Facilitating the energy transition

A best practice model of facilitative actions of municipalities towards sustainable citizens' initiatives

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Abstract

The number of sustainable citizens' initiatives in the Netherlands is rising, whilst the Dutch governments are more and more retreating. However, municipalities still have a role towards citizens' initiatives that concern about climate change and the energy transition. This role can be either facilitative or supportive. The objective of this research is to gain an understanding of how municipalities fulfil their role. To find this out, a literature review has been conducted, combined with the view of citizens themselves derived from a questionnaire of Energysense. This served as the basis for the CRIMP model. Five main pillars which can facilitate citizens' initiatives are suggested. These are the following: *capacity building, recognition, invest in networks, mobilise and procedures.* Each of the five pillars includes facilitative actions which can be taken by municipalities. The CRIMP model has been tested by a case study of policy analysis and conducting semi-structured interviews, involving six municipalities in the province of Groningen, The Netherlands. Providing customised support to citizens' initiatives seems to be preferred by municipalities. Moreover, the case study showed that facilitation is not always straightforward. Therefore, the developed CRIMP model cannot be applied one-on-one to each citizens' initiative. Instead, it can be used as an assessment model to identify the possible needs of citizens' initiatives and therefore serves as a guideline for municipalities. Finally, it was found that municipalities do not always have policies on how to facilitate citizens' initiatives, resulting in uncertainty. There should be more awareness of the energy transition to better facilitate citizens' initiatives and effectively contribute to the energy transition.

Key words: facilitative governance, citizens' initiatives, energy transition, sustainability

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List of abbreviations

CBS   Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek – Statistics Netherlands
CI   Citizens' initiative
CI's   Citizens' initiatives
GrEK   Groninger Energie Koepel – Groninger Energy Organisation
NMF   Natuur Milieu Federatie / Nature and Environmental Organisation
ROB   Raad voor het Openbaar Bestuur / Council for Public Governance

1.Introduction

1.1 Background and relevance

The last years, the reduction of the emission of greenhouse gases and the production of more sustainable energy has increasingly gained attention, not only in the academic field and by governments, but also by citizens. In 2016, the Dutch central government formulated their goals to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases to zero by 2050, in the so-called Energieagenda (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2016). Together with employers, labour unions and environmental organisations, agreements have been made regarding this reduction. Besides the ambition to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, sustainable energy production is emphasised. The goal for 2020 is to produce 14 percent of the energy production on a sustainable way. According to a study of the National Energy Exploration the share of sustainable energy will grow to 12,3 percent by 2020 (Schoots et al., 2017), which means the goals will not be reached. Nevertheless, the goal of 16 percent sustainable energy will be reached by 2023, as the expectancy is a growth towards 16,7 percent (Schoots et al., 2017). There is awareness that more sustainable energy has to be produced and the central government has chosen to be proactive on this matter.

In the Energieagenda (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2016) it is stated that all parties, including citizens, firms, local governments and the central government are responsible for the energy transition. The realisation of the energy transition takes places at the regional and local level. The Ministry of Economic Affairs (2016) argues that decentral governments and regional and local social groups should be given the opportunity to participate in the energy transition. Citizens' initiatives, among which are energy corporations, can thus contribute to reach the goals set in the Energieagenda (Van der Veen, 2016). According to Van der Veen (2016), energy corporations have added value because of their local embeddedness. Therefore they can be used by local governments as an organisation to help realise the goals related to sustainability. According to Aall & Norland (2005, in Hoppe et al., 2014), local governments are the most important actor in the transformation towards a more sustainable society. Furthermore, municipalities are the governmental institution which citizens' initiatives are most familiar with, due to their proximity, meaning that contact will be made more easily. Especially when citizens' initiatives are in need of specific help, the local government can be supportive or work in a facilitative manner (Bakker et al., 2012). This emphasises the role of both local governments and citizens in the energy transition. It can be seen as a shared responsibility, in which multiple parties have to cooperate or be supportive towards each other, in order to be able to reach the goals as presented in the Energieagenda (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2016). Despite the relevance of the topic, research about how governments can fulfil their role in facilitating citizens' initiatives is limited. Moreover, existing research focuses on citizens' attributes (Lowndes et al., 2006) or does not present inclusive actions that can be taken by governments (Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven, 2011; Hassink et al. 2016).

This research will focus on municipalities in the province of Groningen. There are many citizens' initiatives known in the province of Groningen (NMF Groningen, 2018; EnergieVanOns, 2018; LokaalEnergieVoorwaarts, 2018). These citizens' initiatives can contact the municipalities when they are in need of support. This stresses the importance of the formal role of municipalities which has to be given further substance. According to Bakker et al. (2012) this role can either be supportive or facilitative. When the governmental support is adequate, citizens' initiatives can flourish and contribute to the goals as formulated in the Energieagenda. Besides their attribution to the energy transition, citizens' initiatives are contributing to the sense of community (Van Dam et al., 2014). If

they are successfully facilitated by the municipalities, citizens' initiatives will contribute to both the energy transition and the social climate.

1.2 Research goal

The aim of this research is to find out how municipalities in the province of Groningen can and should meet the needs of citizens' initiatives concerned with sustainable energy. Therefore, the following research questions have been formulated, as can be found in paragraph 1.3. By conducting a literature study combined with a questionnaire of Energysense, held in 2017, a conceptual model has been designed. The questionnaire provides insights in the needs of the citizens' initiatives. Finally, the model will be used to test how the municipalities facilitate citizens' initiatives in practice. By doing so, it can be determined to what extend the needs of the citizens' initiatives correspond with the actions taken by the municipalities.

1.3 Research questions

The following question is leading for this research:

How can local governments meet the needs of sustainable citizens´ initiatives in the province of Groningen?

This primary research question will be answered by the following three secondary questions:

1. Which actions can be taken by local governments in order to support citizens' initiatives?
2. What are the needs of citizens´ initiatives, as derived from the Energysense questionnaire?
3. How do the selected municipalities support citizens' initiatives?

1.4 Outline

In the following figure 1, the outline that will be followed to answer the primary research question can be found. First, a literature review will be conducted to form the basis for the model. Hereafter, the questionnaire of Energysense will be analysed and used as input to supplement the model. In chapter 4, the methodology for the case study to test the model in practice will be discussed. Chapter 5 will present the findings of the interviews, followed by a discussion and reflection on the gathered data. Finally, the conclusion and recommendations will be drawn.

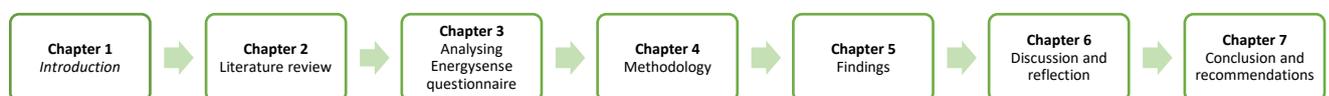| **Chapter 1** *Introduction* | **Chapter 2** Literature review | **Chapter 3** Analysing Energysense questionnaire | **Chapter 4** Methodology | **Chapter 5** Findings | **Chapter 6** Discussion and reflection | **Chapter 7** Conclusion and recommendations |

Figure 1: Outline of the research

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will discuss the development of citizens' participation through time and will define the concept of citizens' initiatives. Following that, the changing role of the government, which contributed to the rise of citizens' initiatives will be discussed. Hereafter, five main facilitative actions will be presented in the CRIMP model. These actions will provide a preliminary answer to the first secondary question: *"Which actions can be taken by local governments in order to support citizens' initiatives?"*

2.1 Defining citizens' initiatives

Before the governmental role towards citizens' initiatives can be defined, it is necessary to determine the concept of citizens' initiatives and their role in the energy transition. According to Rotmans (2012), a successful energy transition is the consequence of a bottom-up process, in which citizens participate. Hassink et al. (2016) argue that an increasing number of citizens are active in shaping their own neighbourhood. The state expects citizens and their organisations to accept their responsibility in the participative society and citizens should, less than before, lean on the welfare state (Verhoeven & Tonkens, 2013). This stresses the increased importance of citizens' initiatives. Citizens' participation has developed through time. Lenos et al. (2006) observed three different generations of citizens' participation, which can exist at the same time, but have different starting points throughout history. The first generation of citizens' participation started in the 1970s and is mainly about the right of having a say regarding the policies created by municipalities. The second generation includes the interactive decision-making and co-production and originated in the early 1990s. This can be linked to the shift in governance, which will be further elaborated upon (De Roo, 2007) in paragraph 2.2.2. From the beginning of the twenty-first century, the third generation of citizens' participation gained influence. In this generation, citizens take their responsibility and according to Lenos et al. (2006) the government has a facilitative role. Third generation citizens' participation has the most common ground with the concept of citizens' initiatives. The following definition of Bakker et al. (2012), which describes citizens' initiatives will be used for this research:

"… collective activities by citizens aimed at providing local public goods or services in their street, neighbourhood or town, in which citizens decide themselves both about the aims and means of their project and in which local authorities have a supporting or facilitating role." (Bakker et al, 2012, p. 397).

2.2 Facilitating initiatives

2.2.1 Governmental role

The definition as given by Bakker et al (2012) contains multiple aspects. The collective aspect of citizens' initiatives is emphasised. Citizens´ initiatives are self-organised and they need collective action. They can be seen as a network of citizens, interest groups or entrepreneurs (Rauws, 2016). There has been a shift in focus from purely individual to bringing more people together, which is called blended social action by Sampson et al. (2005). They address the common purpose of the group of citizens involved in a citizens' initiative. Zapata Campos and Zapata (2017) found that different individuals have the capabilities to organise or mobilise people to provide local public goods. When there are social changes, the group of citizens is adaptive and can recombine material resources, construct new rationales and is capable to forge new inter-actor relations to still be able to generate collective action (Hardy & Maguire, 2008, in Zapata Campos & Zapata, 2017). Still, the commitment of the citizens to their citizens' initiatives is constantly tested, as they are being

confronted with changes in government or involved citizens moving out (Bussu & Bartels, 2014). From this description, it could be argued that citizens' initiatives are more or less capable of managing themselves. However, according to Bakker et al. (2012) local authorities, including municipalities, have a supporting or facilitating role. Hurenkamp et al. (2006) argue that, although citizens take the lead, they still collaborate with public authorities. The vast majority of citizens' initiatives is being confronted with institutions such as municipalities (Denters et al., 2013). The municipality could take a facilitative role in such contacts, providing the citizens' initiatives with a sense of being important and the feeling that their activities contribute to their environment (Denters et al., 2013). Research by Putnam (1993, 2000, in Lowndes et al., 2006) provides insight in the fact that a higher level of social capital within the community is more profitable for democratic institutions and therefore it could be reasoned that citizens' initiatives are being supported. Lowndes et al. (2006) add to this that active citizens should not be regarded with suspicion, but rather be recognised as a key driver and value of democracy. Moreover, many citizens' initiatives are dependent on support from local authorities, which can contribute to their success (Fung, 2004; Hendriks, 2003; Putnam & Feldstein, 2004, in Hassink et al., 2016). In addition, Bomberg and McEwen (2012, in Arentsen & Bellekom, 2014) conclude that support from governments assists to the realisation of citizens' initiatives. This indicates that, although citizens' initiatives should be capable to manage themselves, governmental support is needed to be successful. Furthermore, according to Bakker et al. (2012), the Dutch national government and local governments consider citizens' initiatives as providers of cheap alternatives to costly governmental development programs. They are expected to contribute to a safer and more liveable living environment (Marschall, 2004). Likewise, Bakker et al. (2012) argue that citizens' initiatives are believed to empower and educate citizens and reduce their reliance on state bureaucracies. Moreover, facilitating citizens might lead to better decision-making (Newman, 2001, in Lowndes et al., 2006). This means that from a governmental perspective, the success of citizens' initiatives, is profitable for the government as well.

2.2.2 Shift in governance

In paragraph 2.1, it was discussed that citizens' initiatives can be seen as a result of the third generation citizens' participation. In line with this reasoning, the facilitation of citizens' initiatives, is a consequence of changes in governance. Fung and Wright (2003, in Bussu & Bartels, 2014) argue that traditional government institutions are no longer adequately equipped to confront the complexities of the contemporary society. A Dutch report on ongoing trends, The Energetic Society, assumed that this *"… society does not call for "less government", but instead for "another government"." (Van der Steen et al., 2015, p.4).* Kooiman and Van Vliet (1993, in Hassink et al., 2016) already referred to the changing relationship between government and citizens, which they call a shift from government to governance. Saward (2003, in Lowndes et al., 2006) showed that democracy has moved towards a more participative interpretation. These changes in government styles are part of a broader shift in planning. The government used to be directing, but has shifted to a more collaborative or even facilitative style. De Roo (2007) describes this as a shift from a technical rational approach to a communicative approach. This has become established in both contemporary planning theory and practice (Innes, 1995, in De Roo, 2007). Ansall & Gash (2007) described a collaborative governance style as follows:

"A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets." (Ansall & Gash, 2007, p.544).

Although this description does not link to supportive or facilitative governance as prescribed in the definition of Bakker et al. (2012), it can be seen as a marker of a governmental shift. Furthermore, the definition of Ansall & Gash (2007) can be regarded as co-production. Verschuere et al. (2012, in Nesti, 2017) argue that co-production is about the involvement of individual citizens or groups of citizens in public service delivery. Co-production between citizens and government can be seen as a gain in program efficiency, effectiveness (Marschall, 2004) and quality of services (Nesti, 2017). Still, co-production does not completely emphasis full citizens' empowerment, in which citizens decide themselves, as is the case with citizens' initiatives.

2.2.3 Facilitative governance

According to Newland (2003) facilitative governance focuses on helping people and their institutions to achieve constructive purposes. This is in contrast to earlier ideals of governmental planning, which focused more on the domination of societies and economies by command-and-control government. However, according to a report of the Council for Public Governance, ROB (2012, in Van der Steen et al., 2015) the , *"… government is trying to forge an approach based on the means and capacity of civic society to be self-governing, in an effort to transfer tasks to citizens and civil society organisations." (ROB, 2012, in Van der Steen et al., p. 16)*. This demonstrates that the government has shifted away from a dominating role. Instead, the governmental role is to ensure that citizens, businesses and other relevant stakeholders have a better position to deal with their issues (Van der Steen et al., 2015). This is being done in order to provide the different stakeholders with a *"… free rein to their creativity and capacity to learn." (Van der Steen et al., 2015, p.17)*. Within this so-called participatory governance, which best meets the facilitative or supportive role of the governments as described in the definition of Bakker et al. (2012), the government develops a framework and offers support. The civil servants have a facilitative role in this framework. Thereafter, the government can decide to actively engage in the citizens' initiatives or deliberately withdraw. It depends on the will of politicians (Teles (2014) whether a facilitative governance style will be adapted. Furthermore, politicians determine what role and which facilitative actions will be taken (Blom et al., 2010). In the following paragraph the different actions which can be taken by a facilitative government are discussed.

2.3 CLEAR framework: from citizens attributes to a facilitative role

Although the article of Bakker et al. (2012) is limited to the mobilisation stage of citizens' initiatives, it provides insights in the diverse roles facilitators or public planners can adopt when they want to facilitate citizens' initiatives. Bakker et al. (2012) question which methods and instruments of facilitation may lead to successful citizens' initiatives, based on the CLEAR framework. Verba et al. (1995, in Bakker et al., 2012) first developed this framework, which was later extended by Lowndes et al. (2006). This framework, which can be found in table 1, *"… offers public authorities an investigative method for understanding where the strengths and weaknesses of their existing participation infrastructure are, and help to identify policy responses that might be pursued."* (Lowndes et al., 2006, p.285/286).

Key factor	Functioning	Policy targets
Can do	The individual resources that people have to mobilise and organise (speaking, writing and technical skills, and the confidence to use them) make a difference	Capacity building, training and support of volunteers, mentoring, leadership development

Like to	To commit to participation requires an identification with the public entity that is the focus of engagement	Civil renewal, citizenship, community development, neighbourhood governance, social capital
Enabled to	The civic infrastructure of groups and umbrella organisations makes a difference because it creates or blocks an opportunity structure for participation	Investing in civic infrastructure and community networks, improving channels of communication via compacts
Asked to	Mobilising people into participation by asking for their input can make a big difference	Public participation schemes that are diverse and reflexive
Responded to	When asked people say they will participate if they are listened to (not necessarily agreed with) and able to see a response	A public policy system that shows a capacity to respond through specific outcomes, ongoing learning and feedback

Table 1: CLEAR framework, adapted from Lowndes et al. (2006), p.286

They argue that it is not a simple task to get people to participate, as there are structural factors that shape people's resources and attitudes. Hassink et al. (2016) identified two types of key factors in the interaction between citizens and governments. The first type involves process-related aspects, such as trust building and a sense of commitment, and the second type is about structuration aspects, such as rules and regulations. This is closely related to Lowndes et al. (2006), who introduced the five key factors, which can be found in table 1. These five key factors are about the attributes which citizens need to be able to effectively participate in citizens' initiatives. In the following paragraphs, for each of the citizens' attributes it will be discussed how it can be supported by the government. By doing so, it can be determined how governments can contribute to strengthen the citizens' attributes and therewith facilitate citizens' initiatives. The five transformed key factors will form the main pillars for the assessment model, as these will be linked to other findings upon best practices in facilitating citizens' initiatives, derived from existing research. Each factor will be elaborated and their practical use for municipalities are discussed and presented in a conceptual model, which can be found in paragraph 2.5.

2.3.1 Capacity Building
Capacity building is about the contribution of governments to the capabilities of citizens' initiatives to be able to grow or exist. It *"… refers to the socio-economic arguments that have traditionally dominated explanations for variations in local participation rates." (Verba et al., 1995; Pattie et al., 2004, in Lowndes et al., 2006, p. 286).* When people have the skills and resources to participate, they will be more likely to do so and the traditional variations can be overcome. These resources and skills range from the ability and confidence to speak in public to the ability to write letters to institutions (Lowndes et al, 2006). Moreover, it is about the capacity to organise and encourage others to support initiatives. Access to basic resources such as internet are important in facilitating the initiative. Timmerman (2017) adds to this that *"…technical expertise, knowledge of financial and regulatory issues, next to advice skills are desirable, although seldom bundled within one person." (Timmerman, 2017, p.79).* However, these skills and resources are more present among the higher educated and employed citizens (Lowndes et al. 2006), thus those of higher socio-economic status. Consequently, those with a lower socio-economic status should be supported more in terms of capacity building. According to Lowndes et al. (2006) citizens should be given support to develop their skills and resources to enable them to engage, especially to prevent further downgrading of their living environment (Bakker et al., 2012). In the following, three potential supportive actions

which can be undertaken by governments in capacity building will be presented and discussed. Firstly, it must be mentioned that citizens do need time to engage (Bakker et al., 2012). Though it seems that this factor cannot necessarily be influenced by governmental institutions, governments can have a supportive role in this matter. Elzenga & Kruitwagen (2012) suggest that *guidelines* should be created to add to knowledge where it is missing. By offering clear guidelines, citizens require less time guiding themselves through all kind of formal procedures, providing them with more time to actively engage. Furthermore, providing citizens with *training* to develop their skills is an effective manner of stimulating the capabilities within the community. In addition, this can be profitable for citizens' capacities to guide themselves through all kind of formal procedures as well, as their skills are further developed.

Secondly, a *personal approach* helps to build the development of skills needed to be successful (Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven, 2011). As citizens' initiatives are operated by volunteers, municipalities can support them by offering capacity in the form of manpower (Hurenkamp et al., 2006). These assigned civil servants could help to gain access to related organisations and work for the initiatives (Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven, 2011). Wagenaar (2007) shows that an assigned community worker who helped residents articulating their goals and interests, was experienced positively. Still, it depends on the citizens' initiatives which support from civil servants is desired or not. This should be assessed and customised by the municipality (Blom et al., 2010). However, the organisational capacity of the municipality itself is an important factor in the stimulation of citizens' initiatives (Hendriks et al., 2014). If there is insufficient capacity in terms of manpower, helping citizens' initiatives with a personal approach can be difficult.

Thirdly, it is suggested by Hurenkamp et al. (2006) that municipalities could be supportive by offering *financial support.* Governmental grants can, according to Bomberg and McEwen (2012), offset some of the costs and risks of the citizens' initiatives. Such financial support could consist of neighbourhood budgets or other budgets to stimulate the start-up of citizens' initiatives (Engbersen et al., 2010; Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven, 2008, in Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven, 2011). Moreover, financial compensation for volunteers can be stimulating (Bakker et al., 2012). Buitelaar et al. (2012) argue that subsidies or attractive land prices can be stimulating for citizens to create opportunities towards a more sustainable society. However, there are municipalities that do not have these possibilities and can therefore not contribute to the citizens' initiatives with financial support. In addition to the lack of opportunities to be supportive, it is argued that citizens' initiatives should be independent of governmental support. Therefore, according to Bokhorst et al. (2015), municipalities are reticent in providing a lot of financial support.

Key aspects: training and guidelines, a personal approach, financial support.

2.3.2 Recognition

"… refers to the importance of people's felt sense of community as a basis for engagement. The argument is that, if you feel a part of something, you are more willing to engage." (Lowndes et al., 2006, p. 287). Sense of community is a strong motivator for participation. Bakker et al. (2012) describe it as *"…civic motivations" (p. 408)*, which come with a desire of citizens to contribute to their own environment or community. The role of the municipality to support the civic motivations can be either positive or negative. It is important that citizens feel a sense of community, which can be promoted by civil servants (Lowndes et al., 2006). Therefore, it is argued that recognition and promotion of a sense of civic citizenship and solidarity can contribute to a positive environment for community engagement (Lowndes et al., 2006). If civil servants show *engagement and enthusiasm*, citizens feel more appreciated. This can be done by participating during the planning process and with activities, resulting in shown empathy and responsiveness (Bakker et al., 2012). Hurenkamp et

al. (2006) and Flink et al. (2014) show that governments, organisations or companies who want to stimulate citizens' initiatives, should focus on appreciation and recognition of the initiatives and its volunteers. Recognition might even be more effective if the municipality itself initiates the first contact (Blom et al., 2010).

Secondly, *awards, medals and other possibilities to acknowledge* their performances can have stimulating effects. Experiments of citizens could be supported with various communication methods and arrangements (Elzenga & Kruitwagen, 2012), resulting in more recognition. Despite efforts of the municipality to appreciate or recognise citizens' initiatives, it still depends on the individual whether to participate or not, especially when they see others participate or have trust in the job of the civil servants (Lowndes et al., 2006). However, Bakker et al. (2012) argue that the provision of *information through media* such as newspapers, letters spread in neighbourhoods, local television or internet motivate people to become active.

Key aspects: show engagement and participation, rewards, information via media

2.3.3 Invest in networks

Refers to *"… a factor driving participation, [which] is premised on the research observation that most participation is facilitated through groups or organisations." (Parry et al., 1992; Pattie et al., 2004, in Lowndes et al., 2006, p. 288).* Groups or organisations are important for citizens to participate, which is related to the civic motivations described by Bakker et al. (2012). Variety between the groups is crucial (Lowndes et al., 2006) and Bakker et al. (2012) refer to a successful initiative as it brings together groups of citizens with a good mix of resources. Governments could stimulate the creation of such new networks (Wagenaar, 2007), both between governments and citizens, as between citizens themselves. Schram (2006, in Sanders, 2014) provides an example in which it is mentioned that community centres can create social cohesion. This is stimulating for the community feeling and if there is a high level of community feeling, citizens might be more willing to participate. Therefore, it can be argued that municipalities can stimulate the social cohesion by offering *physical places* where people can meet each other and seize the opportunity to start initiatives.

Furthermore, *by investing in new partnerships*, central governments could encourage and stimulate the cooperation between local or regional market parties and municipalities (Elzenga & Kruitwagen, 2012), creating denser networks. Doing this will contribute to more trust and sense of community. Not only should citizens trust governments, governments should also trust citizens' initiatives as being able to contribute to the energy transition (Wagenaar, 2007). To strengthen the mutual trust, municipalities could appoint *an initiator* who links the various interest groups and is empowered to arrange meetings with relevant actors working for the government. *A boundary spanner*, as mentioned by Van Meerkerk (2014), connects the different actors involved in initiatives. Additionally, their task is to include the selection of relevant information for all parties involved.

Key aspects: support creation of new networks, create meeting spaces, appoint an initiator or boundary spanner

2.3.4 Mobilise

Mobilising citizens refers to *"… the finding of much research that mobilisation matters. People tend to become engaged more often and more regularly when they are asked to engage."(Lowndes et al., 2006, p. 288).* Those who have the responsibility for decision-making, such as civil servants, should ask citizens to *engage in the process of decision making* (Lowndes et al., 2006). According to Widestrom (2017), mobilisation adds to the development of the citizens' skills as it serves as training and connects them to civil servants. However, as the citizens are asked to participate, it might result in a biased mobilisation (Bakker et al., 2012). Certain groups of citizens are attracted while others are ignored in the decision making process, therefore it is crucial that different groups are given the

opportunity to participate. According to Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven (2011) citizens sometimes have to be mobilised as initiatives should in some cases not be initiated by the citizens themselves, which demands an active role of the government. Still, *"…there are three different types of barriers* [that need to be overcome by the citizens]*: psychological, technical and financial" (Bomberg & McEwen, 2012 in Timmerman, 2017, p. 19).* The psychological barriers refer to the lack of accurate knowledge and information, which can be solved by adequate capacity building. Likewise, citizens can have the feeling that individual actions might not make a difference for the bigger picture (Timmerman, 2017). Foremost, it is important that citizens feel an urgency to become active. Municipalities could raise the awareness by involving the citizens in the processes of decision-making, for instance by organising public consultation evenings. Moreover, campaigns could be started, in which the importance of an energy transition to be more sustainable is stressed (Hoppe et al., 2016). The actions described above demand an active role of the municipalities. Lenos et al. (2006, in Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven, 2011) refer to this active role of municipalities in asking citizens to engage as the second generation of citizens' participation. Third generation citizens' participation refers to a situation in which municipalities reacts rather than asks actively, as described in paragraph 2.1. Therefore, it might be argued to what extend the mobilisation of citizens is part of facilitative governance. Nevertheless, the municipality is still facilitating in second-generation initiatives, as it steps out of its comfort zone by involving citizens in the process of decision-making. Bakker et al. (2012) argue that the mobilisation of citizens is most effective done when people are asked by citizens within their personal environment, and thus not by the municipality. Secondly, it is important that *climate change,* of which the energy transition is part of, is being implemented in the *local policy agendas* (Hoppe et al., 2016). By doing so, municipalities express their ambitions to the citizens (Kern & Smith, 2008). Including them in the process makes them involved and contributes to develop their skills to participate and motivate others to do so. Therefore, mobilisation is a key aspect of facilitative governance, as it could generate more involvement.

Key aspects: involve in decision-making, put climate change on policy agenda

2.3.5 Procedures

Refers to *"… the idea that for people to participate on a sustainable basis, they have to believe that their involvement is making a difference." (Lowndes et al., 2006, p.289).* Civil servants need the capacity and capabilities to accept the view from participants to create a suitable base for sustainable development of citizens' initiatives (Lowndes et al., 2006). Therefore, the municipality should be flexible and civil servants should talk with the citizens' initiatives (Bakker et al., 2012). In their research, they found that *"… citizens got frustrated over the slackness of response by civil servants […] or by the inflexibility of procedures […]." (Bakker et al., 2012, p.409).* Wagenaar (2007) reasons that civil servants and citizens clash, as communication is regulated due to strict office hours and legal procedures. Moreover, Lipsky (1980, in Wagenaar, 2007) argues that civil servants use the rules to hide behind in conflicting situations. In such cases, it is questionable to what extent procedures offer flexibility for civil servants. Concrete improvements should be based on more flexibility and should increase the ease of application of regulation or procedures. Bakker et al. (2012) describe an example of a civil servant who gave a lot of freedom to a citizens' initiative in the beginning, but finally concluded that restrictions were necessary, due to unforeseen consequences. In this specific case, the relationship between the municipality and the citizens' initiative was damaged. To prevent this from happening, governments should come up with *clear regulations and procedures,* but should still be flexible in the execution of these regulations and procedures. Customisation can be profitable for citizens' initiatives.

According to Elzenga & Kruitwagen (2012) *a re-evaluation of existing spatial planning laws and regulations* is necessary to prevent certain laws and regulations from being obstructive towards citizens' initiatives. Moreover, such a re-evaluation could remove barriers for civil servants in being supportive towards citizens' initiatives. These barriers can consist of outdated regulations, not suited for the current steps needed in the energy transition. Therefore, local governments should encourage civil servants to be creative with regulations (Hassink et al., 2016). Still, there should be security and predictability in policies (Elzenga & Kruitwagen, 2012).

Furthermore, it is advised by Elzenga and Kruitwagen (2012) that municipalities create their visions regarding the energy transition together with citizens. However, this demands an open decision-making process, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. In order to prevent uncertainty, these visions should not be short-termed, but focused on a *long-term period* (Beuvens & Scha, 2012; Timmerman, 2017). Moreover, *the visions should be adaptive* as matters can change in time. Too many rules and control should, according to Timmerman (2017) be avoided to prevent loss of intrinsic motivation of the participating citizens. Denters et al. (2013) argued the same, as conditions of receiving financial support, through subsidies or a voucher system, might stimulate internal goals of municipalities. Therefore, a well-functioning formal system is in the interest of municipalities as well and can contribute to the motivation of citizens' initiatives.

Key aspects: creation of long-term and adaptive visions, re-evaluation of existing planning laws and regulations, clear rules and procedures

2.5 Conceptual model

In figure 2, the conceptual model can be found as derived from the theoretical framework. The citizens' initiatives have specific wishes or needs to be successful. Therefore, they get in contact with the municipality, which has been described above. The municipality can take a facilitative or supportive role, without taking full control of the citizens' initiative. The literature has been organised using the CLEAR model as first presented by Verba et al. (1995, in Bakker et al., 2012) and further extended by Lowndes et al. (2006). From there, several specific actions which could be undertaken by local governments are presented, answering the first secondary question. The five key factors of the original CLEAR model have been termed differently and now focus on the governmental perspective towards citizens' initiatives instead of the citizens' attributes. The first letters of these five new key factors, which are more action-oriented, form the acronym crimp. Therefore, the model will be named the CRIMP model, referring to the withdrawal of the government, leading to more citizens' initiatives and facilitative governance.

Capacity building
- Training and guidelines
- Personal approach
- Financial support

Recognition
-Show engagement and participation
-Appreciation through rewards
-Provide information via media

Invest in networks
- Stimulate the creation of new networks
- Create meeting places
- Appoint boundary spanner or coach

Mobilise
- Put climate change on policy agenda
- Involve citizens in decision-making

Procedures
-Create long-term and flexbile visions
-Re-evaluate existing planning laws and regultions
-Clear regulations and procedures

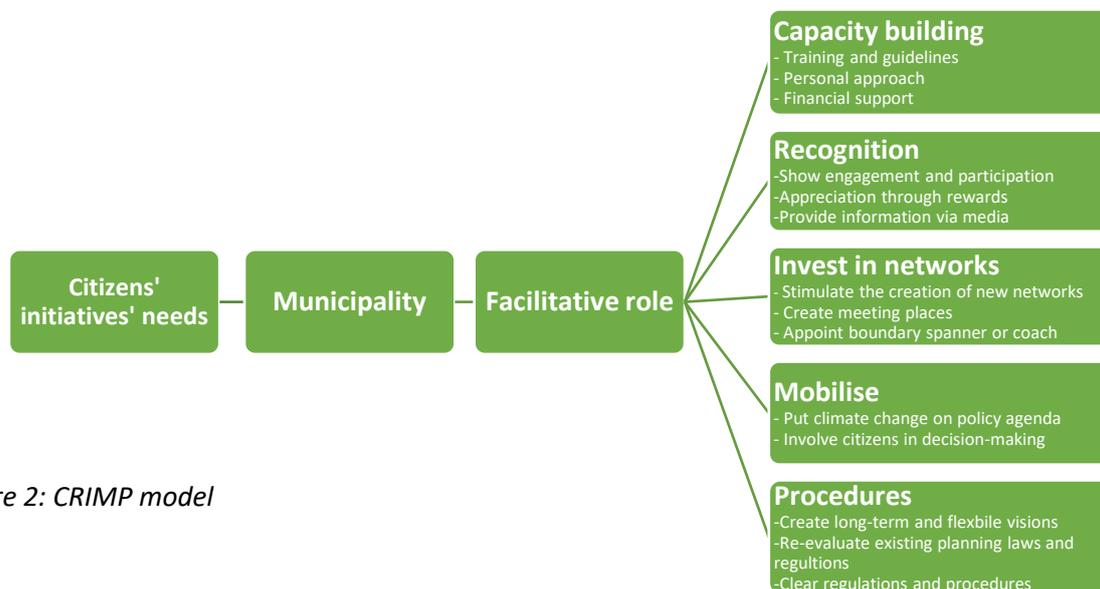Citizens' initiatives' needs — Municipality — Facilitative role

Figure 2: CRIMP model

3. Analysis of Energysense questionnaire

In the following paragraphs, the theoretical perspectives as discussed in chapter 2, will be further complemented. This will be done to be able to supplement the conceptual model, as presented in figure 2, which then takes both a scientists' view as the view of those involved in the citizens' initiatives, namely the citizens themselves. This will be done to be able to answer the second secondary question, which is the following: *'What are the needs of sustainable citizens' initiatives as derived from the Energysense questionnaire?'*. Moreover, it will complement the first secondary question. The questionnaire will be used as an inductive element. It will help to further extend the theoretical framework, as first presented in paragraph 2.5. Such a grounded theory will contribute to the development of theory through the careful observation of the wishes of citizens' initiatives towards facilitative governance (Hennink et al., 2011). Their wishes will be used as input for the empirical research, which will be presented in chapter four. First, an explanation of what Energysense is will be given. In paragraph 3.2, the design of the questionnaire will be discussed. Then, in paragraph 3.3 an overview will be presented of the respondents. Following that, in paragraph 3.4 their vision on the energy transition will be given. Paragraph 3.5 and onwards specifically zoom in on the question what the role of the governments should be according to the respondents of the Energysense questionnaire. This will be used to further supplement the CRIMP model.

3.1 What is Energysense?
Energysense is an initiative of the University of Groningen (Energysense, 2018) and the Energy Academy Europe (Energy Academy Europe, 2018). It can be seen as a living laboratory of the energy transition (Energy Academy Europe, 2018) and is supported with funding from the European Union (Energysense, 2018). The focus of the project is on the reduction of energy use on the household level, as well as the production of sustainable energy. Moreover Energysense focuses on research, innovation and involvement of researchers and households for co-creation. The ultimate goal is to find new solutions to speed up the energy transition and to make a more sustainable society. Energysense had a database of almost 800 households, when the questionnaire was distributed.

3.2 Design of the questionnaire
The questionnaire, which functions as a major pillar for this thesis, was conducted in 2017. The core focus of the questionnaire is on the involvement of respondents in energy initiatives, which is a specific type of citizens' initiatives. As this research focuses on sustainable citizens' initiatives, the questionnaire is relevant to use. There are 31 questions in the questionnaire, divided in nine subcategories, of which the last two are about giving permission for participating in further research and give space for questions or comments. The other seven subcategories are more relevant to be used for analysis. Especially subcategories two, three and seven will be used, as these focus on whether respondents are involved in citizens' initiatives or not and what the role of governments should look like according to the respondents.

3.3 Respondents overview
Finally, 279 people, out of a total of 370 selected respondents, have responded and completed the questionnaire. The respondents are mostly men, namely 194 compared to 85 women. Moreover, the largest share of them is highly educated. Surprisingly, 251 of the total of 279 respondents lived in the Northern Netherlands when completing the questionnaire. This can be explained by the initial ambition of Energysense to monitor 10.000 households in the Northern Netherlands (Energy Academy Europe, 2018). However, according to Energysense, for this questionnaire it is purely co-

incidence, as the questionnaire was spread amongst all participants of Energysense. Energysense (2018) itself does not just focus on the three northern provinces of the Netherlands. Since this research focuses on the role of local governments within fulfilling the needs of citizens' initiatives in the province of Groningen, this high share of respondents living in this province, namely 168, results in a useful representation of the situation in the province of Groningen. For the analysis of this questionnaire, all 279 respondents will be used. Only 79 respondents turned out to be active in activities related to energy, which can be either an energy cooperation, a project focusing on energy, a project with energy as one of the focus points or another project, in which people are involved via for example schools or associations. Table 2 shows how the different groups, not-involved or involved, responded to the question of how the government can give substance to their facilitative role, which will be discussed in paragraph 3.5. The highlighted percentages show some difference between the groups, though the overarching outcome of the comparison is that there is only one significant difference between the two groups. This significant difference of 0.033, based on a comparison of means, can be found in the governmental role of adapting policies and rules. This action will not be taken into account and therefore, all 279 respondents can be used in the analysis.

Response (= true)	Not-Involved (N=200)	Involved (N=79)
Financial support through grants	77.5%	77.3%
Open to input	14%	16%
Sharing of knowledge and information	68.5%	57.3%
Support collaboration	59.1%	70.7%
Adapting policies and rules*	74.7%	61.3%
Offering support in navigating current rules and procedures	55.1%	60%
Other role	2%	7.6%
Significant difference		

Table 2: Comparison between citizens that are not-involved and involved based on Energysense questionnaire, Own analysis

3.4 Respondents vision on the energy transition
Respondents were questioned about their motives to reduce their energy use. 256 respondents were active in reducing their energy use. Following this question, the respondents who were indeed active in reducing their energy use could choose multiple options to reason their active role in energy use reduction. The explanations that were given most are willingness to contribute to a sustainable society (205), reducing the energy bill (195) and making the respondents feel good (133). Furthermore, reducing the energy use helped the respondent set a good example (110) and it ensures them an ongoing supply of energy in the future (53). This shows that respondents are aware of the necessity of energy use reduction. Different motivations can exist alongside each other. Having multiple motivations can result in an increased drive to become active in reducing the energy use. However, reducing the energy use is not the same as being active in a citizens' initiatives. Reduction cannot be directly related to the generation of sustainable energy, but is still an important step to be taken, as less energy supply is needed when the use is reduced.

3.5 Role of the government
In subcategory 3, it is specifically asked whether citizens' initiatives should be supported by governments. In figure 3 it is visualised that more than 90 percent of the respondents, both involved and not-involved, believes that governments should be supportive towards energy initiatives. Therefore, an active role of the government is emphasised, which supports the definition given by Bakker et al. (2012), that governments have a facilitative or supportive role in citizens' initiatives.
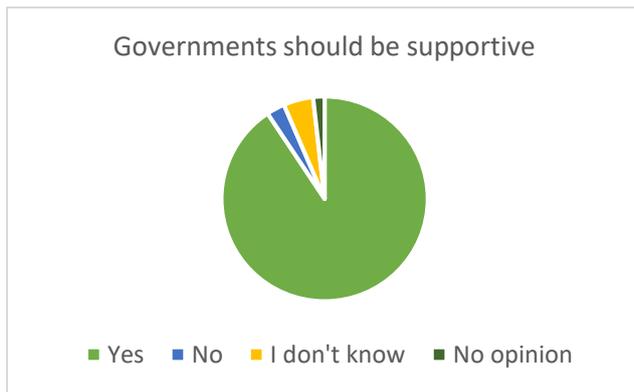
Figure 3: Governments should be supportive

Moreover, participants of the questionnaire were asked which institutions have the most important role in the transition towards more sustainable energy. 45 respondents see it as the responsibility of both energy companies and governments and only 27 respondents think the government is fully responsible for the energy transition. The majority, namely 165 respondents, consider the energy transition as a shared responsibility between citizens, governments and energy companies. Therefore, it could be seen as a co-production between these different actors, as referred to by Nesti (2017). This will increase the efficiency (Marschall, 2004) and the quality (Nesti, 2017) of the programmes set up by the government. Therefore, it will be profitable for the energy transition as a whole, partly fuelled by the processes of co-production.

3.6 Giving substance to the supportive role

The question nest question is about how the government should give substance to a supportive role. Different supportive actions, which could be undertaken by the government are presented (figure 4). The respondents could check multiple boxes, so there were no restrictions to select only one 'best practice' of supportive governance. This resulted in the following outcomes based on 253 respondents who believe that the government should be supportive. Furthermore, there was room for the respondents to formulate another role, which was not being formulated by the authors of the Energysense questionnaire. Ten respondents made use of this option. Their responses will be presented and discussed in paragraph 3.6.6. As was mentioned in paragraph 3.3, there is a significant difference between the groups of respondents that is involved and not-involved regarding the opinion that governments should adapt policies and rules as supportive role. Therefore, this will not be taken into account.

Figure 4: How should governments be supportive?

3.6.1 Financial support or grants

Respondents seem to appreciate financial support or grants. This can be linked to the ideas brought up in Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven (2011), who suggest that neighbourhood budgets or other grants can stimulate citizens' initiatives to start-up. Besides that, Buitelaar et al. (2012) discussed the sti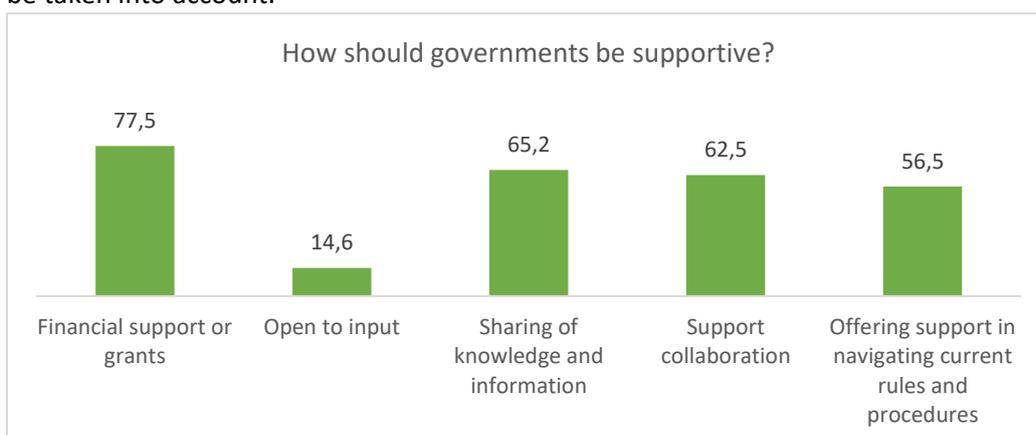mulating effects of subsidies and attractive land prices. By offering financial support or grants, governments can contribute to the capacities of citizens to be successful. However, according to Bokhorst et al. (2015) citizens' initiatives should be able to function independent from governmental support. This makes governments reticent in providing lots of funding.

3.6.2 Open to input

Respondents did not very convincingly feel the need that governments should be open to input. According to Bakker et al. (2012), recognition of citizens' initiatives from governments is important in their success. Therefore, governments could show their appreciation and engagement. Doing so will contribute to the visibility of the government as being an institute that can be used by citizens' initiatives. This is not being recognised by the respondents as important, but as discussed in the literature review, seems to be vital in the success of citizens' initiatives. It can be suggested that the low appreciation of this supportive action is due to the fact that it is not really specified what it means when a government is open to input.

3.6.3 Sharing of knowledge and information

Moreover, the sharing of knowledge and information is appreciated. Governments should provide information and knowledge to be supportive. Timmerman (2017) already argued that citizens often lack the specific type of expertise necessary to be successful with their initiatives. To overcome barriers raised because of a lack of knowledge, governments should share their expertise and knowledge with the citizens' initiatives. Elzenga & Kruitwagen (2012) concluded that good knowledge provision effectively motivates people to take action or to continue with their plans, for example by providing guidelines. According to Oude Vrielink and Van de Wijdeven (2011), a personal approach will contribute to further develop the skills of citizens involved in citizens' initiatives. When the barriers are overcome, it could lead to more involvement in citizens' initiatives among the respondents of Energysense.

3.6.4 Support collaboration

In contrast to the openness to input, governments should according to the respondents, actively support collaboration. This response, as formulated by the authors of the questionnaire, can be understood in different ways. First it could be about the support of collaboration among the citizens involved in a citizens' initiatives themselves. Second, it could be about the support of collaboration between the government and the citizens' initiatives. For this reason, this response is difficult to interpret, as the precise meaning is uncertain. Wagenaar (2007) discussed the creation of networks, which seems to be somewhat overlapping with the formulation of the answer option and is in accordance with the enabling factor of investing in networks. Such networks could stimulate the emergence of citizens' initiatives by citizens themselves, but could also create short lines between the citizens and the government for more collaboration. Boundary spanners, as presented by Van Meerkerk (2014) seem to be useful for the creation of such networks, as they act as bridge between the different actors involved.

3.6.5 Navigating through existing rules and procedures

Furthermore, most of the respondents would like to see that the government offers support in navigating through current rules and procedures. Formal procedures might be experienced as being obstructive or difficult, instead of stimulating. Bakker et al. (2012) referred to the inflexibility of

existing procedures. Respondents would like to receive help from governments in navigating through rules. The literature review showed that civil servants experience some inflexibility in the legal procedures. Therefore, it could raise barriers for citizens' initiatives to develop freely. It might be the case that some procedures are too difficult to understand, causing a loss of intrinsic motivation for citizens' initiatives (Timmerman, 2017). In such cases, guidelines and trainings could be designed to help citizens navigate through the multiple procedures. By doing so, the government can give more substance to a supportive role, instead of being obstructing by raising formal barriers.

3.6.6 Other options

As mentioned, ten respondents made use of the option to formulate their own ideas and opinions about the role governments should take. One respondent referred to a possible problem that was already mentioned in the literature review, namely the idea that long-term policies are needed, as referred to by Timmerman (2017). The respondent experienced it as a missed opportunity, as investments might not be made because of short-term policies, creating uncertainty. Another role that could be taken by the government is the suggestion of a respondent that municipalities or provinces could support citizens' initiatives with publicity, as partly referred to by Bakker et al. (2012). They suggest that information about the citizens' initiatives can be spread through different media channels or letters in the neighbourhood. Moreover, the same respondent mentions the provision of physical spaces, such as meeting rooms, to perform their specific activities, as mentioned by Schram (2006, in Sanders, 2014). Furthermore, according to one respondent, governments should provide customised support, which stands for a personal approach, mentioned to be successful by Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven (2011). A more action-oriented role is being emphasised by one respondent, who argues that the government could take a more leading role. In the definition used for this research (Bakker et al., 2012), governments should have a supportive or facilitative role. This is not in accordance to a more leading role of the government and therefore it can be questioned to what extent such an active role is eligible when it comes to support citizens' initiatives. In a situation in which there is no initial action from citizens, governments can be the initiator and the encourager of citizens' initiatives. However, citizens' initiatives should still be independent of governmental support (Bokhorst et al., 2015).

3.7 Valuing supportive governance

The following paragraph will discuss the extent to which respondents appreciate a certain role of supportive governance. This follows from the question asked in subcategory seven, which has been formulated as follows: '*to what extent should the government take a stimulating role in the following ways*?'. This question will be discussed as it gives new insights on how much certain facilitative actions are appreciated by the respondents, instead of merely indicating which actions are desired. Moreover, three different answer options have been added, compared to the ones discussed in paragraph 3.6, resulting in a more precise overview of supportive governance. The respondents were able to choose out of a scale from one to five, with one being ´*completely not*´ and five standing for ´*definitely yes*´, referring to a more practical role which should be taken by the government. There are nine answer options presented by Energysense, with the ninth option being undefined. Respondents had no option to formulate their own answer, and therefore this option has not been taken into account. In figure 5, the results from this specific question can be found. According to the 279 respondents, the role of the governments is more supportive than non-supportive, resulting in values of over three, mostly over four. This means that most respondents see it as important and valuable that the government is stimulating towards citizens' initiatives with different actions.
In the following paragraphs, three answer options, namely information through a helpdesk or coach, agreements between governments and energy corporations and building trust will be further

elaborated. These three were no answer options in the question discussed in paragraph 3.6 and should therefore be further discussed. Subsequently, the respondents were asked to list the answer options which they valued the most from one to three. The results of this question will be presented and discussed in paragraph 3.7.4.
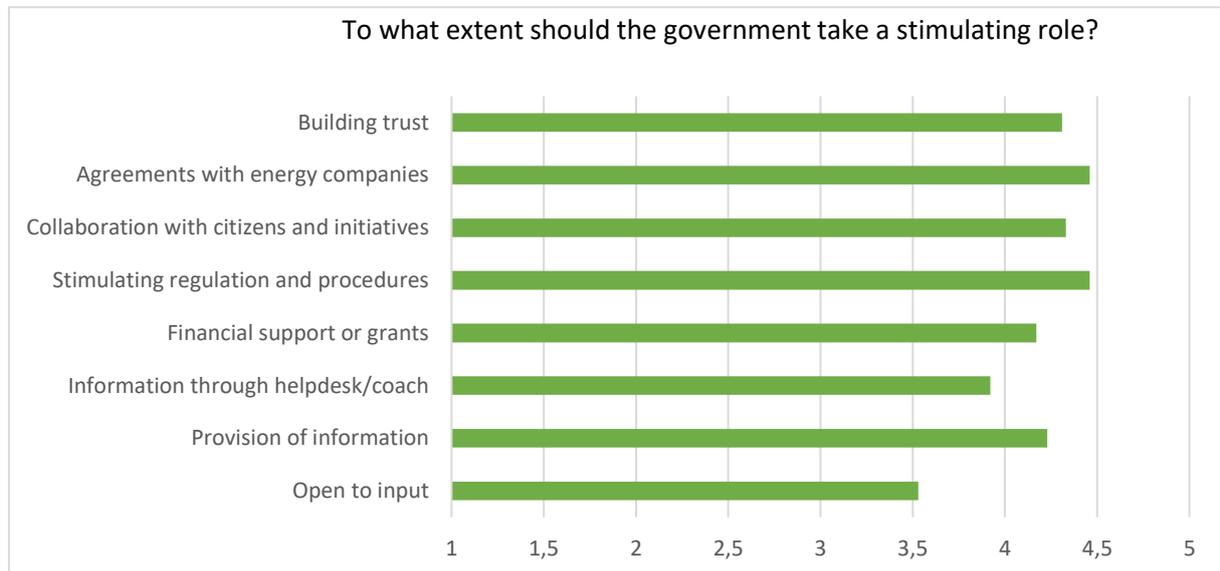
Figure 5: To what extent should the government take a stimulating role?

3.7.1 Information through helpdesks and coaches

Governments which support citizens´ initiatives through offering information via helpdesks or coaches are being valued by the respondents. However, respondents are more reserved compared to other possible stimulating roles. Still, it can be an important facilitative role. In the literature review, no specific attention has been paid to these roles, as it can be shared under capacity building as well as the investment in networks. A helpdesk refers to a place or municipal desk where citizens can get information regarding specific issues being faced while participating in citizens' initiatives. Moreover, a coach could be appointed who works together with the citizens' initiatives. This mostly relates to the community worker, as mentioned by Wagenaar (2007), who in consultation with the citizens articulates their goals and interests. The appointed contact person should be clear for the whole community, and moreover, this person should be easily approachable (Flink et al., 2014). By working with such a personal approach, the distance between the government and citizens can be bridged, as Van Meerkerk (2014) referred to as boundary spanners.

3.7.2 Agreements with energy companies

Respondents strongly value a government that makes agreements with energy companies. Energy companies are strong players on the energy market, in which the citizens' initiatives are a small operator. Therefore, it might be hard for them to get in contact with the energy companies, specifically, as formulated in the answer, about the return delivery of energy to the network produced by the citizens' initiatives. Hisschemöller and Siozious (2013) argue that big energy companies' interests result in limited access to the energy sector. This might be experienced by the respondents, which results in the appreciation of a government that makes agreements with energy companies, on behalf of the citizens' initiatives and only on request.

3.7.3 Building trust

Building or creating trust is highly valued as a stimulating role. Governments should, according to the

respondents, be the institution to do so. This is closely related to denser networks, as mentioned by Elzenga & Kruitwagen (2012) and Wagenaar (2007). More density might lead to more contact, which ultimately could be profitable for the levels of trust within the community towards the government, but also vice versa. This is also argued by Flink et al. (2014), who reason that the initiators should be seen as a key figure and therefore be trusted, leading to more informal contact between both the municipality and the citizens' initiatives. Therefore, the initiator or civil servant should be available for the citizens' initiatives. By showing engagement, enthusiasm and flexibility, demonstrated by not sticking to office hours (Wagenaar, 2007), trust can be built by civil servants.

3.7.4 Arranging the stimulating factors

As mentioned, the respondents were asked to arrange the different actions which could be taken by the government. This resulted in the following outcomes, as can be seen in table 3, below. The numbers represented the amount of people that placed an action on the first, second and third place.

	First place	Second place	Third place
Agreements between governments and energy companies	64	63	50
Collaboration with citizens and initiatives	34	44	43
Trust building	20	14	16
Financial support	54	48	72
Information clearinghouse or coach	8	6	13
Open to input	1	0	9
Providing information	18	23	26
Stimulate supporting rules and procedures	74	78	49
Other	6	3	1

Table 3: Arranging the stimulating factors

The table shows that especially agreements between governments and energy companies, collaboration with citizens and initiatives, financial support and supporting rules and procedures are valued as most important among the residents. Despite that, the other categories should be taken into account as well, as these are important factors in stimulating citizens' initiatives, since respondents could only order three answers. This does not necessarily mean that these are unimportant. It might be concluded based on table 2 and figure 4 from paragraph 3.6 that being open to input is seen as inconsiderable. However, based on figure 5 this can be refuted, as being open to input is valued as a role which should be taken by the government.

3.8 CRIMP model supplemented

In the following figure, the CRIMP model can be found, as will be used for the case study, which will be explained in the next chapter. In accordance with the results from the questionnaire of Energysense (2017), as discussed in the previous paragraphs, the model has been adjusted accordingly. The actions which can be taken by municipalities which were not covered by the literature review have been marked in black in de supplemented model. This adjusted model will thus cover both an academic view based on the previously discussed literature as the view of respondents of the Energysense questionnaire. Therefore, it is more precise and applicable to test the way in which municipalities are either facilitative or not.

Capacity building
- Training and guidelines
- Personal approach
- Financial support

Recognition
- Show engagement and participation
- Appreciation through rewards
- Provide information via media
- Open to input

Invest in networks
- Stimulate the creation of new networks
- Create meeting places
- Appoint boundary spanner or coach
- Building trust

Mobilise
- Put climate change on policy agenda
- Involve citizens in decision-making
- Agreements with energy companies

Procedures
-Create long-term and flexbile visions
-Re-evaluate existing planning laws and regultions
-Clear regulations and procedures

Citizens' initiatives' needs — Municipality — Facilitative role
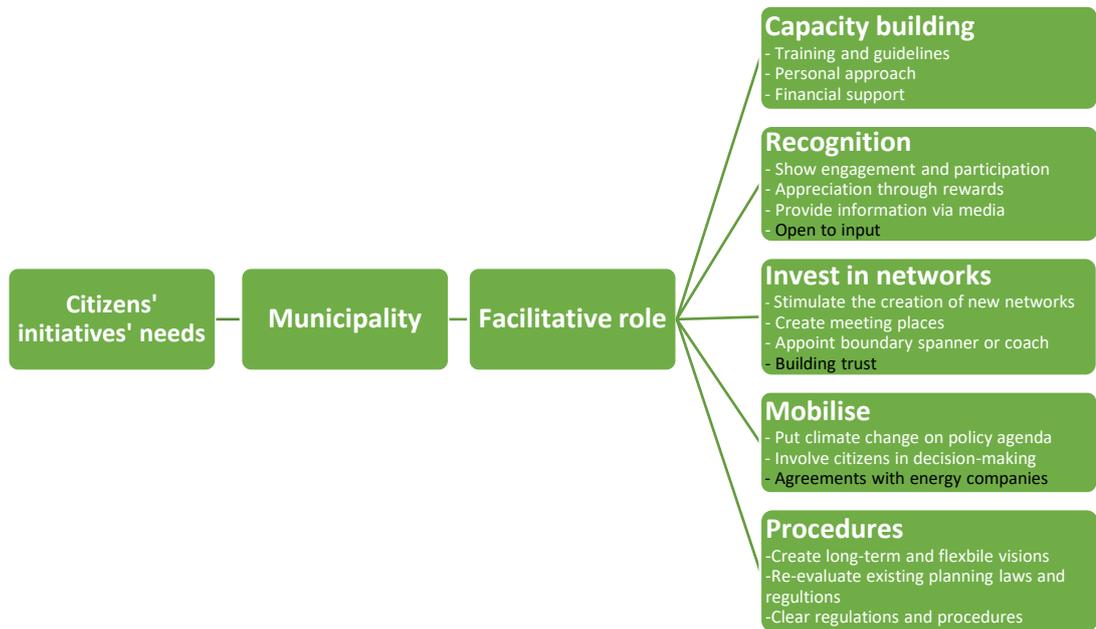
Figure 6: Supplemented CRIMP model

4. Methodology

In this chapter, it will be explained and elaborated how this research has been designed and which steps have been taken to come to a final conclusion. Therefore, the used mixed methods will be discussed, followed by an explanation of the utility of a case study and semi-structured interviews. Hereafter, the analysis which will be conducted after the data has been gathered, will be further explained. Moreover, the selected cases will be presented and there will be room for ethical considerations.

4.1 Research approach

This research is based on both quantitative and qualitative data. In the previous chapter, the data have been presented through a conceptual model. These data have been retrieved from both literature and the Energysense questionnaire. Moreover, policy documents of the selected municipalities have been used, if available, to support the preparation of the semi-structured interviews. Although the questionnaire of Energysense could have been analysed using analytical statistics, it has primarily been presented via descriptive statistics. Despite the fact that the data have not been gathered specifically for this research, this information is useful to developed the model and answer a part of the research questions, as can be found in chapter one. By making use of mixed methods, a broad and depth understanding and corroboration of the topic can be found (Johnson et al., 2007). Johnson et al. (2007) describe mixed methods, as used in this research, as follows:

"…relies on qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, and inference techniques combined according to the logic of mixed methods research to address one's research question(s)." (Johnson et al., 2007, p.129).

In the following figure 7, the research strategy is visualised.
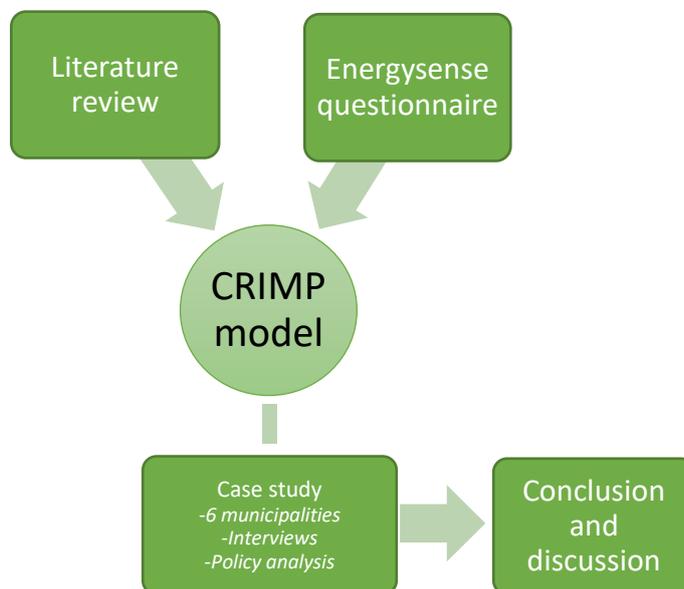

Figure 7: Visualisation of the research strategy

4.1.1 Case study

For this research, a case study has been conducted of six municipalities in the province of Groningen, The Netherlands. This province has been selected, because of the specific problems in the province

due to the gas extraction. The need to produce more sustainable energy is urgent and this makes it an interesting case to further investigate. Moreover, of the three northern provinces, the province of Groningen is producing the most renewable energy (Klimaatmonitor, 2018). The case study will provide an answer to the third secondary question: *'How do the selected municipalities support citizens' initiatives?'*. These six cases are discussed in paragraph 4.3. O'Leary (2004) argues that a case can be described as some aspects, such as boundaries, which make it distinct. In order to be able to make generalisations, it might be useful, according to Rice (2010), to restrict attention to small areas or small groups. Some suggest that case studies cannot provide reliable information which is broadly applicable (Abercrombie et al., 1984). Still, the focus should be on identifying a general pattern, rather than the unique, as is also being advised by Flyvbjerg (2006). Ragin and Becker (1992) argue that theories can be developed based on specific situations. This describes the aim of the case study that will be conducted for this research, as it is not possible to visit and investigate all 20 municipalities in the selected province of Groningen (Provincie Groningen, 2018). Therefore, generalisation will be inevitable, but should be performed with vigilance. Nevertheless, case studies can provide detailed information of the cases which have been selected (Rice, 2010). Furthermore, case studies produce context-dependent knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006). According to O'Leary (2004), the number of cases which need to be explored, is highly dependent of the research goals. The selection of these cases should be non-random, and should be conducted on a pragmatic or theoretical basis (O'Leary, 2004). For this research, theoretical selection has been executed, as will be further discussed upon in paragraph 4.3.

4.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

Besides the use of secondary data, originating from literature, Energysense and policy documents of municipalities, primary data is gathered from the selected municipalities. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews have been conducted (see appendix A) This method has been chosen, because the secondary data did not provide enough precise and in-depth information to be able to answer the research question properly. The semi-structured interviews offer the opportunity to gain insight in the motives behind certain methods of actions when it comes to the facilitation of citizens' initiatives. The use of quantitative data gathering was considered, but is not preferred as it does not provide insight in the underlying motives of municipalities and is not suitable for an in-depth case study. Longhurst (2010) argues that semi-structured interviews are about talking with people. However, besides just talking it is still self-conscious, ordered and partially structured (Longhurst, 2010). Furthermore, using semi-structured interviews instead of structured interviews, offers the opportunities to ask questions which are not listed beforehand. This might be done to respond to unexpected turns in the interview (Flowerdew & Martin, 2005). Besides the flexibility that is offered by this method, it offers the opportunity for respondents to add matters they value as being important to be mentioned (Longhurst, 2010). Being able to talk face-to-face with the respondents offers a situation in which the respondent might feel more comfortable (Khan, 2014). It is also helpful to interview the respondents in a neutral place, but more importantly in a place in which they feel familiar and where they are able to speak freely (Longhurst, 2010). The selected respondents are civil servants of a municipality and are critically questioned. According to Valentine (2005, in Longhurst, 2010) it is almost unavoidable to speak with officials on a different location than their own offices, in this case the town halls.

4.2 Analysing the data

In order to be able to properly analyse the interviews, recordings have been made with audio material. Thereafter, the recordings have been transcribed and coded with the help of Atlas.ti, which is a software program that has been developed for this purpose. Most of the data has been coded

deductive, meaning that the codes originate from the gathered data, based on literature and the questionnaire of Energysense. The deductive codes can be found in the adjusted conceptual model and in appendices C and D. The composure of codes serve to identify categories and patterns (Cope, 2010). Moreover, it helps to interconnect themes and categories, contributing to more rigorous conclusions (Cope, 2010). Inductive coding is used to supplement the deductive codes, when responses cannot be shared among a deductive codes. Doing so, offers flexibility to the researcher, but also contributes to a more precise process of analysis.

4.3 Ethical considerations

"Ethical research in geography is characterized by practitioners who behave with integrity and who act in ways that are just, beneficent and respectful." (Hay, 2010, p.35). Especially when interviews are conducted, personal interaction can be influenced by norms and values, expectations and power structures (Dunn, 2010). In all cases, this should be prevented. The researcher can be considered as an outsider, with interest in sustainability, citizens' initiatives and governance. However, the researcher and the participants did not have any personal relation and moreover, there were no other interests besides gathering the required information for this research. Furthermore, the participants had to sign a declaration of consent (see appendix B), in which it was described that their answers will only be used for this thesis, that they had the possibility to study the questions on forehand, that they could stop the interview at any time and that it would be recorded. After completing this research, the data will be destroyed. In addition, the participants were guaranteed anonymity, therefore their names will not be used in the thesis. Such confidentiality will help the participants to feel more freely in answering the questions (Hay, 2010).

4.4 Case selection

For this case study, six cases have been selected to participate in the research. In the questionnaire of Energysense, respondents could mention a citizens' initiatives in which they were active themselves. Three local citizens' initiatives, which are not located in the municipality of Groningen, were mentioned. This means that respondents are active in these three citizens' initiatives and therefore have closely experienced the role of the municipality in which their citizens' initiative is located. These municipalities are the municipalities of Bedum, Pekela and Winsum. About 580.000 people live in the province of Groningen (CBS, 2018). Of these persons approximately 200.000 are living in the municipality of Groningen. This does not reflect the situation in the rest of the province. Therefore, alongside with the previous three selected cases, three other municipalities have been selected, based on both their geographical position as other specific characteristics, which will later be discussed. These three cases are the municipalities of Leek, Loppersum and Midden-Groningen. Besides geographical spread, it is also desired, as this research is about the facilitation of citizens' initiatives involved in sustainable energy, that some kind of citizens' initiatives are located within the municipal boundaries. To confirm this, information of EnergieVanOns (2018), LokaleEnergieVoorwaarts (2018) and NMF Groningen (2018) has been used. These are organisation that monitor citizens' initiatives concerned with sustainability. The following map of the province of Groningen presents the geographical location of the selected municipalities (see figure 8).
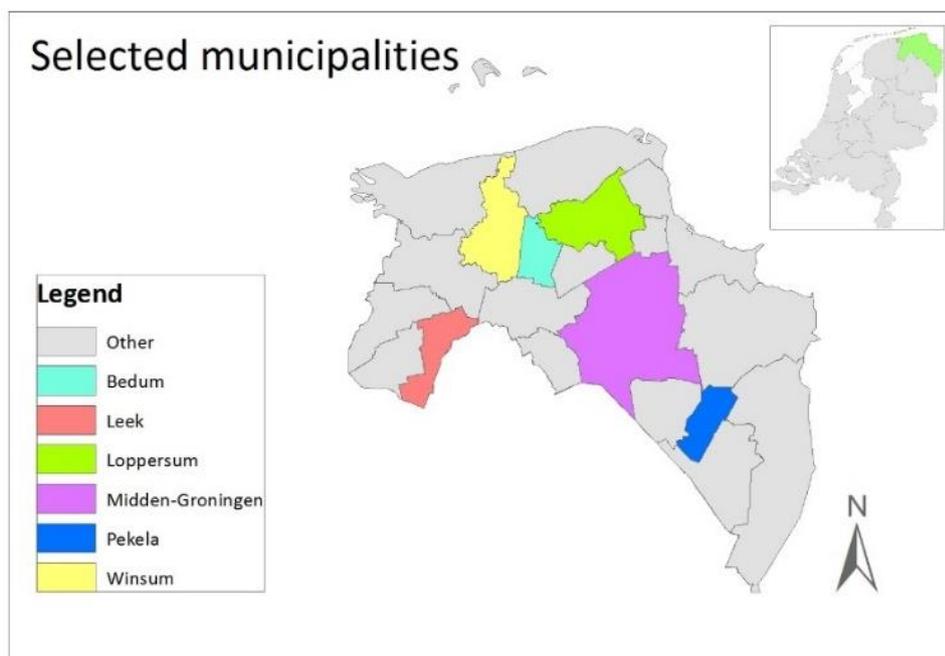
Figure 8: Map of the selected municipalities

In table 4, it can be found which participants have been selected for the interviews and what their professional role is within the municipality they work for. Moreover, the related policy documents, if available and relevant, are presented. For the municipality of Bedum, two interviews have been conducted, as the first participant was not able to give detailed information on how the municipality facilitates the mobilisation of citizens' initiatives and how the municipality fulfilled its procedural role.

Municipality	Respondent	Professional role	Date	Duration	Policy document
Bedum	Participant 1	Villages coordinator	29-05-2018	00:44:19	*Leefbaarheidsvisie gemeente Bedum*
	Participant 2	Legal assistant spatial planning	09-07-2018	00:29:57	
Leek	Participant 3	Policy officer sustainability	07-06-2018	00:54:54	*Masterplan Duurzaamheid 2016-2020*
Loppersum	Participant 4	Policy advisor sustainability and environment	22-05-2018	00:50:45	*Samen beter bezig voor een duurzaam Loppersum*
Midden-Groningen	Participant 5	Policy officer sustainability	19-06-2018	00:49:13	*Not available*
Pekela	Participant 6	Advisor environ-mental policy	24-05-2018	00:28:30	*Not available*
Winsum	Participant 7	Policy officer environment	19-06-2018	00:41:06	*Samen aan de slag*

Table 4 – Overview of participants and policy documents

4.4.1 Municipality of Bedum

The municipality of Bedum has 10.475 inhabitants (CBS, 2018). The village of Bedum is the biggest and is located at approximately ten kilometres from the city of Groningen. It can be described as a small, commuters community. At January 1, 2019, the municipality will merge with the municipalities of De Marne, Eemsmond and Winsum, creating the municipality of Het Hogeland (Gemeente Bedum, 2018). At EnergieVanOns (2018), one energy cooperation is registered, namely Energy cooperation

Durabel. This one is also mentioned by respondents of the questionnaire of Energysense. Moreover, at the website of LokaleEnergieVoorwaarts (2018), Duurzaam Bedum is mentioned as citizens' initiative with the ambition to provide the village of Bedum with sustainable energy. In their policy document on liveability, the municipality of Bedum argues that the sustainable ambitions should be connected with citizens' initiatives. Citizens should be stimulated and facilitated, because of *"… the limited manpower and means the municipality has…"(Freely translated, Adema & Miedema, 2015, p.36).* The document therefore shows an emphasis on the topic of sustainability as part of liveability, and puts the responsibility at the citizens' initiatives. Due to this, Bedum is an interesting case for further research.

4.4.2 Municipality of Leek
The municipality of Leek has around 20.000 inhabitants (CBS, 2018) and is located in the southwest of the province of Groningen. By the start of 2019, the municipality will merge, together with three other municipalities, into the municipality of Westerkwartier. This means that the municipalities together are already thinking on how to fulfil their new role, when the municipalities are no longer independent. In the municipality of Leek several citizens' initiatives are active, including Energy Cooperation Oostwold and DuurZSaam Actief Midwolde (EnergieVanOns, 2018). In their masterplan on sustainability, the municipality argues that *"There are countless ways in which the municipality can stimulate and facilitate."(Freely translated, Gemeente Leek, 2016, p.5).* The masterplan acknowledges that the municipality has a facilitative role towards citizens' initiatives and even discusses how this role can be formalised. Therefore it can be interesting to find out why they are so active in facilitation and how they precisely implement their ambitions.

4.4.3 Municipality of Loppersum
With less than 10.000 inhabitants, the municipality of Loppersum, located in the earthquake area, is the smallest municipality included in this research (CBS, 2018). In their policy document, the municipality indicates that it values citizens' participation and that it facilitates, informs, stimulates and advices citizens' initiatives (Gemeente Loppersum, 2017). Citizens' initiatives which can come for help of the municipality are LOPEC, Energy Cooperation Middelstroom and Energy Cooperation Zonnedorpen (EnergieVanOns, 2018). The municipality acknowledges the need of an energy transition, especially as it is seen as the epicentre of the earthquakes caused by gas production (FluxEnergie, 2017). This specific problems makes the municipality an intriguing case, as the need for a different manner of energy production is present. Moreover, the municipality itself states that it has little to no barriers for citizens to come to the town hall (Gemeente Loppersum, 2017), suggesting that it is willing to facilitate.

4.4.4 Municipality of Midden-Groningen
Almost 61.000 people live in the municipality of Midden-Groningen (CBS, 2018). The municipality is established on January 1, 2018 and is the result of a reclassification of three other municipalities. According to Van den Dool et al. (2010), when such a case is selected, the focus should not only be on gathering data about the performance of the municipality, but it should also be tried to look at the processes that are going on. It might be likely that the newly established municipality has some start-up problems, influencing the facilitation of citizens' initiatives. The coalition agreement states that space will be given for sustainable initiatives, without further specification, meaning that it cannot be used as a source of information for this research. Duurzaam Duurswold and Duurzaam Menterwolde are known to EnergieVanOns (2018) and multiple others are presented at LokaalEnergieVoorwaarts (2018). Therefore, the space given to citizens' initiatives is being used, although most of the initiatives were already started before the reclassification of the municipality.

4.4.5 Municipality of Pekela

The municipality of Pekela is characterised by its location in the former peat colonies, which resulted in ribbon development of the villages (De Vries, n.d.), with around 12.000 inhabitants (CBS, 2018). The municipality does not offer specific plans on how to facilitate towards sustainable citizens' initiatives. Instead, it remains relatively superficial on which actions will be taken by the municipality. Furthermore, the municipality works together with the municipality of Veendam to reduce the costs for the official apparatus (De Kompanjie, 2018), which could be experienced as a barrier for citizens' initiatives to get in contact with the municipality. The cooperation Pekela Duurzaam is the only citizens' initiative which is known to EnergieVanOns (2018) and focuses on the entire municipality. The lack of provided information of how the facilitation is shaped makes it an interesting case to investigate.

4.4.6 Municipality of Winsum

"As municipality we are more and more an ambassador of developments, changes and connector of parties, than the determiner of what should happen." (Freely translated, Gemeente Winsum, 2016, p.5). This describes the facilitative role the municipality of Winsum, with 13.500 inhabitants (CBS, 2018), wants to fulfil. Six citizens' initiatives are known to EnergieVanOns (2018) and LokaalEnergieVoorwaarts (2018), resulting in one in each two villages. Therefore, it can be said that the citizens within the municipality are actively contributing to the energy transition. The policy document indicates that the municipality is well aware of what a facilitative role is and it stresses the importance of letting things be done by citizens themselves (Gemeente Winsum, 2016). This understanding can result in well thought out ideas on how to facilitate and therefore it is interesting to find out what the motives of the municipality of Winsum are and how they make their vision more specific.

5. Findings

This chapter will discuss the findings gathered by the seven interviews held at the six selected municipalities to provide an answer to the third secondary question: *"How do the selected municipalities support citizens' initiatives?"*. First, the view of the municipality on how to facilitate will be presented and discussed. To be able to further explore the reasoning of the municipality and how their facilitative role is given substance, each of the five main pillars of the CRIMP model will be discussed. It will be tested how and if the different facilitative actions based on theory and the Energysense questionnaire, presented in the supplemented model (paragraph 3.7), are being applied in practice by the municipalities in the facilitation towards sustainable citizens' initiatives. Finally, table 5 will present an overview of the different actions. Furthermore, it needs to be mentioned that in the following, when a municipality is discussed, only the name of the municipality will be given. Thus for example, the municipality of Bedum will be referred to as Bedum.

5.1 Facilitation

The different municipalities have different understandings of what is means to be facilitative towards citizens' initiatives. Apart from Pekela, all municipalities mention the term facilitation when it was asked what their role is towards citizens' initiatives. Pekela describes their role as *"pull together, support where possible. Know from each other what you do. Try to align. Not doing the same things" (Participant 6, 2018).* Though this role is supportive, it does not tell much about what they actually do for citizens' initiatives. However, it also shows that they do recognise citizens' initiatives as party in the energy transition. The participant of Loppersum argues that the role of the municipality is facilitative. They try to stimulate citizens' initiatives by providing visions on the topic and when citizens' initiatives have a plan *"… as municipality you find a way to fit it in, instead of pulling up barriers. Our role is reserved first. […] then we see if it can be realised." (Participant 4, 2018).* This reserved role is clearly taken by Midden-Groningen, as the participant argues that the government has a facilitative role, and only has to act *"… when things go wrong or things are needed, that is when the government steps in." (Participant 5, 2018).* The exemplary role of Midden-Groningen is emphasised, so they have to work on the energy transition themselves as well. In a not yet accepted policy document, the policy on solar energy for the new municipality of Het Hogeland, of which Bedum and Winsum will be part, is presented. The new municipality wants to facilitate citizens' initiatives in the process with energy companies and getting subsidies and permits (Het Hogeland, 2018). For Bedum, this is not yet the case, as no specific policy for facilitation is available. Participant 2 argues that Bedum is predominantly facilitative and supportive where needed. However, Winsum is rather clear on their role, as the municipality is active by *"Bringing together knowledge and different initiatives." (Participant 7, 2018),* following the reasoning of the policy document (Gemeente Winsum, 2016). This networking role will be used to further facilitate citizens' initiatives. Finally, participant 3 of Leek argues that the municipality has a facilitate role, however sometimes they have a pioneering role. By trying to find the energy and enthusiasm in the society, Leek wants people to work on the energy transition. If they do so, the participant argues, that they are accompanying, instead of facilitating.

5.2 Capacity building

5.2.1 Training and guidelines

Offering guidelines and training could help to make citizens more knowledgeable when they do not possess the necessary information. Citizens involved in citizens' initiatives could be supported in their capabilities, which can be profitable for the community as a whole. However, five out of the six

interviewed municipalities do not offer training and guidelines to support citizens' initiatives in building their capacities. The municipalities of Bedum, Leek, Loppersum and Midden-Groningen argue that there is an organisation that serves the whole province of Groningen. The so-called GrEK (Groningen Energiekoepel) which was established to share knowledge about energy questions (GrEK, 2018). Trainings and guidelines are available, however, these are not provided by the municipalities. The participant of Loppersum argues the following: *"Then you have something like… why do we, as municipality, have to add something on this matter?" (Participant 4, 2018).* Moreover, the participant of Midden-Groningen mentions that the GrEK provides sufficient knowledge and that there are no signals that training and guidelines are necessary. Although Leek does not offer this form of support, the participant *"Thinks it can be of added value. We do not do it now with the reason that the province has stimulated trajectories in the past and that there are many parties to help initiatives." (Participant 3, 2018).* Though some municipalities argue that the GrEK provides the citizens' initiatives with adequate knowledge, the participant of Pekela is not completely convinced and believes that the knowledge is already available within the citizens' initiatives. That can be the reason that Pekela does not facilitate with training and guidelines. Participant 2 of Bedum argues that every citizens' initiatives has another request and therefore customised support is needed. On the contrary, the participant of Winsum is the only one that has some role in offering training and guidelines. However, this role can be seen as connecting: *"Linkage if they cannot find something, that is when we step in" (Participant 7, 2018).* There seems to be more emphasis on an active role of the municipality, without offering the training and guidelines themselves.

5.2.2 Personal approach

Assigning civil servant to help citizens' initiatives gaining access to related organisations and to work for the citizens' initiatives can be valuable to further develop the capacities of citizens. All the participants indicate that citizens' initiatives can come to the municipality for support, however, the various municipalities have different understandings about how to implement a personal approach. The participants of Leek and Winsum argue that they apply a personal approach and that it is integrated in their tasks. The civil servants meet with citizens' initiatives, without taking over control. *"I am the only civil servant on climate policy, so I have contact with the initiatives. They have to do as much as possible themselves." (Participant 7, 2018).* The participant of Loppersum indicates that they did not think about appointing one specific civil servant, because they do not want to make it too formal. Instead, they have customised the support to citizens' initiatives. Participant 1 of Bedum says that the municipality is involved in the initiatives, but without complete accompaniment, as they believe it is not the role of the municipality to do so. Participant 2 of Bedum adds that colleagues have hours available, but not specifically labelled and linked to citizens' initiatives. Before Midden-Groningen starts to facilitate, citizens' initiatives have to make themselves known to the municipality. The participant believes that the municipality should prevent to become the lead taker, but as civil servant *"…you should think along. Make time available." (Participant 5, 2018).* This opinion is shared by the participant of Pekela, however it is argued that the civil servant will not conduct an extended search for the information needed, as this is a role of the citizens themselves. However, such policy could also be the consequence of a lack of organisational capacity, which is an important factor in the support for citizens' initiatives. The participant of Pekela indeed argues the following: *"We have limited capacity and financial means."(Participant 6, 2018).*

5.2.3 Financial support

Financial support can contribute to a decrease of the costs and risks for citizens involved in citizens' initiatives. Moreover, by providing subsidies governments can stimulate citizens to create opportunities towards a more sustainable society. Bedum and Loppersum are the only cases that do

not provide financial support. Participant 2 of Bedum argues that there are no arrangements of financial support yet. It is reasoned that in the new municipality of Het Hogeland, attention will be paid to financial support for citizens' initiatives. In the transitional period, the support for citizens' initiatives is more or less stagnated. According to the participant of Loppersum there are other opportunities for the citizens' initiatives to get financial support, such as the GrEK. This opinion is partly shared by the participant of Winsum, who indicates the following: *"They just get the starting subsidy. As municipality we say: if there are good arrangements, why should we jump in?" (Participant 7, 2018).* Furthermore, the participant states that the province of Groningen provides a subsidy of 10,000 euros. Though the other municipalities provide some financial support, it can be seen as a starting subsidy as well. The participant of Pekela states again, just as in paragraph 5.2.2. that there is no more money available. However, if it would be available, then the importance of financial support is seen. The same applies for Winsum, as the participant addresses that *"No money* [is available] *for large-scale loan" (Participant 7, 2018).* The motive for Leek to provide financial support is to be supportive in the starting phase of the citizens' initiatives. A funding of 2,500 euros is provided, which can be used for promoting activities, such as a website or leaflets. The participant of Midden-Groningen states that the municipality's subsidy is also used to support citizens' initiatives in the starting phase. *"Recently we have awarded five initiatives with a price [...] a subsidy to make a start."(Participant 5, 2018).*

5.3 Recognition

5.3.1 Show engagement and participation

Civil servants can show engagement and enthusiasm to let citizens feel appreciated. The municipality can participate in the planning process to appreciate or recognise the citizens' initiatives. All six municipalities indicate that they show engagement and participation, though there are nuances to be addressed. The prevailing view is that citizens' initiatives remain a project of the citizens and therefore the municipality should not force themselves to become a part of the citizens' initiatives. Both the participants of Leek and Pekela indicate that they visit information meetings of citizens' initiatives, especially to show that the municipalities appreciate what is being done. This opinion is shared by the participant of the municipality of Bedum, who argues the following: *"By joining meetings. Show that you are there."(Participant 1, 2018).* The participant of Loppersum attends meetings, *"Just to see how it goes, not to control [...] taste the atmosphere" (Participant 4, 2018).* They want to express their engagement on an informal matter, and sometimes the alderman gets invited to perform a special opening. The same goes for Winsum, however it should also be addressed that they are willing to actively participate in the process *"If it becomes difficult, we take on a slightly stronger role with regard to projects that can manage themselves." (Participant 7, 2018).* In addition, recognition might be more effective if the municipality itself initiates the first contact. This is clearly been done by Bedum, as participant 1 indicates that the initiative to be present lies with the municipality.

5.3.2 Appreciation through rewards

Citizens' initiatives can be stimulated by awards, medals or other acknowledgements. Despite the stimulating effects of prizes, municipalities are reticent of using this supportive method. Only Midden-Groningen is actively recognising initiatives with prizes, as presented in paragraph 5.2.3. In addition to this, the participant mentions that *"Five ideas are rewarded with a prize." (Participant 5, 2018).* This can be seen as an action to search actively for citizens' initiatives by the municipality. The participant of Loppersum does not like the idea of recognising citizens' initiatives by awarding with prizes, as the participant questions why one citizens' initiative should get an award and another one

not. It is stated that all initiatives are equally good and interesting and that recognition should be expressed via other channels. This opinion is shared by the participant of Pekela, who states that recognition can be given in a personal way, by mentioning the good work of the citizens' initiatives. Leek does not have a system in which they award prizes, as they have not thought about it. *"If there would be more active* [Citizens' initiatives], *then it could be possible.* […] *Nice idea!"(Participant 3, 2018).* This reasoning is the opposite of that of Midden-Groningen, where the award system is used as an action to search for more citizens' initiatives. In Winsum and Bedum, the participants state that *"We have the luxury of many initiatives […] we did not feel it was necessary."(Participant 7, 2018)* and *"Provoke through prices is not really necessary" (Participant 2, 2018).*

5.3.3 Provide information via media

Municipalities can be facilitative towards citizens' initiatives by providing information through media about the citizens' initiatives. Doing so can contribute to the motivation of citizens to become active in an already existing citizens' initiatives. Each of the six municipalities indicates that they provide information through media to support the citizens' initiatives. The municipalities of Leek, Loppersum, Pekela and Winsum mention the use of the Energieloket. On this online platform, all the municipalities of the province of Groningen have their own page to make announcements about sustainable energy issues in their municipality (Energieloket Groningen, 2018). Despite the fact that the participants of Bedum and Midden-Groningen did not indicate their presence on the online platform, they do have their own page as well. Therefore all municipalities provide information via media about citizens' initiatives. The participant of Loppersum indicates that it is the responsibility of the citizens' initiatives to provide information for the online platform, which is financed by the municipality. Moreover, the Energieloket can be seen as an easy way of support, as argued by the participant of Pekela. However, the participant of Bedum does not reason the same way and argues that it is not necessarily the role of the municipality to provide information about citizens' initiatives online. *"Not all initiatives belong there* [municipal page]. *Because we are not the owner of the initiative. Sometimes you should not interfere with that." (Participant 1, 2018).* Although the Energieloket can be used as a tool, the participant of Leek argues that it is not enough. Therefore, the municipality took an active role and organised a collective purchase action by spreading information letters about the purchase of solar panels, solar boilers and heat pumps home to home. *"With relatively little effort, a lot of return" (Participant 3, 2018).*

5.3.4 Open to input

When citizens' initiatives can contact the municipality for all kind of issues, the municipality shows engagement in the process the citizens' initiatives experience. This does not demand an active role of the municipalities, but openness. All municipalities indicate they are open to input. Participant 1 of Bedum argues that citizens can always come to the municipality. *"It is a town hall. We work for the municipality, for the citizens. The town hall is open for citizens."(Participant 1, 2018).* However, nuance is added by participant 1, as it is argued that civil servants work in specific time slots and are restricted to the opening hours of the town hall. The opinion of an open town hall is shared by Loppersum, Midden-Groningen and Winsum, as the participants indicate that if citizens have questions, the civil servants are willing to help them out. The participant of Leek sees being open to input more as being approachable and being able to think along. *"We should not be to guiding." (Participant 3, 2018).* Caution is needed to not take the lead in citizens' initiatives. The participant also argues that the municipality struggles to give purpose to its role. *"It are new questions, policy wise, we have do not always have an answer […] what is our role?" (Participant 3, 2018).* Pekela is currently in the process of obtaining a national subsidy for the citizens' initiative in the municipality.

The citizens' initiative approached the municipality, *"As they cannot do it themselves." (Participant 6, 2018).* This indicates that Pekela is open to input and willing to support the citizens' initiatives.

5.4 Invest in networks

5.4.1 Stimulate the creation of new networks

Bringing together a mixed group of citizens is profitable for the different resources citizens can combine. Furthermore, the stimulation of new partnerships contributes to denser networks, and can therefore be profitable for the emergence of new citizens' initiatives. It is argued by all municipalities that they stimulate the creation of new networks of citizens. However, not every municipality is actively stimulating this. Both the municipalities of Loppersum and Pekela mention the option for citizens to use the town hall to meet each other. Pekela has organised evenings for citizens to inform them and let them meet, whilst Loppersum does not actively guides citizens as they know how to find each other themselves. The participant of Leek mentions that the municipality has organised meeting sessions, on a voluntary basis. However, it is also argued that the municipality should not determine what citizens want, as *"… often it does function less well." (Participant 3, 2018).* Therefore, an independent advisor is often used, because an *"Advisor has some distance, we chose not do it ourselves." (Participant 3, 2018).* This indicates that the municipality is not always perceived as the appropriate party to facilitate the creation of new networks. The participant of Midden-Groningen recognises the importance of networks, and the municipality has actively used its own networking capacity to create a new energy network. However, the participant does not sees the municipality as the only one responsible for new networks. *"Citizens should network themselves, as well." (Participant 5, 2018).* One of the explanations is that the government has limited financial and personnel means, and therefore they always try to figure out where they can be of added value. In Winsum the stimulating role is the strongest of the six cases. *"We organise sessions where they* [Citizens' initiatives] *can meet and where the GrEK is present and potentially the province and the nature and environmental federation" (Participant 7, 2018).* This is not because citizens do not start citizens' initiatives, but just to be supportive. Participant 1 of Bedum argues that they try to connect, but it is not formally organised as it is the case in Winsum. Besides that, the participant questions whether the different citizens' initiatives are willing to cooperate and learn from each other. Still, participant 2 of Bedum tries to connect for example farmers, who want to take sustainable measures, by means of citizens' initiatives.

5.4.2 Create meeting places

Physical spaces where citizens can meet could contribute to the level of social cohesion. More social cohesion can stimulate new citizens' initiatives. Participant 1 of Bedum claims that citizens do not need a space within the town hall, as they have community centres in their own villages. *"Then we do not facilitate it." (Participant 1, 2018).* This opinion is not shared by the participant of Leek, as the municipality is trying to get citizens to meet each other, not only for getting citizens' initiatives started, but also for meeting again. As was mentioned in the previous paragraph, Winsum is actively supporting the creation of new networks. This strong role in bringing citizens and related parties together is stressed again when the participant was asked what role the municipality has in create meeting places for citizens. It is mentioned that Winsum acts in such a way to let people meet in the town hall, who *"Cannot reach each other and there is a connective role for the municipality to bring people together."(Participant 7, 2018).* In Midden-Groningen citizens can use the town hall and the municipality is willing to think along, which applies to Loppersum as well.

5.4.3 Appoint boundary spanner or coach

By appointing a boundary spanner, municipalities can bridge the gap that might exist between

citizens and the formal organisation which is the municipality. Not every municipality does appoint such a boundary spanner. The participant of Loppersum argues that there are already enough organisations to fulfil this role, such as the GrEK. In addition, the participant reasons the following: *"As a municipality, you should not want to have a tendency to arrange everything from above. Everything must fit within a protocol. Let go, that energy transition. It Is also new to me, for many parties it is new. Everyone is looking for a way."(Participant 4, 2018).* This clarifies the ambition of Loppersum not to take over citizens' initiatives. Instead citizens' initiatives are encouraged to find their own path. Participant 1 of Bedum also argues that the GrEK can fulfil this role, besides the role of the village coordinator to connect the different citizens and to link them to civil servants. This meaning is shared by the participant of Winsum, who claims to be the boundary spanner. *"Connecting is part of the job." (Participant 7, 2018).* The participant of Pekela reasons the same. The participant of Leek sees an independent advisor as a solution to get citizens activated. Incidentally this happens in Midden-Groningen as well. However, as in Winsum and Bedum, the participant of Midden-Groningen does also see it as a role of the civil servants. *"Just what name you assign to it. Civil servant is someone who is a connector, a coach, someone who thinks along." (Participant 5, 2018).*

5.4.4 Building trust

Mutual trust is important for both citizens' initiatives as for the municipality. It is necessary that civil servants are transparent and willing to talk to citizens. The six municipalities have divergent views on how to build trust. For Pekela it means that citizens can go to the town hall when they feel an urgency. The participant of Midden-Groningen sees transparency as an important aspect. *"It is important that you are transparent. Clearly indicate what you can offer and what not." (Participant 5, 2018).* Being clear is also stressed by the participant of Winsum, and it is added that the municipality will not interfere in the processes of the citizens' initiatives. Moreover, when citizens have questions, the municipality will treat them seriously. *"Our processes are just transparent" (Participant 7, 2018).* Participant 1 believes that Bedum builds trust by being there for the citizens and by thinking along. This view is not completely shared by participant 2 of Bedum, who argues that trust is being built by defining clear frameworks. These frameworks emanate from policy documents. Due to the reclassification, Bedum does not really work with citizens' initiatives. *"We do not go further, because we do not know where the policy is heading to." (Participant 2, 2018).* Participant 3 is convinced that Leek is good in building trust. *"I think we are good in that, this also has to do with the facilitative role. […] By being clear in what you do and promise." (Participant 3, 2018).*

5.5 Mobilise

5.5.1 Put climate change on the policy agenda

If municipalities stress the urgency of the energy transition by putting it on their local policy agenda, citizens become aware of the necessity to become active. In different ways, the municipalities are putting climate change and therewith the energy transition on the policy agenda. However, for Bedum, there is currently no real policy, but they are working on it. This is due to the reclassification of the municipality into Het Hogeland, which has put things on hold. For the next elections, some political parties have indicated to put more emphasis on sustainability in their programme. In Pekela, ambitious plans had been developed, which have not been executed. This is the consequence of both political dissatisfaction in the municipality, which led to the withdrawal of the alderman of the GroenLinks party in Pekela, and because of limited budgets and capacity. On the contrary, Loppersum has put *"Climate change clearly high on the agenda […] We have the momentum here."* *(Participant 4, 2018).* The participant indicates that this helps civil servants to get things done, but it

is still a lot of work. In Midden-Groningen, the new coalition has stated in its agreement that it wants to pay close attention to the energy transition, as Midden-Groningen is an earthquake-municipality. The participant of Winsum mentions that climate change is an important issue, and it is on the agenda. *"There is just climate policy and citizens' initiatives are called as one of the pillars." (Participant 7, 2018).* Winsum has ambitions, but the implementation is, according to the participant, ad hoc. This can make it difficult to really work on the topic, as no money is directly available for climate policy. Finally in Leek there is a vision on the energy transition expressed in the Masterplan Sustainability (Gemeente Leek, 2016). According to the participant, this policy should be *"… translated into concrete action" (Participant 3, 2018)* and the communication from the municipality towards citizens could be improved.

5.5.2 Involve citizens in decision-making

Involving citizens in decision-making will contribute to the development of their personal skills and will create broader supported policies. All six municipalities involve or have the intention to involve citizens in decision-making. Bedum, Midden-Groningen and Winsum need to develop new policies in this respect. *"For the new municipality we must get to work with the policy for sustainability." (Participant 5, 2018).* Midden-Groningen is already familiar with the involvement of citizens, and the participant argues that it is wise to do so. Bedum and Winsum have developed their current policies without involving citizens in the development. However, after the policy has been made, the municipalities have spoken with citizens and citizens' initiatives on how to implement it. Still, *"The municipality must have the final responsibility" (Participant 7, 2018).* Pekela actively involves citizens, because *"You do it for the citizens." (Participant 6, 2018).* This opinion is shared by the participant of Loppersum. The municipality has used different methods to gather information, such as community evenings in the villages and a citizens summit. In addition, the participant argues the following: *"We inform what we are going to do. What the results of the process will be." (Participant 4, 2018).* By doing so, citizens feel more involved and being taken serious. Leek involves citizens, but especially spoke with social partners such as housing associations and firms. *"Create added value together […] open dialogue, look where you can find mutual energy." (Participant 3, 2018).* According to the participant this helped to create support. Moreover, citizens' initiatives are invited to tell the municipality about their experiences and to connect.

5.5.3 Agreements with energy companies

For citizens' initiatives it might be difficult to get in contact with big energy companies. Municipalities could be of added value when they help to connect citizens with these energy companies or when making agreements on behalf of the citizens' initiatives. Pekela is the only municipality that does not make agreements with energy companies. *"The cooperation does it by itself. They have enough knowledge and connections." (Participant 6, 2018).* In line with Pekela, the participant of Midden-Groningen argues the following: *"A good citizens' initiative makes the contacts by itself, that is part of the feasibility of the plan. This is also indicated by the municipality." (Participant 5, 2018).* Though it might be seen as a responsibility for the citizens' initiatives, Midden-Groningen is willing to use its contacts in favour of the citizens' initiatives. In Loppersum it is reasoned that it can be difficult for citizens to contact the energy companies, as they are all volunteers. *"The municipality has a more extensive network" (Participant 4, 2018).* Leek assists citizens by contributing to their networking capacities by helping them to become full-fledged conversation partners. Still, this process could be improved by cooperating with market parties. The participant of Winsum believes that energy companies themselves are active. In Bedum they are willing to help citizens' initiatives. *"We have the contacts and that makes it easier to use these in the contact with initiatives […] Did not yet happen. […] Should not be at the final stage." (Participant 2, 2018).*

5.6 Procedures

5.6.1 Create long-term and flexible visions

Long-term visions, which can be adapted in time, are profitable for citizens' initiatives. On the one hand it offers clarity for citizens, whilst on the other hand the flexibility to change the visions adds to a more customised effectuation. Midden-Groningen did not yet develop a vision on energy transition, whilst the participant of Loppersum indicates that a vision on the spatial implementation will be finished within two years. This does not contribute to the certainty for citizens' initiatives. In Bedum, they are working on the policy for the new municipality (Het Hogeland, 2018). They try to be adaptive, because *"The energy transition is unknown. […] You do not know what the world looks like in ten years." (Participant 2, 2018).* This means that the vision, which is focused on 2050, will be revised every few years, offering both certainty and flexibility to the municipality and for the citizens' initiatives. The same policy will apply for Winsum and the respondent adds that the vision creates more space for the facilitation of citizens' initiatives. In Leek, the vision will be more specific, however, the participant also argues that the municipality is rather conservative and that this can be a constraining factor. The participant of Pekela argues that the citizens' initiatives are more active than the municipality. They can make use of the visions, but it is questioned to what extent it is useful for them. However, Pekela does have a long-term vision available. It states *"What we have now and what we want to have in the future." (Participant 6, 2018).*

5.6.2 Re-evaluate existing planning laws and regulations

Certain laws and regulations can be obstructive towards the development of citizens' initiatives. If the rules are re-evaluated, both civil servants and citizens' initiatives can profit from better facilitation. The participant of Leek is critical towards the municipality, as it is observed that civil servants should connect more to citizens for a better understanding. *"If we all sit on our isolated island, then that is not conducive." (Participant 3, 2018).* The participant feels that regulations should not be to curtailing and should be broader interpreted. According to the other participants, their municipality is willing to re-evaluate existing planning laws. *"We are flexible" (Participant 6, Pekela, 2018).* Bedum, Midden-Groningen and Winsum mention the role of the province of Groningen. According to the participant of Bedum the province is rather strict. *"We already try to deviate from provincial policy" (Participant 2, 2018).* Bedum wants to revise laws when it becomes clear they are obstructive. According to Midden-Groningen, regulations should be better aligned with future developments. Winsum reasons the same and *"… tries to stretch it as much as possible." (Participant 7, 2018)*. Still, it is argued that some regulations cannot be changed by the municipality. Although the participant of Loppersum wants to be flexible in the implementation of rules, zoning plans still need to be available for inspection by citizens. Besides that, it is stressed that the energy transition is a new topic, and this results in many questions that still have to be answered.

5.6.3 Clear rules and procedures

To prevent unforeseen consequences of specific actions, clear rules and procedures should be drawn. This does not necessarily mean that these rules are not flexible or adaptive, as discussed in the previous two paragraphs. According to the participant of Bedum, the municipality sometimes does not have much choice but to be clear, as the province demands this. However, it is also argued that space remains for tailor made solutions. Therefore, drawing clear rules and procedures can sometimes be unnecessary. The participant of Leek considers this action as making thing easier, which demands straightforward thinking. This opinion is shared by Pekela. It is argued that *"If you deviate, you can offer flexibility." (Participant 6, 2018).* In contrary, the respondent of Midden-Groningen believes in clear rules and procedures. It can provide guidance to citizens' initiatives about

where a certain citizens' initiative can be developed, for example with regard to this case: solar parks. The clear rules and procedures indicate *"What do you allow, what do you not allow."* *(Participant 5, 2018).* The participants of Loppersum and Winsum did indicate they provide clear rules and procedures, but did not further specify on this action.

5.7 Overview

In the following table 5 an overview is presented of the facilitative actions the six municipalities take. Furthermore, the most important reasons are shortly described. The colours indicate whether an action is taken by the municipality based on the interviews and own interpretation. Green refers to certainly, whilst brown means the specific action is not being taken by the municipality. The blue boxes mean that an action is taken to some extent.

	Bedum	Leek	Loppersum	Midden-Groningen	Pekela	Winsum
Training and guidelines	Provided by the GrEK	Provided by the GrEK	Provided by the GrEK	Provided by the GrEK	Knowledge already available within CI	Be the linkage
Personal approach	Not their role	Integrated in tasks	Do not make it too formal	Willing to help, CI's should take initiative	Limited capacity	Integrated in their tasks
Financial support	No budget available	Be supportive in starting phase	Other options, such as GrEK	Provide starting subsidy	No more money available	Other good arrangements, no budget
Show engagement and participation	Join meetings, show your presence	Visit information meetings to show appreciation	Attendings meetings to taste atmosphere	Can come to the municipality	Visit information meetings to show appreciation	Take stronger role when it becomes difficult
Appreciation by rewards	It is not necessary, already enough CI's	Too little CI's to do, not thought about it	Appreciates each CI equally	Search for CI's	Recognition should be personal, not material	Already enough CI's
Provide info via media	Energieloket, not always municipal responsibility	Energieloket, collective purchase action home-to-home mailing	Energieloket, use social media and alderman	Energieloket, advertisement on website	Energieloket easy way of support	Energieloket, willing to spread news
Open to input	Work for the citizens	Being approachable, not guiding	Civil servants willing to help	Civil servants willing to help	Some things cannot be done by CI	Civil servants willing to help
Stimulate new networks	Not formally organised, willing to connect	Organise meeting session, use independent advisor	Use townhall, citizens know to find each other	Citizens should also network themselves	Use townhall to meet	Organise sessions with relevant stakeholders
Create meeting places	They have community centres available	Let people meet and meet again	Use townhall	Use townhall	Use townhall	Bring people together as municipality
Appoint boundary spanner or coach	Role of the village coordinator to connect to civil servants	Independent advisor to get citizens active	Other organisations to do so, such as the GrEK	Independent advisor, role of civil servants	Role of civil servants	Role of civil servants
Building trust	Being there, define clear frameworks	Being clear in actions and promises	Do not be too formal	Be transparent and clear	Welcome at town hall	Being clear, treat CI's seriously
Put climate change on policy agenda	No real policy due to reclassification	Masterplan available, should be better translated into concrete action	Right momentum puts it high on agenda	As earthquake municipality high on agenda	Implementation of plans on-hold due to limited budgets and capacities	Ad hoc implementation of climate policy
Involve citizens in decision-making	Policy developed by municipality, discussed afterwards	Spoke with social partners and citizens invited to share experiences	Inform on results of the process	Wise to involve citizens	Policy is for the citizens	Policy discussed with stakeholders after development. Municipality has final responsibility
Agreement with energy companies	Municipality has contact and willing to use them for CI's	Contribute to capacities of citizens to become serious conversation partners	Citizens are volunteers, municipality has extensive network	Both responsibility citizens and municipality	Cooperation has enough knowledge and connections	Energy companies also active, municipality can be linkage
Create long term and flexible visions	New long-term vision for Het Hogeland in progress, adaptive as energy transition is unknown	More concrete visions, municipality conservative	No vision on energy transition yet, in progress	No vision on energy transition yet, in progress	Long-term vision available, but CI's faster than municipality	New long-term vision for Het Hogeland in progress, adaptive visions
Re-evaluate existing planning laws and regulations	Revise laws when obstructive, Province can be constraining	Regulations can be curtailing due to sectoral structure of municipality	Energy questions provides new question, some rules need to be followed	Adapt rules to better align with future questions, Province can be constraining	Trying to be flexible by deviating from rules	Stretching the rules as much as possible, Province can be constraining
Clear regulations and procedures	Sometimes needed to be clear, customisation remains	Making things easier, by thinking straightforward	-	Provide guidance for CI's	Sometimes flexibility is preferred	-

Table 5: Overview of the different facilitative actions taken by the municipalities

6. Discussion and reflection

6.1 Discussion

For this research, the definition of Bakker et al. (2012) was used as guideline for defining what the role of the government should be regarding citizens' initiatives, which is the following:

"… collective activities by citizens aimed at providing local public goods or services in their street, neighbourhood or town, in which citizens decide themselves both about the aims and means of their project and in which local authorities have a supporting or facilitating role." (Bakker et al, 2012, p. 397).

Bakker et al. (2012) indicate that the role of governments should either be supporting or facilitating. However, the case study indicated that municipalities have different ideas about how to deal with citizens' initiatives, and that supporting or facilitating is not as straightforward as suggested in the definition presented by Bakker et al. (2012). It can be broadly interpreted by municipalities, and so it is done. Moreover, the terms 'facilitation' and 'support' are used alongside each other, whilst there are differences. For this research, no distinction of these two terms is being made. However, supporting citizens' initiatives demands a more active role of municipalities than facilitating. Besides these differences it can also be the case that municipalities are not involved in citizens' initiatives at all. Therefore it could be concluded that the definition as given by Bakker et al. (2012) turned out to be not completely accurate for this research when it is about the governmental role. Moreover, citizens do not merely decide themselves about the aims and means of their projects, as these are influenced by the government. This can be done by means of existing policies of municipalities which can guide the aims of citizens' initiative. Besides that, the government, among which is the national and provincial government, can be constraining. It is likely that this influences the possibilities for the development of citizens' initiatives. Therefore, the definition of Bakker et al. (2012) will be reformulated as follows:

"Sustainable citizens' initiatives are collective activities by citizens aimed at providing local public goods or services in their own environment, in which citizens define themselves the aims and means, influenced by governmental policies, of their project and in which local authorities can have a supporting or facilitating role." (Reformulation by author, 2018, based on Bakker et al., 2012, p.397).

Besides this new definition, municipalities do not always facilitate or support in a pre-determined way. It was concluded that not all actions derived from literature and the questionnaire of Energysense were applied by each municipality. Municipalities can perform different actions besides the actions presented in the CRIMP model (see figure 6). The municipality of Leek provided citizens with materials to perform their activities, whilst Pekela provided a municipal roof to citizens' initiative. Moreover, Winsum actively tries to involve citizens' initiatives in the development of a new residential area. Municipalities seem to appreciate the possibility of being flexible and provide customised support to citizens' initiatives. After all, each citizens' initiative is different. Still, the CRIMP model, as revised in the next chapter (figure 9), can be used as an assessment model for municipalities. Citizens' initiatives have to acknowledge their needs, leading to a response by municipalities and how this can be related to the model. Citizens' initiatives have different wishes, influenced by their personal skills and the context they are situated in. When municipalities start to customise their support, there might be conflicts with generic policies. However, it can be argued that citizens' initiatives have different needs and need customised support. The CRIMP model can

thus be regarded and used as a guideline for municipalities. This does not mean that it can be completely followed by municipalities and applied one-on-one to each citizens' initiative. Although the results of the case study cannot be easily generalised, the CRIMP model can be used by municipalities and the specific interpretation of the action points is dependent on the citizens' initiative, the situating and the institutional context. This is simply a consequence of a case study, which was already identified by Flyvbjerg (2006). A case study provides detailed information for the researcher, but should always be regarded as being influenced by the context.

6.2 Reflection

The used data gathering method was useful to gain insight in the motivations for municipalities to facilitate or support citizens' initiatives. However, firstly, not every civil servant was equally well informed on each of the five main pillars of the CRIMP model. This made it hard for some actions points to really get to the core of the facilitative action. For Bedum this resulted in two interviews, giving an extended insight in the way the municipality facilitates citizens' initiatives. Combining an interview with a regular civil servant, responsible for sustainability and environment, with interviewing a legal assistant could have been interesting for the other cases, as well.

Secondly, other prospects had been selected initially. Despite many efforts to get in contact with these prospects, no appointments could be made with the relevant civil servants. Therefore, other prospects have been added. This resulted in the selection of Midden-Groningen, which was firstly not desired as it is a reclassified municipality. However, it provided interesting insights in how municipalities are trying to fulfil the needs of citizens' initiatives, even when there is no real policy available. Also the other selected municipalities have experienced different development processes over the last years. Bedum and Winsum will no longer be independent municipalities by 2019, which is also the case for Leek. Whilst Loppersum is in a pre-trajectory for reclassification. Pekela is not fully independent when it comes to their civil service, as they work together with the municipality of Veendam. Its governmental position is therefore different and cannot unambiguously be compared. Moreover, the municipalities have different geographical spreading, which might result in different standpoints towards the energy transition, as a consequence of the earthquakes caused by gas extraction. This might have resulted in deviant ambitions and priorities. Still, the CRIMP model can be regarded as a useful assessment model.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

This research has aimed to give insights on how municipalities in the province of Groningen facilitate towards sustainable citizens' initiatives. A best practice model, the CRIMP model, was developed to present the actions that could be taken to facilitate or support citizens' initiatives. This model is inspired by the CLEAR model presented in Lowndes et al. (2006). It was given substance by literature and the results of the Energysense questionnaire, held in 2017. This led to an extensive model with five main pillars, including seventeen action points. In the following paragraphs, a conclusion will be drawn with regard to each of the five main pillars to facilitate citizens' initiatives, based on policy documents and the seven semi-structured interviews held with six municipalities. To make the CRIMP model as accurate as possible, based on the findings, the facilitative actions of the model will be discussed and revised, leading to the answer on the primary research question: *'How can local governments meet the needs of sustainable citizens' initiatives in the province of Groningen?'*. Finally, recommendations for further research will be given, followed by the meaning of facilitative governance for the energy transition.

7.1 Capacity building

Literature review has shown that citizens do not always have the necessary capacity to successfully engage in citizens' initiatives. Moreover, it might be the case that citizens' initiatives as a whole miss the necessary resources and skills. Lowndes et al. (2006) suggested that capacity building can contribute to these missing skills and resources. Offering training and guidelines, a personal approach and financial support can be seen as facilitative actions to support those skills. As derived from the interviews, municipalities do not offer training and guidelines themselves. There are other organisations that take this role to support the capacities of citizens or citizens' initiatives. This does not imply that this role should not be fulfilled by the municipalities, as it can be the case that some provinces do not have relevant organisations that fulfil such a role. Municipalities seem to be willing to take a personal approach to support, although no specific civil servants are assigned to take this role. It can be seen as being integrated within their function, which can result in the appearance of a conflict of interest. Assigning specific civil servants shows to citizens' initiatives that they are taken seriously and more time is available to facilitate them. However, it also depends on the capacity and financial means of the municipality whether there is time and money available to organise such a personal approach, which is mostly not the case. Financial support is not provided commonly. When it is granted, the municipalities use it to support citizens' initiatives in their starting phase. It can be seen as seed funding, to motivate citizens' initiatives to continue. Most of the money that is provided does not come from the municipalities themselves, but is part of a larger subsidy scheme, mostly organised by the province of Groningen. This does not necessarily mean that municipalities are not willing to help citizens' initiatives to find the subsidies that are available. In line with the reasoning of Bokhorst et al. (2015), it can be concluded that municipalities are reticent in providing financial support, because citizens' initiatives are considered as independent from governmental support. Moreover, it is reasoned that citizens' initiatives have adequate capacities, which should not always be supported by the municipalities.

7.2 Recognition

When citizens' initiatives feel appreciated and recognised by the municipalities, they might be more motivated to continue with their plans. Lowndes et al. (2006) suggested that civil servants can create a positive environment. Showing engagement and participation, appreciate through rewards, providing information via media and being open to input can be stimulating. Municipalities have the feeling that they are actively expressing their appreciation for the citizens' initiatives, on different

ways. An online platform of the province of Groningen (Energieloket) is used to provide online information about citizens' initiatives. Still, it is argued that the citizens' initiatives should not rely on the help of civil servants. It is indicated that the contact should not be too formal, implying that citizens' initiatives should be able to function independent. Awarding citizens' initiatives was used as an instrument to investigate whether there are chances to create citizens' initiatives. Therefore, it can also be regarded as a mobilising action, which is in line with the reasoning of Elzenga & Kruitwagen (2012), in paragraph 2.3.2. Other municipalities did not reward citizens' initiatives, because they did not feel an urgency or had not considered it. In the revised CRIMP model, it will be considered as attributing to the pillar 'mobilise'. Being open to input can be understood as the visibility of municipalities as a governmental institute that is there for the citizens. All participants indicated that their municipality is open to input. However, they mostly regarded it as the willingness to help. This means that there is overlap with the personal approach which helps to contribute to the capacities of citizens' initiatives. Although it can still be considered as contributing to the recognition of citizens' initiatives, it will be mainly considered as part of a personal approach.

7.3 Invest in networks

To encourage citizens to become active, investments should be made in existing and non-existing networks. When people meet, they can share their ideas and might start citizens' initiatives. By stimulating the creation of new networks, creating meeting places, appointing a boundary spanner or coach and building trust, municipalities can facilitate towards citizens' initiatives. It can be concluded that municipalities stimulate the creation of new networks. They have different views on how to accomplish this action. This action demands an active role of municipalities, and although they see the relevance of bringing together relevant stakeholders, this is not always translated into specific actions by each municipality. Town halls and community centres can be used by citizens' initiatives in each municipality to organise meetings. Most of the participants considered themselves as being the boundary spanner. However, the use of an independent boundary spanner, as happens occasionally, is emphasised by Van Meerkerk (2014). Appointing an independent person will cost money and most of the municipalities do not have a lot of financial means. This could influence an adequate facilitation of the citizens' initiatives in a negative way, as there might be an appearance of conflicting interests. The usefulness of this action is still apparent and should be brought to the attention and will therefore be considered in the revised model. Building trust is being done by being transparent and clear towards the citizens' initiatives, as indicated by the municipalities. If there is trust, the citizens can maintain their mutual network and the network with the municipality.

7.4 Mobilise

Citizens should be engaged in the process of decision-making and should be made aware of the necessity of the energy transition. Therefore, the energy transition must be placed on the policy agendas of municipalities. This is not the case in each municipality. Some municipalities indicate that the energy transition has its place on the political agenda, which not results in concrete policies. If the municipalities are not aware of the energy transition themselves, they do not have specific plans to facilitate the citizens' initiatives, as there is no policy for the facilitation. Moreover, politicians could put more emphasis on the topic. Even when municipalities have developed policies, it could be made more clear which actions are being taken to make it more specific. This offers grip to citizens' initiatives, but leaves little room for customisation, which is stressed as being important as well by the municipalities. Although the participants see the importance of involving citizens in the process of decision-making, it does not mean that the involvement is effectively being done. Citizens should be asked by the municipalities beforehand instead of being consulted after the policies have been developed. This requires an active municipality that organises, for example: consultation evenings,

walk-in hours and campaigns. These are points for improvement, not only with the involvement of citizens. Municipalities should show more awareness of the energy transition and should treat it as an important issue. Besides that, municipalities should motivate citizens to become active in sustainable citizens' initiatives. Also, municipalities can function as the missing link between citizens and energy companies. The municipalities can use their connections, but it is also seen as a task of citizens themselves to makes these contacts. It can be argued that municipalities could contribute to the capacities of citizens to make them able to start the conversations without interference of the municipalities. Municipalities could also organise network meetings where citizens' initiatives can meet with the relevant stakeholders, among which are energy companies. This best practice was shown by Winsum (see paragraph 5.4.1). Therefore, it is questionable whether this action is part of the mobilisation pillar. It can be argued that making agreements with energy companies is part of the stimulation of new networks, between citizens and energy companies. Municipalities can be the linkage to form these networks. This means that the municipalities should create the right circumstances to make such networks possible.

7.5 Procedures

By creating long-term and flexible visions, re-evaluating existing planning laws and regulations and formulating clear regulations and procedures, municipalities set the right conditions to facilitate citizens' initiatives. It would be helpful for citizens when the municipalities have clear visions on how to facilitate sustainable citizens' initiatives. However, most of the municipalities do not have clear visions which are based on a longer-term. It is acknowledged that this can be problematic for citizens' initiatives in terms of what can be expected from municipalities. The visions that are available should be more specific and sometimes citizens' initiatives are developing faster than the municipalities' policy-making, meaning that the municipalities should speed-up the process of policy development. It is also indicated that, because of the missing visions, citizens' initiatives remain on hold. This is not supportive for their development and the motivations of the involved citizens. Nevertheless, the municipalities argue that their visions are flexible and can be adapted when it is asked, resulting in customised facilitations. Furthermore, the re-evaluation of existing planning laws and regulations is not always possible, which can be constraining in terms of the implementation of plans of citizens' initiatives. This can be due to provincial policies, which function as frameworks, partly influenced by national laws. It is indicated that the influence of the province can be rather constraining, as their regulations do not connect with the contextual needs of citizens' initiatives. For municipalities this means that they cannot always satisfy the citizens' initiatives, though they want to cooperate by re-evaluating the existing regulations. The action of facilitating by formulating clear rules and regulations is not being met by all municipalities. This can be explained by the fact that municipalities try to customise their facilitation towards the needs of the citizens' initiatives. Moreover, as policies are not always available, the clarity cannot be given by specific rules and regulations appointed to the facilitation. However, this does not necessarily mean that this action should not be included in the CRIMP model. It can be argued that municipalities hold on to clear rules and regulations to express their point of view towards citizens' initiatives, instead of customising the facilitative actions of the procedural pillar.

7.6 CRIMP model revised

In figure 9, the revised CRIMP model can be found. In this model, the citizens' initiatives are clearly centralised as they need to express their needs before they will receive support. At the same time, the role of relevant organisations such as the GrEK, which functions as intermediary connective organisation, is emphasised. Moreover, it was found that the province influences the way in which municipalities facilitate. Although this was not part of the research, it was found in the case study

that the province of Groningen influences the facilitation of municipalities. The province can be either constraining, but it also offers arrangements which can be used for the citizens' initiatives. The conclusions of the case study, as described in the previous paragraphs, have led to changes in the five pillars. For the actions 'open to input' and 'agreements with energy companies' this resulted in a subdivision in a different pillar. Appreciation through rewards has been classified of being part of the 'mobilisation' phase. Although it could still be used as an action to recognise citizens' initiatives, this was not supported by the case study.
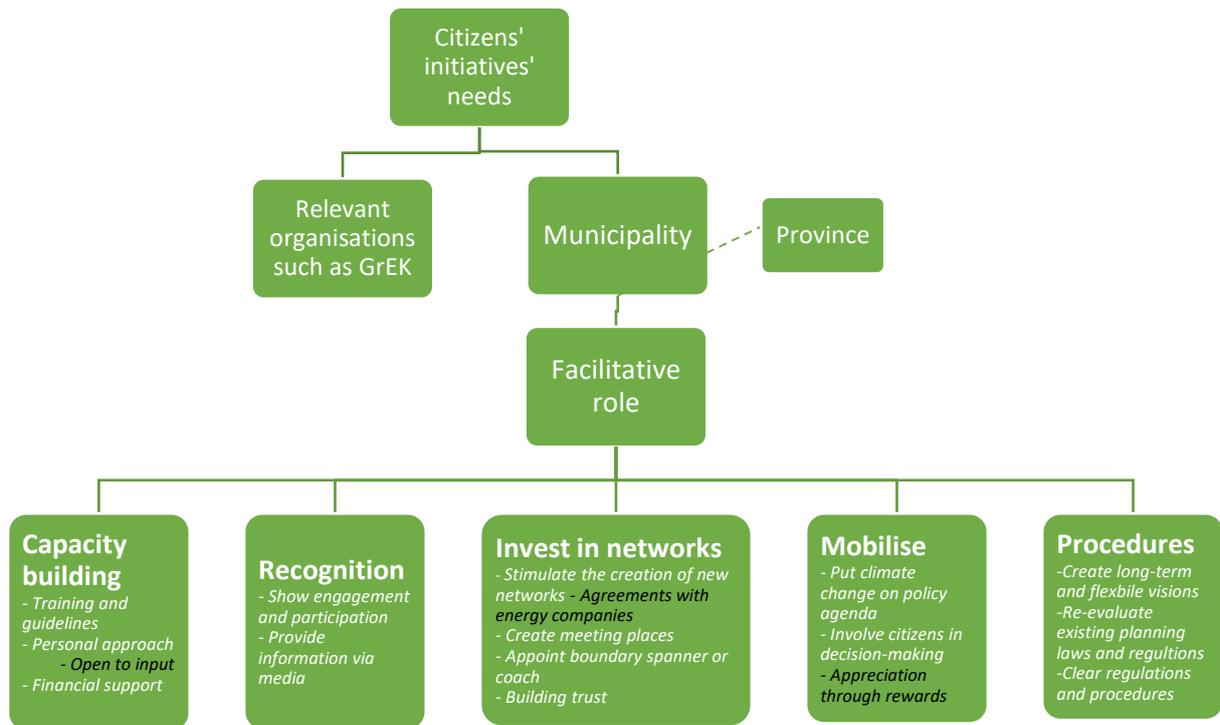

Figure 9: Revised CRIMP model

7.7 Recommendations

From the interviews it became clear that municipalities have different views on how to deal with citizens' initiatives. If municipalities are not supportive towards citizens' initiatives, it could result in less motivation among citizens to become active. This should be prevented, as their importance is being recognised in the national policy agenda, as discussed in chapter 1 (Energieagenda, 2016). Therefore, it is important that municipalities develop policies on how to facilitate, support or stimulate citizens' initiatives. By formulating a clear standpoint, guidance is provided to citizens involved in citizens' initiatives. Especially the pillar of mobilisation and procedures deserve more attention. Municipalities could take a firmer role when citizens are not becoming active themselves. This could be done by awarding citizens' initiatives, stimulating the creation of new networks, putting the energy transition on the policy agenda and involve citizens in their decision-making. Particularly the awareness among municipalities to put emphasis on the energy transition and their facilitative role towards sustainable citizens' initiatives should be improved. Furthermore, procedures seem to be important in the facilitation. Legal issues can be hard to understand for citizens and to keep citizens motivated, municipalities should remove barriers and cooperate with citizens' initiatives, instead of being obstructive. Working on the energy transition, in co-production with citizens' initiatives is vital to properly deal with climate change. Co-production is necessary to keep up with

the third generation citizens' participation, as discussed by Lenos et al. (2006).

Also, it would have been interesting for this research to investigate the facilitation from multiple perspectives. First, citizens' initiatives could be questioned about their needs and wishes. Although the questionnaire of Energysense, presented in chapter 3, provided insights in the needs and wishes of citizens, the information was rather general and not targeted towards the role municipalities should have. Moreover, it did not merely involve citizens involved in citizens' initiatives and it provided quantitative data instead of qualitative data. This could be followed by an interview with the local municipality. After conducting interviews with citizens' initiatives, an interview with the province could add another perspective and could explain actions taken or not taken by municipalities. For this research, it would have been too time consuming, especially when multiple cases are investigated in detail. The questionnaire of Energysense provided sufficient insight in the needs and wishes of involved citizens for this research, as this research aimed to gain insight in the actions and perspective of municipalities.

Thirdly, to be able to make more generalisations, the revised CRIMP model (figure 9) could be tested using a quantitative data gathering method. A questionnaire in which civil servants can check boxes could provide information for all municipalities in the Netherlands. The questionnaire could be extended with different motivations municipalities can have to undertake certain actions. Furthermore, it could question which actions are undertaken in the different phases that citizens' initiatives are going through. It might be the case that citizens' initiatives have other wishes in their starting phase than in their mature phase, which can result in different facilitative actions. Conducting such a questionnaire, provides the possibility of testing the CRIMP model on a larger scale and will offer the opportunity for statistical tests, rather than descriptive as presented in chapter 5. The results of the questionnaire could then serve as a base for a new model and could be tested using a qualitative research method.

7.8 Meaning for the debate

The results of this research show that municipalities have difficulties facilitating citizens' initiatives. Still, the national government needs citizens' initiatives to reach its sustainable energy goals. Therefore, it is necessary that citizens' initiatives are supported in the right way, to keep them motivated, to make them able to flourish and to let them effectively contribute to the energy transition. The national government should not only set the goals, but should also provide means for municipalities to properly facilitate citizens' initiatives concerned with the energy transition. Municipalities are already facing difficulties concerning their budgets and consequently they are expected to help citizens' initiatives. Although civil servants are motivated to provide support, they should have the right knowledge and should be supported themselves by the national government. In addition, municipalities should keep in mind that citizens' initiatives are run by volunteers. This means that when citizens' initiatives contact governments for help, they should not be ignored, but be supported in the best possible way. The previous paragraphs showed points for improvement and municipalities should be aware of these.

Moreover, it should be recognised that the rise of sustainable citizens' initiatives is a new phenomenon. Mistakes in the facilitation can be made, but lessons should be drawn from it. Still, citizens' initiatives should not be the victim of such mistakes. Customising the support seems to be most vital. The energy transition will unmistakable lead to changes in the landscape and will have spatial consequences. When citizens' initiatives are involved, more support could be created, leading to more acceptance among citizens. This will be profitable for the energy transition and will speed-up the process of reaching the goals as formulated in the Energieagenda.

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Appendices

Introductie

1. Kunt u zichzelf kort introduceren?

2. Op welke manier bent u betrokken bij het duurzaamheidsbeleid van uw gemeente, en meer specifiek duurzame energie?

3. Welke rol voor burgerinitiatieven ziet u op dit gebied? Welke mogelijkheden ziet u voor zelforganisatie?

4. Welke duurzame burgerinitiatieven zijn er bij u bekend in uw gemeente? Welke op het gebied van energie?

5. Hoe ervaart de gemeente hun rol en activiteiten?

Inhoudelijk

6. Hoe ziet u de rol van uw gemeente in dergelijke initiatieven? Wat betekent deze rol en wat houdt dit in? Welke rol heeft u expliciet niet?

7. Kunt u aangeven of u de volgende acties wel of niet uitvoert in uw relatie met burgerinitiatieven?

Actie	Ja	Nee
Capaciteiten burgerinitiatief ondersteunen		
Financiële ondersteuning		
Toewijzen van ambtelijke ondersteuning		
Trainingen en kennis aanbieden of opstellen handleidingen		
Erkenning		
Betrokkenheid en deelname tonen		
Waardering tonen via bijvoorbeeld prijzen of andere vormen van erkenning		
Informatie over het initiatief verspreiden via de media		
Een luisterend oor bieden		
Investeren in netwerken		
Ontstaan nieuwe netwerken ondersteunen		
Creëren van ontmoetingsplekken voor burgers of burgerinitiatieven		

Aanstellen verbinder of coaches		
Vertrouwen creëren		
Mobiliseren		
Klimaatverandering en/of energietransitie op de beleidsagenda plaatsen		
Burgers betrekken bij beleidsontwikkeling en/of uitvoering		
Afspraken maken met energie bedrijven		
Procedureel		
Opstellen van doelen en visies die lange termijn gericht zijn en adaptief		
Heroverwegen bestaande planningswetgeving		
Duidelijke regels en procedures opstellen		

8. Graag zou ik op een aantal antwoorden extra toelichting krijgen?
-Waarom en hoe voert u dit specifiek uit?

9. Zijn er ook acties niet genoemd in bovenstaande tabel? Zo ja, kunt u deze toelichten?

10. Variabele vraag aangaande beleidsdocumenten.

Afsluiting

11. Welke kansen voor betere facilitering /ondersteuning ziet u nog in uw gemeente?

12. Welke factoren zijn mogelijk belemmerend voor het uitvoeren van de facilitering / ondersteuning?

13. Wat verwacht u van de provincie en het Rijk op dit punt?

14. Welke zaken zijn niet besproken binnen dit interview, maar zou u toch graag willen bespreken?

Toestemmingsverklaringformulier

"Hoe kunnen gemeenten tegemoetkomen aan de behoeften van duurzame burgerinitiatieven in de provincie Groningen?"

Beste X,

Allereerst hartelijk dank voor de bereidheid om deel te nemen aan het onderzoek ter afsluiting van de Master Socio-Spatial Planning aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.

In dit onderzoek wordt onderzocht hoe uw gemeente energie initiatieven ondersteunt of faciliteert. Dit interview zal semigestructureerd zijn. De vragen zijn al opgesteld, maar indien daartoe aanleiding is zal er kunnen worden afgeweken. Het interview zal ongeveer 30 tot 45 minuten in beslag nemen.

Door onderaan het formulier te tekenen, tekent u voor de volgende zaken:
-Uw antwoorden zullen alleen voor dit onderzoek worden gebruikt.
-U heeft de mogelijkheid gehad de vragen alvorens het interview in te zien.
-U kunt te allen tijde besluiten te stoppen met het interview of aangeven dat u een moment pauze wilt inlassen.
-U gaat akkoord dat het interview wordt opgenomen.

Voor meer informatie kunt u contact opnemen met onderstaand persoon.

Hopende u hiermee voldoende te hebben geïnformeerd,

Rolf de Jong
Telefoonnummer/E-mailadres

Handtekening:
Functie X
Gemeente X

_____

Appendix C: Code tree

Facilitative governance	A: Capacity building	A1: Providing guidelines and training	A1.1: Provide it ourselves
			A1.2: Provided by other organisation
			A1.3: Be the linkage
		A2: Personal approach	A2.1: Role of the civil servant
			A2.2: Limited capacity
			A2.3: Formally organised
		A3: Financial support	A3.1: Provide it ourselves
			A3.2: Limited financial means
			A3.3: Provided by other organisations
	B: Recognition	B1: Show engagement and participation	B1.1: Visit meetings
			B1.2: CI's an come to municipality
		B2: Appreciation through rewards	B2.1: No rewards
			B2.2: Awards to mobilise citizens
		B3: Provide information via media	B3.1: Internet, social media
			B3.2: Energieloket
		B4: Open to input	B4.1: CI's can come
			B4.2: Being approachable
	C: Invest in networks	C1: Stimulate creation of new networks	C1.1: Organise meeting sessions
			C1.2: No role for municipality
		C2: Create meeting places	C2.1: Use town hall or municipal buildings
			C2.2: Not provided
		C3: Appoint boundary spanner or coach	C3.1: Independent advisor
			C3.2: Role of civil servant
			C3.3: Provided by other organisations
		C4: Building trust	C4.1: Transparency
			C4.2: Being clear and treat CI's seriously
	D: Mobilise	D1: Put climate change on policy agenda	D1.1: Policy available
			D1.2: No policy
			D1.3: Policy on-hold
		D2: Involve citizens in decision-making	D2.1: Discuss policy with citizens
			D2.2: Develop policy with citizens
			D2.3: No involvement
		D3: Agreement with energy companies	D3.1: Use contacts for CI's
			D3.2: Not needed
			D3.3: Not responsibility of municipality
	E: Procedures	E1: Create long-term and flexible vision	E1.1: No vision available
			E1.2: Make more concrete visions
			E1.3: Development in progress
		E2: Re-evaluate existing planning laws and regulations	E2.1: Not always possible
			E2.2: Flexible in execution
			E2.3: New topic
		E3: Clear regulations and procedures	E3.1: Make things easier
			E3.2: Provide guidance
			E3.3: Flexibility preferred

Appendix D: Code book

Code Book			
Codes	Type	Definition	Source
Facilitative actions			
Capacity building	Citizens have to be supported in their skills to build their capacities to engage within CI's		
Provide training and guidelines	Deductive	Add to knowledge where it is missing and develop the skills	Elzenga & Kruitwagen (2012)
Personal approach	Deductive	Offer support in terms of manpower to relate CI's to relevant organisations	Hurenkamp et al. (2006)
			Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven (2011)
			Wagenaar (2007)
Financial support	Deductive	Offsetting the costs and risks of CI's. Stimulating the start-up of CI's.	Oude Vrielink & Van de Wijdeven (2011)
			Hurenkamp et al. (2006)
			Bakker et al. (2012)
			Bomberg & McEwen (2012)
			Buitelaar et al. (2012)
Recognition	Create a positive environment for community engagement and keep citizens motivated to stay or become active		
Show engagement and participation	Deductive	Citizens feel more appreciated, can be done by participating in the process	Bakker et al. (2012)
			Blom et al. (2010)
			Hurenkamp et al. (2012)
			Flink et al. (2014)
Appreciation through rewards	Deductive	Acknowledge performances can be motivating	Elzenga & Kruitwagen (2012)
Provide information via media	Deductive	Provide info via media to motivate people	Bakker et al. (2012)
Open to input			Energysense (2017)
Invest in networks	Bringing together different groups of citizens to have a mix of people with different resources to become a successful CI		
Create meeting places	Deductive	Creates social cohesion and provide opportunity for people to meet and start CI's	Bakker et al. (2012)
			Schram (2006, in Sanders, 2014)
Stimulate creation of new networks	Deductive	Denser networks creates more trust and sense of community	Wagenaar (2007)
			Elzenga & Kruitwagen (2012)
			Energysense (2017)
Appoint boundary spanner	Deductive	Independent person who connects the different actors	Van Meerkerk (2014)
Building trust	Deductive	Mutual rust is needed for well-functioning CI's	Energysense (2017)
Mobilise	Citizens sometimes need to be mobilised to become active and keep motivated, as they are needed to reach the goals as formulated in the Energieagenda (2016).		
Put climate change on policy agenda	Deductive	Express ambitions to citizens	Hoppe et al. (2016)
			Kern & Smith (2008)

Involve citizens in decision-making	Deductive	Help citizens to connect to decision-making and improves their skills. Option should be provided by municipality	Hoppe et al. (2016)
			Widestrom (2017)
Agreements with energy companies	Deductive	CI's need sometimes help to connect with the energy companies or other relevant stakeholders. Municipalities can be the linkage.	Energysense (2017)
			Hisschemöller and Siozious (2013)
Procedures	Procedures can be constraining. This should be prevented by different actions. This will contribute to keep citizens motivated.		
Create long term visions and flexible visions	Deductive	Offers clarity for CI's, but should also be adapted when it is needed due to societal or environmental changes	Elzenga & Kruitwagen (2012)
			Beuvens & Scha (2012)
			Timmerman (2017)
Re-evaluate existing planning laws and regulations	Deductive	Rules should not be obstructive and re-evaluations make them up to date.	Elzenga & Kruitwagen (2012)
Clear regulations and procedures	Deductive	Be clear and be aware of the impact of rules to prevent unforeseen consequences	Bakker et al. (2012)
			Hassink et al. (2016)
Other	These codes are inductive and did not appear in the literature review, but are important for the facilitative actions taken by municipalities		
GrEK	Inductive	GrEK has a big role in the facilitation towards CI's. This means that not always a role for municipalities is needed as CI's get in contact with GrEK (and other organisations) themselves.	
Province	Inductive	The role of the province can be constraining for municipalities to proper facilitate CI's, especially in the procedural actions.	