zullen niet publiek toegankelijk zijn. Alleen de hoofdonderzoeker (Milu Termaat) en hoofdbegeleider (Niek Mouter) zullen toegang hebben tot deze data. De audio-opname en het transcript zullen gebruikt worden om een geanonimiseerde samenvatting van het interview op te stellen. Deze samenvatting zal u worden toegestuurd en u zal toestemming moeten geven voordat de samenvatting gebruikt wordt in het onderzoek. Deze samenvattingen zullen de basis vormen voor het onderzoek en zullen publiek toegankelijk zijn indien u hiervoor toestemming geeft.

De data zal gebruikt worden voor om waardevolle conclusies te kunnen trekken met betrekking tot de toekomst van grootschalige burgerparticipatie in het kader van een masterthesis voor de TU Delft. U wordt gevraagd om mee te denken over knelpunten en gebreken van massa participatieprocessen (bijv. incl. PVE); en de toekomstige trends rondom burgerparticipatie. De vragen die u kunt verwachten zullen dan ook enerzijds praktijkgericht zijn, waarbij uw ervaring(en) met burgerparticipatie van belang zijn. Anderzijds zullen relatief abstractere onderwerpen aan bod komen, waarbij u op basis van uw ervaringen inzicht kunt geven in de ontwikkelingen rondom burgerparticipatie.

Zoals bij elke (online) activiteit is het risico van een databreuk aanwezig. Ik doe mijn best om uw antwoorden vertrouwelijk te houden. De risico's worden geminimaliseerd door alle data (audio-opnames, transcripten en samenvattingen) veilig te bewaren op de TU Delft OneDrive waartoe alleen ik en Niek Mouter toegang zullen hebben. Het interview zal worden opgenomen met behulp van Microsoft Teams en automatisch worden getranscribeerd. Aangezien deze data niet publiek toegankelijk zal worden gemaakt, worden ze in een aparte map opgeslagen, gescheiden worden van publiek toegankelijke bestanden. De audio-opnames en transcripten zullen maximaal 1 maand na het afronden van de masterscriptie worden verwijderd. Zoals eerder aangegeven zullen de geanonimiseerde samenvattingen worden bewaard als onderdeel van de masterthesis. Ik zal geen naar u traceerbare data in mijn thesis delen.

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

Graag wil ik u vragen om de vragen op de volgende pagina's te beantwoorden en ondertekend naar mij terug te sturen. Indien er onduidelijkheden zijn of u vragen heeft, dan heeft u de gelegenheid deze te stellen. Dit formulier zal eveneens veilig worden opgeslagen tijdens de periode van het onderzoek.

Milu Termaat

l.x.y.termaat@student.tudelft.nl

PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOXES	Yes	No
A: GENERAL AGREEMENT – RESEARCH GOALS, PARTICIPANT TASKS AND VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION		
Ik heb de informatie over het onderzoek gedateerd [DD/MM/YYYY] 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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ik begrijp dat mijn deelname aan het onderzoek de volgende punten betekent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dit interview zal worden opgenomen (in audio, met behulp van Microsoft Teams) en er zal een automatische transcriptie worden gemaakt. • De opnames van het interview worden veilig opgeslagen tot maximaal één maand na de afronding van mijn thesis op een door de TU Delft beheerde locatie. Daarna zullen de opnames worden verwijderd. • De geanonimiseerde samenvatting die op basis van het interview wordt opgesteld, kunnen gepresenteerd worden in mijn thesis. Hiervoor moet de geïnterviewde toestemming geven. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ik begrijp dat mijn deelname aan het onderzoek niet wordt gecompenseerd.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ik begrijp dat de studie naar verwachting in juli of augustus 2023 eindigt.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B: POTENTIAL RISKS OF PARTICIPATING (INCLUDING DATA PROTECTION)		
Ik begrijp dat mijn deelname betekent dat er persoonlijke identificeerbare informatie en onderzoeksdata worden verzameld, met het risico dat ik hieruit geïdentificeerd kan worden.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Provide brief summaries of potential risks of re-identification (eg: public/professional reputation)</i>		
Ik begrijp dat binnen de Algemene Verordening Gegevensbescherming (AVG) een deel van deze persoonlijk identificeerbare onderzoeksdata als gevoelig wordt beschouwd, namelijk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naam • E-mailadres 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOXES	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andere contactgegevens voor digitale communicatie • Functie/werkachtergrond • Geluidopnames van dit interview 		
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alle data wordt opgeslagen op de TU Delft OneDrive waar alleen de Milu Termaat en Niek Mouter toegang tot hebben. • Op basis van het interview wordt een geanonimiseerde samenvatting gemaakt. • Alleen de geanonimiseerde samenvatting wordt, indien u daarvoor toestemming geeft, gebruikt in het onderzoek. • Alleen de geanonimiseerde samenvatting wordt publiek gemaakt. • Niet geanonimiseerde data (opname en transcript) worden in een aparte map opgeslagen en zullen niet buiten de door de TU Delft beheerde map worden opgeslagen. • De data wordt maximaal één maand na afronding van de thesis verwijderd. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ik begrijp dat de persoonlijke informatie die over mij verzameld wordt en mij kan identificeren, zoals naam, contactinformatie en geluidopnames, niet gedeeld worden buiten het studieteam.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ik begrijp dat de persoonlijke data die over mij verzameld wordt, maximaal één maand na afronding van mijn thesis vernietigd wordt. Naar verwachting zal de thesis in juli 2023 of augustus 2023 worden afgerond.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C: RESEARCH PUBLICATION, DISSEMINATION AND APPLICATION		
Ik begrijp dat na het onderzoek de geanonimiseerde informatie gebruikt zal worden voor verder onderzoek en onderwijs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ik geef toestemming om mijn antwoorden, ideeën of andere bijdrages anoniem te quoten in resulterende producten.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signatures		
Naam deelnemer	Handtekening	Datum

Ik, **de wettelijke vertegenwoordiger**, verklaar dat de informatie en het instemmingsformulier aan de potentiële deelnemer correct zijn voorgelezen, en dat hij/zij de kans heeft gekregen om vragen te stellen. Ik verklaar dat de potentiële deelnemer zijn/haar instemming vrijwillig heeft gegeven.

Naam wettelijke vertegenwoordiger

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:

Milu

06-26255223

l.x.y.termaat@student.tudelft.nl

Termaat

Appendix D: Anonymous summaries

This appendix contains all the anonymous summaries that were made based on the interviews or other contact with the individual.

Interview 1

Doelen

Het belangrijkste doel van burgerparticipatie is de inhoudelijke reden: het verbeteren van beleid. Ambtenaren steken nu nog veel tijd in het ontwerpen van beleid, waardoor er soms te weinig focus is op hoe het beleid aansluit op de voorkeuren en waarden van burgers.

Het tweede doel is dat zorgvuldige burgerparticipatie kan leiden tot meer draagvlak en vertrouwen in politici en het besluit.

Verbeterpunten

Aan de bekendheid en toegankelijkheid van participatie, en raadplegingen, kan nog gewerkt worden, zodat verschillende groepen burgers (waaronder burgers die minder digitaal vaardig zijn) ook kunnen participeren.

Bij overheden heerst soms nog een spanning bij het gebruik van PWE als onderbouwing voor een beleidskeuze.

Daarnaast kunnen nog stappen gemaakt worden om duidelijker te maken dat het mogelijk is voor mensen om te participeren.

Oplossingsrichtingen

Wellicht is een centrale website waarop te zien is hoe mensen kunnen participeren en wat hun mogelijkheden zijn, een mogelijkheid om meer mensen te bereiken.

De eerste stap richting het beleid inhoudelijk kunnen verbeteren door middel van burgerparticipatie is door het benadrukken van succesvolle voorbeelden, zodat de angst die ambtenaren kunnen hebben bij participatie en het negatieve beeld worden verminderd. Ook als gekeken wordt naar het meest recente participatietraject (PWE voor de Lelylijn), dan zou 2x zoveel budget ingezet worden om meer mensen te bereiken, en dan met name mensen die zouden willen participeren. In het geval van 3x zoveel budget, dan zouden er ook verschillende varianten ontworpen kunnen worden die verschillen in tijdsduur; bijv. 5 minuten, 20 minuten en een nog langere. Dit gaat in feite richting participatie op maat. Op deze manier kan je een nog grotere groep mensen aanspreken.

Het is goed om succesvolle voorbeelden te benadrukken, ook onder andere ambtenaren. Hierbij kan ook gemonitord worden wat er goed ging. Op deze manier kan de drempel voor ambtenaren om participatie toe te passen verlaagd worden.

Het benutten van kennis (van wetenschappers maar bijvoorbeeld ook mensen in de praktijk) bij de voorkant van een dergelijk proces, zodat de kans op het slagen van een participatietraject zo groot mogelijk wordt.

Toekomstige ontwikkelingen

De politieke versplintering is een ontwikkeling die invloed kan gaan hebben.

Een andere ontwikkeling is de toenemende aanwezigheid van de media; waardoor er enerzijds meer druk is op de politici (afbreukrisico is groter). Dit zorgt voor spanning bij het organiseren van participatietrajecten. Anderzijds laat de media meer zien wat er achter de schermen gebeurt en

aangezien er dan ook dingen aan het licht komen die misgaan, kan dat de noodzaak voor participatie vergroten.

Een positievere ontwikkeling kan ontstaan wanneer er meer succesvoorbeelden zijn en ambtenaren meer ervaring krijgen met hoe ze moeten omgaan met situaties. Er is sprake van professionalisering. Dit zou een positieve spiraal kunnen worden: professionalisering wat leidt tot betere ervaringen, wat ertoe leidt dat men er beter mee om kan gaan. Deze positieve trend kan echter wel verstoord worden als het een paar keer mis gaat (en dus negatief nieuws genereert).

Een slechte voorbeeld kan altijd gebeuren, dat is wellicht niet te voorkomen. Als er veel positieve voorbeelden zijn, dan is die ene misstap misschien niet zo erg. Een manier om de kans op slagen zo groot mogelijk te maken (en daardoor de kans op een fout te beperken) is wellicht een review commissie van wetenschappers die nog meer focussen op de lessen die geleerd kunnen worden en de inzet van kennis. Deze commissie kan dan advies geven waardoor achteraf niet het sentiment heerst van *'hadden we ze maar eerder betrokken of hadden we maar...'*.

Interview 2

Doelen van (grootschalige, online) burgerparticipatie

Hoger doel van burgerparticipatie is dat mensen zich gehoord voelen en de kans krijgen om mee te praten en input te leveren. Dit leidt tot een verbetering van de kwaliteit van het beleid (inhoudelijke verbetering). Een van de waarden voor participatie geeft aan dat het hierbij gaat om (1) mensen die geraakt worden door of een belang hebben bij het onderwerp, of (2) mensen die interesse hebben.

Verskillende participatieprojecten kunnen wel verschillende concretere doelstellingen hebben:

- Mensen laten meedenken en inspiratie/ideeën opdoen.
- Toetsen wat al bedacht is
- Mensen laten prioriteren.

Het doel van de PWE kan zijn om de burger te laten ervaren voor welke keuze de bestuurder staat. De PWE kan helpen bij prioriteren, er is een stemelement, en je kunt input (ideeën) ophalen (met open vragen). Andere positieve aspecten: dat de resultaten bij een representatieve groep vergeleken kan worden met de resultaten van een open raadpleging (voorbeeld: Lelylijn) en dat er verschillende PWE's zijn (pakketten kiezen, punten verdelen). Dus een PWE-ontwerp kan afgestemd worden op het vraagstuk en het doel.

Gerelateerd doel van participatie (op basis van het gespreksonderwerp PWE) kan ook zijn; als overheid/bestuurder in de leefwereld van de stakeholders duiken (burgers, bedrijven etc.), door bijv. meelopen een dagje bij een bedrijf en gesprekken voeren.

“Wij zeggen eigenlijk nooit dat je draagvlak kan creëren met participatie. Wij zeggen eigenlijk het doel van participatie is dat alle perspectieven op het zijn gekomen”. Dus burgers de gelegenheid geven om hun belangen, zorgen en wensen te uiten. Draagvlak wordt beschouwd als een positief bijproduct, geen doel op zich. *“Draagvlak is niet maakbaar”.* Er kan dus niet op voorhand beloofd worden aan een bestuurder dat het participatietraject tot meer draagvlak leidt. De tegengestelde belangen die blijven bestaan. Er kan gestreefd worden naar draagvlak/tevredenheid over het proces of begrip voor de uitkomst. In de praktijk is dit lastig omdat mensen die vaak niet tevreden zijn achteraf meer van zich laten horen dan mensen die tevreden zijn met de uitkomst van het participatieproces.

Verbeterpunten/uitdagingen

Eigenlijk gaan er veel dingen goed. Een aandachtspunt (en dit kan ook beschouwd worden als een kenmerk van participatiemethoden in het algemeen) is *“dat je eigenlijk altijd wel een doelgroep uitsluit”.* Dit is *“inherent aan iedere participatievorm”* (zowel online als fysieke methoden).

Fietscafé's is meest recente project met als doel: inspiratie opdoen en ideeën genereren; *“niet over mensen praten, maar met de mensen zelf”.* Er zijn bewuste keuzes gemaakt voor de inzet van het format World café en bepaalde elementen hiervan (o.a. gespreksleiders vanuit de overheid i.p.v. extern zodat zij voor de uitvoering van het beleid ook actief betrokken zijn). Het is soms lastig inwoners te vinden die bereid zijn om te participeren. Bij de Fietscafé's hebben we ongeveer 50 deelnemers per bijeenkomst kunnen werven. In de dorpen (Joure en Meerssen) was het lastig om representativiteit bij deelnemers te bereiken. Ook wervingsbureaus konden ons niet helpen, omdat we voor fysieke participatiebijeenkomsten kozen buiten de randstad. Als we voor online participatie hadden gekozen, dan hadden deze wervingsbureaus ons wel kunnen helpen.

Kanttekeningen bij het gebruik van de PWE is dat beleidsmakers het soms wellicht moeilijk vinden om de resultaten van een PWE goed te interpreteren. Tussentijdse resultaten van een PWE zijn lastig te oogsten. Als participatieprofessionals wil je concreter weten wat een PWE oplevert. Wellicht voer je een PWE liever in een concretere fase van het traject uit, zodat de resultaten ook concreter zijn (met het

oog op de toepassing van de PWE bij de Lelylijn in een vroeg stadium). Voor ambtenaren zijn de resultaten soms overweldigend en kan het onduidelijk zijn wat ze met de resultaten kunnen.

Oplossingsrichtingen

Dit wordt al wel aangemoedigd, maar om als bestuurder ook een keer in de schoenen van de burger te stappen (meelopen, gesprekken etc.).

Naast de huidige werkzaamheden kan mediation ook gebruikt worden om te anticiperen op het relatief lage vertrouwen in de overheid. Hierbij gaat het niet per se om het vervullen van de rol als mediator maar om te leren over de rol van een mediator en bijbehorende vaardigheden. Indien het vertrouwen in de overheid nog verder daalt, dan is extra inzetten op participatie misschien niet de oplossing; aan de relatie met de burger werken zou hier wel kunnen werken. Mediation vaardigheden kunnen hierbij goed ingezet worden.

Het voor beleidsmakers gemakkelijker maken om de resultaten van de PWE te gebruiken/ interpreteren kan wellicht door van tevoren specifieker aan te geven wat de doelen zijn en wat de resultaten kunnen zijn, in het kader van *“daar kan dan mogelijk dit uitkomen en dit hebben jullie er dan later aan. Bij wat voor type keuzes moet de PWE nu gaan helpen?”*. Wellicht ook meer laten zien hoe een PWE kan worden toegepast bij een specifiek onderwerp (maatwerk). Hierbij gaat het om maatwerk PWE waarbij gespecificeerd wordt voor de beleidsmakers wat mogelijke resultaten zijn en wat welke richting zij daarmee op kunnen. Dit is wel afhankelijk van de fase van het beleidstraject waar de PWE (of participatie) wordt toegepast. Terugkomen op de Lelylijn: daar *“zijn nog zoveel onzekerheden en dan is het abstractieniveau van de PWE natuurlijk ook veel hoger en daardoor zijn de resultaten ook weer abstracter, maar dat maakt ze weer moeilijk om ze te verwerken”*

Toekomstige ontwikkelingen

Qua vormgeving moet gestreefd worden naar dat de toepassing van participatie de norm/standaard wordt i.p.v. de uitzondering. Dit zou *“echt een andere manier van werk worden binnen de overheid”*.

Online middelen kunnen helpen om vraagstukken begrijpelijker te maken voor burgers (bijv. *“uitbeelden van vraagstukken”*). Wellicht kunnen dingen als Digital Twins of augmented reality mensen meer mee laten denken. Zulke technologische/digitale middelen kunnen ondersteunend werken. Ontwikkelingen kunnen ook voortkomen aan de verschuivende voorkeuren van burgers; wellicht meer voorkeur voor plaats en tijdonafhankelijk participeren. Er is echter twijfel of de maatschappij zich daadwerkelijk in deze richting zal bewegen omdat de behoefte aan face-to-face contact waarschijnlijk blijft. *“Het zou eigenlijk mooi zijn als het altijd een mix blijft”*.

Digitale ontwikkeling, zoals augmented reality, kan goed gebruikt worden om mensen te informeren, *“zodat ze beter in de gelegenheid zijn om op een goed en gelijkwaardig niveau te participeren”*. Op deze manier worden mensen geïnformeerd voordat zij hun mening geven, zodat zij bewuster kunnen participeren.

Mogelijke vorm van e-participatie: eigen platform waarop je verschillende vormen presenteert; dus fora functionaliteit, stemmethoden, prioriteren, waarden, online reactieformulieren, online enquêtes. Andere interessante vorm: Synthetron, wat een soort online world café is. Veel verschillende mensen die tegelijk online zijn en tot consensus moeten komen in aparte gespreksgroepjes. Deze groepjes wisselen steeds. Dit kan gecategoriseerd worden als deliberatieve online vorm en gaat richting maxi publiek.

Interessant onderzoek in het kader van deze mix: Redress. Dit project focust op het *“combineren van mini en maxi publieken; van deliberatieve en stemachtige participatievormen”* waarbij de resultaten van het mini-publiek getoetst kunnen worden aan het maxi-publiek. Dus de verwachting is dat er meer van zulke combinatie ingezet gaan worden en dat ze kwalitatief ook beter worden. Een positief effect hiervan

(van het inzetten van beide vormen en het toetsen van de uitkomsten van een kleine groep bij een grotere groep) is dat *“je wel met veel zekerheid kan zeggen, dit vinden mensen of hier lopen mensen tegenaan. Je hebt eigenlijk veel meer data waarop je je besluit kan bouwen of waarop je die als input voor je besluit kunt benutten”*.

Een potentiële negatieve ontwikkeling voor burgerparticipatie is het relatief lage vertrouwen in de overheid. Dus het is belangrijk om verwachtingen te managen (hoeveel ruimte is er voor participatie? en wat wordt er met de resultaten gedaan?), consequente terugkoppeling naar afspraken die gemaakt zijn (hoe zijn de resultaten gebruikt?) en je aan afspraken te houden. Je moet als overheid betrouwbaar, navolgbaar en transparant zijn. Dit hangt samen met een stukje communicatie.

Vergeleken met vroeger, ziet tegenwoordig iedereen het nut/belang van participatie in. De trend is een toenemende behoefte om participatie steeds eerder inzetten; eigenlijk al voor de start. Dit is misschien ook een toekomststreven.

Corona heeft men gedwongen om meer online te gaan werken (en dus ook participatie online te doen) waardoor de angst/spanning die vooraf heerste omtrent online participatie weggenomen werd. Na corona merk je dat ambtenaren meer open staan voor participatie en ook voor e-participatie (o.a. door het relatief lage vertrouwen van de samenleving in de overheid en de wens van het kabinet om hier iets aan te doen). Het is wel goed om mensen ook weer in het echt te kunnen zien, *“dus het is eigenlijk echt de ideale mix die je zou moeten nastreven”*.

Ongecategoriseerd

“Participatie blijft altijd maatwerk”

Interessant stuk over de vormgeving van participatieprocessen: over het algemeen bevat het participatieproces meerdere fasen/stappen. Er zijn ook participatieprocessen met maar één stap, maar dit impliceert soms een periode waarbij de burger niet betrokken is. Aan het begin van het proces is er vaak wel ruimte voor participatie; vaak erg breed/open omdat het dan is om ideeën/inspiratie opdoen. Daarna neemt de mogelijkheid weer af en later in het proces is er weer meer ruimte voor participatie, alleen zal het doel dan waarschijnlijk het toetsen van het beleidsontwerp zijn. Er zal dan een besluit genomen worden, wat weer gecommuniceerd moet worden. Communicatie en participatie wisselen elkaar af in het proces. *“Dus je hebt participatie, dan koppel je terug, dan kunnen communicatie en als je dan weer in een nieuwe fase met participatiemogelijkheden belandt, heb je weer, idealiter, weer eigenlijk uitnodigingen versturen, heb je weer communicatie, participatie, communicatie”*. Bij elk beleidsonderwerp zijn mijlpalen, en er wordt gekeken of bij die mijlpalen ruimte is voor participatie (vervolgens participatieplan: doel, doelgroep, vorm etc.). Hierbij zou je eventueel ook participatie over de participatie kunnen hebben (dus bij het opstellen van het zogenoemde participatieplan).

Een ander interessant punt: het geven van een vergoeding voor mensen die participeren. Dit is bij de fietscafés gedaan. *“Een vergoeding kan helpen om de mensen die we echt niet aan tafel krijgen of doorgaans zien komen, dat die wel met een vergoeding eerder geneigd zijn om te participeren”*. Of er een vergoeding gegeven wordt hangt af van het project. Een online participatiemethode, zoals de PWE, daarvoor zou minder snel een vergoeding komen. De indicator is op dit moment vooral de moeite die mensen moeten doen om te participeren (bijv. (reis)tijd). Wellicht veranderen deze indicatoren in de toekomst, dat is onzeker.

Interview 3

Doelen

Participatie is nooit een doel op zichzelf. Participatie kan bijdragen aan drie dingen (doelen):

- Inhoudelijk doel → participatie om het project inhoudelijk te verbeteren.
- Normatief doel → participatie om een proces te structureren/ordenen.
- Democratisch doel → participatie om legitimiteit te geven aan de besluitvorming.

Bij het normatieve doel duidt het proces op een “*proces van interactieve beleidsvorming*”. Dit betekent dat het beleidsproces op zo’n manier is ingericht dat het interactief is met de omgeving; dit kan meer ad hoc of gestructureerd (waardoor het proces meer voorspelbaar wordt).

Per project verschilt de prioritering van deze drie globale doelen; afhankelijk van onder andere het onderwerp, de inhoudelijke ruimte en het speelveld. De mate waarin de doelen behaald worden, is dus ook verschillend per traject (verschillende doelen etc.).

Als de doelen gerelateerd worden aan grootschalige online burgerparticipatie (zoals PWE), dan komen alle doelen terug. Wellicht zijn het democratische en inhoudelijke doel toch iets meer gerelateerd aan zulke vormen van participatie; legitimiteit kan gegeven worden doordat een grote groep mensen betrokken wordt, wat vervolgens relevante inhoudelijke inzichten kan opleveren. Het normatieve doel past minder (over het algemeen, maar het ligt aan de specifieke context), omdat één methode vaak niet is staat is een heel proces te structureren. Dit doel kijkt vaak breder dan de inzet van participatie op een bepaald moment.

Draagvlak is geen doel van participatie, het “*kan een heel mooi bijproduct zijn*”. Draagvlak is van verschillende dingen afhankelijk waardoor het onmogelijk is om van tevoren te garanderen dat participatie tot draagvlak leidt. Draagvlak voor een proces kan wel een doel zijn (proces legitimiteit); men hoeft het niet eens te zijn over de uitkomsten van het participatietraject, maar wel over de manier waarop die uitkomst tot stand is gekomen.

Voorbeeld: Klankbordgroep PFAS. Er was veel weerstand, bevolking was onrustig. Participatie had als doel om het PFAS beleid inhoudelijk te verbeteren, en om structuur te krijgen in het proces. Na de participatie is er inhoudelijk relatief weinig verbetering geweest, maar er was meer orde en rust in het proces (en dat was eigenlijk het voornaamste doel).

Belangrijk is om bij een participatietraject te starten vanuit de doelen en vanuit daar te verkennen wat de juiste middelen/aanpak is. Het identificeren van een passende methode is afhankelijk van de doelen en de beleidsruimte (o.a. Wat is het onderwerp? Wat ligt al vast? Welke stakeholders?).

Er zitten randvoorwaarden aan de effectiviteit van participatie; het hangt af van onder andere de doelen, de ruimte, de verwachtingen, en de inzet van de juiste middelen om de doelen te bereiken.

Uitdagingen/verbeterpunten

Een van de dingen van participatie die op dit moment minder goed gaan, is dat er “*verkeerde verwachtingen worden gewekt*”. Concreet gezien gaat het om situaties waarin bestuurders aangeven dat er meer aan participatie gedaan gaat worden, terwijl er inhoudelijk gezien geen ruimte voor is (er liggen bijvoorbeeld al dingen vast). In zo’n geval wordt er een verwachting gewekt bij participanten en dat kan resulteren in teleurstelling. Daarnaast zijn er intern soms ook verkeerde verwachtingen over de resultaten van participatie waarbij gedacht wordt dat participatie een middel is dat leidt tot draagvlak voor een project. Dit kan niet van tevoren gesteld worden, vooral niet als er inhoudelijk al dingen vaststaan.

Een ander risico van participatie is dat het polarisatie kan versterken als het traject niet goed ontworpen is. Het risico bestaat dat burgers met een sterke mening (voor of tegen) veel ruimte krijgen, terwijl het stille midden (de meerderheid) naar de achtergrond gaat. Hierdoor krijg je beperkt inzicht in de

meningen van burgers en het kan uiteindelijk leiden tot een versterking van de tegengestelde polen. Hierbij moet wel aangegeven worden dat een discussie ook constructief kan zijn, maar er ligt een grens waar het nut afneemt. De uitdaging is om het stille midden ook op een goede manier te betrekken. Dit is lastig aangezien het stille midden minder snel uit zichzelf participeert.

Een andere verbeterpunt betreft het “overdragen van kennis en informatie”. Burgers moeten voldoende kennis/informatie hebben over het onderwerp om bij te dragen. De uitdaging hierbij is dat vraagstukken (technisch) heel complex kunnen zijn en er dus goed nagedacht moet worden over hoe de kennis aan burgers overgedragen kan worden. Als de burgers niet de goede kennis krijgen, kan het zijn dat het advies/input van de burger gebaseerd is op verkeerde/beperkte informatie.

Oplossingsrichtingen

Op nationaal niveau zou het stille midden meer betrokken kunnen worden door grootschalige burgerparticipatie, bijv. een PWE. Een andere optie zijn burgerberaden waarbij deelnemers geloot worden. Om het stille midden te betrekken, moet echt actief moeite gedaan worden. Dit vraagt om de inzet van passende middelen. Dit kan gaan om wervingsmiddelen en participatievormen; dus bij het invullen van het participatietraject moet goed naar de vorm gekeken worden, en als de vorm bepaald is, kan ingezet worden op specifieke wervingsmiddelen. Een gemakkelijkere manier is om een panel in te kopen waarbij je de kenmerken van de groep zelf kan aangeven.

Het bereiken van het stille midden is echt een probleem voor beleidsmakers. Vaak weten beleidsmakers niet hoe ze met zulke problemen moeten omgaan; ze hebben geen weet van methoden/gereedschappen die wellicht de oplossing kunnen zijn.

“Elk participatiemiddel sluit per definitie een bepaalde groep uit, dus waar je dan eigenlijk naar op zoek moet, is een mix aan participatiemiddelen om de groep die je uitsluit zo klein mogelijk te maken”

Het feit dat verschillende participatievormen verschillende groepen aantrekken komt bijvoorbeeld terug in het verschil in burgers dat aanwezig was tijdens de fysieke bijeenkomsten voor coronatijd en tijdens de online bijeenkomsten (tijdens corona). De drempel voor een online (plaats onafhankelijke) bijeenkomst is lager. Daarnaast kan het ook nog tijdsafhankelijke participatie zijn, zoals de PWE en enquêtes.

Men moet stoppen met het zien van draagvlak als doel. Zoals eerder aangegeven kan wel gestreefd worden naar draagvlak op het proces.

Wat betreft het omgaan met verkeerde verwachtingen; enerzijds zou hierover expliciet gecommuniceerd moeten worden (waar gaat de participatie wel en niet over) en anderzijds dat de organiserende partij het proces zorgvuldig moet voorbereiden. Dit betekent dat deze partij goed moet onderzoeken waar het participatieproces over gaat en vervolgens helder communiceert over de resulterende participatiestrategie/aanpak. Dit kan resulteren in een situatie waarin gecommuniceerd moet worden dat het participatietraject ergens niet over gaat, terwijl de maatschappij dit wel in de scope wil. Als bestuurder kun je dan intern overleggen over een aanpassing van de scope of de burger verwijzen naar een andere afdeling.

Meer middelen (2x zoveel budget) zou voor het participatietraject (in dit geval het voorbeeld Integraal riviermanagement) niet zoveel uitmaken. Het gebruik van dit extra budget zou liever gebruikt worden voor inhoudelijke veranderingen van het project; dus de mogelijkheid om de uitkomsten van het participatieproces te verwerken in het project.

Er zijn situaties waarbij de beleidsmakers participatie als oplossing zien terwijl het op dat moment niet past bij de situatie. Er is dan een soort paniek; bijv. bij Lelystad Airport, een mogelijkheid is dat beleidsmakers ongemak voelden bij de onrust die het beleid oproep bij burgers. Zij kozen voor meer participatie, maar inhoudelijk gezien was daar geen ruimte voor (besluiten waren grotendeels al

genomen). In dit geval was goede communicatie wellicht beter dan meer participatie. Dan was het wanvertrouwen niet vergroot.

Toekomstige trends/ontwikkelingen

Een van de trends is verdere digitaliseren (AI), waarvan de impact op de samenleving nog onbekend is. Voor participatietrajecten kan dit ervoor zorgen dat de kennis- en informatiestromen sneller gaan, waarbij er ook een uitdaging is om om te gaan met de grote hoeveelheid kennis/informatie (risico: wat is de waarheid?). Om met deze trend om te gaan, is de beste mogelijkheid wellicht om ons bewust te zijn van de mogelijke negatieve consequenties. Daarnaast gaat de impact waarschijnlijk zo groot zijn op de maatschappij dat de overheid beter kan leren omgaan met de ontwikkeling dan om het te negeren.

Een ontwikkeling die hopelijk tot stand komt en doorzet, is een interactievere vorm van beleid maken. Dit zou een andere manier van beleid maken zijn en op lokaal niveau is deze ontwikkeling al een beetje begonnen. Deze ontwikkeling zou goed zijn met de gedachte *“dat beleid beter wordt door dat samen met anderen te doen”*. Dit kan resulteren in *“gedragen oplossingen”* en *“gedeelde urgentie”*. Deze laatstgenoemde heeft te maken met een gedeeld beeld krijgen van wat nu het probleem is en wellicht begrip creëren voor de standpunten van andere belanghebbenden/burgers. Bij de ontwikkeling richting een interactievere vorm van beleid maken, is een belangrijke rol weggelegd voor de politiek en de samenleving. De overheid wordt gedreven organisatie, dus als er politieke nadruk op een onderwerp ligt, gaan ministeries er sneller mee aan de slag. Als er druk komt vanuit de maatschappij, dan zorgt dat voor druk op de overheid om wellicht te veranderen.

Overige punten/ongecategoriseerd

Participatie als begrip is erg breed en de interpretatie en invulling daarvan hangt af van de context.

Bij participatietraject over kernenergie bevat het participatieplan (kort samengevat) een antwoord op 4 vragen:

- *“Waar moet participatie bij helpen?”*
- *“Wat zijn je doelen?”*
- *“Waar gaat het wel en niet over?”*
- *“Met wie vindt de participatie plaats en hoe?”*

Interview 4

Doelen

Burgerparticipatie heeft (ook) een moreel doel; burgerparticipatie draagt bij aan een gezonde democratie. Volksvertegenwoordigers moeten de besluiten niet alleen nemen. Het is belangrijk voor onze democratie dat de samenleving betrokken wordt bij het nemen van besluiten; laat ze meepraten en meebeslissen bij het nemen van besluiten.

Het heeft ook een instrumenteel doel; de diversiteit aan perspectieven en kennis bij ambtenaren/ beleidsmakers is relatief homogeen en niet representatief voor de samenleving. Burgerparticipatie kan ervoor zorgen dat men inzicht krijgt in deze kennis en levenservaring van de samenleving waardoor de besluitvorming en het beleid uiteindelijk beter wordt.

Grootschalige burgerparticipatie heeft als voordeel dat het relatief laagdrempelig is (niet voor iedereen) en dat een grote groep burger bereikt kan worden. Hierdoor kan je “*grotere betrokkenheid creëren*” bij bepaalde onderwerpen en besluitvormingsprocessen.

Verbeterpunten/uitdagingen

Het feit dat er al veel wordt gedaan aan participatie geeft aan dat we een gezonde democratie hebben. Een verbeterpunt is dat in de praktijk mensen vaak weinig zeggenschap hebben wat leidt tot teleurstellingen. Dit heeft te maken met de communicatie vooraf en de verwachtingen die daardoor ontstaan. Teleurstelling kan ontstaan als mensen het gevoel hebben dat er geen ruimte meer is om de uitkomsten van de participatie te verwerken in het beleid. De plannen zijn dan bijvoorbeeld al zo goed als gemaakt.

Een gerelateerd verbeterpunt is dat de toegang tot participatie oneerlijk verdeeld is. De recente bijeenkomst met burgerinitiatieven bewees eigenlijk het clichébeeld dat participatie alleen toegankelijk is voor een bepaalde demografisch gezien homogene groep. Het gevolg van zo'n homogene groep is dat de beleidsmaker/bestuurder/politicus ook een eenzijdig beeld krijgt van de dingen die spelen in de samenleving en de mogelijkheden. De meerstemmigheid komt dan niet naar voren. Het feit dat bestuurders bij participatie vaak te maken krijgen met de groep die tegen is, zorgt er ook voor dat bestuurders burgers vaak pas laat in het proces betrekken (om tegenspraak en weerstand tegen hun beleid te voorkomen). Op dat moment is er vaak nog maar weinig ruimte voor verandering op basis van de participatie wat leidt tot meer frustratie.

Daarnaast zijn de hoeveelheid wet- en regelgeving waar je rekening mee moet houden als je een burgerinitiatief wilt beginnen.

Er wordt nog te weinig geëxperimenteerd met participatiemethoden (denk aan loting, mensen fysiek opzoeken, wijken ingaan en buurtregisseurs). Dit kan voortkomen uit de angst voor de mogelijke uitkomsten en de onzekerheid m.b.t. hoeveel verantwoordelijkheid er bij de burger gelegd kan worden en of men niet uit eigen belang handelt. Daarnaast wordt vaak gezegd dat het veel werk is om op andere manieren mensen te benaderen, maar er kan niet verwacht worden dat de standaard manieren (via brief of overheidswebsite) voldoende is om verschillende doelgroepen te bereiken.

Het feit dat overheidsinstanties vaak zelf homogeen zijn (qua organisatie en werknemers), maakt dat het lastig is om in de praktijk heterogene participatie te organiseren. Dus de overheid moet ook op de eigen organisatie reflecteren (dit vraagt om een mentaliteitsverandering). Het zou “*goed zijn als in meer overheidslagen de samenleving beter weerspiegeld*” wordt. “*Academische kennis is niet de enige kennis die je nodig hebt om goed beleid te maken*”. “*Andere vormen van kennis zijn minstens zo belangrijk*”. Dit betreft o.a. levenservaring en praktijkervaring. Als er diverse vormen van kennis worden gebruikt bij het maken van beleid, dan kan het beleid alleen maar beter worden.

Oplossingsrichtingen

Om de meerstemmigheid uit de samenleving beter te representeren in participatie, ligt er een taak bij zowel de beleidsmakers als de samenleving. Hierbij is de regeldrift een demotiverende factor; er is behoefte om vooraf al de uitkomst te weten. Deze behoefte komt onder andere voort uit het feit dat beleidsmakers zelf ook afgerekend worden op hun prestaties, en dat ze zich niet bewust zijn van het feit dat burgers vaak ook bij andere loketten moeten zijn om dingen te regelen.

Vanuit de overheid, is er een actievere benadering van burgers nodig om meer inzicht te krijgen in de meerstemmigheid van de samenleving. Een groep inwoners/burgers moet niet als één homogene doelgroep gezien worden, maar als verschillende doelgroepen. Er zijn diverse aanpakken nodig om die verschillende groepen te benaderen en betrekken. Dit gaat verder dan de standaard communicatiemethoden; zoals via brief of overheidswebsite. Als alternatieve benaderingsmethoden worden gebruikt, dan komt naar boven dat de groep burgers die niet vaak ingaan op uitnodigingen voor participatie, zeker bereid zijn om te participeren. Het is belangrijk om burgers te laten beseffen dat hun mening/perspectief ertoe doet.

Wellicht dat het ontwikkelen van een soort gestandaardiseerde strategie nuttig zou zijn waarin bijvoorbeeld een eerste stap zou zijn om, als overheid, na te denken over hoe ze naar burgers kijken (zoals ook in het symposium van SCP wordt aangekaart); zijn burgers een bron van kennis? Gelijkwaardige partners? Risicofactor? Het gaat om een *“meer menselijke blik op inwoners”*.

De groep burgers die wellicht een soort angst hebben om te participeren (bijv. praktisch geschoolden en mensen zonder opleiding) betrekken, kan ervoor zorgen dat zij *“groeien in hun democratisch zelfvertrouwen”*. Dit resultaat is niet vanzelfsprekend; er is goede gespreksbegeleiding nodig, verschillende (passende) werkvormen en verschillende manieren om kennis over te dragen/uit te wisselen.

Het meest recente participatietraject is de Inwonerraad Energiesysteem 2050, waarbij opgemerkt moet worden dat het geen burgerberaad was omdat deze raad geen politiek mandaat had. Met extra budget was er wellicht ruimte geweest om vaker bij elkaar te komen en om deskundigen training te geven m.b.t. informatieoverdracht voor een diverse groep burgers. Kortom, meer tijd.

Wet- en regelgeving is nodig, maar er moet ook ruimte flexibiliteit, zoals bij een burgerbegroting waarvan het open einde een mooi aspect is. Dit open einde vinden overheden spannend en het vraagt dus om vertrouwen van de overheid in de burger. Er zouden meer burgerbegrotingen moeten komen over grotere budgetten. Wellicht zouden combinatie ook ingezet kunnen worden; een burgerberaad organiseren met een budget om het uit te voeren.

Terugkomend op dat vertrouwen; in de praktijk merk je dat burgers hebben het vertrouwen van de overheid en daarmee de bewegingsvrijheid m.b.t. handelen en initiatiefnemen, nodig. Als overheid zou je hier ondersteuning kunnen bieden; financiële middelen, maar ook praktisch gezien dingen zoals het overnemen van administratieve taken (faciliterende overheid). Voor bestuurders zou dit ook positief kunnen zijn voor het imago als zij hier meer op inzetten, want ze laten zien dat ze op een gelijkwaardige manier kan samenwerken met burgers.

Toekomstige ontwikkelingen

Digitale platforms hebben veel potentie, zo is het voor veel mensen een drempelverlagende factor. Een element dat bij digitale platforms nog niet vaak wordt gebruikt en dat zich hopelijk in de toekomst meer ontwikkelt, is de dialoog. Vaak is er weinig ruimte om interactie te hebben met anderen en om samen te werken aan bijvoorbeeld een oplossing of advies. Dialogen tussen burgers met verschillende meningen kan voor begrip zorgen en voor het inzicht dat men wel degelijk kan samenwerken ondanks de verschillende meningen. Bij het hebben van een dialoog, kan het zijn dat burgers van mening veranderen, omdat ze andere perspectieven beter begrijpen. Vaak is dit niet radicaal maar een klein beetje.

Het internet kan goed gebruikt worden om mensen te verbinden, zonder dat mensen bijvoorbeeld ver moeten reizen naar een fysieke locatie. Momenteel worden deze mogelijkheden nog te weinig benut.

De ontwikkelingen op het gebied van techniek kunnen ook leiden tot een scherpere verdeeldheid en polarisatie. Dit zou een negatieve impact hebben op het beleid.

Een andere interessante ontwikkeling is kunstmatige intelligentie. Dit kan een positieve rol spelen bij kennisoverdracht en kennisontwikkeling.

Daarnaast is het interessant hoe de democratie zich gaat ontwikkelen. Het huidige systeem is ingericht op een beleidscyclus van 4 jaar, terwijl de problemen die spelen vaak lange termijn problemen zijn. Aangezien een politicus zich vaak in die beleidscyclus van 4 jaar wil bewijzen, worden lange termijn problemen vooruitgeschoven waardoor ze uiteindelijk een crisis kunnen worden. Burgers hebben geen achterban waar ze zich aan moeten verantwoorden, waardoor hun betrokkenheid bij lange termijn besluitvorming en problemen het huidige systeem kunnen completeren. Dit moet wel gefaciliteerd worden. Onderzoek wijst uit dat burgers in staat zijn om, met de juiste begeleiding, advies te geven/beslissingen te maken voor de lange termijn.

De eerste stap richting deze verandering in onze democratie is een nationaal burgerberaad (de eerste stappen naar dit beraad zijn al in gang gezet). De inzichten die uit zo'n ervaring voortkomen in combinatie met ervaring uit andere landen zijn belangrijk. Daarnaast hebben enkele tientallen gemeentes burgerberaden in hun coalitieakkoord opgenomen, dus dit resulteert ook in ervaringen die meegenomen kunnen worden op nationaal niveau.

'civil servants' geeft aan dat de overheid in feite het volk dient, echter deze dienende rol is tegenwoordig soms ver te zoeken. Voor inwoners is het vaak lastig om dingen te regelen (vanwege regels en voorwaarden die vanuit de overheid gesteld worden). Dus, als overheid zijnde, betrek de burger bij het ontwerpen van participatie; wat hebben zij nodig? Welke participatiebehoefte hebben zij? Een "*gelijkwaardige wisselwerking*" tussen overheid en burger zou een ideaal zijn.

Interview 5

Doelen

De doelen van burgerparticipatie zijn afhankelijk van het perspectief; vanuit de overheid, de burger of een bedrijf. Er zijn 3 generieke doelen die ook in de literatuur naar voren komen:

1. Normatief doel (democratisch doel): iedere burger moet kunnen meepraten over beleid.
2. Instrumentele doel: de burger betrekken en in samenspraak tot een resultaat komen. Draagvlak ontwikkelen.
3. Inhoudelijk doel: het gebruiken van de lokale kennis van burgers om zo tot een betere beslissingen te komen.

Vanuit de overheid wordt vaak het betrekken van burgers genoemd waarbij het vanuit het overheidsperspectief vaak gaat om de overheid die initiatief neemt en de burger die daarin deelneemt. Er zijn ook burgerinitiatieven waarbij er meer sprake is van overheidsparticipatie; burgers verlangen dan dat de overheid voornamelijk faciliteert (met bijv. kennis of geld).

Verdere differentiatie in doelen kan gemaakt worden door procesdoelen (inspanningsdoelen) en einddoelen (resultaatdoelen) te onderscheiden. Bij procesdoelen gaat het erom dat de partijen vinden dat de overheid *“op een goede en nette manier het proces van de participatie gevoerd”* heeft, waarbij de nadruk niet ligt op het eindresultaat. Bij een einddoel is de overheid nog steeds de eindbeslissende en wordt de burger om advies gevraagd (consultatie). Daarnaast is er onderscheid in output en outcome; waarbij output refereert aan het resultaat van het participatieproces, terwijl outcome refereert aan wat er met het resultaat wordt gedaan.

Positieve aspecten

De PWE heeft als voordeel dat *“je de burger op de stoel zet van de bestuurder en dat het niet zwart-wit is zoals bij een referendum”*. Daarnaast kan het de burger inzicht geven in de ingewikkeldheid van de besluiten waar de overheid voor staat. Op een landelijk niveau kan de PWE voor verdiepende inzichten zorgen doordat de methode inzicht kan geven in de waarden die burgers belangrijk vinden. Dit gaat om een innerlijke afweging en kan leiden tot meer nuance. Er kan meer uitgediept worden waarom de burger iets niet lijkt te willen; wellicht is het geen kwestie van willen, maar van kunnen. 2 andere factoren zijn weten (ben je je bewust van wat er aan de hand is?) en doen (ga je daadwerkelijk handelen?). Bij deze laatste (het doen), daar zit vaak een bottleneck. Een PWE zorgt er ook voor dat men een breder perspectief krijgt op de burger en zijn motieven (dus breder dan het perspectief van iemand met de 7 vinkjes).

Problemen/uitdagingen

Bij het overgrote deel van de participatieprocessen (denk aan 80-90%) staat niet vast wat het doel is, waardoor er ook niet bepaald kan worden of het traject een succes was.

“moet je denken nou in de orde gewoon van 80 of 90% van de participatieprocessen staat niet wat het doel is van de participatieproces”

Burgerinitiatieven zijn vrij nieuw voor de overheid waardoor er nog beperkte ervaring/kennis over is. De overheid is wellicht wat terughoudend wat betreft de mate van betrokkenheid en facilitering omdat er weinig garanties zijn met betrekking tot de bestaanszekerheid. De overheid gaat dan investeren terwijl er onzekerheid is over de toekomstige ontwikkeling van het initiatief. Daarnaast bestaat er nog geen gestandaardiseerde contractvormen waarin afspraken tussen de overheid en burgerinitiatieven vastgelegd kunnen worden. Voor contracten tussen de overheid en bedrijven zijn die er wel (zoals bijvoorbeeld een (Design, Build, Finance and Maintain, DBFM contract). Een dergelijk gestandaardiseerd format voor het maken van afspraken zorgt er voor dat niet ieder nieuw burger-overheidsproject met een blanco vel hoeft te beginnen.

De structuur van de overheid zelf kan ook nog voor uitdagingen zorgen bij de samenwerking tussen overheden en burgerinitiatieven; de sectorale indeling van de overheid is nuttig als het gaat om verantwoording afleggen met betrekking tot de besteding van overheidsbudget (systeemdenken). De burger denkt alleen niet sectoraal, maar integraal, wat voor uitdagingen kan zorgen bij burgerinitiatieven die met de overheid willen samenwerken. Als beleidsmaker moet je constant de afweging maken tussen doelmatigheid en rechtmatigheid; houd ik mij strikt aan de wet en kijk ik alleen naar mijn eigen afdelingsbudget en -taken (rechtmatigheid), of ga ik ook meer integraal kijken (doelmatig).

Openheid en het uitleggen van keuzes zijn nog twee uitdagingen van grootschalige burgerparticipatie. Vanuit een academisch perspectief is deze openheid een noodzaak. Hierbij moet wel de kanttekening geplaatst worden dat er in de praktijk situaties zijn waarin de overheid niet per se open wil zijn; zoals om politieke redenen. Bestuurders willen wellicht beleidsvrijheid houden waarbij relatief vage doelen wordt opgesteld zodat zij later kunnen invullen hoe deze bereikt worden. Daarnaast is volledige openheid ook niet wenselijk; dan kunnen politieke deals ook niet gesloten worden.

Aan het eind van een beleidsvormingsproces kan gereflecteerd worden; wat ging goed en wat ging minder goed? Wellicht kan dit wel beter. Wat goed gaat, dat kan voortgezet worden. Wat fout gaat, wil je eigenlijk verbeteren in een volgend proces. Dit is eigenlijk een feedback lus van de uitvoering van het beleid (en de opgedane kennis/ervaring) naar de beleidsvorming. Hierbij kan gesteld worden dat men wel enigszins inzicht heeft in wat wel en niet goed gaat (alhoewel dit nog verbeterd zou kunnen worden). Daarnaast kan het beleid veranderd worden. Bij het willen zit de bottleneck. *“Leren bestaat uit twee dingen, maar je moet weten wat er wel en niet goed gaat en wat je moet veranderen, en het voor ons ook doen in nieuw beleid”*. Terugkomend op de feedback lus; de koppeling van de ervaringen uit de uitvoering naar het evalueren van beleid en het ontwikkelen van nieuwe beleid is te zwak.

Oplossingsrichtingen

Bij de afweging tussen doelmatigheid en rechtmatigheid zou de overheid wellicht beter moeten leren omgaan met deze dilemma's. Elke keuze heeft een nadeel. *“Burgers begrijpen heus wel meer dingen dan de overheid denkt, maar je moet het wel uitleggen”*. Dus bij samenwerking tussen burgers en de overheid is het belangrijk om de keuze uit te leggen op basis van een bepaalde visie en belangrijke normen (bijv. aan de hand van de normen het beleid toetsen en dat gebruiken als onderbouwing voor de keuze voor een bepaald beleid). Hierbij moet de overheid zich afvragen of er alleen gecommuniceerd wordt naar de burger of dat de burger om advies gevraagd wordt. Soms heeft de burger namelijk al informatie en is het nuttiger om de burger te betrekken en bijvoorbeeld te vragen waarvoor een bepaald budget gebruikt moet worden.

3 oplossingsrichtingen om om te gaan met het verbeteren van de voorgenoemde feedback lus:

- Inhoudelijk goed voorbereiden wat het probleem is.
- Op ambtelijk en politiek niveau communiceren over dingen die verwerkt moeten worden in het nieuwe beleid op basis van nieuwe inzichten.
- Instrumenten ontwikkelen voor burgers en ambtenaren zodat zij weten hoe ze met situaties kunnen omgaan en welke methoden ze kunnen gebruiken. Zo is de stap naar het doen kleiner.
 - o Key Enabling Methodologies → methoden die je kunt gebruiken om bijvoorbeeld uit een dilemma te komen.
 - o Overheid houdt wellicht nog teveel vast aan een traditioneel perspectief bij de aanpak van een probleem. Andere methoden/perspectieven kunnen een oplossing dichterbij brengen.
 - o Voorbeeld instrumenten: participatie, (strategisch) omgevingsmanagement, u theory, design thinking.

Oplossingsrichtingen voor specifiek het gebruik van de PWE: De twee hoofdpunten zijn *“de feedback over de methodiek van degenen die eraan deelnemen”* en *“wanneer zou je het wel of niet kunnen”*

gebruiken”. Dus beter en wellicht overzichtelijker aangeven in welke situaties een PWE wel werkt en wanneer niet. Wellicht dat er ook een overzicht gemaakt kan worden van verschillende vormen van PWE’s en wanneer deze goed in te zetten zijn (infographic bijvoorbeeld).

Toekomstige trends

Digitalisering is een midellange/lange-termijn trend. Het aantal burgers dat om kan gaan met digitale middel zal toenemen. Er zal echter altijd een groep burgers blijven die niet digitaal vaardig is, waardoor toegankelijkheid ook een uitdaging is. Dit kan zelfs samenhangen met rechtvaardigheid (weer een dilemma voor de overheid). *“mag je dan van mensen die wat zwakker zijn in deze maatschappij mag je daar evenveel van verwachten als mensen die, die wat beter hebben in deze maatschappij?”*.

Op de korte termijn valt op dat burgers mondiger worden en dat de manieren waarop zij zichzelf uiten diverser worden.

Het aantal actieve ouderen zal toenemen. Zij zullen ook actiever betrokken zijn bij de samenleving, wellicht vrijwilligerswerk bijvoorbeeld. Zij beschikken over veel kennis en ervaring die zij kunnen overdragen. Het moet echter geen verplichting worden. Je kunt mensen niet dwingen. Wat hierin een risico is, is dat een vrijwilliger stopt waarbij een gat ontstaat in de organisatie, wat grote consequenties kan hebben voor de organisatie (bijv. een burgerinitiatief).

Burgers worden actiever en het aantal burgerinitiatieven zal stijgen. Het aantal intermediairs, die veel kennis hebben van de lokale samenleving en de organisatie van de gemeente, gaat hopelijk toenemen. Dit vergt tijd aangezien deze burgers veel ervaring hebben.

Ongecategoriseerd

Ideale mix tussen overheidsparticipatie en burgerparticipatie is niet op voorhand te zeggen. Het hangt af van de context; waaronder het schaalniveau en de fase van besluitvorming. Het kan namelijk zo zijn dat er al besluiten genomen zijn en er dingen vastliggen op hoger schaalniveau, waardoor de burger minder vrijheid heeft op bijvoorbeeld lokaal niveau. Wellicht belangrijker dan het bepalen van deze ideale mix, is het feit dat men erover nadenkt; *“Wat is in deze omstandigheden de ideale mix?”*. Betrek de burger ook meer bij bepalen van de manier van participatie die bij hen past. Waar hebben zij behoefte aan? De uitkomst hiervan is afhankelijk van de context, bijv. cultuur, demografische kenmerken.

Participatie kán een verminderde werking hebben op de polarisatie, als er een evenwichtige afspiegeling is van de samenleving bij participatie.

Interview 6

Doelen

Zowel in de literatuur als in de praktijk wordt het vergroten van de betrokkenheid van burgers vaak genoemd als doel. Er zijn twee redenen waarom dit belangrijk zou zijn. (1) Het idee dat burgers willen meebeslissen en daartoe ook in staat zijn, zowel door het gestegen gemiddelde opleidingsniveau als door technologische ontwikkelingen). (2) Het veelgehoorde idee dat met name bepaalde groepen burgers onvoldoende gehoord worden

Verbeterpunten / uitdagingen

De vraag is vervolgens of burgerparticipatie, hoe goed bedoeld vaak ook, een goede manier is om op de twee genoemde punten in te spelen. Het antwoord is 'nee'. Beter kan worden gekeken naar de mogelijkheden die ons huidige politieke stelsel al biedt om tot goed beleid in het algemeen belang te komen. Bovendien staat diverse nieuwe vormen van burgerparticipatie op gespannen voet met de grondwettelijke representatieve democratie.

Verder: bij politieke partijen is een toenemend probleem het gebrek aan visie vanuit de politiek zelf.

Er is bovendien een breder probleem rond ons openbaar bestuur, namelijk "*de tendens om allerlei debatten, allerlei kwesties uit te besteden aan andere instanties en "burgerparticipatie is een soort van zoveelste vorm van uitbesteding"*". Een risicovol effect van burgerparticipatie is dan ook dat de politieke functie verzwakt wordt als de besluitvorming aan anderen wordt overgelaten.

Daarnaast: veel burgers vinden dat de politiek uiteindelijk de besluiten moet nemen, ook als zijzelf actief (willen) participeren. Burgers zien ook in dat zij niet over alle eigenschappen en inzichten beschikken om een goede beslissing te nemen. Bovendien zijn niet burgers, maar politici en bestuurders degenen die ook de tijd en (via verkiezingen) het mandaat hebben gekregen om zich daarmee bezig te houden. Zij zijn hiertoe uiteindelijk gemandateerd vanuit de samenleving op basis van hun ideeën, motivatie, ervaring e.d. Om dan vervolgens als bestuurder/politici aan de burger te vragen waar hij/zij zich mee bezig moet houden, is vreemd en niet wenselijk. "*Eerst maar eens gewoon terug naar de uitgangspunten van ons politieke stelsel en de eisen die dat stelt in termen van; weten wat je rol is, welke deskundigheid nodig is, etc.*". Wellicht vindt men het gezien de populistische tijdgeest spannend om te pleiten voor het versterken van de eigen instituties.

En: als een burger zich actiever wil bezighouden met politieke beleids- en besluitvorming, kan hij/zij ervoor kiezen zelf de politiek in te gaan, of op een andere manier maatschappelijk actief te worden.

"*De inhoudelijke deskundigheid bij de overheid, maar ook op het decentrale bestuursniveau is enorm achteruit gekacheld*". In reactie op het gebrek aan ambtelijke deskundigheid wordt de burger betrokken in plaats van het intern op te lossen. Daarnaast kost het ook veel energie om participatietrajecten te organiseren, vooral door de grote toename aan mogelijkheden/vormen wordt het er niet overzichtelijker op.

Wat betreft alle participatiemethoden en tegenwoordig ook de hybride democratische innovatie; elke methode sluit weer aan op een andere context. Echter hierdoor verliest men zicht op de connectie van deze participatiemethoden met ons politieke systeem. Indien participatiemethoden worden ontwikkeld om om te gaan met beperkingen van onze representatieve democratie, dan moet men durven aan te geven dat het politieke systeem zelf wellicht veranderd moet worden, en hoe dan precies. In plaats daarvan hoor je voorstanders van participatieve democratie zeggen dat men het bestaande stelsel wil 'aanvullen' en 'verrijken'.

Wat betreft de PWE; online (website TU Delft) staat dat politici ook de keuze hebben om naar experts te luisteren in plaats van burger. Echter, de keuze is niet zo zwart wit, er zijn nog andere manieren om input voor planvorming en besluitvorming te vergaren, zoals je eigen visie als politicus, het politieke

programma van de partij en het ambtelijke apparaat. Wat betreft de nationale klimaatraadpleging: de vragen die daarin worden voorgelegd zijn nogal complex. Uiteindelijk is dit instrument dan ook gericht op een beperkte groep mensen.

Oplossingsrichting

In eerste instantie zouden we moeten kijken naar structurele verbeteringen in de democratie, op basis van het bestaande staatsrecht. Begin met het stellen van de vraag: *“Hoe zorgen we nou dat het hele politieke proces, zoals het officieel bedoeld was, weer beter gaat verlopen?”*. Ga het gesprek aan over *“institutionele vernieuwing”*. Politici moeten zich bewust worden van het feit dat zij (lange termijn) visies moeten ontwikkelen voor de samenleving, waarbij contact met burger belangrijk is. Dit hoeft niet per se met nieuwe vormen van burgerparticipatie, de politiek heeft daar al instrumenten voor vanuit het officiële politieke stelsel.

Voordat nieuwe vormen van bestuurlijke burgerparticipatie eventueel een rol krijgen in de (verbeterde werking van de) vertegenwoordigende democratie, dan moet eerst beter onderzocht worden hoe en binnen welke kaders. *“Want zomaar de uitkomst van bijvoorbeeld een burgerberaad als min of meer bindend beschouwen, dat kan grondwettelijk helemaal niet”*.

Er is een fundamentele discussie nodig, vooral binnen de politiek, over de rol van de overheid en de functie van het parlement. De uitkomsten van de discussie moeten gebruikt worden voor het stellen van bijvoorbeeld kwaliteitseisen. Als ons openbaar bestuur zelf goed functioneert, kan vervolgens eventueel nagedacht worden over (nieuwe) manieren om burgers te betrekken.

Toekomstige ontwikkelingen/trends

Participatieve vermoeidheid. Overheidsorganisaties zijn vaak voornemens om burgerparticipatie toe te passen, terwijl in de praktijk blijkt dat dit in beperkte mate wordt gedaan. Er is een discrepantie tussen de ontwikkelingen van methodes en de mate waarin het onderwerp leeft in de samenleving, en de mate waarin participatiemethoden daadwerkelijk in een behoefte voorzien. *“Hoe meer vormen en hoe meer soorten, hoe lastiger het ook wordt om daar vanuit de politiek op een goede manier gebruik van te maken”*.

Digitalisering kan een rol gaan spelen in de communicatie naar burgers toe. Alhoewel dit mogelijkheden biedt, kan dit ook leiden tot extra problemen, niet alleen voor de overheid, maar voor de maatschappij in het algemeen. Hierbij gaat het met name over de grote hoeveelheid beschikbare informatie en de algoritmes die bepaalde informatie meer naar de voorgrond brengen. Hiervoor is beleid nodig zodat discussies en gesprekken gebaseerd zijn op basis van betrouwbare informatie.

Ongecategoriseerd

De kritische houding ten aanzien van burgerparticipatie zoals het nu toegepast wordt, betekent niet dat de politiek en de overheid niet in contact hoeven te staan met de samenleving. Dat contact is namelijk inherent aan een politieke functie. Er zijn momenteel al manieren, buiten burgerparticipatie, om dit contact te onderhouden, en kennis op te doen van wat er in de samenleving speelt, o.a. via de journalistiek, door onderzoek van wetenschappelijke adviesraden, werkbezoeken en allerlei andere vormen van contact met burgers, al dan niet binnen de eigen politieke achterban.

Er bestaat een misverstand over dat er zonder nieuwe vormen van participatie, te weinig participatie mogelijk is. In Nederland is er echter al veel mogelijk binnen de huidige grondrechtelijke mogelijkheden, denk aan het actieve en passieve kiesrecht, het recht je te verenigen, het demonstratierecht. *“Een democratie is een wisselwerking tussen politiek en samenleving”, “die wisselwerking vindt op heel veel manieren plaats”*. De systeemwereld (van de politiek) en de leefwereld (van de burger) worden vaak als gesloten en als tegengestelde werelden beschouwd, terwijl dit niet zo is. De samenleving bestaat uit verschillende burgers met verschillende perspectieven en belangen. De

representatieve democratie heeft als functie om op basis van deze verschillen tot doordacht en rechtsstatelijk beleid te komen, waar de meeste mensen mee kunnen leven.

Interview 7

Doelen

Het belangrijkste doel van burgerparticipatie is het feit dat de burger betrokken moet worden bij de besluitvorming zodat er meer acceptatie ontstaat voor het besluit dat genomen moet worden. De burger is mondiger geworden, heeft meer kennis en mogelijkheden om informatie te verkrijgen (waaronder ook desinformatie). Dus is er meer nodig voor de burger om een bepaald besluit te accepteren.

Bij besluiten over het gehele traject, van beleidsvorming tot realisatie, is burgerparticipatie nodig. De reden hiervoor is dat de positie van de burger verschilt in de verschillende stappen/fase van het traject. *“De burger als belanghebbende wordt elke keer anders”*.

Voor elke stap is een andere vorm van participatie nodig, die aansluit op de positie van de burger.

Aan het begin van een traject kan een burgerberaad worden ingezet voor een brede maatschappelijke discussie. In dit geval is de burger een maatschappelijk belanghebbende, zonder persoonlijk betrokken te zijn. Bij een discussie over de realisatie zal de positie van de burger veranderen als het hem (persoonlijk) raakt.

Het is belangrijk om ervoor te zorgen dat de doelgroep van de participatiemethode aansluit op de fase/stap waarin het proces zich bevindt. Een burgerberaad met gelote burgers inzetten in een later stadium van het proces leidt dus niet tot de input die je wilt hebben; want bij de realisatie wil je concrete input in plaats van een brede maatschappelijke discussie.

Het doel is om mensen mee te nemen en een kwalitatief goed proces te doorlopen waarbij de uitkomst van het proces geaccepteerd/begrepen wordt door de burger. *“Het doel is de basis vormen voor het volgende participatieproces”*. De uitkomsten van een participatief proces leiden tot het volgende proces. Uiteindelijk leidt dit tot de realisatie van de gehele transitie.

Voordelen

Een voordeel van internetraadplegingen is dat veel mensen benaderd kunnen worden die anders niet worden benaderd. Vergeleken met een burgerberaad, heeft een internetraadpleging geen deliberatief proces; de respondent wordt niet beïnvloed door anderen. De vraag is of dit deliberatieve aspect wel verwerkt moet worden in een internetraadpleging. Een internetraadpleging, zonder deliberatief aspect, kan evenzogoed nuttig zijn om *“ongenuanceerde meningen van die mensen”* in kaart te brengen. Deze resultaten kunnen dienen als input voor bijvoorbeeld een burgerberaad waarin bijvoorbeeld gereageerd wordt op uitkomsten van de internetraadpleging. Deliberatief aspect inbrengen kan ertoe leiden dat je geen inzicht krijgt in de verschillende perspectieven en meningen.

Uitdagingen/verbeterpunten

Recent participatietraject: OlstWijhe. 2x zoveel budget zou ingezet kunnen worden voor intensievere begeleiding, en meer tijd.

Er wordt gestreefd naar een participatietraject dat continuïteit brengt; van beleid tot realisatie (van beleidsmatig denken tot invulling geven aan details). Momenteel ontbreekt deze continuïteit en worden mensen niet bij de hand genomen om van de ene fase naar de andere te bewegen. Daarnaast moet men in feite al vooruitdenken bij de definiëren van een kader in de beginfase van een proces. Het gevaar is dat men hier al dingen gaat beslissen waardoor er later in het proces niet genoeg ruimte is om daar invulling aan te geven. Het is belangrijk om kaders te stellen en te reflecteren waarom die kaders er zijn. De basis voor keuzes omtrent deze kaders zou moeten komen uit de waarden die je hebt.

Het is belangrijk bij een participatietraject om te investeren in de voorkant. Niet alleen de voorkant van een specifiek participatietraject, maar aan de voorkant van het hele traject, zoals de energietransitie. Ook al kost dit wellicht in het begin meer tijd, het resulteert wel in een betere kwaliteit. Bovendien kan dit

later in de transitie wel resulteren in tijdswinst; als de burger een positieve ervaring heeft, goed betrokken is en de uitkomst geaccepteerd is, dan kan samen doorgedaan worden in plaats van vechtrajecten die elkaar opvolgen.

Bij het koppelen van participatieprocessen zijn overdrachtsmomenten belangrijk; de uitkomst van het ene proces is input voor het volgende proces. Een overdrachtsmoment maakt dit duidelijker.

Een andere uitdaging, wellicht eveneens een toekomsttrend waar we op moeten anticiperen, is het *“opkomend populisme over het toepassen van burgerparticipatie”*. Burgerparticipatie moet niet een projectje zijn dat uitgevoerd wordt zodat het afgevinkt kan worden van een lijst met projecten. Het aankaarten van het belang van burgerparticipatie is iets wat we moeten blijven doen.

“De overheid moet de regie nemen en de uitkomst vanuit het proces weer oppakken en weer verder brengen”. De overheid moet de regie nemen en het proces begeleiden; van de ene fase naar andere. Belangrijk is ook om de uitkomst van een participatieproces terug te koppelen naar de volksvertegenwoordiging.

Toekomstige trends/ontwikkelingen

Meer vertrouwen krijgen in het nut van burgerparticipatie. Dit besef moet ook komen bij bestuurders. Het besef dat veel dingen deliberatief opgelost kunnen worden; indien individueel belang en het algemeen maatschappelijk belang overeenkomen, dan kan een participatief proces leiden tot een geaccepteerde uitkomst. Indien er verschil zit, dan heb je bijv. een gemeenteraad wel nodig, die maakt dan namelijk de keuze, waarbij het algemene maatschappelijke belang afgewogen wordt tegen het individuele belang. Dit is in feite een soort scheidsrechterpositie.

Ongecategoriseerd

Er zijn verschillende vormen van participatie, elke vorm past bij een bepaalde situatie. Bijv. een referendum en een burgerberaad zijn alternatieven van elkaar; beide kunnen gebruikt worden maar het is afhankelijk van de situatie.

De crux; om de vier jaar kiezen we bestuurders, maar binnen deze vier jaar zijn er dingen die gebeuren waar de burger ook iets over wil zeggen.

Interview 8

Doelen

Op een hoog niveau kan gesteld worden dat de overheid een maatschappelijke rol heeft. Als ambtenaar ben je een schakel tussen de politiek verantwoordelijke en de maatschappij. De minister neemt uiteindelijk het besluit als hij/zij dat mandaat heeft. In dit proces speelt burgerparticipatie een rol waarbij eigenlijk gecommuniceerd wordt naar *“de verantwoordelijken die daar door onze democratische besluitvorming toe gemachtigd zijn, tijdelijk, om daar beslissingen over te nemen”* wat maatschappelijk gewenst is en hoe het beleid maatschappelijk gaat vallen.

Uitdagingen/verbeterpunten

Je kunt burgerparticipatie te vroeg in het proces hebben. Wanneer het nog niet duidelijk is of er een probleem is op die locatie, dan kan participatie de burger afschrikken.

Bij participatietrajecten wordt vaak onvoldoende gecommuniceerd waar het over gaat en wat er al vastligt. Voorbeeld Biesbosch: spreker had geen grip op materie en wilde aardig zijn. Dit werkt niet; je moet ontzettend duidelijk zijn naar de mensen toe over dingen zoals de persoon die uiteindelijk beslist en hoe de resultaten van de participatie gebruikt worden (mate van impact).

Vertrouwenscrisis richting overheden die te maken heeft met het feit dat de overheid ernaar streeft participatie goed vorm te geven, maar tegelijkertijd in het begin de fout in gaat door bij mensen aan te bellen en ze puur te informeren in plaats van het gesprek aan te gaan en de mensen leren kennen. Een dergelijke manier van communiceren wekt weerstand op, ook omdat mensen moeten wennen aan het idee dat hun omgeving gaat veranderen. De overheid moet hier de tijd voor nemen. *“Ik denk dat het een jaar kost om er vrede mee te hebben dat je omgeving verandert en kansen te gaan zien”*. De overheid zou dit jaar moeten benutten om kennis te vergaren over de omgeving en de mensen. Op deze manier kan verkend worden of overlap zitten tussen het projectdoel van de overheid en de behoeften/waarden van de mensen. Als dit het geval is, kunnen samen plannen gemaakt worden. Zo niet, dan kan de overheid 3 dingen doen: (1) macht inzetten en als overheid het plan doorzetten (gezien de veranderende maatschappij valt dit tegenwoordig slechter dan vroeger), (2) verlies pakken en ergens anders heen gaan, of (3) het plan aanpassen.

De mate van weerstand tegen een project dat de omgeving verandert, ligt onder andere aan de fase van het project. In het begin is altijd weerstand en het ligt onder andere aan de manier waarop je hiermee omgaat. Aan het eind hoeven mensen er niet gelukkig van worden als ze het maar begrijpen. Dus je kunt ook een verkeerde toon aanslag in interactie met de burger.

Wellicht is dit geen kritiekpunt, maar binnen de ambtelijke wereld is er altijd terughoudendheid over het geven van informatie, zelfs als deze informatie al vrijwel publiekelijk bekend is.

De overheidscultuur moet veranderen; de verhouding tussen overheid/uitvoerende dienst en de maatschappij moet veranderen. Bij Rijkswaterstaat wordt geprobeerd een nieuwe cultuur te forceren en dat gaat niet. Vanuit de top en de jonge mensen vanaf de werkvloer willen vaak wel, maar afdelingshoofden vinden het vaak lastiger, ook omdat het administratief lastiger is.

De afslanking van het ambtenarenapparaat zonder afslanking van het takenpakket heeft ertoe geleid dat er te weinig contact is tussen deze ambtelijke wereld en de maatschappelijke wereld.

Bestuurders en ambtenaren zijn gemotiveerd en willen de maatschappij dienen. *“Alleen het systeem waar we door de politiek in mijn optiek zijn ingeperst, heeft ertoe geleid dat elke terugkoppeling, van werkt het beleid nou in de praktijk? Waar leidt dat toe? Lost het ook die maatschappelijke problemen op? Dat is er allemaal uit geschrapt”*.

Ambtenaren moeten meer inzetten op hun taak als schakel tussen maatschappij en politiek, in plaats van zich richten op wat de minister wil.

Een andere uitdaging is om de jongere generatie een nadrukkelijke rol te geven in het participatietraject, omdat sommige beleidsstukken over een periode van 10-15 jaar gaan. Het is dan dus eigenlijk relevanter om van deze jonge groep mensen te horen wat zij vinden dan van ouderen.

Wat betreft de PWE; deze heeft positieve aspecten, zoals het feit dat de burger moet denken vanuit een ander perspectief. Het is echter maar beperkt bruikbaar.

Goede aspecten

Het feit dat er verschillende participatiemethoden zijn, die gebruikt kunnen worden in een passende context (bij een passende vraag of fase).

In de praktijk blijkt dat men bereid is om te investeren in een collectief doel/project. Angst komt vaak niet door pure weerstand tegen een project, maar door de angst om als individu op te draaien voor de kosten van een collectief doel. De kosten collectief maken en iemand perspectief bieden, kan er hier al voor zorgen dat weerstand afneemt.

Oplossingsrichtingen

Om een cultuursverandering te laten plaatsvinden, is een eerste stap om vanuit de top ruimte te creëren om ervaring op te doen om vervolgens die ervaring binnen de organisatie te verspreiden. Echter, “*die overheid heeft de deskundigheid vaak maar spaarzaam in huis, heeft daar de tijd niet voor, heeft het geld niet voor, heeft het personeel er niet voor.*”. Er is geen sprake van onwil. De mensen begrijpen dat verandering nodig is, maar er is een gebrek aan competenties bij de mensen waardoor uitvoeren lastig is. Men is soms te veel gefocust op precies willen weten hoe iets zit voordat de omgeving/buitenwereld geïnformeerd wordt, maar soms is het voldoende om aan te geven dat er nog onzekerheid is.

Durf aan het begin van een traject te investeren in de relatie met de omgeving. Hier wordt te weinig op gefocust, onder andere vanuit de gedachte dat het veel geld kost, maar dat het geen tastbare producten oplevert.

Goede ervaringen te blijven onthouden binnen de overheid en die ervaring en goede aspecten mee te nemen in volgende trajecten.

Toekomstige trends/ontwikkelingen

Vergeleken met vroeger zijn de informatielijnen tussen overheden en de maatschappij korter geworden (o.a. door sociale media) en is de maatschappij assertiever geworden. Daarnaast zie je een ontwikkeling waarbij de nadruk meer komt te liggen over overheidsparticipatie in plaats van burgerparticipatie.

Er is een trend richting met de burger in een vroegere fase van het besluitvormingsproces.

Een andere mogelijke ontwikkeling is dat de burger minder gaat participeren en aangeeft dat het de taak van de overheid is om tot een plan te komen voordat de burger wordt betrokken.

Overheid, maatschappelijke sectoren en burgers raken steeds meer betrokken. Mensen moeten vroegtijdig betrokken worden, maar hierbij moet wel worden opgelet dat de vraagstelling niet te abstract is (en je dus te vroeg naar de mensen gaat). Deze betrokkenheid (en dus behoefte aan participatie) zal zich verder ontwikkelen.

Het internet en digitale technologieën kunnen ook invloed hebben op het gebrek aan vertrouwen en gebruikt worden voor verkeerde doeleinden. Het is echter ook een kans om de betrokkenheid en communicatie op een goede, en nieuwe manier vorm te geven.

Het liefst heb je een traject waarin gebruikers en overheden gezamenlijk tot afspraken komen in plaats van dat de overheid dingen oplegt. Dit zou de toekomst moeten zijn van burgerparticipatie.

Ongecategoriseerd

Wanneer je participeert en hoe, is zeer context-afhankelijk.

Het gaat erom dat je, als ambtenaar/bestuurder, te vertrouwen bent door de mensen. Je moet vertrouwen wekken en mensen moeten serieus genomen worden. Dit houdt ook in dat excuses moeten worden aangeboden als je fout zit. In je relatie, als bestuurder/ambtenaar, met de omgeving moet je wel een grens trekken tussen werk en privé.

Er is tijd nodig om mensen hun perspectieven te transformeren. En indien mensen mede-ontwerper kunnen worden van het beleid, dan worden ze in feite ook mede-eigenaar (van zowel het probleem als de oplossing) en gaan ze zich verantwoordelijk voelen. Dit is in feite co-creatie.

Houd wel in gedachte; *“Politiek wordt niet alleen door de politiek bedreven, echt niet.”*

Flexibiliteit en de noodzaak tot efficiëntie bij klimaat gerelateerde projecten is nodig vanwege 3 redenen: (1) klimaatverandering gaat sneller dan we denken, (2) geld ontwaard en (3) personeelsgebrek.

Interview 9

Doelen

Vanuit een politiek perspectief kan gesteld worden dat het in een democratie belangrijk is om burgers te betrekken. Het doel hiervan is om inzicht te krijgen in wensen en verlangens van burgers en kiezers en die te vertalen naar de politiek en vervolgens naar beleid.

Vanuit het perspectief van de burger is participatie grofweg op te delen in drie dingen:

1. *“Steun voor het idee van participatie of specifieke participatie-instrumenten”*
2. *“de bereidheid om eraan mee te doen”*
3. *“het daadwerkelijke gedrag” (het wel of niet meedoen)”*

Op alle drie deze punten kunnen mensen bepaalde motivaties hebben om daarvoor te zijn. Meedoen is een mogelijk voor mensen om hun opvattingen, wensen en belangen kenbaar te maken in het politieke besluitvormingsproces.

In een democratie is het belangrijk dat mensen kunnen laten weten wat ze van beleid vinden. En vervolgens kan je kijken welke manieren daarop aansluiten. Hierbij moet je heel goed nadenken over het doel van participatie, of iedereen hetzelfde doel heeft en of het instrument ook ervoor zorgt dat het doel bereikt wordt. Het ene instrument zal wellicht beter aansluiten op een bepaald type besluit dan een ander instrument.

Protesten zijn ook een vorm van politieke participatie (bottom-up). Deze manier is minder geïnstitutionaliseerd, maar het is wel een belangrijke manier (het is ook een grondrecht). Vaak is het een manier waarop mensen willen aangeven dat ze gehoord willen worden.

Burgers willen een responsieve overheid; waarbij beleid wordt aangepast op wat er speelt in de samenleving en als beleid hier niet op aansluit, dat het uitgelegd wordt.

Een onderdeel van de democratie is om vragen te blijven stellen over het level van participatie, gelijkheid en representativiteit. Participatie wordt aan de voorkant van het beleid maken ingezet, daarna wil je dat de overheid tot beleid komt dat gelijkwaardig is (*“distributieve rechtvaardigheid”*). *“Voor mij is participatie gewoon een onderdeel in die democratische keten, maar het is in die zin voor een deel op doel op zich (als democratische waarde), maar het is ook een middel om iets te bereiken.”* Participatie is een onderdeel binnen het bredere proces.

Positieve aspecten

Over het algemeen gaat het goed met onze representatieve democratie. Op nationaal niveau is de opkomst voor verkiezingen ongeveer 80% en dat is relatief hoog. Ook op andere bestuurlijke niveaus is het aantal mensen dat meedoet aan verkiezingen groot, ondanks dat de percentages lager zijn, rond de 50-60%.

Een positief aspect van de algemene verkiezingen is dat in feite iedereen kan meedoen (er zijn maar een paar drempels).

“Dus we associëren burgerparticipatie wel met iets positiefs, namelijk democratische betrokkenheid”

Uitdagingen/verbeterpunten

Over het algemeen functioneert de huidige representatieve democratie goed, maar niet ideaal. Participatiemethoden worden ingezet om de democratie aan te vullen als reactie op de gebreken die ontstaan bij verkiezingen. Dit lost het probleem gedeeltelijk op, maar hierbij blijft de politieke ongelijkheid een uitdaging.

Een van de belangrijkste onderwerpen is politieke ongelijkheid; is de participatie inclusief genoeg? En leidt dit tot gelijke vertegenwoordiging en uiteindelijk tot gelijke uitkomsten in het beleid?

Inclusiviteit valt onder representativiteit. Hierbij is het belangrijk om na te denken over of de groep deelnemers representatief is (dit is aan de voorkant van het proces) en of iedereen tijdens het proces gelijk aan bod komt.

Een keerzijde bij algemene verkiezingen is dat *“niet iedereen daar in gelijke mate aan mee doet”*. Hierdoor is er politieke ongelijkheid; op landelijk niveau valt het nog mee (met een constante opkomst van rond de 80%), maar op lokaal, provinciaal, en Europees niveau is deze ongelijkheid groter.

Een andere uitdaging is toegang (ofwel de mogelijkheid tot participatie) in het daadwerkelijke maken van beleid. Er is daar weinig representativiteit waarbij eigenlijk beleid gemaakt wordt zonder politieke vertegenwoordiging.

Men weet vaak wel dat sommige groepen gebrekkig vertegenwoordigd worden, en dat dat effect heeft op het beleid. Dus er is aandacht voor. Wellicht zou er meer aandacht moeten komen voor hoe deze ongelijkheid in participatie kan worden opgelost, maar feit blijft dat het een moeilijk probleem is. Bovendien, het organiseren van manieren waarop mensen betrokken kunnen worden, leidt niet per definitie tot inclusiever beleid. Vaak zie je namelijk dat een bepaalde manier om burgers te betrekken er toch toe leidt dat bepaalde mensen worden bevoordeelt boven anderen.

Belangrijk: *“Dus ik denk dat gewoon zorgen dat mensen gewoon betrokken zijn, maar ook betrokken op een betekenisvolle manier”*.

Oplossingsrichtingen

Een deel van de oplossing is om onze huidige representatieve democratie te waarderen, want er doen veel mensen mee. Natuurlijk kun je altijd streven naar verbetering en het betrekken van meer mensen, maar dit is niet gemakkelijk. Een mogelijke opkomstplicht bij verkiezingen is hier ook geen oplossing voor, want het feit dat mensen dan wel meedoen heeft als keerzijde dat het niet altijd betekenisvolle stemmen zijn (men maakt niet altijd een *“weloverwogen inhoudelijke keuze”*). In dat geval wordt dan nog steeds niet bereikt dat mensen hun wensen kenbaar maken.

Zoals eerder aangegeven werkt onze representatieve democratie goed, ondanks dat er natuurlijk altijd iets te verbeteren valt. Dus we moeten ook investeren in de representatieve democratie en vanuit daar onderzoeken welke participatie instrumenten of combinatie van instrumenten gebruikt kunnen worden om de democratische waarden te verwezenlijken (zoals het vergroten van de gelijkheid).

Vaak is er bij de overheid sprake van top-down participatie en dat is goed, maar dat impliceert dat de overheid over veel dingen bepaalt (wat is het onderwerp, wie mag er meedoen, hoeveel beleidsruimte is er?). Bij een dergelijke top-down manier van organiseren moet eveneens gereflecteerd worden of politici en beleidsmakers dezelfde doelen en verwachtingen hebben, en wat de verwachtingen van burgers zijn. Wellicht is het nodig om in een besluitvormingsproces ruimte te laten voor deelnemers of een breder publiek om hun inbreng de integreren in het beleid. In onze democratie is het de bedoeling dat burger mee kunnen doen en dat moet niet alleen top-down zijn, maar ook bottom-up.

Een kanttekening is wel dat participatie geen verplichting moet worden, maar een mogelijkheid blijven.

Ongecategoriseerd

Bij onderzoek doen ben je eigenlijk ook bezig om de opvattingen en wensen van burgers door te vertalen naar beleid. Dit is alleen een top-down manier, waarbij van bovenaf de scope wordt bepaald. Er is wel een verschil tussen mensen betrekken via onderzoek of mensen betrekken via een andere manier (op een manier waarbij het meer open staat en mensen zelf dingen kunnen initiëren).

Het idee van de deliberatieve theorie is dat burgers niet alleen betrokken worden voor gelijkheid, maar dat deze betrokkenheid ook leidt tot een betere besluitvorming en een beter beleid. Bij deliberatieve processen is het ook van belang om mensen te betrekken die minder zelfvertrouwen hebben bij zichzelf politiek uitdrukken.

Bij lokale burgerparticipatie kunnen drie golven onderscheiden worden:

1. De overheid heeft een top-down benadering.
2. Meer gelegenheid voor initiatieven van burgers.
3. Veel aandacht voor bottom-up initiatieven, echter er ontstaat ook een tegenbeweging. Bijv. online petitie-systeem in Engeland, waarbij het aantal ingediende voorstellen zo groot is dat het betekenisloos is geworden.

Interview 10

Doelen

Het belangrijkste doel is dat je samen met de omgeving je plan beter maakt en zo beargumenteerd wat je aan het doen bent. Daarnaast hoop je op draagvlak, maar dat krijg je niet altijd, maar de acceptatie kan wel toenemen.

In vergelijking met grootschalige participatie moeten het doel in principe hetzelfde zijn. Echter, in de praktijk zie je vaak dat het doel meer is om te het ontworpen beleid te testen (wat vinden mensen ervan) in plaats van beslissen of adviseren. Het gaat vaak op het peilen van meningen.

Uitdagingen/verbeterpunten

Bij grootschalige participatie moet er meer ingezet worden op het adviseren vanuit de burger aan de overheid in plaats van het testen van beleid. Het beslissen op belangrijke onderwerpen is niet per se iets waar de nadruk op hoeft te komen, want we hebben een representatieve democratie waarbij we de mensen kiezen die beslissingen nemen.

Als participatie is georganiseerd, dan moet je wel serieus de uitkomsten meenemen en niet terzijde schuiven. Het komt te vaak voor dat de resultaten terzijde worden geschoven onder het mom van gebrek aan representativiteit of slechte organisatie, omdat de resultaten niet bevallen.

“Participatie moet ook meer in een beleidsfase beginnen, dus als je beleid gaat ontwikkelen” in plaats van alleen in de concretere fase. Wellicht dat hierbij de communicatie van de overheid iets verbeterd kan worden, door toe te lichten in welke fase men zich bevindt. Bijv. burgers die bijeenkwamen over windmolens en die zich afvroegen wanneer en door wie er überhaupt beslist was om windmolens te plaatsen.

Een van de meest recente participatietrajecten was de PWE over het toekomstige energiesysteem. Twee keer zoveel budget zou besteed worden aan meer inclusiviteit in de deelnemers. In de open raadpleging ontbrak er aansluiting met bepaalde doelgroepen, bijv. vrouwen. Dus geld uitgeven aan het betrekken van mensen die nu nog niet betrokken zijn. Inclusiviteit en representativiteit zijn belangrijk *“omdat je beleid maakt voor iedereen en niet alleen voor de oude witte man”*. Deze doelgroep hebben recht om mee te doen, maar het is van belang om ook anderen te betrekken.

Het feit dat jongeren niet meedoen aan participatietrajecten is ook een uitdaging. Er is hier al bewustwording over.

Oplossingsrichtingen

Om ervoor te zorgen dat de resultaten serieus worden genomen, moet bewustwording plaatsvinden. Deze beweging is al in gang gezet, maar moet zich verder door ontwikkelen. Hierbij is het publiceren van stukken zoals een kabinetsvisie over burgerbetrokkenheid een eerste stap. Daarnaast moet gerealiseerd worden dat de ambtenarij achter de bestuurders ook een verantwoordelijkheid heeft met betrekking tot de resultaatverwerking bij burgerparticipatie. Zij moeten geactiveerd worden en bewust worden gemaakt.

Positieve aspecten/elementen

Het feit dat er veel innovatie is, is positief. Er worden verschillende digitale technieken geprobeerd die zorgen voor meer toegankelijkheid.

Het is erg wijkafhankelijk, maar sommige gemeentes zijn al goed bezig door heel gericht mensen uit te nodigen; door langs te gaan en aan te bellen in plaats van een brief.

De afstemming met betrekking tot de organisatie van burgerparticipatie tussen lokale en nationale overheden. Dit wordt al regelmatig gedaan, maar kan sterker en beter.

Toekomstige trends/ontwikkelingen

Meer digitalisering is een toekomstige ontwikkeling, waarbij meer methodes ontwikkeld kunnen worden die veel mensen betrekken. Bovendien zal dit ook meer op de persoon gericht zijn.

Een ontwikkeling die opkomt is wellicht de groep burgers die niet betrokken wil worden en die het maken en uitvoeren van beleid als een overheidstaak ziet.

Wantrouwen is ook iets om in de gaten te houden; zowel overheidswantrouwen als wantrouwen in de samenleving in het algemeen. Burgerparticipatie kan deze ontwikkeling wellicht remmen en ervoor zorgen dat men grote transities, zoals de energietransitie, gaat zien als een gezamenlijk iets. Een andere manier om te anticiperen op het wantrouwen is om, als overheid en bestuurders, *“te doen wat je zegt dat je gaat doen”*. Hoe dit vertrouwen teruggewonnen moet worden, is lastig. Hun overtuigingen zitten vaak diep geworteld waardoor het lastig is om op te lossen.

Ongecategoriseerd

“Des te concreter, des te meer deelnemers over het algemeen”. Dit betreft de mate van concreetheid van de fase; zit je in de fase van beleid ontwikkelen of ga je nadenken op een gedetailleerder niveau?

Interview 11

“Mijn belangrijkste boodschap is dat hoe het nu georganiseerd wordt alleen een beperkt groepje bereikt”.

“Ik denk dat er mensen zich niet gehoord voelen en dat het heel belangrijk is dat mensen zich gehoord voelen”

Doelen

“Burgerbetrokkenheid is veel meer dan participatie”.

Soms wordt er te veel gewicht aan het participatieproces gehangen; het wordt wellicht gezien als iets wat je kan afvinken. Beleid wordt beter van participatie doordat het de informatieasymmetrie oplost; *“als overheid weet je lang niet alles en met burger erbij weet je veel meer”.*

Participatie wordt gezien een manier om de democratie te versterken. Dit werkt niet als mensen die zich niet gehoord voelen ook niet participeren.

Uitdagingen/verbeterpunten

In feite participeert vaak alleen een specifieke groep burgers. Vaak gaat dit om burgers die de tijd en capaciteit hebben om te participeren. Het is echter ook relevant om te weten wie er niet meedoen want deze groepen wil je ook betrekken. Dit kan bijvoorbeeld de middenmoot zijn waar eigenlijk de meeste mensen zich in bevinden, of praktisch opgeleiden die kritisch zijn op de overheid.

Het moment waarop participatie wordt toegepast is altijd een trade-off; als het vroeg in het besluitvormingsproces wordt toegepast, dan is het vraagstuk nog relatief abstract. Als het later in het proces wordt toegepast, dan is de ruimte voor het meenemen van de uitkomsten kleiner. Wees als bestuurder in ieder geval open over waarover het gaat en waarover niet.

De mondige groep burgers weten meer te bereiken dan de minder mondige burgers.

Een andere uitdaging is het feit dat er een *“toenemende polarisatie is over klimaatbeleid in de breedte”*, terwijl er nog geen gemeenschappelijk besef over de urgentie van klimaatverandering.

Er is spanning tussen de verschillende bestuurlijke niveaus, waarbij het gaat over mandaten en machtsverhoudingen. Hierbij worden dingen soms op nationaal niveau beslist en blijkt dat er op lokaal niveau weinig ruimte is voor aanpassingen. Dit zorgt voor spanning als burgerparticipatie op lokaal niveau wordt georganiseerd, maar vervolgens een overheidsorganisatie op hoger niveau hier anders mee omgaat (bijv. overrulen). Deze spanning is begrijpelijk gezien de verschillende belangen die er spelen.

Daarnaast ontbreekt er een feedback loop tussen de bestuurlijke niveaus; op nationaal niveau wordt nationale beleid gemaakt, zonder de kennis op lokaal niveau mee te nemen waardoor er te weinig is nagedacht over de gevolgen van het nationale beleid voor de implementatie.

Ook over de verdeling van lusten en lasten moet je, als overheid, open zijn; bijv. dat de ene provincie erop achteruit gaat als gevolg van nieuw beleid, terwijl andere regio's erop vooruitgaan. Met deze verschillen moet je wat doen.

Positieve aspecten burgerparticipatie

Bij een burgerforum heb je in mindere mate te maken met het feit dat alleen een specifieke groep burgers de uitnodiging krijgt. Een aspect waar wel over nagedacht moet worden is wat er met de resultaten gedaan wordt door de bestuurders. Er is lef nodig om ruimte te laten in het beleid voor wat er uit het burgerforum komt.

Ideaalbeeld

Alhoewel het betrekken van burgers zeer belangrijk is, is er ook stevig overheidsbeleid nodig bij de grote maatschappelijke vraagstukken waar de maatschappij voor staat. In dit beleid moet duidelijk worden wat er met de belangen en ideeën van burgers gedaan wordt.

Belangrijk hierbij is om ook vanuit het perspectief van de burger te denken als het gaat om het ontwerpen van burgerparticipatie; bijv. Waarom zou de burger meedoen? En is de informatie die de overheid geeft begrijpelijk?

Daarnaast is het wellicht nodig om na te denken over de verschillen in groepen burgers; wat zijn voor hen beperkingen en hoe kunnen we hierop ingaan; zodat iedereen zich een weg weet te vinden naar bijvoorbeeld subsidieregelingen. Bovendien kan de beschikbare informatie beter gebruikt worden, waarbij nagedacht kan worden wat voor invloed het beleid heeft op verschillende groepen en hoe beleid meer kan aansluiten op doelgroepen.

Weerstand moet serieus genomen worden. Problemen moeten serieus genomen worden en het uitleggen is dan onvoldoende.

Eerste stappen richting ideaalbeeld

De context speelt een belangrijke rol. Binnen de overheid is een cultuurverandering nodig zodat bestuurders/ambtenaren de ruimte krijgen om te leren en te ervaren wat wel en niet goed gaat.

Daarnaast is het belangrijk om informatie begrijpelijk en toegankelijk te houden, zodat men concreet weet wat een beleidsverandering betekent. *“Een begrijpelijk handelingsperspectief”*.

Het is belangrijk om eerlijk te zijn in een participatieproces. Hierbij gaat het om open zijn over de dingen die vast liggen, het kader van de discussie en wat er uitkomt.

Ongecategoriseerd

De gebruikte participatiemethode is afhankelijk van de context, o.a. het bestuurlijke niveau.

Burgers vinden het belangrijk dat het democratisch proces goed functioneert. Hieronder valt het feit dat ze gehoord willen worden en dat hun perspectief wordt meegenomen in de besluitvorming. Dit betekent niet automatisch dat zij zelf willen participeren of vertegenwoordiger willen worden.

Interview 12

Toekomstbeeld:

De digitale democratie: “de inzet van digitale technologie om democratische besluitvormingsprocessen te ondersteunen” (blz. 217). Hierbij is een belangrijk onderdeel om de digitale ruimte anders inrichten; democratischer en inclusiever. Hierbij moeten jongeren betrokken worden.

Het betekent niet dat digitale participatietools de norm worden, deze moeten een aanvulling vormen op de bestaande methoden.

Uitdagingen:

Ondanks dat er wel nog steeds steun is voor de representatieve democratie, is er onvrede over de huidige invulling ervan. Er is onvrede over hoe men vertegenwoordigd wordt; de politieke invulling van onze democratie.

De participatie-paradox vormt een uitdaging. Dit refereert naar het feit dat meer participatiemethoden tot gevolg kan hebben dat de kans op ongelijkheid toeneemt.

Ongelijkheid is een probleem. Vaak worden dezelfde mensen betrokken.

Technologie en de nieuwe manieren om te communiceren, hebben impact op onze samenleving. Social media kunnen ook nuttig zijn; het is verbindend. Ze kunnen gebruikt worden om ervaringen te delen en het zorgt er ook voor dat men cultureel wordt opgevoed. Je kan erachter komen wat maatschappelijk wel of niet gepast is.

Social media zorgen ervoor dat we wel worden geconfronteerd met mensen die anders denken, maar dat men daardoor nog meer gaat geloven in zijn eigen standpunt. Dit kan gevaarlijk zijn, bijv. het fenomeen echokamer. Echter, social media kunnen ook gebruikt worden door regimes om vrijheden af te nemen en te beperken.

Wel blijkt dat men zich wel bewust kan zijn van desinformatie.

In de samenleving is een verschuiving te zien in het participatiepatroon van jongeren. Zij zijn wel degelijk maatschappelijk geïnteresseerd, maar kunnen zich niet uiten via de officiële manieren die de democratie biedt. Hierdoor ontstaat de indruk dat het probleem bij de jongeren ligt, terwijl het wellicht bij de instituties die niet meer aansluiten op de behoeften van jongeren.

In de huidige samenleving zijn macht en verantwoordelijkheid van elkaar losgekoppeld, waarbij personen met veel macht (of een groot bereik op social media) niet de verantwoordelijkheid dragen voor hun acties.

Een ander probleem is het feit dat de BigTech publieke taken naar zich toetrekt in het bepalen welke content er wel of niet op hun platform geplaatst mag worden (vrijheid van meningsuiting). Zij zijn niet zo neutraal als we voorheen dachten. Dit is een lastige situatie, want strenger zijn (qua regelgeving) kan ertoe leiden dat deze bedrijven extra gaan censureren, terwijl dat niet wenselijk is (vrijheid van meningsuiting).

Vaak worden huidige participatiemethoden rechtstreeks vertaald naar digitale methoden. Hierdoor blijft de doelgroep grotendeels hetzelfde. De veranderende cultuur/maatschappij waarin er sprake is van een opkomend activisme (vaak via social media) moet formeel geïntegreerd worden in de politieke besluitvorming.

Oplossingsrichting

Er worden twee manieren genoemd om de verspreiding van nepnieuws en desinformatie te voorkomen:

1. Mensen waarschuwen voor de mogelijkheden.
2. De kennis van mensen betreffende desinformatie en social media vergroten. (wellicht in combinatie met een toelichting over hoe informatieverwerking in het brein werkt?)

De aanpak van digitale geletterdheid moet zich wellicht vooral focussen op volwassenen, want jongeren blijken zich al bewuster te zijn van bijvoorbeeld desinformatie. Jongeren moeten wel betrokken worden bij deze transitie, zij blijken gehoord te willen worden, vindingrijk te zijn en belang te hechten aan inclusiviteit.

Er worden eveneens twee manieren geboden om om te gaan met de BigTech. Wellicht is een combinatie van beide strategieën het beste:

- Nationalisering van social media platforms. Dit zorgt er echter voor dat er veel gelijk blijft, alleen dat de beheerder en eigenaar verandert.
- Interoperabiliteit vergroten tussen social media platforms. Dit verandert echter niet per se iets aan de dataverzameling.

Er zijn 8 dingen die kunnen bijdragen aan de totstandkoming van het toekomstbeeld (ofwel een inclusieve en rechtvaardige digitale democratie):

1. Neem onvrede serieus.
2. Heb vertrouwen in de burger.
3. Laat BigTech erbuiten; ze mogen wel dingen ontwikkelen, maar niet beheren.
4. Zorg voor formele inbedding van participatiemogelijkheden.
5. Richt participatie in als een proces.
6. Maak van inclusiviteit de norm.
7. Vertrouw niet blind op technologie; er blijft behoefte aan fysieke interactie.
8. Wees onvolmaakt; geef ruimte aan de burger voor input en verandering.