

Citizen participation in the new Planning and Environment act



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Colophon

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Abstract

In the new Planning and Environment Act, the Dutch government aims to integrate many different laws to simplify the planning process. Citizen participation is also part of the new act but the act does not include how they want to involve as many citizens as possible. This is important because as Verba (1996) argues, a government needs equal responsiveness from all citizens, not only in citizen participation but also in political participation in general. This research aims to find out to what extent there is a correlation between citizen participation and political participation in order for the government to know better who will be willing to participate. Bekker and Meer (2011) argued that Dutch citizens prefer more passive political participation such as voting over more active participation such as demonstrating. This is something that was also found in the survey. People were very willing to vote but less so to participate in citizen participation. From the answers given in the survey and the statistical tests that were done with that data, it can be concluded that there is no correlation between citizen participation in the new planning act and political participation. Further research can be done by doing a similar survey with a larger sample or by gaining a better understanding of whom might want to be involved in citizen participation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and objectives

In 2016 the Planning and Environmental Act (Omgevingswet in Dutch) was approved by the Dutch government. With this law, considerable reforms are to be implemented to simplify planning procedures and encourage development. The Act should have been in effect already, however it has been postponed several times. At the moment of writing, it should come into effect on January first, 2023.

Within the new planning act, there is also a special focus on citizen participation. The government aims to better include residents in planning processes as well as make it easier for citizens to start a project. The new law also includes that it is obligated for each planning project, in which stakeholders are involved in the process, to show what the results of these contributions were and how they are implemented in the results (Participatie in de Omgevingswet, n.d.). The law however does not imply how they are going to involve as many citizens as possible in citizen participation. This is important because as Denters et al. (2011) argue, for a government to make the right decisions they need to have adequate information of all citizens. Without this, they argue, a representative democracy does not meet its criteria. In the paper, they also refer to Verba (1996) who argues that the government needs equal responsiveness across all citizens for a democracy to work. This equal responsiveness does not only include citizens' opinions and advice through participation but it includes political participation in general. Because equal responsiveness is needed and not much attention in the new act goes to including as many citizens as possible, it is interesting to see if there is a correlation between how willing people are to participate in political participation as well as citizen participation. The research question that arises from this is:

To what extent correlate the willingness to do political participation and to participate in citizen participation in the Planning and Environment act?

To answer this research question, three sub-questions have been established. They are the following:

1. What is citizen participation and what are possible pitfalls?
2. What is political participation?
3. Is there a correlation between the two forms of participation?

1.2 Societal and scientific relevance

1.2.1 Societal relevance

As explained by Dreijerink, et al., (2008), citizen participation has societal relevance. The report explains that the government, thanks to decentralization and international treaties, finds it more important what citizens think and want. This is much like the aim of the new Planning and Environment act. This research could help the government understand which people do and do not intend to participate in citizen participation. By having this

understanding the government could, if needed, try to involve more citizens in citizen participation to get equal responsiveness.

1.2.2 Scientific relevance

The scientific relevance of this research has to do with how citizen participation is used. In the Netherlands, also explained in the RIVM report (Dreijerink, et al., 2008), it is used as an instrument to strengthen the representative democracy of the country. They also say that there is a so-called participation paradox, in which there are a lot of people that hardly participate and some people that participate a lot. The difficulty for many governments is to fix this, which is why an understanding of whom would like to participate could be used for more understanding of the topic as well as possible future research.

1.3 Reading guide

This thesis consists of six chapters. In the second chapter, the core concepts will be defined and the first two sub-questions are examined. In the third chapter, it will be explained how the survey is conducted and the results of that survey will be discussed in the fourth chapter. In the fifth chapter conclusions of this study will be explained and in the last chapter, a reflection and discussion of this thesis will be provided.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Planning and Environment act

Even though the Planning and Environment act still needs to come into effect, some research has already been done on it. The research has been quite diverse, with some being on the topic of combining all the different laws into one new act and some were aimed at citizen participation in the context of the new law. However, this research has not been very positive.

Bisschops and Hollemans (2018) for example looked at a project in Gouda where they wanted to make urban developments with citizen participation from the new act in the back of their minds. In the end, they concluded that the project itself was not much of a success because it still is rather difficult to make citizen participation successful. They also noted that some people who disagreed with the majority of the group found it hard to voice their opinions. Part of the issues that were mentioned by Bisschops and Hollemans, resulted from what De Groot (2017) argued. Within the new Planning and Environment act, it is quite unclear what exactly is meant by citizen participation. This, according to De Groot, will inevitably lead to a disagreeing view on what the 'right' way of doing citizen participation is. One of these disagreeing views will one day end up in front of a judge, which is something no government should want. Alongside the legal perspective, there is another problem with the unclear definition of citizen participation in the new act. For this, a closer look at the concept of citizen participation is needed.

2.2 Citizen participation

The concept of citizen participation has been around for many years and so there has been much research on it. Most though, do refer back to Arnstein (1969). In it, she argues that citizen participation is 'a categorical term for citizen power'. She continues by explaining that power is given to citizens that are excluded from economic and political processes. By using citizen participation, she argues they can be included. Yet, the most well know part of her research is the so-called Ladder of participation, which can be seen in Figure 1. This ladder shows the different levels of participation that can occur. The first two steps, Therapy and Manipulation, are together called Nonparticipation and in these cases, it is more about the stakeholders educating citizens rather than hearing their opinions. According to Arnstein, the next three steps, which together are called Tokenism, are the most frustrating for citizens because citizens are allowed to give their advice, yet they cannot follow through with it. When we look back at the previous part about the new law not being clear on what form of citizen participation will be needed, the worry is that Tokenism can easily occur. This could occur by accident but also on purpose. The last two steps are where citizens influence the planning process and are also the ones that the government should aim for.

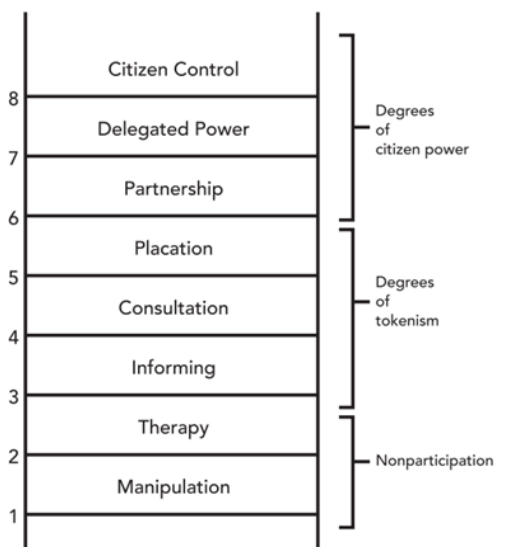


Figure 1 - Ladder of participation, Arnstein (1969)

The Netherlands is not the only government that is interested in a form of citizen participation, many governments are (Cooper et al., 2006). According to Yetano et al., governments want to use citizen participation because it will 'improve citizen trust in government, enhance governmental legitimacy and improve the quality of government responsiveness' (Yetano et al., 2009, p.2). Still, as Callahan (2007) argues, even though many governments value direct citizen participation, it is not yet adopted by many policymakers. Which still holds some truth today. She goes on to explain that for this concept to work well and produce positive outcomes, it needs to be done 'right'. With that she means that public administrators will need help when dealing with citizen participation, the process of participation needs to have a great assortment of different stakeholders and reflections are important to take possible obstacles down (learning from mistakes). In the new act, some of these things, like having a wide range of stakeholders, are included, yet not all are included. The reflection and learning from previous mistakes are currently not very clear in the law. Callahan, Dreijerink et al. (2008) have written similar things, such as gathering the right stakeholders. They added though that the whole process should be transparent and independent. Transparency is something that the new planning and Environment law aim for as well, yet independence is something that could be disputed. Because not an independent institution but the government itself will organize the projects and the process surrounding it. This could lead to Tokenism because they might want a certain outcome rather than to do citizen participation fairly. Dreijerink et al. (2008) also argue that while doing their research, they found that oftentimes when citizen participation was used, the results were not concrete, and often too much focus was on creating enough support for participation rather than doing participation in the right way. This would mean that citizen participation would be on the steps of Nonparticipation according to Arnstein's ladder which is often not positively perceived by the public. Dreijerink et al. concluded similarly, that it is not only important for the process to be done right but the government should also take into account how citizen participation is received.

2.3 Political participation

To answer the research question properly, a closer look at the concept of political participation is needed. The research field of political participation has been around for quite some time. The start of the field is somewhere in the 1950s (Milbrath, 1981). At the start of the research field, the focus was on understanding why people wanted to vote or not to vote. Throughout time, this gradually evolved into other areas of political activities including making financial contributions to political parties or pressure groups, campaigning, and demonstrating (Milbrath, 1981). Milbrath would define political participation as 'those actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics' (Milbrath, 1981, p.197).

Because the field of political participation is already older, many studies (with different outcomes) have emerged over the years, Bekker and Meer (2011) have included some of the important different perspectives on political participation. Historically, Aristotle argued that people are 'political beings' and with that are always interested in participating in politics. This, however, has since been disputed. Recently, arguments have been made that people are not politically themselves but they use politics to get something they want. This means that, unless citizens see it as a necessity, they do not become active. In that same paper by Bekker and Meer (2011), it is shown that people in the Netherlands enjoy discussing politics. Even though this is not directly a form of political participation, it does show that Dutch

people have a high level of interest in politics and what is happening in the world around them. Yet, the research has also shown that it does not mean automatically people will participate in everything. On average Dutch people are more interested in doing 'passive' political participation such as voting and signing petitions.

2.4 Citizen and political participation

In this research, we take a closer look at citizen and political participation and its correlation. As shown in the previous parts, many studies have already been done on the separate concepts but some studies have been conducted on the possible correlation between the two. One of the interesting studies that have been done is by Neblo et al. (2010), who argues that having a political interest, in general, is a motivation to participate. Alongside this, Verba et al. (1995) argue that political engagement (or political participation) is, again, a motivating factor for people to participate in a form of 'civic volunteerism', which includes citizen participation. This could mean Dutch people are likely to participate in any form of citizen participation because as explained in the previous paragraph, Dutch people are on average quite interested in politics.

At the same time though, as explained by Bekker and Meer (2011) in the previous part, Dutch people prefer 'passive' political participation over more active forms of participation. Citizen participation is closer to active participation because it takes more work than simply voting on a matter or signing a petition (which is passive participation). Contrary to Neblo et al. and Verba et al., this could mean that people in the Netherlands might not be very interested to participate in citizen participation in the new planning act.

Interestingly, according to Hubbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), a reason to participate in citizen participation is distrust in the government. This is interesting because in the last few decades the trust in the Dutch government has had a downwards trend (Engbersen et al. 2022). This is partly due to the government's approach to tackling the coronavirus. But the research also shows this has to do with the allowance affair (toeslagen affaire in Dutch) and the long cabinet formation. Nevertheless, since 2002 the level of trust in the government has been going down and leveled out at around 50% (Haye, 2022). The importance of having trust in the government and how this might influence a person's chance of participating in political participation has been studied many times before and they concluded that the more trust a person has in the government, the more likely they are to vote (e.g. Craig et al. (1990), Schmeets (2017), and Lee et al. (2019)). This importance of trust is something that Bovaird et al. (2015) also argued. They say that 'coproduction' tends to be more when people feel they are heard and something is done with their opinions. In other words, people have trust the government will do something with their advice.

2.5 Conceptual model



Figure 2 - Model with the concepts used in this research

Above the conceptual model of this research can be seen. As explained in the previous parts, this thesis tries to examine if there is a correlation between the variable citizen participation in the new Planning and Environment act and the variable political participation. Therefore, the arrow in between the boxes represents the possibility of a correlation.

3. Methodology

The data collection instrument that has been used in this research is a survey. Even though it would have been most accurate to census the whole population's opinion of the new planning act, this is not possible. As explained by Glen (n.d.), a good alternative is a sample survey. By using this, a part of the population that represents the whole population will be asked about their opinion.

The survey consists of several questions. Depending on the answers given, the questions will be different. E.g. if a person answers they are not interested in participating in citizen participation, the following question will be about why they are not interested in this. Yet, if they answer they are interested, the following questions will for example be about how much trust they have in the government. All of the survey questions and the structure of the survey can be found in appendix 1.

To make the survey accessible to as many people as possible, it will be done online by using Google Forms. Google Forms can be used anonymously and is usable for all people (no account needed), on all devices with Wi-Fi and the link of the survey can be easily be shared. Alongside this, the language of the survey is Dutch. Dutch was chosen because for most people in the Netherlands it is their first language. Hopefully, they feel more comfortable filling in the survey when it's their native language as well as making the chance of misunderstanding questions smaller.

The data collection will be collected through two methods. Firstly, the snowball method will be used. This will be done by posting a message if people could fill the survey in as well as asking if they could send it to others. The message will be posted in different WhatsApp groups with diverse people in it. Because using only the snowball method could lead to problems such as a small population and not having a diverse enough sample, another way of gathering is used. The second method is by asking people walking through Paddepoel in Groningen to fill in the survey. Paddepoel is a mall in the north of Groningen. Because of the location of the mall, people of a wide range of ages can be seen using the mall. This will hopefully lead to more diversity in the sample. The people in Paddepoel can use a QR code that leads to the survey or use the phone of the researcher.

3.1 Data analysis

The data that is taken from the survey answers will be analyzed by the computer software SPSS. This software is made for social sciences and can be easily used for quantitative data, such as this survey. By using SPSS, the goal is to find out if there is a correlation between citizen- and political participation.

3.2 Ethical considerations

To make sure people feel as comfortable as possible to express their feelings and opinions in the survey, the survey is fully anonymous. So, no names or contact information has been asked. This is also stated at the beginning of the survey. Only their age within a range has been asked but there are multiple persons with the same age in each range, meaning the answer cannot be traced back to a single person.

If people wish not to participate in this research, they can simply say no or ignore the request to fill out the survey. When they do fill in the survey, they have permitted their submitted data to be used in this research.

4. Results

In this section, the results of the survey will be discussed. The survey can be split up into three parts. The first part is about a person's experiences with citizen participation so far, the second part is about citizen participation within the new Planning and Environment act and the last part is about political participation. This chapter will have a similar structure, at the end of the chapter, results from the SPSS research on correlation will be shown and discussed.

4.1 Current experiences

First, people were asked about their previous experiences with citizen participation. When examining Figure 3, we conclude that the majority have never participated in citizen participation (62,2%). The people that have participated before, got asked what in their opinion their role was within the process. They could choose from multiple answers such as initiator of the process, co-decider, advisor initial speech and final speech (in Dutch: adviseur begins-/eindspraak). The answers were evenly spread but what stood out was that nobody choose initiator. Alongside that, it also stood out that most people choose spectator as their role, meaning they did not have a 'real participating' role within the process. The other question that people who answered they had already participated in citizen participation before was how they experienced it. They could rate it between 1 and 5, with 1 being 'very negative' and 5 being 'very positive'. They averaged out on 3.25, which is just above average.

As explained earlier in this thesis, the government has not laid out how they are going to get people to be involved in citizen participation. They more or less expect people to be willing to participate. This might become a problem because as shown in these results as well as in the literature, having a citizen participation process, does not automatically mean people are going to participate. This raises the question, do people still want to participate in citizen participation in the future?

4.2 Citizen participation in the new act

In Figure 4, the results of the question 'Would you like to participate in citizen participation in the new Planning and Environment act?' can be seen. A shift between Figures 3 and 4 can be seen. Now, the majority answer they are at least considering it and the people that want to participate has more than doubled. Still, a little less than one out of five people in the sample are not planning to participate. When we compare this to, for example, the turn-out rates of the Dutch national elections throughout the years, you can see that between 20% and 30% do not vote (Dekker, 2018). This means that it is somewhat comparable. Yet, as explained in the introduction, the government should aim for equal responsiveness under its citizens. The people that answered they do not want to participate in the

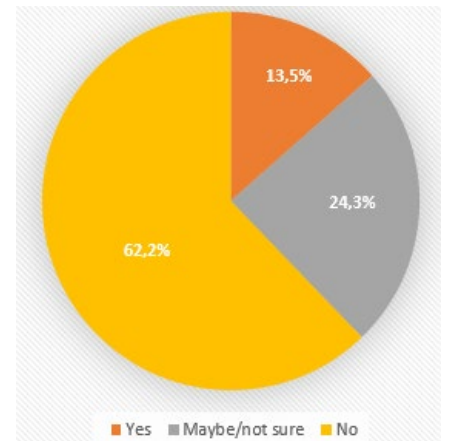


Figure 3 - Results of the survey question: 'Have you ever participated in citizen participation before?'

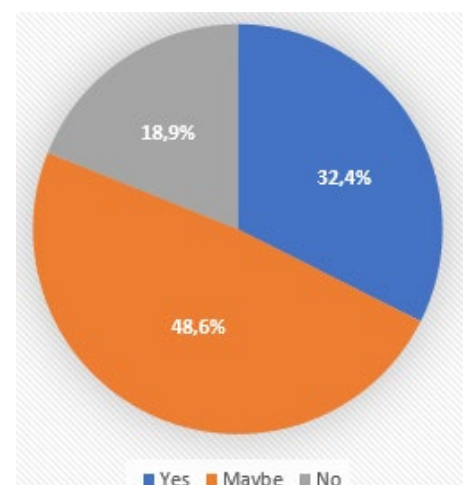


Figure 4 - Results from the survey question: 'Would you like to participate in citizen participation with the new Planning and Environment act?'

future, were asked why not. The majority answered of them that they are too busy to participate. Interestingly, only one person thought that the government was not going to do anything with their opinion/advice. This is interesting because as Bovaird et al. (2015) argued when people have low trust in the government, they do not want to participate at all. This means that even though trust in the government is not perfect, people do seem to have enough trust in them to participate in citizen participation.

The people that did want to participate were asked what role they would like to fulfill within the process. People could give multiple answers. The most often chosen answer was that people would like to be a co-decider within the process. This means that they decide on things along with the (local) government and/or stakeholders.

What is interesting to see is that of the people that want to participate, 13% answered that they want to be an initiator by starting a planning process. The question though is to what extent this will actually happen. Because none of the persons that want to start an initiative have participated in citizen participation before.

Lastly, the people that answered they want to participate in the future with the new act, were asked how much trust they have the government will do something with their opinion. They could give an answer between one and five, with one being 'very little trust' and five being 'a lot of trust'. As you can see in Figure 5, they are not very positive on this matter. Nobody has 'a lot of trust' the government will do something with their opinions/advice and the average is 2.6. For the government, this is an interesting number because it means at the moment citizens do not have much trust in the governance and the process of citizen participation. Even though, implementations have been made to improve the current citizen participation process by for example being more transparent.

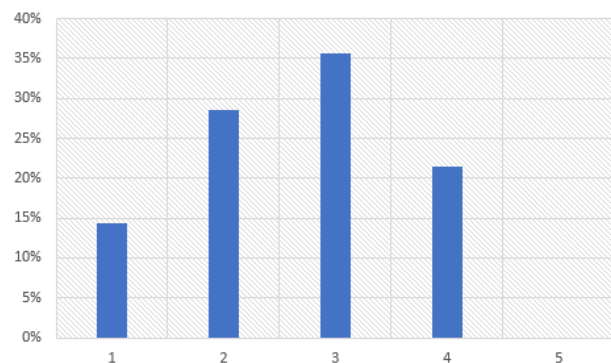


Figure 5 - Results from the survey question: 'To what extent do you trust that your advice/opinions will be used?'

4.3 Political participation

To answer the objective of this research, we need to know if people participated in political participation before. Political participation consists of many things. And, as explained in the theoretical framework, Dutch citizens seem to participate in some things more than others. To take this into account, political participation was split up into four dimensions: voting, actively participating in politics outside of election times

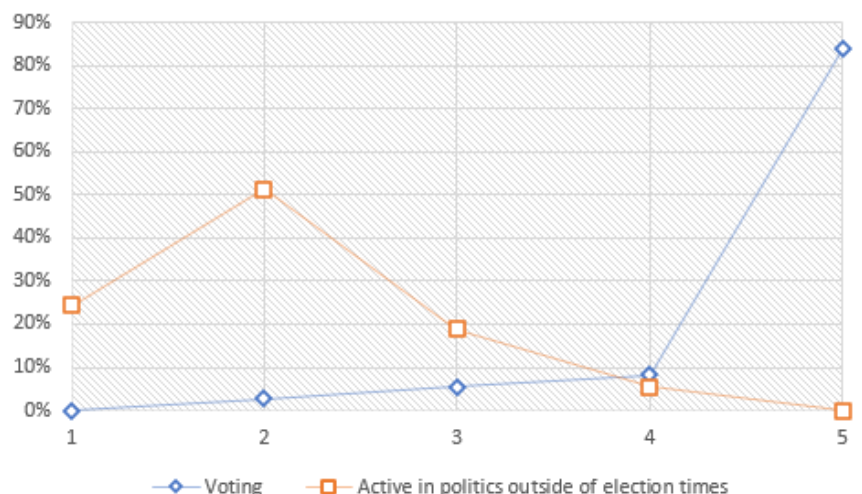


Figure 6 - Results of the survey statements: 'If I can vote, I always go voting' and 'Outside of election times, I am active in politics'.

(examples were given such as demonstrating, signing petitions, etc.), being part of a pressure or action group, and being a member of a political party (Mr. Chadd Academy, 2022). In Figure 6, the results of the first two variables can be seen. Both questions were asked in a way that people could range themselves between one and five. One was 'totally disagree' and five was 'totally agree'. In Figure 6, it can be seen that the arguments Bekker

and Meer (2011) made, still hold some truth in the Netherlands. The blue line in the graph, which represents the statement 'If I can vote, I always go voting', is clearly skewed towards the right, the peak of the yellow line, representing the statement 'outside of election times, I am active in politics', is to the left of the graph. The first variable has an average of 4,7 and the average of the second variable is 2,02. When we compare the blue line with actual data on election turn-out rates in the Netherlands, it becomes clear that there is some difference. In the Netherlands, the turn-out rates are between 70% and 80% for most elections but within the sample, more than 80% say they always go voting. This means that, when it comes to voting, the sample is somewhat representing the Dutch population. When it comes to the other forms of political participation, the results were very clear. Only one person was part of a pressure/action group and just one other person was part of a political party. Interestingly, the person that is part of a pressure/action group did also participate in citizen participation in the past and is planning to participate when the new act comes into effect.

4.4 Correlation

As explained in the methodology, to find out whether there is a correlation, SPSS has been used. Two possible correlations were tried, between the survey question 'Would you participate in citizen participation when the planning act comes into effect?' and the statement 'If I can vote, I always go voting'. The other test used the survey question 'Would you participate in citizen participation when the planning act comes into effect' and the survey statement 'Outside of election times, I am politically active'. The other two forms of political participation were not used to test correlation because, especially with the given answers, they are not ordinal data. At least nominal data is needed to make a correlation. For both correlation tests, Spearman's rho was used because all questions have ordinal data since you can rank them on how likely they are to participate in either political or citizen participation. The problem you do have is that not all data consists of numbers, one of the questions has answers in the form of words. This means that other tests such as Pearson's cannot be used. Spearman's rho though can be used. This test replaces the data with rank numbers. By doing so, a correlation can still be found. Within the test, if the significance is low enough and we can reject the null hypothesis, the correlation coefficient is important. The coefficient has a range between -1 and 1. If the coefficient is zero or near zero, there is no or hardly any correlation between the variables. If the correlation is exactly -1 or 1, it means the line within the model goes perfectly straight downwards or downwards.

Table 1 - Results from the Spearman's rho test in SPSS for the statement 'If I can vote, I always go voting' and the question 'Would you participate in citizen participation when the planning act comes into effect?'

Correlations

| | | Als ik kan stemmen, stem ik altijd. (Denk aan de gemeentelijke verkiezingen, landelijke verkiezingen, Europese verkiezingen, etc.) | | Zou je mee willen werken aan burgerparticipatie als de nieuwe omgevingswet in gaat? | |
|----------------|--|--|-------|---|-------|
| Spearman's rho | Als ik kan stemmen, stem ik altijd. (Denk aan de gemeentelijke verkiezingen, landelijke verkiezingen, Europese verkiezingen, etc.) | Correlation Coefficient | 1,000 | | ,079 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | | ,640 |
| | | N | 37 | | 37 |
| Spearman's rho | Zou je mee willen werken aan burgerparticipatie als de nieuwe omgevingswet in gaat? | Correlation Coefficient | ,079 | | 1,000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | ,640 | | . |
| | | N | 37 | | 37 |

For the first test, the null hypothesis was: there is no correlation between the survey statement 'If I can vote, I always go voting' and the survey question 'Would you participate in citizen participation when the planning act comes into effect?' When we look at the results, which can be seen above in Table 1, the significance is 0,64. This means it is 64%, which is way more than the allowed 5% significance. Because of this, the hypothesis cannot be rejected. Therefore, we can say there is no correlation between a person voting and whether they want to participate in citizen participation.

Table 2 - Results from the Spearman's rho test in SPSS for the statement 'Outside of election time, I am politically active' and the question 'Would you participate in citizen participation when the planning act comes into effect?'

Correlations

| | | Zou je mee willen werken aan burgerparticipatie als de nieuwe omgevingswet in gaat? | | Buiten de verkiezingstijd ben ik actief bezig met de politiek. (Denk aan demonstreren, online petitie starten/tekenen, in gesprek gaan met een politicus, etc.) | |
|----------------|---|---|-------|---|-------|
| Spearman's rho | Zou je mee willen werken aan burgerparticipatie als de nieuwe omgevingswet in gaat? | Correlation Coefficient | 1,000 | | ,178 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | | ,291 |
| | | N | 37 | | 37 |
| Spearman's rho | Buiten de verkiezingstijd ben ik actief bezig met de politiek. (Denk aan demonstreren, online petitie starten/tekenen, in gesprek gaan met een politicus, etc.) | Correlation Coefficient | ,178 | | 1,000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | ,291 | | . |
| | | N | 37 | | 259 |

Above, in Table 2, the results from the second Spearman's rho test can be found. Again the null hypothesis was that there is no correlation between the survey statement 'Outside of election time, I am politically active' and the survey question 'Would you participate in citizen participation when the planning act comes into effect?'

participation when the planning act comes into effect?' Unfortunately, the significance is 0,291 in the model. This means it has a significance of 29,1%, which is again more than the allowed 5%. Because of this, we cannot reject the null hypothesis and instead accept it.

5. Conclusion

With the new Planning and Environment act, it is important for the government to understand if citizens are interested in participating in citizen participation. As explained by, Verba (1996) the government needs equal responsiveness through all forms of participation in order for the democracy to work well. Therefore, in this research, the objective was to find out to what extent correlate the willingness to do political participation and to participate in citizen participation in the new act. To find this out, a survey was held and a literate study has been done, from which several conclusions can be made.

Firstly, when it comes to the current citizen participation, from the survey we can conclude that not many people participate in it, their experiences with citizen participation were not very positive (3,25 out of 5) and their roles within the process were often somewhere between Nonparticipation and Tokenism on Arnstein's ladder. When we look at the literature used in this research, we can conclude the way people perceive the process of citizen participation is equally important as the outcome of citizen participation. This is something in the new law that needs more attention. Not only does it need more attention in the law because people have not perceived it very positively in the past, but also because when asked, on average, they are not very confident things will change in the future with the new law. Because of this, there should be more focus on the reflection of the process and the process itself should be more independent from the (local) government.

When looking at the new act, people are more interested in participating. In fact, in the survey, most people were at least considering it. This could be a positive thing but the question remains whether they actually end up doing it. As explained by Bekker and Meer (2011) people often do not intend on being politically active, unless they see it as a necessity. Alongside this, they even argued that Dutch people especially, tend to participate way more often in more 'passive' political participation like voting. Citizen participation is not a very 'passive' form of participation. Some people indicated in the survey they do not want to participate in the future (18,9%). Even though this number is somewhat comparable to voting turnout rates, the government should always aim for zero as argued by Verba (1996). Within the process of citizen participation, citizens want much more power. The survey concluded that most people want to be a co-decider in the process along with other stakeholders/(local) government. This would mean that in the eyes of citizens, the new citizen participation process should operate on one of the highest levels of Arnstein's ladder, Degrees of citizen power.

When it comes to political participation, the definition used in this research was 'those actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics' (Milbrath, 1981, p.197). As already explained above, Dutch citizens are more likely to participate in more 'passive' forms of participation, this also included political participation. When looking at the results of the survey, a similar conclusion can be made. Almost all people are 'very likely to go voting (average 4,7 out of 5) when possible, but almost nobody is part of political parties and pressure/action groups or is active in political participation outside of election times (average 2,05 out of 5).

To find out whether there is a correlation and to what extent that correlation exists (strong or weak correlation), SPSS has been used. The Spearman's rho test was conducted for the

variables 'If I can vote, I always go voting' and 'Would you participate in citizen participation when the planning act comes into effect?', as well as the variables 'Outside of election time, I am politically active' and 'Would you participate in citizen participation when the planning act comes into effect?'. Unfortunately, both tests concluded that there is no correlation.

6. Discussion and reflection

This research is mainly made to gain an understanding of who might want to participate in citizen participation in the new law. It has become clear that in this research there is no correlation between citizen participation and political participation. This means it is not as simple as to think, that if people are willing to vote, they are also willing to participate in citizen participation. Still, other conclusions from the survey can be used. For example, the number of trust people have the government will do something with their given advice/opinions is worrisome.

This research has some limitations. The sample population is quite small which could have had an influence on the outcome. Not only more people would have been better for the research but also from more different places in the Netherlands and more diversity in the ages of people would have been good for the research.

Because of this, there are quite some options for future research. Maybe redoing the research with more diversity, could be interesting. Alongside this, it might be good, before the act comes into effect, to have a better understanding of who might want to participate in citizen participation in the Netherlands and how more people can be involved. Lastly, a study on how to improve people's perception of what the government will do with their given opinions/advice before could also help to improve the usefulness of the act.

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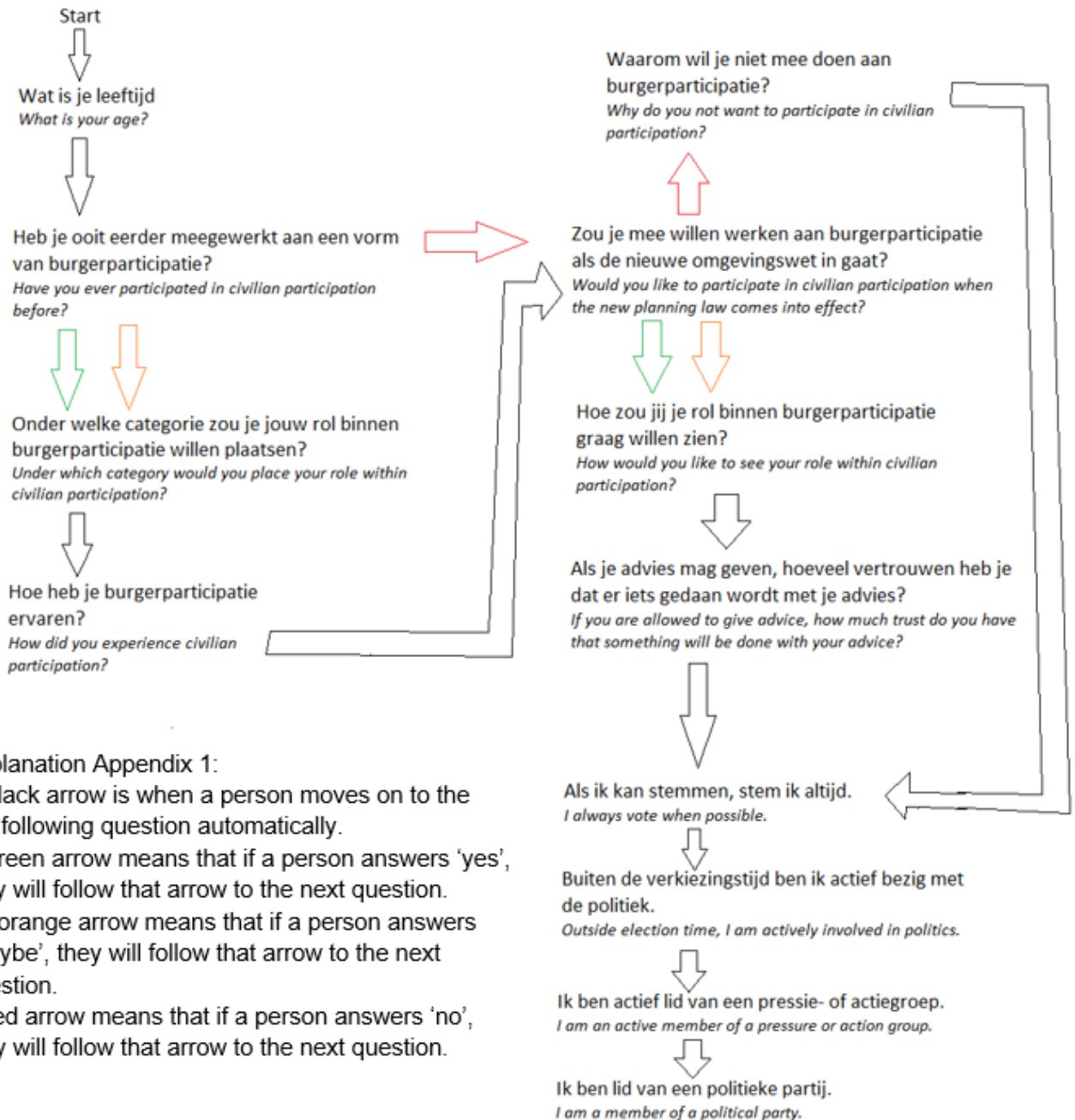
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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Survey questions



Explanation Appendix 1:

A black arrow is when a person moves on to the the following question automatically.

A green arrow means that if a person answers 'yes', they will follow that arrow to the next question.

An orange arrow means that if a person answers 'Maybe', they will follow that arrow to the next question.

A red arrow means that if a person answers 'no', they will follow that arrow to the next question.