

Evaluating Citizen Participation Procedures and Outcomes

Evidence from 4 cases of participation in
the Municipality of Groningen, The Netherlands



Bachelor Thesis

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Figure 1. A view over the Municipality of Groningen.

Abstract

Citizen participation is an instrument for government actors to involve citizens in decision-making processes. Government actors shape this involvement by selecting and implementing participation procedures. Certain elements of a participation procedure can influence its degree of effectiveness. These elements include; representativeness of the sample of participants, independence of participants, earliness of involvement of participants, influence of participants, transparency of the process, the accessibility of resources to the participants, clarity of the task definition, degree of structure in decision-making, and cost-effectiveness. These procedures shape the following participation outcome categories; construction of citizenship, the practice of participation, responsiveness and accountability of states, and inclusive and cohesive societies. To be able to predict and control participation outcomes increasingly, it is imperative to structurally evaluate citizen participation processes. Despite sporadic efforts, structured evaluations have stagnated in academic research over the last two decades (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021). The scarcity of comprehensive participation evaluations in Groningen indicates the necessity for structured assessments. This research addresses this gap by undertaking a structural evaluation of four participation procedures, aligning with the evaluative frameworks proposed by Rowe & Frewer (2000) and Gaventa & Barrett (2012). Data for this evaluation is gathered through interviews with participation procedure managers and the analysis of participation policy documents. The findings indicate that the municipality of Groningen employs participation procedures yielding negative outcomes. Moreover, the data suggests that the lack of clear guidelines and instruments for systematically assessing inconsistencies in participation procedures could contribute to this situation. Hence, this study recommends further investigation into the potential impact of revising participation guidelines within the Municipality of Groningen for future research endeavors.

1. Background.

In recent decades, public authorities have embraced various participatory models allowing citizens to become more directly engaged in decision-making processes. Citizen participation can be regarded as the involvement of those individuals or groups who do not occupy sanctional governmental decision-making positions (Rosener, 1978), that are positively or negatively affected by, or that are interested in, a proposed project, program, plan, or policy that is subject to a decision-making process (André et al., 2006). This shift is generally seen as a positive development, recognizing citizen participation as a valuable aspect of democracy (Michels, 2011). Citizen participation has the potential to advance three values of democratic governance: effectiveness, legitimacy, and social justice (Fung, A., 2015). However, citizen participation can produce both positive and negative outcomes (Gavanta & Barrett, 2012). To be able to predict and control outcomes increasingly, it is imperative to investigate citizen participation processes and evaluate their designs (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021).

1.1 Participation in Groningen.

Since the 1970s, the City Council of Groningen has witnessed constructive discussions and initiatives regarding citizen involvement in municipal decision-making processes (Van Maanen, 2017). However, from the 1990s onward, the City Council adopted a New Public Management approach, as described by Van Maanen (2017), treating citizens as consumers who are presumed not to know their own needs. In doing so, the Municipality departed from its previously more open stance toward citizen participation. Since then, only a limited amount of participation practices have been initiated and policy formally institutionalizing participation beyond early consultation (Figure 2), has not been implemented (Bijker & Reijerse, 2020; Van Maanen, 2017; Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken, 2012). The scarcity of comprehensive participation evaluations within the Municipality of Groningen (Bijker & Reijerse, 2020), despite the presence of sporadic assessments, underscores a compelling opportunity to systematically engage in more robust and extensive evaluative practices. Over the last two decades, the number of studies evaluating citizen participation in a structured manner has stagnated. In 2005, Rowe & Frewer and the OECD indicated a necessity for more structural evaluations; in 2021 Falanga & Ferrão indicated the same. To oppose this stagnation this study aims to provide a structured evaluation of citizen participation in the Municipality of Groningen in line with the evaluation frameworks provided by Gavanta & Barrett (2012) and Rowe & Frewer (2000; 2005). The scarcity of comprehensive participation evaluations in Groningen indicates the need for structured assessments. Despite sporadic efforts, structured evaluations have stagnated for two decades (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021). This study addresses this gap, applying frameworks from Gavanta & Barrett (2012) and Rowe & Frewer (2000; 2005) to evaluate citizen participation in Groningen.

1.2 Research Problem.

As generally agreed upon, the success of a participation procedure is dependent on both the quality of its participation instruments and the sustainability of the outcomes that relate specifically to the process (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Gavanta & Barrett, 2012). To be able to predict and control outcomes increasingly, it is imperative to investigate these procedures and outcomes. This study investigates four cases of citizen participation procedures in the Municipality of Groningen concerning the following research question:

“What are the characteristics of four citizen participation procedures in the Municipality of Groningen, and how have these produced citizen participation outcomes?”

The subquestions in this research are:

- What is citizen participation and how do we evaluate it?
- What are the characteristics of the participation procedures in the selected cases?
- How has the participation procedure in the selected cases shaped participation outcomes?

1.3 Structure of Thesis.

Firstly, this study provides a theoretical framework of contemporary academic insight into evaluative criteria concerning participation procedures and participation outcomes. Subsequently, I delineate a methodology of interviews and policy document content analysis adapted for examining and evaluating four selected cases of participation in the Municipality of Groningen. The results are structured to describe evaluative elements per case of a participation process, distinguished by participation procedures and outcomes. This thesis then assesses the relationship between participation procedures and outcomes. Finally, the conclusions of this evaluation are drawn to contribute to the societal and academic debate on the prediction and control of outcomes of citizen participation processes.

2. Theoretical framework.

2.1 The Evaluation of Participation.

Citizen participation can be regarded as the involvement of those individuals or groups who do not occupy sanctioned governmental decision-making positions (Rosener, 1978), who are affected by, or are interested in, a proposed project, program, plan, or policy that is subject to a decision-making process (André et al., 2006). Alternatively, Arnstein (1969) defines it as a categorical term for citizen power. Democratic governments have increasingly sought views on policy issues from citizens more directly than dictated by the traditional model in which decision-makers are periodically elected to set policy without further public input (Rowe & Frewer, 2004). This rise is attributable to a decline in social trust over the last 60 years (Reich 1985; Laird 1993; Dryzek 1997) and an inclination of elected officials and civil servants to reverse this trend (Rowe & Frewer, 2004). Social trust refers to people's willingness to rely on experts and institutions in the management of policy issues that have a direct impact on the public or the environment and thus relates to their confidence in the competence and integrity of institutions (OECD, 2005). Given the central role governmental actors hold within societal structures, heightened levels of social trust within society correlate with enhanced capacities for societal functioning, adaptation, and responsiveness (Pitlik & Rode, 2020). The inclusion of citizens in the negotiating of interests and values in decision-making processes through participatory processes, inherently signifies an increase in the complexity of the issue under negotiation (De Roo & Voogd, 2019), as it implies an enlarged struggle of power between agents, policy areas and levels of administration (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021). The complex, normative, and unquantifiable nature of the participation concept complicates the measurement and evaluation of citizen participation (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Fung, A., 2015; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012; Rosener, 1978; Rosener, 1981). Despite the consensus on its complexity, academics regard citizen participation as an indispensable and unavoidable practice (Michels, 2011) because the exclusion of citizens from direct participation in decision-making processes is liable to lead to confrontation, dispute, disruption, boycott, distrust, and public dissatisfaction (Rowe et al., 2001). Recognizing the inevitability of citizen participation, it is imperative to underscore the necessity for an enhanced comprehension of the intricate dynamics inherent in the practice of citizen participation. The examination and evaluation of participatory processes in practice can give researchers valuable insight into these dynamics (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021).

2.1.1 Arnstein's Ladder of Participation.

Citizen Participation is commonly differentiated into Arnstein's eight rungs on a ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969), illustrated in Figure 2. Arnstein considers three categories. First of all the category Non-participation; 1. Manipulation: Citizens are given the illusion of participation, but they have no decision power. 2. Therapy: Superficial attempts are made to educate or cure citizens, without actual involvement in decision-making. Secondly, the category Tokenism; 3. Informing: Citizens are provided with information, but the decision-making power remains with authorities. 4. Consultation: Authorities seek public input, but the decision-making process is not significantly influenced by citizen feedback. 5. Placation: Citizens have some influence, but the power to make decisions still rests primarily with authorities. Finally, the category of Citizen Power: 6. Partnership: There is a more equitable sharing of power between citizens and authorities in decision-making. 7. Delegated Power: Citizens have substantial control in decision-making, although final authority may still rest with authorities. 8. Citizen Control: The highest rung, where citizens have full autonomy and control over decision-making processes.

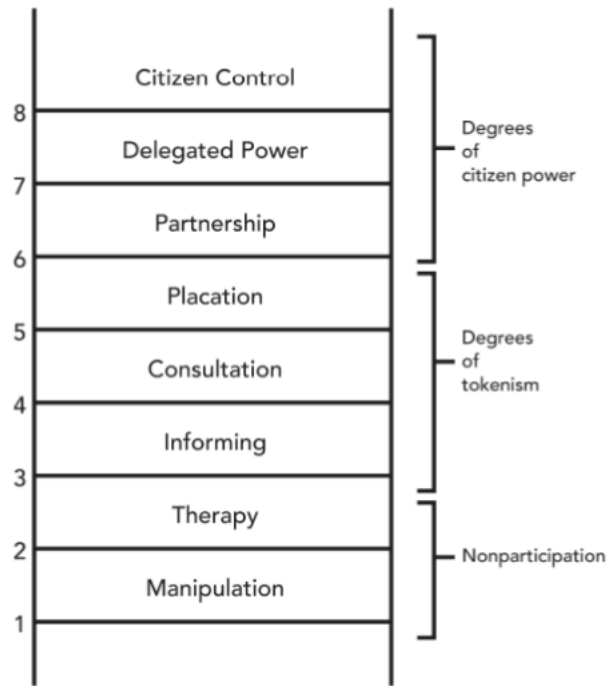


Figure 2. A ladder of citizen participation, source; Arnstein (1969).

2.2 Participation Procedures.

Elected officials and civil servants, through their access to state power and resources, shape citizen participation by implementing participation procedures (Fung, 2003). A participation procedure is a bundle of instruments that outline how citizens can contribute, voice their opinions, or engage with a decision-making process (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Rowe & Frewer, 2000). Public participation can both increase and decrease social trust, depending on the ethical and competent employment of participation procedures (Arnstein, 1969; Burke, 1968; Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2004; Wang & Wart, 2007; Yang, 2005). In the present article, participation procedures are defined as the operationalizations of participation mechanisms or participation exercises that are employed by governmental actors to engage with citizens. The engagement can range from manipulative degrees of participation, to degrees of citizen control as described by Arnstein's ladder of participation (Figure 2). Rowe & Frewer (2004) indicate the diversity of existing participation procedures, ranging from the traditional (e.g., public meeting) to the novel (e.g., consensus conference) and from procedures that seek individual responses from citizens (e.g., surveys) to procedures involving deliberation between participants interacting in groups (e.g., focus groups). The degree of participation as described by Arnstein (1969) varies by procedure; for example, surveys are consultative if governmental actors control data incorporation into policies. Therefore, Arnstein (1969) argues that this participation procedure is a form of tokenistic participation. She argues that tokenistic participation often contributes to a decrease in social trust. Whereas Arnstein (1969) classifies participation in a spectrum reaching from "true" to non-participation, Rowe & Frewer (2000) provide indications of the effectiveness of a participation procedure through 9 defined elements (Figure 3). The criteria as defined by Rowe & Frewer (2000) often relate to Arnstein's (1969) categorizations of citizen involvement. Therefore, the present article aims to extend the explanatory power of the 9 criteria by relating the extent of integration of the criteria in a participation procedure to Arnstein's (1969) classification of participation degrees. The participation criteria are comprised of two types: acceptance criteria, which concern features of a procedure that make it acceptable to the wider public, and process criteria, which concern features of the procedure that are liable to ensure that it takes place in an effective manner (Rowe & Frewer, 2000). The examination of different participation procedures would aim to establish which procedure works best in which situation; in a practical sense, such knowledge is crucial for both citizens and governmental actors involved in participation processes (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Rowe & Frewer 2000; 2004).

Criteria	Definition
<i>Representativeness</i>	The public involved in the exercise should comprise a broadly representative sample of the population affected by the policy decision.
<i>Independence</i>	The participation exercise should be conducted in an independent (unbiased) way.
<i>Early involvement</i>	The participants in the exercise should be involved as early as possible in the process, as soon as societal values become important to the development of policy.
<i>Influence</i>	The outcome of the procedure should have a genuine impact on policy.
<i>Transparency</i>	The process should be transparent so that the relevant/affected population can see what is going on and how decisions are made.
<i>Resource accessibility</i>	Participants should have access to the appropriate resources to enable them to fulfil their brief.
<i>Task definition</i>	The nature and scope of the participation exercise should be clearly defined.
<i>Structured decision making</i>	The participation exercise should use appropriate mechanisms for structuring/displaying the decision-making process.
<i>Cost-effectiveness</i>	The process should be cost-effective from the point of view of the sponsors (for example, in the case of proportionality of response).

Figure 3. Nine criteria for participation procedures, source; Rowe & Frewer (2000).

2.2.1 Acceptance Criteria.

1. Representativeness of participants. A much-discussed criterion of effective participation procedures is the representative selection of participants. The group of citizens involved in participation processes should be comprised of a representative sample of the population that is affected (Nelkin & Pollak, 1979; Crosby et al., 1986; Webler et al., 1995; Middendorf & Busch, 1997; Rowe & Frewer, 2000). This can be challenging due to the differing willingness of citizens to participate among and within groups (Rowe & Frewer, 2000).

2. Independence of true participants. Governmental actors and citizens participating in the participation process should be both in actuality and visibly independent and unbiased (Nelkin & Pollak, 1979; Rowe & Frewer, 2000). Biased governmental actors managing the participation process shape and engineer the support of citizens to fit their bias, which Arnstein (1969) classifies as a degree of nonparticipation and may decrease social trust like aforementioned.

3. Criterion of early involvement. Citizens should be involved in the decision-making process as early as reasonably practicable (Arnstein, 1969, Falanga & Farrão, 2021; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2004). Rowe & Frewer (2000) argue that in a decision-making stage where judgment and considerations about value and risk become important, citizens should be included. The authors continue to argue that highly technical issues are impractical for involvement and may lead to chaos in the decision-making process. Arnstein (1969) and Rowe & Frewer (2000) argue that late involvement in decision-making processes decreases the influence participants have on the policy to a tokenistic degree of participation. For example when citizens are involved in the decision-making process of preselected, narrowed down, predefined problems.

4. Criterion of influence on final policy. The output of a participation procedure should significantly impact policy ((Arnstein, 1969, Crosby et al., 1986; Falanga & Farrão, 2021; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2004). A common complaint about participation procedures is that they are there to give the appearance of legitimate decision-making without any genuine involvement (Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2004). Without significant impact, a participation procedure is classified by Arnstein (1969) as a tokenistic or non-participatory degree of participation, and may again lead to a decrease in social trust among citizens (Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2004).

5. Criterion of transparency. The participation process should be transparent so that citizens have complete access to information about how decisions are being made (Arnstein, 1969, Falanga & Farrão, 2021; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2004). Secretive decision-making behind closed doors is likely to decrease social trust (Burke, 1968; Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2004; Wang & Wart, 2007; Yang, 2005).

2.2.2 Process Criteria.

6. Criterion of Resource Accessibility. Participants should have access to information resources (e.g. summaries of relevant facts), human resources (e.g. experts), material resources (e.g. pens, paper, computers), and time resources (sufficient decision-making time), to enable them to successfully reach the participation objective. A lack in the provision of the quantity or quality of these resources by governmental actors involved in the participation process, indicates a limitation of the effectiveness of the participation procedure, which may lead to a decrease in social trust (Burke, 1968; Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2004; Wang & Wart, 2007; Yang, 2005). A participation process in which governmental actors fail to provide access to necessary resources, Arnstein (1969) classifies the processes as tokenistic due to the limitations of citizen capacity to successfully reach the participation objective. 7. Criterion of task definition. Misunderstandings about the scope, expected output, and mechanisms of the participation procedure may hinder the decision-making process. Rowe & Frewer (2000) therefore argue that a consensus on the definition of the participation procedure is inherent to its enhancement of social trust and the quality of the final policy. 8. Criterion of structured decision making. A participation procedure should use/provide independent rules that structure a decision-making process and accessible display its documentation. Misunderstandings or disagreements about the structure of the decision-making process or about previously made decisions may be avoided with the use/provision of a structured decision-making process and may enhance social trust and the quality of the final policy (Crosby et al., 1986; Rowe & Frewer, 2000). 9. Criterion of cost-effectiveness. Rowe & Frewer (2000) and Crosby et al. (1986) underscore the importance of considering the financial efficiency of participation procedures. It is prudent to evaluate the potential costs, both in terms of time and money, associated with different methods of participation before implementation.

As aforementioned, Participation Procedures are implemented into participation processes by governmental actors through their access to state power and public resources (Fung, 2003). Individual and legislative values guide the practical actions of civil servants. These values materialize in visions and guidelines that shape the content of public policy through procedural policy implementation (Steen et al., 2016) and thus shape the intentions of the participation process and the intentions of selected participation procedures. The visible intention to empower citizens in decision-making processes and the selection and formulation of effective procedures that facilitate the inclusion of citizens, create positive participation outcomes (Arnstein, 1969; Fallanga & Farrão, 2021; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2004) This begs the question, what are positive outcomes and negative outcomes produced by participation procedures?

2.3 Participation Outcomes.

Gaventa & Barrett (2012) introduce 4 broad categories of citizen participation outcomes as illustrated in Figure 4: 1. The construction or deconstruction of citizenship. This category of participation outcomes concerns the creation of “better” citizens who have gained political knowledge, confidence, and their sense of citizenship, and can therefore better participate in democratic life, hold the state to account, and more effectively exercise their rights and responsibilities. E.g.; from focus groups that have access to relevant knowledge resources, participants may gain knowledge about state responsibilities. On the other hand, public hearings followed by an inconsistent implementation of citizen input, can reduce a sense of agency among citizens. 2. Citizen engagement and the state of practice of participation. A greater sense of citizenship and gained political knowledge may result in growing capacities for collective action, create greater networks between citizens and governmental actors, and create new forms of participation. The authors caution that these capacities, networks, and new forms of participation can be employed to serve biased goals. E.g.; the appointment of a citizen advisory board may enhance networks among citizens. However, the citizen advisory board may empower a network that is unrepresentative of the relevant population. This is liable to lead to unrepresentative decision-making. 3. Citizen engagement and building or dismantling responsive and accountable states. Citizen participation can increase the citizen accessibility to state services and resources, and claim existing and achieve additional rights. Additionally, citizen participation, through the creation of greater accessibility to information, new institutionalized mechanisms for engagement, and attitudes toward state-society engagement, can strengthen state accountability. E.g.; Negotiated rulemaking between a citizen organization and governmental actors, leading to reform in the institutionalization of state responsibilities on a specific topic, which in turn increases the construction of state accountability. In contrast, the opposite is also possible, where the state denies services, resources, rights, and accountability.

4. Citizen engagement and inclusive and cohesive societies or exclusive and fragmented societies. Through participation procedures that facilitate collective engagement in a society, citizen participation can build inclusive and cohesive societies. E.g.; A consensus conference of opposing citizen organizations, leading to an accepted solution to the issue. In turn, this could lead to a more inclusive attitude between groups. In contrast, the conference could lead to a reinforcement of a fragmented society if no acceptable solution is found, as well. The examination of different participation outcomes would aim to establish which participation procedure leads to which participation outcome. Like the examination of participation procedures, such knowledge is crucial for both citizens and governmental actors involved in participation processes (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Rowe & Frewer 2000; 2004).

Positive	Negative
<i>Construction of citizenship</i>	
Increased civic and political knowledge	Reliance on knowledge intermediaries
Greater sense of empowerment and agency ¹	Disempowerment and reduced sense of agency
<i>Practices of citizen participation</i>	
Increased capacities for collective action	New capacities used for “negative” purposes
New forms of participation	Tokenistic or “captured” forms of participation
Deepening of networks and solidarities	Lack of accountability and representation in networks
<i>Responsive and accountable states</i>	
Greater access to state services and resources	Denial of state services and resources
Greater realization of rights	Social, economic, and political reprisals
Enhanced state responsiveness and accountability	Violent or coercive state response
<i>Inclusive and cohesive societies</i>	
Inclusion of new actors and issues in public spaces	Reinforcement of social hierarchies and exclusion
Greater social cohesion across groups	Increased horizontal conflict and violence

Figure 4. Positive and negative participation outcomes, source Gaventa & Barrett (2012).

2.4 The Participation Cycle.

When governmental actors perceive citizen participation to be important, they are liable to shape the participation process or related visions and guidelines to facilitate citizen participation (Fung, 2003; Steen et al., 2016). When citizens perceive the participation process to be effective and genuine, social trust is high and citizens are liable to participate (Arnstein, 1969; Burke, 1968; Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2004; Wang & Wart, 2007; Yang, 2005). When the participation process is effective according to the 9 criteria of participation procedures, it is liable to lead to positive participation outcomes (Arnstein, 1969; Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2004). Positive participation outcomes are liable to increase social trust and strengthen positive perceptions of citizen participation among citizens and governmental actors (Arnstein, 1969; Burke, 1968; Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2004; Steen et al., 2016; Wang & Wart, 2007; Yang, 2005). A ‘Successful’ participation process is effective according to the participation procedure criteria and produces positive participation outcomes. The aforementioned relationships between variables are illustrated in Figure 5.

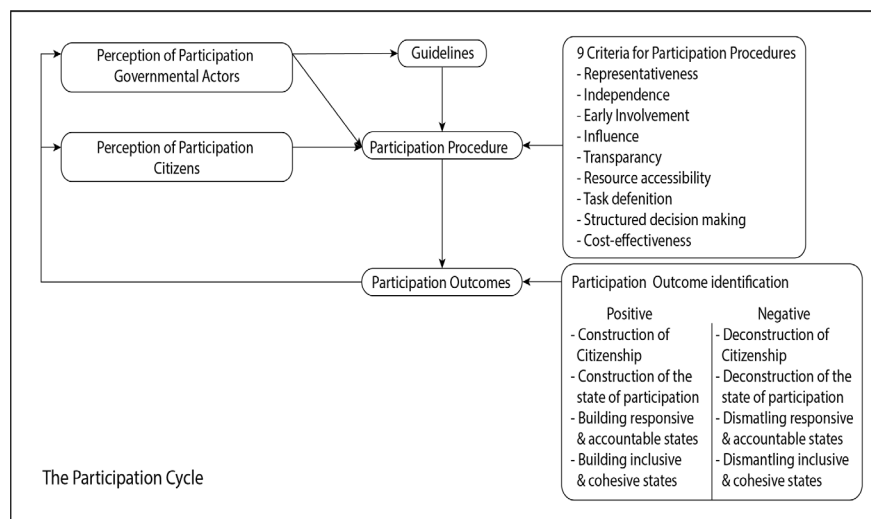


Figure 5. Conceptual model visualizing the relationships between variables that relate to Participation Procedures and Participation Outcomes. Source: Gaventa & Barrett (2012); Rowe & Frewer (2000); Author.

3. Methodology

The complexity of citizen participation processes (De Roo & Voogd, 2019) necessitates a data collection approach reliant on qualitative data for optimal description of involved variables and implications (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Raskind et al., 2018). Therefore, this study has selected a data collection instrument of qualitative methodological pluralism visualized in Figure 6. Table 1. depicts the interviewed municipal employees.

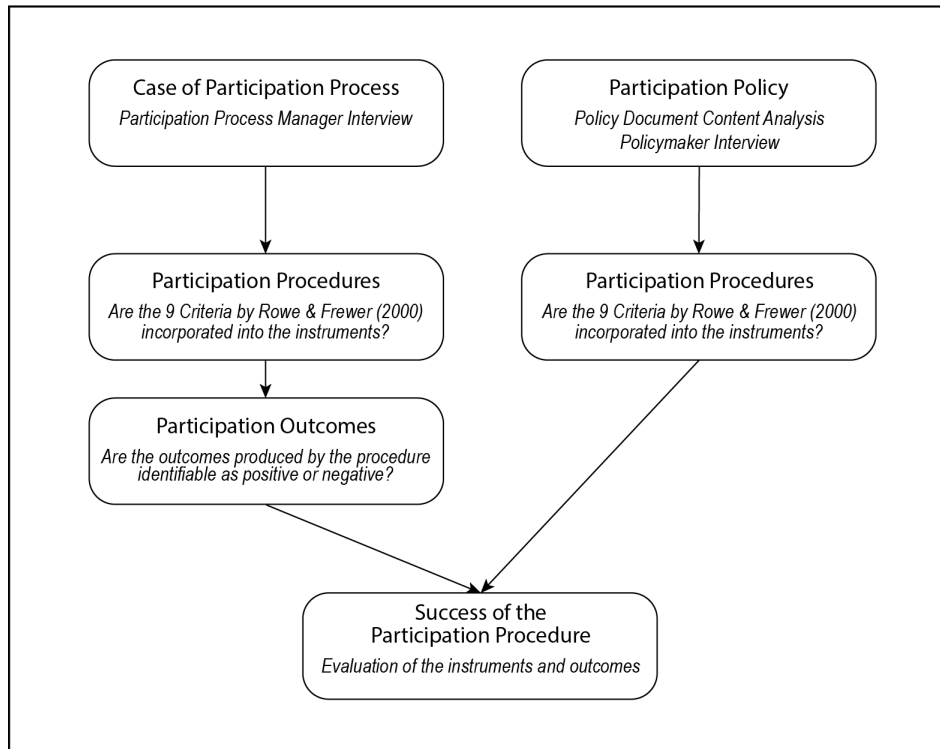


Figure 6. Analytical Framework Visualizing Methodology.

3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews with Participation Procedure Managers

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews with participation procedure managers is twofold. First, a case of participation is selected, and in-depth expert insights on the incorporation of participation procedure criteria and outcomes are collected. Data collection on the integration of procedural criteria and outcome identification is ensured by the design of the interview guide (Annex 4). This guide incorporates questions addressing all evaluative elements from the frameworks of Gaventa & Barrett (2012) and Rowe & Frewer (2000). The interview begins with a discussion on the participation processes managed by the interviewee. One process is then chosen for analysis based on two criteria: it must have generated participation outcomes, and it must be open to discussion with minimal restrictions. Among viable processes, priority is given to the most recent, as it is likely to reveal recent policy implications. The interviewee is then asked to express their viewpoint on the incorporation of participation procedure criteria within the managed process and to assess the participation outcomes produced. Annex 3 details the interview guide utilized in the study. The interviewed managers were selected through convenience and snowball sampling. Using personal connections within the Municipality, I contacted procedure managers to recruit participants for the study. Transcripts were coded using Atlas.ti software, and the coded documents are provided separately for transparency. Section 4 outlines the most significant findings, while Annex 1 comprehensively catalogs findings from the interviews. Due to their length and the inconsistency of transcription instruments, the transcripts may not be entirely concise. The coding tree illustrated in Figure 7 aims to provide a structural categorization of data in the transcripts, revealing profound insights into the mechanisms influencing participation cases.

Interviewee	Role	Involvement
Manager 1	Participation procedure manager	Neighborhood Company Selwerd
Manager 2	Participation procedure manager	Tiny House Westpark development
Manager 3	Participation procedure manager	Participation in the implementation of paid parking
Manager 4	Participation procedure manager	Solar and wind farm participation framework
Policymaker 1	Municipal Policymaker	Municipal participation policy formulation
Policymaker 2	Municipal Policymaker	Municipal participation policy formulation

Table 1. A depiction of the interviewed municipal employees.

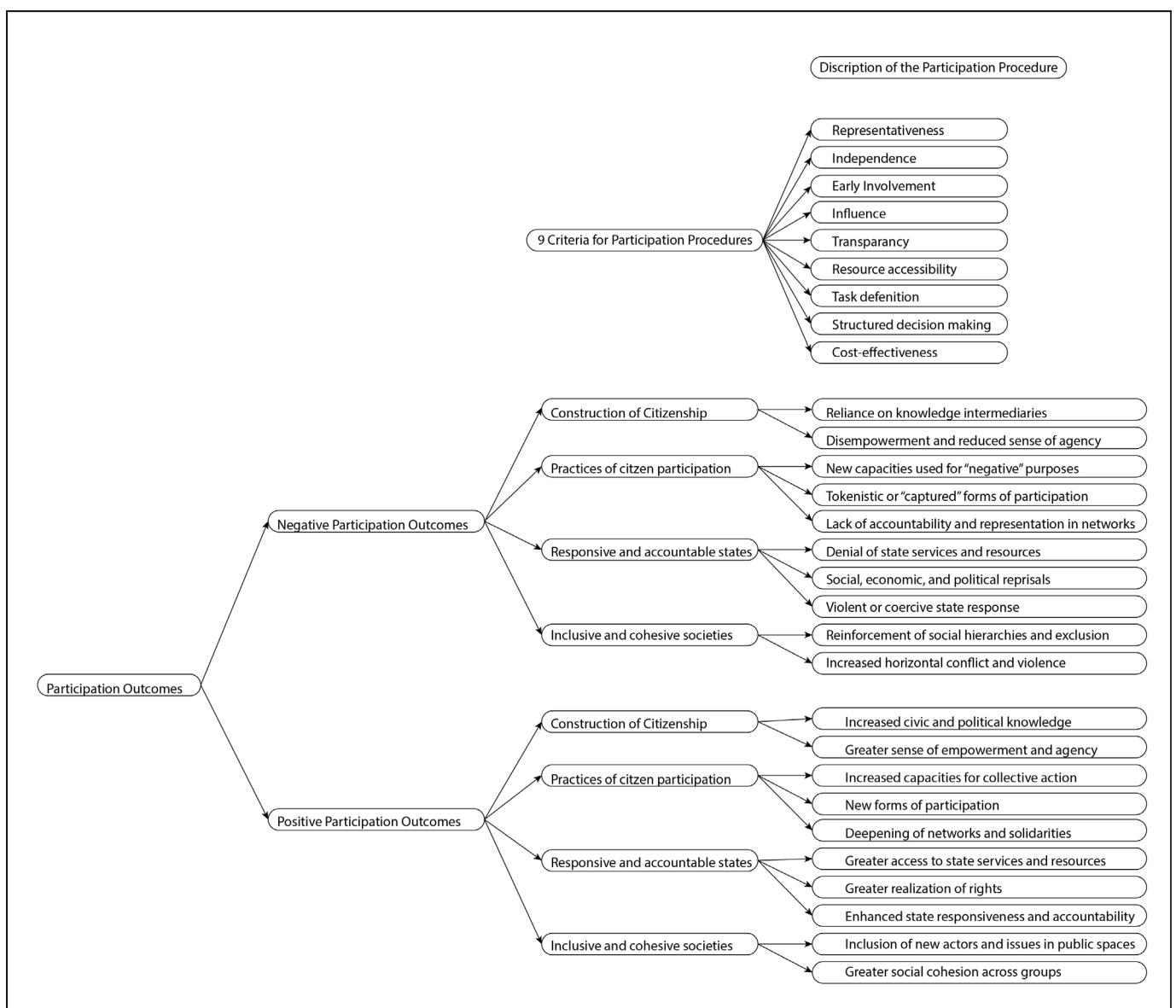


Figure 7. Coding tree employed for the coding of data in the interview transcripts and policy documents. The coding tree incorporates Fung (2003), Gaventa & Barrett (2012) and Rowe & Frewer (2000).

3.2 Policy Document Content Analysis

Additionally, this study conducts a policy document analysis on policy documents that state policy concerned with the selected participation processes in the Municipality. To understand individual participation procedures, it is relevant to examine the underlying national and municipal standards and regulations (Heslinga, 2018). The documents stating these standards and regulations are generally public, and therefore available for document content analysis. The combined use of semi-structured interviews and policy document content is generally seen as a robust research methodology (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Heslinga, 2018, Raskind et al., 2018) At the time of implementation of the examined participation procedures (2013-2016), three main policies institutionalized citizen participation in the Municipality; 1. the district aldermen and the neighborhood-oriented approach; 2. the neighborhood organizations contract; and 3. the national Wro act and the municipal structure vision. Policy documents that officially state the policy itself or documents that state further implications of the same policy are most relevant for policy document content analysis (listed in Annex 6). These documents were identified in a search in the municipal digital administration of city council motions and reports. Furthermore, for the selection and collection of key policy documents, interviews with policymakers of the Municipality of Groningen were carried out. While policymakers are generally more engaged in the strategic and comprehensive formulation of participation policies that apply to the whole municipality, participation procedure managers focus on the individual cases of implementation of these policies and the formulation of situation-specific details of policy. Policymakers can offer expert insight into the relevance of content in key policy documents of the municipality that might explain mechanisms in participation policy formulation and implementation (Transcripts submitted separately). The selection of policymakers to be interviewed has been a product of convenience and snowball sampling through previous interviews with participation procedure managers. The policy document analysis employs the evaluative framework of participation procedures by Rowe & Frewer (2000) to collect data of the integration of procedure criteria in the policy document.

3.3 Evaluative Analysis

This qualitative methodological pluralism approach is designed to provide a holistic understanding of both the formalized structures and informal mechanisms that shape participation practices. The findings are subject to a structured evaluation. This evaluation is structured through a framework that integrates the established academic frameworks of Gaventa & Barrett (2012) and Rowe & Frewer (2000) that systematically evaluate citizen participation procedures and participation outcomes. This combination of evaluative frameworks covers the most impactful variables in participation practice, as per contemporary academic knowledge (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021), thereby providing a perspective as expansive as feasible.

3.4 The Data, Ethical Considerations & Data Management

The accuracy and academic validity of the data is ensured by the concise employment of the framework combining the frameworks of Gaventa & Barrett (2012) and Rowe & Frewer (2000) throughout the interviews and policy document analyses. The written interview consent (Annex 2), the impartiality of the employed interview guide (Annex 5), the anonymization of interviewees in transcripts, the removal of interview recordings after transcription, and open communication about data management preferences with the interviewees, have ensured the confidentiality of data collection and storage.

4. Results

4.1 Neighborhood Company Selwerd

The Neighborhood Company Selwerd is a municipal initiative aiming to increase citizens' engagement in society. The company inaugurated its establishment in 2014 within a former school building. The Neighborhood Company Selwerd was appointed to address the a gap in social infrastructure within the disadvantaged neighborhood of Selwerd. Currently, a citizen council manages a municipal budget for citizen initiatives. Citizens participate in these initiatives voluntarily, and when feasible, through employment. The primary objective is to re-engage individuals distanced from the labor market. The organization has undergone variations in size, currently comprising 80 volunteers and 19 employees. The participation procedure encompasses the citizen council budget for citizen initiatives and the council as an advisory citizen council to the municipality. The following components, described by the participation procedure manager, are most significant in the evaluation of the participation procedure and its outcomes:

Significant procedure elements:

- Independence of true participants: No institutionalization structurally evaluates the independence of the citizen board, nor is there a process established for the request and consideration of its advice.
- Influence on final policy: Certain initiatives necessitate municipal permits, where decision-making power is either vested in governmental actors or predetermined by municipal zoning regulations or national legislation. Additionally, the potentially biased facilitating role of governmental actors and the indicated unwillingness for total independence of participants may have limited participants' influence on the final policy. These factors aside, the citizen council has full control over the municipal budget.

Significant outcome identification:

- Positive participation outcomes: The Neighborhood Company Selwerd demonstrates the potential to enhance confidence, a sense of citizenship and ownership, and social trust among participants. Moreover, the organization has demonstrated instances of enhancing state responsiveness and accountability, fostering inclusivity and social cohesion, and facilitating the expansion of capacities and networks among participants. Participation procedure manager 1 indicated that these positive outcomes of participation have been constrained by the limited size of the organization:

"It's all quite exciting, but just at a very small scale."

The encapsulated influence of participants and the limited scale of the participation instrument implies that the procedure exhibits characteristics of a tokenistic form of participation (Arnstein, 1969).

4.2 Tiny House Westpark development.

Due to increasing demand, the City Council initiated the development of a Tiny House park in the Westpark in 2017 (Municipality of Groningen, 2019b). The municipality organized 'walk-in' public hearings for information provision and consultation opportunities for nearby residents, users of Westpark, and neighborhood organizations (Municipality of Groningen, 2019a). The project manager instigated a citizen participation process to facilitate the selection of prospective inhabitants. According to the interviewed participation procedure manager, the responsibility for conducting the selection procedure was delegated to members of the 'Lutje Westpark' Facebook group. The composition of the members engaged in the selection process fluctuated over the approximately two-year duration of the endeavor. Typically, the group comprised the five most engaged members of the 'Lutje Westpark' community. The group selected future inhabitants from among themselves. The purpose of this participation instrument was to engineer a sense of community and ownership among future inhabitants. The following components, described by the participation procedure manager, are most significant in the evaluation of the participation procedure and its outcomes:

Significant procedure elements:

- Non-Independence of Participants: No institutionalized instrument structurally evaluates the independence of the participants of the future resident selection process. The participation instrument is therefore liable to lead to bias in the selection process of future residents of the Tiny Houses in Westpark.

Significant outcome identification:

- Positive Participation Outcome: The participation instrument contributed to a sense of ownership and community among participants and the selected residents of the tiny houses in Westpark. Due to the limited sample size of participants, the scale of this outcome is limited.
- Negative Participation Outcome: The absence of institutionalization for the selection process participation instrument hinders its potential to foster broader participation practices. Its future selection and implementation are deemed arbitrary, as noted by participation procedure manager 2 below. The late involvement of participants in the decision-making process and the limited scale of the participation instrument implies that the procedure exhibits characteristics of a tokenistic form of participation (Arnstein, 1969).

"This (participation instrument) was autonomous and will not necessarily be included in future processes."

The encapsulated influence of participants and the limited scale of the participation instrument implies that the procedure exhibits characteristics of a tokenistic form of participation (Arnstein, 1969).

4.3 Participation in the implementation of paid parking.

Between 2014 and 2016, the municipality of Groningen employed a participation procedure to garner civil support for the implementation of paid parking in certain neighborhoods. These neighborhoods won't be specified to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewed procedure manager. The directive from the City Council was to implement citizen participation with civil support. Per neighborhood, different approaches were explored. There was generally no set approach for the selection and implementation of the participation instruments, except for the mandatory consultation of neighborhood organizations (Municipality of Groningen, 2008). An exception to the absence of guidelines was a public opinion survey seeking citizen input in the policy formulation process for the implementation of paid parking in a specific neighborhood, initiated by the College of Mayor and Aldermen in 2015 (Municipality of Groningen, 2015b). According to the participation procedure manager, the municipality initially sought consultation with the respective neighborhood organization, as outlined in the Neighborhood Organization Covenant (Municipality of Groningen, 2008). However, the neighborhood organization declined to provide consultation due to the controversial nature of the topic and concerns about the potential loss of popularity. The following components, described by the participation procedure manager, are most significant in the evaluation of the participation procedure and its outcomes:

Significant procedure elements:

- Unrepresentative sample of participants: The members of the neighborhood organizations are not a representative sample of the relevant population.

Significant outcome identification:

- Negative Participation Outcome: Constructing Citizenship. Due to the late involvement of neighborhood organizations in the decision-making process and limited influence over the final policy, participants in some cases indicated a decreased sense of citizenship, ownership of the policy, and social trust.
- Positive Participation Outcome: Constructing Citizenship. Potential increased sense of citizenship, sense of ownership, and social trust among participants of the survey due to true participant influence of final policy.

Participation procedure manager 3 indicated that there were inadequate guidelines for the selection and implementation of participation procedures:

“The assignment was to implement paid parking with civil support [...] we wanted to talk to citizens but had no idea how.”

4.4 Solar and Wind Farm Participation Framework.

This Participation Framework delineates standards and regulations concerned with citizen participation in solar and wind farm management in the Municipality of Groningen. In the formulation process of this policy, participation instruments were employed to include citizens and private organizations in the decision-making process. The participation procedure encompassed public hearings and surveys, spanning from July 12th to September 27th, 2023. The following components, described by the participation procedure manager, are most significant in the evaluation of the participation procedure and its outcomes:

Significant procedure elements:

- Unsuccessful recruitment of a representative sample of participants. The sample was small and represented mainly the group of retired men in the population and a few energy company representatives.
- No decision-making power - Influence. The decision-making power was vested with the participation procedure manager, nevertheless, the participants had a real influence on the final policy.

Significant outcome identification:

- Negative Participation Outcome: Building Responsive and Accountable States. Due to the limited institutionalization of the participation instrument, the design, and conduct of the procedure is potentially arbitrarily dependent on its procedure manager and their individual views on participation processes. Non-representativeness of the participant sample may lead to selective and unequal state responsiveness and accountability.

Participation procedure manager 4 indicated that the employment of this procedure was autonomous:

“The participation in formulating this policy is not fixed; it was my own decision to include stakeholders in the decision-making process.”

4.5 Policy Document Content Analysis

The Spatial Planning Decree (VROM, 2008) mandates municipalities to formulate a structurevision. A structurevision on the municipal level acts both as a framework indicating the development vision of a municipality and a legal framework for the integration of its policy content. Structurevisions indicate abstract and general policy without going into too much detail about its implementation (Zonneveld, 2005). Article 2.1 required municipalities to implement a citizen participation procedure in the formulation of a structured vision and specify its instruments in the vision itself. The selection and implementation of the participation procedure could be determined by the municipality itself. For the Structurevision 2008-2020, the municipality of Groningen arranged four public input sessions and a concluding debate in the public input phase between September 26 and November 7, 2008 (Municipality of Groningen, 2009a; 2009b). During these public input sessions citizens were encouraged to give feedback on the proposed Structure Vision 2008-2020. Afterward, the feedback was presented to the city council for potential adaptation of the structure vision. Policy document content analysis reveals that apart from the public input into its formulation, there is no indication of future participation. As a legal framework, the structurevision 2008-2020 does not delineate any participation policy guidelines. The national Spatial Planning Decree (VROM; 2008) does not mandate further participation. In contrast to the Structure Vision, the Neighborhood Organisation Covenant (Municipality of Groningen; 2008) does mandate participation. It requires proposals to the City Council to include consultation details with neighborhood organizations and the employed participation procedure. Finally, the municipal policy “Gebiedsgericht werken en wijkwethouders” in Groningen involves decentralized integrated governance at the district level (Municipality of Groningen;

2015a; n.d.). Wijkwethouders, or district aldermen, provide closer governance to citizens, accessible for feedback via the internet and neighborhood organizations. The previous two policies outline consultation-level participation guidelines, but lack guidance for broader participation procedures in general policy. The lack of predetermined guidelines entirely entrusts the participation procedure manager with the personal interpretation and incorporation of participation procedure criteria (Fig. 3). There is no indication of an institutionalized mechanism in place to systematically evaluate these interpretations and incorporations of criteria applied in any of the participation cases, nor in the Structurerevision 2008-2020. While the implementation and documentation of participation procedures in municipal policy are mandated by law (VROM, 2008), there exist limited guidelines for the selection, implementation, and evaluation of these procedures. Such a policy-implementation gap is susceptible to resulting in ineffective policies due to inconsistent and unreliable policy execution (Hudson et al., 2019). These ineffective participation procedures are liable to lead to negative participation outcomes (Fallanga & Farrão, 2021; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012; Rowe & Frewer, 2000). A full indication of the policy documents analyzed can be found in Annex 6.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Results & Implications

This section presents an evaluation that integrates the analysis of policy documents with the examined participation procedures, elucidating their interconnectedness and assessing their combined impact on the produced participation outcomes. The policy document content analysis of participation-related municipal policy documentation suggests an insufficiency of guidelines for participation procedures. Prior studies indicate that an inadequacy of guidelines may signify an implementation gap, resulting in ineffective participation procedures (Hudson et al., 2019; Rowe & Frewer, 2000), which are liable to lead to negative participation outcomes (Fallanga & Farrão, 2021; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2005). In accordance with this literature, data from the examined cases of participation indicate that inadequate guidelines have contributed to inconsistencies in municipal procedures regarding participants' representativeness, independence, and influence on final policy, occasionally resulting in negative participation outcomes. As Arnstein (1969) predicts, the tokenistic nature and ineffectiveness of these procedures, coupled with inadequate guidelines, have produced negative implications of municipal planning, such as the erosion of a sense of citizenship among participants, the degradation of participatory practices, and increased non-responsiveness and lack of accountability of the municipality. If these issues are evident in the examined cases, they may reflect a broader flaw in the participation policies of the Municipality of Groningen.

5.2 Discussion

It is important to consider the complexity associated with citizen participation in decision-making processes when examining these results. The inclusion of additional stakeholders inherently increases the complexity of planning issues, which can significantly slow down the decision-making process (De Roo & Voogd, 2019). This study emphasizes that citizen participation is essential and should adhere to procedural criteria. However, as noted in section 2.2.1 (Criterion of Early Involvement), involving citizens in highly technical issues can be impractical (Rowe & Frewer, 2000). In some cases, excluding citizens from the decision-making process may result in more effective planning solutions, despite leading to negative participation outcomes (Rowe & Frewer, 2000). This trade-off makes the selection and implementation of participation a highly complex practice with often uncertain consequences. Nevertheless, this trade-off should not serve as an excuse to superficially employ participation instruments within technical issues, creating the appearance of inclusivity while decisions are predetermined. Without concrete evidence, this article hypothesizes that the intention of governmental actors in these cases is to bypass the trade-off, maintain control over decision-making power, and simultaneously create positive participation outcomes. However, such tokenistic participation practices are increasingly likely to result in confrontation, disputes, disruptions, boycotts, distrust, and public dissatisfaction (Arnstein, 1969; Rowe & Frewer, 2000; 2005; Rowe et al., 2001). The examined cases reveal a degree of this tokenistic participation intention, evident in the inconsistent degree of influence the participants have on municipal policy.

5.3 Limitations & Future Research

The explanatory value of this evaluation is constrained by its examination of a limited sample of interviewees and procedures. The applied methodology gathers data from the perspective of municipal employees but neglects potentially significant insights from citizen participants. Additionally, the non-randomized selection of procedure managers and policymakers may have introduced biases, potentially resulting in a non-representative sample. Taking into account the potential divergence in perspectives of procedure managers and policymakers who were not included in the sample, interpretations drawn from the collected data must be critically scrutinized. Both the content analyses of policy documents and interviews with procedure managers are susceptible to inaccuracies. Variations in experiences and perspectives among participation managers and policymakers may influence the objectivity of their descriptions of evaluative elements. Additionally, discrepancies may exist between the implementation of policies and their documented descriptions, potentially compromising the reliability of content analysis data and the accuracy of findings. Therefore, simultaneous use of both data collection methods and cross-referencing their results has been essential to ensure the validity of conclusions (Falanga & Ferrão, 2021; Heslinga, 2018; Raskind et al., 2018). Nonetheless, these factors limit the generalizability of the study's findings to the Municipality of Groningen. On the other hand, the data does indicate the possibility of existing flaws in municipal participation policy. Therefore, this study recommends future research to incorporate larger samples of citizen participation cases, larger and more diverse samples of interviewees, and a more extensive inclusion of policy documents in evaluations of participation procedures and outcomes within the municipality of Groningen to determine the extent of flaws in participation policy. Additionally, this study recommends further investigation into the potential impact of revising participation procedures and guidelines within the Municipality of Groningen, while keeping in mind the trade-offs in citizen participation practice.

6. Figures

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Page 3: pexel.com

7. Annex 1. Categorical representation of interview data.
 Neighborhood Company Selwerd Participation Procedure

Participation Instruments	Citizen Council Budget for Citizen Initiatives	Municipal Participation Initiatives
Acceptance Criteria		
Representativeness of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants represent a specific target group. Challenging to recruit participants. No institutionalized instrument structurally evaluates the representativeness of the citizen council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The citizen council is an unrepresentative sample of the neighborhood population. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no institutionalization for the processing of council advice.
Independence of true participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants have indicated unwillingness for total independence. The facilitating role of governmental actors can limit the independence of true participants. No institutionalization structurally evaluates the independence of the citizen board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependent participants and potentially biased governmental actors.
Early involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants initiate and manage the decision-making process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conduct of the participation process is potentially arbitrarily dependent on the procedure manager. There is no institutionalization for the advising role of the citizen board. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conduct of the participation instrument is potentially arbitrarily dependent on the procedure manager.
Influence on final policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Citizen board exerts a considerable influence on final policy. Certain initiatives necessitate municipal permits, where decision-making power is either vested in governmental actors or predetermined by municipal zoning regulations or national legislation. The facilitating role of governmental actors and the unwillingness for independence can limit influence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no institutionalization for the influence of the advice of the citizen board on the final policy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conduct of the participation instrument is potentially arbitrarily dependent on the procedure manager.
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonable transparency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonable transparency.

Process Criteria

Resource Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating role of governmental actors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information resources potentially dependent. Human resources are potentially independent. Material resources accessible. Time resources are potentially unlimited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no institutionalization for the accessibility of resources for the citizen board. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The conduct of the participation instrument is potentially arbitrarily dependent on the procedure manager.
Task Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly structured and clear. Dependent on Council members. Varies per citizen initiative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear task definition.
Structured Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly structured and clear. Dependent on Council members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governmental actors hold decision power.
Cost-effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependent on Council members. Varies per citizen initiative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High cost-effectiveness due to the advising role as a secondary purpose of the Citizen Council board.

Outcome Identification

<p>Constructing Citizenship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential (long-term) increased confidence among participants. • Potential (long-term) increased sense of citizenship and neighborhood ownership among participants. • Potential decrease of confidence due to unwillingness for independent decision-making among participants. • Potential (long-term) increase of social trust among participants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential decrease of social trust among participants in case advice of the Citizen Council is ignored. • Potential increase of social trust among participants in case advice of the Citizen Council is acknowledged.
<p>Building the Practice of Participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential high (long-term) increase of capacities and network among participants • Limited impact due to limited scale. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No indication of building capacities, networks, or participation practices.
<p>Building Responsive and Accountable States</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of responsive and accountable state building can be found. • E.g. Institutionalization of exemption of discontinuation of social security benefits when Neighborhood Company wages exceed maximum additional earnings. • Limited impact due to limited scale. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The responsiveness and accountability of governmental actors towards the advice of the citizen council is undefined and potentially arbitrary.
<p>Building Inclusive and Cohesive Societies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of inclusive and cohesive society building can be found. • E.g. the citizen initiative “Vakantie in eigen wijk”; “on holiday in your neighborhood”, in which foreigners cook for residents of Selwerd once a month; enables interaction between diverse groups. • Limited impact due to limited scale. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No indication of building inclusive and cohesive societies.

Tiny House Development Westpark Participation Procedure

Participation Instruments	“Walk-in” Public Hearings	‘Lutje Westpark’ Resident Selection Process
Acceptance Criteria		
Representativeness of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the significant public interest in the topic of Tiny Houses and the consequential alterations within the Westpark, public hearings were highly attended by engaged citizens and concerned users of the park. Due to the high attendance, the sample’s representativeness to the relevant population of stakeholders is liable to be significant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the small sample of members involved in the process, and their selection being based on eagerness and engagement, the representativeness of participants concerning the population of members is liable to be limited.
Independence of true participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonably independent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No institutionalized instrument structurally evaluates the independence of the participants. The participation instrument is therefore liable to lead to bias in the selection process of future residents of the Tiny Houses in Westpark.
Early involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late involvement in the decision-making process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late involvement in the decision-making process.
Influence on final policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants hold no decision power; at the discretion of the procedure manager, participants did exert minimal influence on the final policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants hold decision power over the selection process of future residents.
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable transparency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is little documentation of the selection process. No institutionalized instrument structurally evaluates the transparency of the selection process.

Process Criteria

Resource Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations by the municipal project team provided participants with information. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for biased information provision in a case of conflicts of interest regarding the formulation of information incorporated into the presentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no institutionalization for the accessibility of resources for the citizen board. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conduct of the participation instrument is potentially arbitrarily dependent on the procedure manager.
Task Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured and clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured and clear.
Structured Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured and clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured and clear.
Cost-effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive and time-consuming • Comprehensive in-depth feedback collection instrument. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly cost-effective.

Outcome Identification

Constructing Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No indication of the construction of citizenship among participants*. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participation instrument contributed to a sense of ownership and community among participants and the selected residents of the tiny houses in Westpark. Due to the limited sample size of participants, the impact of this outcome is limited.
Building the Practice of Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No indication of building the practice of participation*. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants may experience a deepening of citizen-to-municipal networks and solidarity towards the municipality as a result of close collaboration and their tangible influence on the final policy. Due to the limited sample size of participants, the scale of this outcome is limited. Little institutionalization of participation instruments. Conduct is potentially arbitrarily dependent on the procedure manager.
Building Responsive and Accountable States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No indication of building responsive and accountable states*. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little institutionalization of participation instruments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct is potentially arbitrarily dependent on the procedure manager.
Building Inclusive and Cohesive Societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No indication of building inclusive and cohesive societies*. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-representativeness of the sample of participants may reinforce social hierarchies and inequalities. Due to the limited sample size of participants, the impact of this outcome is limited.

*: Participants voiced concerns regarding potential consequential alterations within the Westpark. The municipality explained that these alterations would have minimal impact on users of the Westpark. Consequently, participants generally accepted their limited inclusion in the decision-making power and influence over the final policy. As a result, there are no conclusive indications of either positive or negative participation outcomes stemming from this participation procedure.

Introduction of paid parking in neighborhoods of the Municipality of Groningen Participation Procedure

Participation Instruments	Neighborhood Organization Counseling	Public Opinion Surveys
Acceptance Criteria		
Representativeness of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The members of the neighborhood organizations are not representative of the population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anonymous and therefore unverifiable. +/- 20% turnout.
Independence of true participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential non-independence through biased information provision by government actors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respondents are generally reasonably independent. Potential non-independence through biased information provision by government actors; a booklet accompanying the survey provided information about paid parking.
Early involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main decisions are predetermined; late involvement in the decision-making process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants were involved early in the decision-making process.
Influence on final policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main decisions are predetermined; late involvement in the decision-making process. Participants can have a real influence on certain aspects appointed by government actors. E.g. participants can select a system for paid parking in their neighborhood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants had a true influence on the final policy.
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonably transparent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonably transparent.

Process Criteria

Resource Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Neighborhood Organisations receive funding from the municipality. Other resources are the responsibility of the organizations themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially biased information provision. No instrument in place ensures the independence of information resources provision.
Task Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured and clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured and clear.
Structured Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured and clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured and clear.
Cost-effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expensive and time-consuming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly cost-effective.

Outcome Identification

Constructing Citizenship

- Due to the late involvement in the decision-making process and limited influence over the final policy, participants in some cases indicated a decreased sense of citizenship, ownership of the policy, and social trust.
- Potential increased sense of citizenship and ownership among participants due to true participant influence of final policy.
- Potential increase of social trust among participants due to true participant influence of final policy.

Building the Practice of Participation

- Damages in networks between government actors and citizens.
- No indication of building the practice of participation.

Building Responsive and Accountable States

- No indication of building responsive and accountable states.
- No indication of building responsive and accountable states.

Building Inclusive and Cohesive Societies

- Indications of increased horizontal conflict and violence.
- No indication of building inclusive and cohesive societies.

Participation Framework Solar & Wind Farms Participation Procedure

Participation Instruments	“Walk-in” Public Hearings	Online Feedback Platform
Acceptance Criteria		
Representativeness of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited sample size and representation; mainly the group of retired men in the population and a few energy company representatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anonymous and therefore unverifiable.
Independence of true participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonably independent. Potential bias in the presentation and conduct of the hearing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The feedback of respondents is independent.
Early involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early involvement in the decision-making process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early involvement in the decision-making process.
Influence on final policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants hold no decision power; at the discretion of the procedure manager, participants did exert reasonable influence on the final policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants hold no decision power; at the discretion of the procedure manager, participants did exert reasonable influence on the final policy.
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonably transparent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonably transparent.

Process Criteria

Resource Accessibility

- Webpage providing relevant information.
- Potentially biased information provision.

- Webpage providing relevant information.
- Potentially biased information provision.

Task Definition

- Structured and clear.

- Structured and clear.

Structured Decision Making

- Structured and clear.

- Structured and clear.

Cost-effectiveness

- Expensive and time-consuming.
- Comprehensive in-depth feedback collection instrument.

- Highly cost-effective.

Outcome Identification

Constructing Citizenship

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential (long-term) increased sense of citizenship and ownership among participants due to true participant influence of final policy. • Potential (long-term) increase of social trust among participants due to true participant influence of final policy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential (long-term) increased sense of citizenship and ownership among participants due to true participant influence of final policy. • Potential (long-term) increase of social trust among participants due to true participant influence of final policy. |
|--|--|

Building the Practice of Participation

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the integration of new policies regarding participation in Solar and Wind farm initiatives, wherein compulsory participation extends beyond the mere provision of decision-making process information, the participation instrument exhibits potential for future expansion in this field. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the integration of new policies regarding participation in Solar and Wind farm initiatives, wherein compulsory participation extends beyond the mere provision of decision-making process information, the participation instrument exhibits potential for future expansion in this field. |
|--|--|

Building Responsive and Accountable States

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive in-depth feedback collection instrument and true influence stimulates state responsiveness and accountability. • Little institutionalization of participation instruments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application is potentially arbitrarily dependent on the procedure manager. • Non-representativeness of the sample of participants may lead to selective and unequal state responsiveness and accountability. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little institutionalization of participation instruments. • Conduct is potentially arbitrarily dependent on the procedure manager. |
|--|---|

Building Inclusive and Cohesive Societies

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-representativeness of the sample of participants may reinforce social hierarchies and inequalities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No indication of building inclusive and cohesive societies. |
|---|---|

8. Annex 2. Written guarantee of confidentiality and interview participant recruitment instrument (Translated).

Dear Mr./Ms. ...,

How incredibly nice that you are willing to help me! As I am sure you understand, collecting interviews is sometimes quite a hassle so I am very grateful! In particular, please let me know when it would be convenient for you to chat for an hour or so over a cup of coffee and maybe a pastry or something. I have until April 12 to complete the interviews. Until then, my schedule is very flexible, so I'll totally adapt to your schedule. Below, I will immediately explain what to expect from the interview and what exactly my research is about. Attached I have the piece I wrote to this point should you like to browse through it, but of course this is definitely not necessary for the interview. I have briefly explained the three models at the bottom of this post, but for the interview I am also printing some figures.

I actually use three theoretical models with which I delineate my research on civic participation in Groningen. Using those models, I will look for the relationship between participation procedures and participation outcomes. In what circumstances does a participation process lead to favorable outcomes, and when is an unfavorable outcome more likely to manifest itself? The perspective I am looking for is that of the "civil servant" involved in the participation process. I will focus the interview on two to three participation projects that you have been a part of. I prefer to leave this flexible, because I am especially curious about your experiences and perhaps a participation process that you experienced as special or just representative. Citizen participation is a complex "planning tool" and the results are difficult to measure and assess, but I'm going to try anyway. If you enjoy chatting about neighborhood participation, I'd love to learn from you! An interview takes about an hour. I am recording the interview with my phone. Personally, I was thinking of a table on the first floor of the municipality of Groningen on Zuiderdiep, since this might be easiest for you. If you'd rather sit somewhere else, or you have a better suggestion, of course I'd love to hear it.

Planning:

During the first half of the interview, together we will look for an interesting example of participation in Groningen. During the second half, I will ask for your opinion on the following topics:

- Conditions for citizen participation;
- Existing and new inter-institutional networks;
- Procedures and goals of the participation process;
- Financial resources;
- Actors and users;
- Results and challenges.

Regarding the responsible use of the interview recording, the following applies:

The interview is voluntary.

The interview will be completely anonymized, if sensitive topics are discussed and I cannot guarantee your anonymity, I will delete parts of the transcript upon request.

It is always possible to withdraw both during and after the interview. I will not then include the transcript in my thesis.

The recording will be deleted after the transcript.

Both during the interview and afterwards, I approach you and your work with respect.

I will keep you informed of developments in my research and send the results to you for approval before the submission.

The theoretical models:

The fairly well-known ladder of participation developed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969. This model categorizes the "decision-making" power of citizens in a participation process. See attached image "Arnstein's ladder of

participation.” Less well known, but certainly no less influential, are the models of Gaventa & Barrett (2012) and Rowe & Frewer (2000) who do something more specific within the categorization of participation. Rowe & Frewer (2000) developed a model that identifies participation criteria for a successful process (See attached image “Rowe & Frewer’s criteria”). Gaventa & Barrett (2012) categorized participation outcomes and developed a model indicating what exactly is a positive outcome and what is a negative outcome (See attached image “Gaventa & Barrett’s results’ ‘).

Thank you so much for indicating your interest, and I hope it will be possible to conduct the interview. I am looking forward to it!

Kind regards,

Casper Klooster

8. Annex 3. Written guarantee of confidentiality and interview participant recruitment instrument (Original).

Beste meneer/mevrouw ...,

Wat ontzettend fijn dat je me wil helpen! Zoals je ongetwijfeld begrijpt, is het verzamelen van interviews soms een flink gedoe dus ik ben erg dankbaar! Laat me vooral weten wanneer het je uitkomt om onder het genot van een kop koffie en misschien wel een tompoes o.i.d. een uurtje zou willen kletsen over wat je doet. Ik heb tot 12 april om de interviews af te ronden. Tot die tijd is mijn agenda erg flexibel, dus ik pas me helemaal op je agenda aan.

Hieronder zal ik direct even uitleggen wat je van het interview kunt verwachten en waar mijn onderzoek nou precies over gaat. Bijgevoegd heb ik het stuk dat ik voor zover heb geschreven mocht je het leuk vinden om door te bladeren, maar dit is uiteraard voor het interview zeker niet nodig. Ik heb onderaan dit bericht kort de drie modellen uitgelegd, maar voor het interview print ik ook een aantal figuren.

Ik gebruik eigenlijk drie theoretische modellen waarmee ik mijn onderzoek naar burgerparticipatie in Groningen afbaken. Aan de hand van die modellen ga ik opzoek naar de verhouding tussen participatie procedures en participatieresultaten. In welke omstandigheden leidt een participatieproces tot gunstige uitkomsten, en wanneer manifesteert zich eerder een ongunstig resultaat? Het perspectief waar ik naar op zoek ben, is dat van de "civil servant" (een mooie engelse benaming voor ambtenaar) betrokken in het participatieproces. Ik zal het interview richten op twee à drie participatie projecten waar je onderdeel van hebt uitgemaakt. Dit laat ik het liefst flexibel, omdat ik vooral erg benieuwd ben naar je ervaringen en wellicht een participatieproces dat je als bijzonder of juist representatief hebt ervaren. Burgerparticipatie is een complex "planologisch instrument" en de resultaten laten zich moeilijk meten en beoordelen, maar ik ga het lekker toch proberen.

Als je het leuk vindt om te kletsen over de participatie van buurtbewoners, dan steek ik graag wat van je op! Een interview duurt zo'n uur. Ik neem het interview op met mijn telefoon. Zelf zat ik te denken aan een tafeltje op de begane grond van de gemeente Groningen aan het Zuiderdiep, gezien dit misschien het makkelijkst voor je is. Als je liever ergens anders zit, of je hebt een beter voorstel dan hoor ik dat natuurlijk graag.

De planning:

Gedurende de eerste helft van het interview gaan we samen op zoek naar een interessant voorbeeld van participatie in Groningen. In de tweede helft vraag ik om je mening aangaande de volgende onderwerpen:

- Voorwaarden voor burgerparticipatie;
- Bestaande en nieuwe inter-institutionele netwerken;
- Procedures en doelen van het participatieproces;
- Financiële middelen;
- Actoren en gebruikers;
- Resultaten en uitdagingen.

Wat betreft het verantwoordelijk gebruik van de opname van het interview geldt het volgende:

Het interview is op vrijwillige basis.

Het interview wordt volledig geanonimiseerd, wanneer gevoelige onderwerpen besproken worden en ik je anonimiteit niet kan garanderen, zal ik op verzoek delen van het transcript verwijderen.

Het is altijd mogelijk om je zowel tijdens als na het interview terug te trekken. Ik neem het transcript vervolgens niet mee in mijn scriptie.

De opname wordt na het transcripten verwijderd.

Zowel tijdens het interview als in de omgang hieromheen benader ik jouzelf en je werk met respect.

Ik hou je op de hoogte van ontwikkelingen in mijn onderzoek en stuur het resultaat vóór het inlevermoment naar je op ter goedkeuring.

De theoretische modellen:

De vrij bekende ladder van participatie ontwikkeld door Sherry Arnstein in 1969. Dit model categoriseert de “beslissingsmacht” van burgers in een participatieproces. Zie bijgevoegde afbeelding “Arnstein’s ladder of participation”. Minder bekend, maar zeker niet minder invloedrijk, zijn de modellen van Gaventa & Barrett (2012) en Rowe & Frewer (2000) die iets specifieks doen binnen de categorisering van participatie. Rowe & Frewer (2000) ontwikkelde een model dat participatiecriteria aangeeft voor een succesvol proces (Zie bijgevoegde afbeelding “Rowe & Frewer’s criteria”). Gaventa & Barrett (2012) categorisering van participatie resultaten en ontwikkelde een model dat aangeeft wat nou precies een positief resultaat is en wat een negatief resultaat (Zie bijgevoegde afbeelding “Gaventa & Barrett’s results”).

Heel erg bedankt voor het aangeven van uw interesse, en ik hoop dat het mogelijk zal zijn om het interview te houden. Ik heb er zin an!

Met vriendelijke groetjes,
Casper Klooster

9. Annex 4. Interview script (Translated)

Theme 1. Selecting a Citizen Participation Process.

Examples of citizen participation processes for imaging:

Inspiration for participation processes.

Citizen budget Hoogkerk: strong Hoogkerk

https://hoogkerkonline.nl/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Kaart-Sterk-Hoogkerk-A3-digitaal_sml.pdf

<https://hoogkerkonline.nl/sterkhoogkerk/#content>

Sunny Selwerd

<https://gemeenteraad.groningen.nl/Vergaderingen/Politieke-woensdag-Dag-agenda/2023/07-juni/09:30/Hoorzitting-Wijkvernieuwing/Bijlage-3-Wijkvernieuwing-Selwerd-herstructurering-Nijestee-Fase-2-participatieverslag-1.pdf>

<https://www.sunnyselwerd.nl/projecten/werkplaats2-0/#10stappen>

Is it true that participation through area-based working has actually been used proactively as an institutionalized policy tool since 2015, rather than reactively due to activism within and outside the municipality?

Environment Act Jan. 1, 2024: what has changed in the participation framework now?

Are you working on Procedural or Substantive policies?

Procedural policy is policy that addresses how policy forms.

Substantive policy is policy that addresses the implementation of policy.

Theme 2. What makes a participation instrument an effective tool for citizen participation?

In the context of the selected participation project, what were the participation tools used?

In the context of the selected participation project, what is your opinion about applied participation instrument for the following “acceptance criteria”?

Representativeness:

What is your opinion about the representation of the relevant population group in the participation process?

Independence:

What is your opinion about the management of the participation process in the context of co-occurring biases, manipulation of the participation process or manipulation of the participants?

Involvement at early stages:

What is your opinion on when citizens were included in the decision-making process?

Influence:

What is your opinion about the amount of influence citizens had on the final product?

Transparent decision-making process:

What is your opinion on the transparency of the decision-making process during and after the participation process?

In the context of the selected participation project, what is your opinion on the participation tools used for the following “process criteria”?

Accessibility of tools:

What is your opinion on the accessibility to relevant information resources for participants in the participation process?

What is your opinion on accessibility to relevant “human resources” such as; experts, witnesses and independent process analysts, for participants in the participation process?

What is your opinion on accessibility to relevant materials such as beamers and chalkboards for participants in the participation process?

What is your opinion on the allocation of time to participants in the participation process?

What is your opinion overall in regards to accessibility to resources for participants in the participation process?

Task definition:

What is your opinion about the clarity of the task of participants in the participation process?

Structure in the decision-making process:

What is your opinion on accessibility of documentation of decisions made?

What is your opinion about the structure used/provided in the decision-making process?

Cost-benefit ratio:

What is your opinion on the cost-benefit ratio of the participation process?

Arnstein's Ladder of Participation; see appendix.

Arnstein's Ladder of Participation:

On what step of the ladder of participation would you place the participation process?

What are aspects of the participation process that factor into this placement?

Is there a missing criterion that you have an opinion on?

Theme 3. What is your opinion on the outcomes of the participation process and how do those outcomes relate to the participation instruments?

In the context of the selected participation project, what is your opinion about the outcomes of the participation process for the following categories of participation outcomes?

The construction of citizenship.

What is your opinion on the contribution of the participation process to the development of political knowledge, self-confidence and a sense of citizenship among participants?

What is your opinion about its contribution to participants' capacities to better hold the state accountable, better participate in political issues and better exercise their rights?

The state of participation in practice.

What is your view on the contribution of the participation process to the development of capacities for social action, networking among citizens (and with the state) and opportunities for new participation?

The construction of responsive and accountable government.

What is your opinion on the contribution of the participatory process to the accessibility of public resources and services to citizens?

What is your opinion on the contribution of the participation process to the possibility for citizens to claim existing rights and acquire additional rights?

What is your opinion on the contribution of the participation process to state accountability?

The contribution to social cohesion and inclusiveness in society.

What is your opinion on the contribution of the participatory process to social cohesion in society or engaged participants?

10. Annex 5. Interview guide (Original).

Thema 1. Het selecteren van een Burgerparticipatie Process

Voorbeelden van burgerparticipatie processen voor de beeldvorming:

Inspiration for participation processes

Burgerbegroting Hoogkerk: sterk Hoogkerk

https://hoogkerkonline.nl/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Kaart-Sterk-Hoogkerk-A3-digitaal_sml.pdf

<https://hoogkerkonline.nl/sterkhoogkerk/#content>

Sunny Selwerd

<https://gemeenteraad.groningen.nl/Vergaderingen/Politieke-woensdag-Dag-agenda/2023/07-juni/09:30/Hoorzitting-Wijkvernieuwing/Bijlage-3-Wijkvernieuwing-Selwerd-herstructurering-Nijestee-Fase-2-participatieverslag-1.pdf>

<https://www.sunnyselwerd.nl/projecten/werkplaats2-0/#10stappen>

Klopt het dat participatie door het gebiedsgericht werken sinds 2015 daadwerkelijk proactief als geïnstitutionaliseerd beleidsinstrument wordt gebruikt, in de plaats van reactief ten gevolge van activisme binnen en buiten de gemeente?

Omgevingswet 1 januari 2024: wat is er nu veranderd in het participatiekader?

Bent u bezig met het Procedureel of Substantieel beleid?

Procedureel beleid is beleid dat ingaat op de manier waarop beleid vormd.

Substantieel beleid is beleid dat ingaat op de implementatie van beleid.

Thema 2. Wat maakt een participatie-instrument nou een effectief middel voor burgerparticipatie?

In de context van het uitgekozen participatieproject, wat waren de participatie-instrumenten die zijn gebruikt?

In de context van het uitgekozen participatieproject, wat is je mening over toegepaste participatie-instrumenten voor de volgende “acceptatie-criteria”?

Representativiteit:

Wat is je mening over de representatie van de relevante bevolkingsgroep in het participatieproces?

Onafhankelijkheid:

Wat is je mening over het management van het participatieproces in de context van meespelende vooroordelen, manipulatie van het participatieproces of manipulatie van de deelnemers?

Betrekking in vroeg stadium:

Wat is je mening over het moment waarop burgers zijn meegenomen in het besluitvormingsproces?

Invloed:

Wat is je mening over de hoeveelheid invloed die burgers hebben gehad op het eindproduct?

Transparant besluitvormingsproces:

Wat is je mening over de transparantie van het besluitvormingsproces gedurende en na het participatieproces?

In de context van het uitgekozen participatieproject, wat is je mening over de toegepaste participatie-instrumenten voor de volgende “proces-criteria”?

Toegankelijkheid van hulpmiddelen:

Wat is je mening over de toegankelijkheid tot relevante informatiebronnen voor deelnemers in het participatieproces?

Wat is je mening over de toegankelijkheid tot relevante “human resources” zoals; experts, getuigen en onafhankelijke procesanalisten, voor deelnemers in het participatieproces?

Wat is je mening over de toegankelijkheid tot relevant materiaal zoals beamers en krijtborden voor deelnemers in het participatieproces?

Wat is je mening over de toewijzing van tijd aan deelnemers in het participatieproces?

Wat is je mening over het algemeen in betrekking tot de toegankelijkheid van bronnen voor deelnemers in het participatieproces?

Taakdefinitie:

Wat is je mening over de duidelijkheid van de taak van deelnemers in het participatieproces?

Structuur in het besluitvormingsproces:

Wat is je mening over toegankelijkheid van de documentatie van genomen besluiten?

Wat is je mening over de gebruikte/ de verstrekte structuur van het besluitvormingsproces?

Kosten-baten verhouding:

Wat is je mening over de kosten-baten verhouding van het participatieproces?

Arnsteins Ladder van Participatie; zie bijlage.

Arnstein's Ladder van Participatie:

Op welke trede van de trap van participatie zou je het participatieproces plaatsen?

Wat zijn aspecten van het participatieproces die meespelen in deze plaatsing?

Is er een ontbrekend criterium waar je een mening over hebt?

Thema 3. Wat is je mening over de uitkomsten van het participatieproces en hoe verhouden die uitkomsten zich tot de participatie-instrumenten?

In de context van het uitgekozen participatieproject, wat is je mening over de uitkomsten van het participatieproces voor de volgende categorieën van participatie-uitkomsten?

De constructie van burgerschap.

Wat is je mening over de bijdrage van het participatieproces aan de ontwikkeling van politieke kennis, zelfvertrouwen en een gevoel van burgerschap onder de deelnemers?

Wat is je mening over de bijdrage hiervan aan de capaciteiten van deelnemers om beter de staat verantwoordelijk te houden, beter deel te nemen aan politieke kwesties en beter hun rechten te kunnen uitoefenen?

De staat van participatie in de praktijk.

Wat is je mening over de bijdrage van het participatieproces aan de ontwikkeling van capaciteiten voor maatschappelijke actie, netwerken onder burgers (en met de overheid) en mogelijkheden tot nieuwe participatie?

De constructie van een reactieve en verantwoordelijke overheid.

Wat is je mening over de bijdrage van het participatieproces aan de toegankelijkheid van publieke middelen en diensten voor burgers?

Wat is je mening over de bijdrage van het participatieproces aan de mogelijkheid voor burgers bestaande rechten opeisen en aanvullende rechten verwerven?

Wat is je mening over de bijdrage van het participatieproces aan de verantwoordingsplicht van de staat?

De bijdrage aan sociale cohesie en inclusiviteit in de maatschappij.

Wat is je mening over de bijdrage van het participatieproces aan de sociale cohesie in de maatschappij of van betrokken deelnemers?

11. Annex 6. List of policy documents selected for policy document content analysis.

The documents coded according to Rowe & Frewer's (2000) evaluative framework are submitted separately from the thesis.

- Policy documents related to the area-oriented approach of the municipality of Groningen:
 1. Municipality of Groningen (2015a) Raadsvoorstel Integraal gebiedsgericht werken en beantwoording moties en initiatiefvoorstellen, Available at: <https://gemeenteraad.groningen.nl/Documenten/Raadsvoorstel/Integraal-gebiedsgericht-werken-en-beantwoording-gerelateerde-moties-en-initiatiefvoorstellen-3.pdf> (Accessed 28 February 2024)
 - This policy document indicates the state of the area-oriented approach and integration of district-aldermen in February 2015.
- Policy documents related to the Neighborhood Organisations Covenant:
 2. Municipality of Groningen (2008) Convenant tussen wijkorganisaties en gemeentebestuur, Available at: <https://gemeente.groningen.nl/file/bewonersconvenant> (Accessed 28 February 2024)
 - This policy document states the guidelines of the participation covenant between neighborhood organizations in Groningen and the municipality of Groningen.
- Policy documents related to the Structurevision 2008-2020.
 3. Municipality of Groningen (2009a) Stad op Scherp Structuurvisie 2008 - 2020, Available at: <https://www.crow.nl/downloads/documents/kpvv-beleidsdocumenten/groningen-stad-op-scherp-structuurvisie-2008-2020> (Accessed 10 May 2024)
 - This policy document states the structure vision of the municipality of Groningen. It does not indicate nor delineate future practices of citizen participation in the municipality.
 4. Municipality of Groningen (2009b) Structuurvisie Stad op Scherp Nota Reacties & Commentaar, Available at: <https://gemeenteraad.groningen.nl/Documenten/Stad-op-scherp.pdf> (Accessed 10 May 2024)
 - This policy document states the participation procedure employed for the formulation of the structure vision of the municipality of Groningen.

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