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Youth owns the future



A research on the role that youth wants to play in planning their
 spatial environment

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Preface

During my last two years at the University of Groningen studying spatial planning I have been lucky to uncover and study a wide array of subjects connected to planning. This wide variety of subjects also gave lots of options for the writing of my final thesis. I have considered multiple interesting subjects from which some were related to environmental planning and others were related to traffic planning. However, eventually one subject kept coming back and appealed the most to me; youth participation in planning.

In our society youth is very much discovering their world, both the physical environment and themselves in this world. They develop knowledge about themselves and their environment and get to expand their world. In some parts of writing this thesis I sometimes felt like the youth I was doing my research about. I was discovering the process of writing a thesis, the field of youth participation and developed my skills in it. An adventure which often went well but sometimes went forward with very small steps at a time. Eventually, what is laying in front of you is the product of my adventure of the last months.

However, it was not only my adventure. It could have only been done with the help of multiple people. Firstly, my supervisor, dr. Femke Niekerk who helped me with valuable feedback and her knowledge of the scientific field. Both helped me to gain information and to improve my research. Secondly, I want to thank the participants of the focus group meeting and the interview for their valuable participation and for wanting to share their insights with me. Finally, I want to thank family and friends for helping and supporting me through advice, giving me tips and showing their interest in my research.

It has been an interesting adventure which has led to what is laying in front of you. I enjoyed working on it and so I hope that you will enjoy reading it. Enjoy reading!

Martijn Bentum

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Summary

This research is about involving youth in planning processes. Prior research has shown that youth is able to form valuable opinions about their environment and want to bring these opinions to the planning process of their environment. However, youth is mostly not directly involved in current planning processes, sometimes via their parents. Youth does also use the spatial environment as much as adults do. Therefore, it is plausible that youth does have an opinion on how their environment is designed. Their insights might be very helpful in the planning process.

Research has shown that planning processes gain reciprocal benefits from youth participation; youth can have valuable additions to the planning process and the planning process can have learning effects for youth. However, there are also some drawbacks and obstructions to involving youth in planning processes. For example, that it takes more attention and a different attitude from officials, or that it takes more time to accompany youth participation process in planning than regular planning processes.

Prior research however, has overlooked the opinion of youth themselves about participation in planning. This research aims to hear the opinion and views of youth and see how this fits in the current framework of youth participation in spatial planning. Therefore, a focus group meeting has been organized to let youth speak and discuss about spatial planning, youth participation and what they view as important and less important in both. Next to that a research has been done on how youth participation in planning is viewed from the governmental viewpoint, this research is formed through an interview and desk research.

All in all, this results in some interesting views of youth on participation processes in planning. It shows in what kind of projects youth are interested and that they perceive certain projects as “adult projects”. Furthermore, some parts of the framework on youth participation in planning are confirmed, for instance their interest in projects which show quick result and processes which take a relatively small amount of time. Also, youth does value certain places and likes to be involved in planning those places, however they also do value their spare time and would like to fill their spare time in ways that they want.

From the governmental perspective one of the main findings is that officials find it hard to involve youth in longer lasting planning processes. This comes across with the view of youth themselves on their spare time, they would like to fill that in with fun activities rather than planning processes. Most participation processes take a longer time to come to an end-result than youth likes and are not particularly perceived as amusing to participate in. Adapting this might help in involving youth in participation process.

Whereas this research does show insights of youth in participative planning processes, it does not mean that all questions are now solved. For a beginning, the case (the municipality of Vlagtwedde) in which this research has taken place might influence the results. Performing a similar research in bigger municipalities in the Netherlands, for instance in Utrecht or Groningen might result in deviant results. Research has shown that bigger municipalities are able to perform more and better youth participation than small municipalities. It might be interesting to research the differences between diverse municipalities, participation processes and how youth views it.

Keywords: Collaborative planning, Participation, Youth, Age-specific planning, Policy, Municipality

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1. Introduction

A common known and often used Dutch proverb is; “de jeugd heeft de toekomst” (‘youth owns the future’). The proverb is often used in politics when plans are presented which should benefit the youth. Of course, this is true; today’s children are the grown-ups of the future. However, does this approach also apply to spatial planning? Is youth actually involved in shaping their present and future environment?

1.1 Problem definition

Most of Dutch policies are made by and for grown-ups. Some of them might benefit youth although the policies are formulated from the view of adults. The Netherlands is a country which is built on the idea that everyone deserves an equal treatment. The first article of the constitution literally says; everyone who is in The Netherlands should be treated in equally. This article is the basis for many other rights and laws. It is the basis of the right that all Dutch people above eighteen years old can vote during elections. This equality principle is known as one of the strengths of Dutch culture.

At the start of 2016 little more than twenty-two percent of Dutch population existed of citizens younger than twenty years. Citizens above sixty-five years make up just little more than eighteen percent of the Dutch population (CBS, 2016). For this older group, a political party is grounded and next to that they hold the right to elect local, provincial, national and even European government. For youth this is completely different, they do not have the opportunity to vote in diverse governmental elections let alone that there is a party specifically representing youth. A direct representation on political level does not exist. It is adults who influence and even determine what is “good” and what is “not good” for youth. The government should represent the society; however, it is questionable if the younger part of society is well represented (Goudswaard, 2015).

In planning a similar situation exists; it is questionable if representatives do really represent the population. Thomas (2007) mentions this as the apparent contradiction between participation and representation. The planning process has shifted from a technical rationale process towards a more open and communicative process over the years (Gerrits, Rauws & de Roo, 2012). This does not imply that everyone is now represented in planning. A group which can be taken as an example is the youth. They are not often asked about their opinion when plans are made. In some cases, their adult representatives are asked to contribute on behalf of youth however it is doubtful if the adults really do represent youths’ opinion or views (Matthews, 2003). When plans are made for renewing a school environment sometimes children are asked to contribute. However, the world in which children live is bigger than playgrounds and schools (Lehman-Frisch et al. 2012).

Central point of this research is the sentence; youth owns the future. In Dutch this sentence is often used in a popular way. Of course, it is true, the future adults are today’s children and youth. It seems reasonable to ask these groups about their opinion and views, certainly on changes in the environment. According to Derr & Tarantini (2016) and Cele & van der Burgt (2013) children can add something to planning processes. Because of the added value they can provide it is regrettable that children are often excluded from planning processes.

Current spatial planning procedures are not fit to cover youths’ interests. Planning procedures often are slow and static processes whereas young people quickly adapt to new ideas and concepts. Youth holds a more dynamic attitude than planning procedures are now able to deal with. Adopting more of this dynamic attitude in planning practice might be beneficial (Birch et al, 2017).

The problem on which this research will elaborate is that in today's planning practice the perspective of the youth often is missing. This perspective is not only missing, next to it a source of knowledge and experience is not being used. The perspective of youth can be very beneficial and inspiring to use in planning practice (Cele, 2006). However, the main point this research is going to address is if the youth even wants to be part of planning processes. In what cases are they interested to participate and in what form do they want to participate? Knowing youths' interests can be very beneficial because one can determine beforehand if investing in youth participation does lead to good results.

1.2 Relevance for academia and practice

Participation, communicative planning and adaptive planning are terms which are used more and more among planning theorists and practitioners. The shift from the technical rationale, the procedural planning towards more communicative planning has long begun. However, like more fields of study, it is in a continuous development. This also accounts for engaging youth in spatial planning. Already in 1969 Arnstein conceived the 'Ladder of Participation' which is a well-known schedule for participatory planning. It determines diverse steps in citizen participation. According to Hart (1992) this ladder is also applicable for youth, although he made some small adaptations. The timespan between both steps and how regular participatory planning is now shows that there are still steps to take to in participation processes.

1.2.1 Relevance for academia

The relevance of this research for academia is the addition to the knowledge about engaging children in spatial planning. According to Cele (2006) children possess certain competences that planning should incorporate. This statement is supported by Holloway (2014) who thinks that children can have valuable additions to debates about their lives. She also states that it is important to keep listening to them. Despite or perhaps because the challenging view they hold towards conventional academic wisdom.

This research might add insights to when children would like to be engaged in planning processes and in how they would like to be engaged. What are methods to use youth competences in planning processes in a way they like. Youth competence and meanings differ from adults; thus it is not logical to use the same planning practices for youth and adults. Getting to know more about youths' interests and can however help in determining when to ask youth to participate. This research can add insights about methods which are suitable for the contribution of youth in planning practices. These methods will be based on how youth views processes and how they feel that their opinions are best used. As Derr and Tarantini (2016) said the high degree of complexity and rigidity gives complications in involving youth in planning processes. This research will give insights in how these complexities and this degree of rigidity can be overcome.

1.2.2 Relevance for planning practice

Until now not much attention has been given to what can be achieved through sustained integration of children into municipal planning processes (Derr & Tarantini, 2016). It is being said that children are excluded from formal planning processes due to a high degree to the rigidity and complexity of the planning process. Neoliberal influences and planners' lack of competence is said to play a role. These neoliberal influences in which private actors are increasingly included and more influential in planning practice is financially beneficial for cities.

However, there is also a risk that an increase in private actors may push the social aspects of planning into the shadow of other, more lucrative, aspects. One of these social aspects of planning might be citizen participation (Cele & Burgt, van der, 2013). Also, the way planners' deal with youth participation plays a big role. Youth competence and meanings differ from adults; thus it is not logical to use the same planning practices for youth and adults. With using the same practices planning practitioners are likely to fail in recognizing children's' competences and meaning. As Thomas (2007) states this involves listening to children's ideas and wishes, rather than defining their needs top-down.

This research will contribute in reaching out to practitioners to recognize planning processes in which youth is interested and willing to contribute to. Furthermore, recommendations will be made in how to involve children in planning processes in a way that youth feels they really contribute. Via this knowledge involving youth in planning processes will hopefully become a more regular feature in planning practice. However, it might take a while to fully integrate youth participation in a valuable way in planning practice this research contributes by giving a push towards it. Hart (1992) stated that participation of youth in planning processes can have educational value. So eventually this research, via improved planning processes, might contribute to the personal development of youth via the educational value that participation has.

1.3 Aim of the research

The aim of this study is to get insights about including youths' perspective in planning processes. With these insights, it would be easier to determine to what extent youth want to be involved in planning processes and in what planning issues they are interested. Next to that it will be clearer what opportunities and constraints come up when involving youth in planning processes. This information will be collected from youth themselves. By asking youth directly this research will add the youth perspective to practices in an adult ruled world.

1.4 Research questions

In designing this study, the aim of the research is directly translated into research questions. By doing this, in the end the results and conclusion will come close to the aim of the research. The primary research questions are the following:

In which way could and would youth be involved in spatial planning, so that they can contribute to future spatial developments? How can institutional context adapt to their desires?

This question is supported by multiple secondary questions. The secondary questions are so formulated that they all contribute to a part of the research and complementary provide the needed information to answer the primary question:

- Why is it important to involve youth in planning processes?
- How does the institutional context influence the opportunities of youth participation in spatial planning?
- How can participation of youth in planning processes be conceptualized from a theoretical perspective?

These three questions are supposed to give a stable background on which the rest of the research can elaborate towards reaching the aim. These questions will be answered by compiling information from theory about participative planning, youth's planning and youth's geographies. However, for answering the primary question more information is needed. Therefore, a case study will be performed which elaborates the youth perspective towards planning. The following three questions form the guideline for that part of the research.

- How is participation of youth in planning processes been done until now?
- To what extent does youth want to play a role in the planning process?
- From a youth perspective, what are valuable additions to the planning process?

These three questions will for a greater part provide the information crucial to come to a well substantiated answer of the primary question.

1.5 Research Boundaries

The spatial boundary of this study is the border of a small municipality in the northern part of the Netherlands, namely the municipality of Vlagtwedde. The choice for this municipality is deliberate, because the research involves youth in the middle school age. The high school in Vlagtwedde has a regional character, the greater part of the students is from the municipality. The choice and diversity of schools is bigger in cities than in towns and attracts more students from other parts of the city or other regions. Knowing that youth is from the surrounding region, it is possible to use more concrete situations from that region as an example. Also, the municipality as case is chosen based on the opportunity to participate in the research, the school in Vlagtwedde is more eager to participate than schools in other municipalities.

The target audience is youth between 12 and 15 years young because there are some reasons to conclude that youth in that age group is somewhat subordinated in planning processes (Holt, 2011; Valentine et al., 1998) whereas it is a group that can think along in planning process. Furthermore, according to the stages of development by Piaget (1971; in Belsky, 2013) from twelve years on children can reason on the same level as adults. From twelve years on adolescents are starting to develop the ability to think on an abstract level. According to Belsky from this moment on adolescents can form their own opinion on subjects. Moreover, around the age of twelve children are more and more starting to discover their environment on their own. They do this because they are switching from an elementary school to a high school and they start to become more independent from their parents.

The theoretical scope will be further determined on a literature study. Key theoretical concepts will be children participation, Child-Friendly cities, participatory design, governance and institutionalism. Because the spatial boundary is within the Netherlands, the theoretical scope will be focused Dutch planning practice but will use insights of research conducted abroad.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the results of the scientific literature research. The literature research focuses on searching for answers on the first three research questions of this thesis. These questions are aimed at providing theoretical input towards the empirical part of this research. As a reminder, the secondary questions which will be answered through literature research are mentioned below:

- Why is it important to involve youth in planning processes?
- How does the institutional context influence the opportunities of youth participation in spatial planning?
- How can participation of youth in planning processes be conceptualized from a theoretical perspective?

2.1 Participative planning

A vast amount of research has been conducted on the subject of participation processes in planning. Within this enormous library focussed on participation processes some researchers have chosen to focus their research specifically on participation with youth and children. It is interesting to know how participation of youth differs from participation processes with adults and how participation of youth in planning processes exactly looks from a theoretical perspective. To start off with, this paragraph gives a brief overview of how participative planning has developed through the years.

For a long time the main line of thought among planners was that the physical environment could be controlled on the basis of technical (Healey, 1983), instrumental (Dryzek, 1990) and procedural (Faludi, 1987) expertise. This type of control was based on theoretical grounds and is labelled as rational planning whereas the decision and actions in planning are based on the rational consideration of experts. Examples of this idea were implemented via so-called 'blueprint planning'. Plans were exactly drawn on paper by experts, according to their ideas and were made so that these plans could be constructed quickly. In the Netherlands, this is visible in the way the post-war neighbourhoods are structured. However, this view already had its effects before the second world war. In diverse cities neighbourhoods are constructed which are based on the vision of City Beautiful by Berlage. Examples are Plan Zuid in Amsterdam and the expansion plan from 1928 in Groningen, both are products of this paradigm. Over the years, a wide variety of ideas has had influence on the built environment and is now still visible in our cities. Well-known visions are that of the Garden Cities by Ebenezer Howard and the CIAM movement of which Le Corbusier is a well-known example. These visions were all based on expert-knowledge and functionality (Cammen et al., 2012).

Due to societal changes this traditional line of thought in planning has evolved towards more communicative approaches of planning. These new approaches are all response to the implicit conclusion that one single entity (the national government) does not possess the resources to control the physical environment in such a way that all involved parties will be satisfied. The trend shifted towards solving issues in accordance with local or regional context. This development of decentralisation, issue related, area specific policy is beneficial for the participation of local actors in planning processes (De Roo, 2007).

Although the paragraph above may suggest something different, participation in planning is not a very new thing. Already in the late sixties Arnstein developed the "ladder of citizen participation" in which she distinguishes diverse types of participation on an eight-rung ladder. The types of participation differ from manipulation, which is a form of non-participation, to consultation and on the highest level of the ladder is citizen control. She uses a beautiful metaphor to introduce citizen participation. "The idea of citizen participation is like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you" (Arnstein, 1969).

De Roo & Voogd (2007) see communicative planning as processes in which communication between diverse actors facilitates reaching consensus on plans as well as developing initiatives. However, they also formulated conditions for communication in processes to change the environment. Communication between actors should be understandable, integer, legitimate and sincere (De Roo & Voogd, 2007).

2.2 Involving youth in planning

In accordance with Arnstein's conceptualization, Hart (1992) transferred Arnsteins' ideas to participation of children. He argues that children should be involved in meaningful projects with adults. This is the only way children can later become responsible, participating adult citizens. Through practice as children they can understand democratic participation and develop the competence to participate. Hart (1992) argues that young people can organize themselves without help of adults. However, he thinks that adult guidance is needed and should not be underestimated because adults can also bring experience and lessons for young people they need to learn. According to Hart (1992) the key for participation is motivation; young people can design and managing complex projects together if they feel some sense of ownership in them.

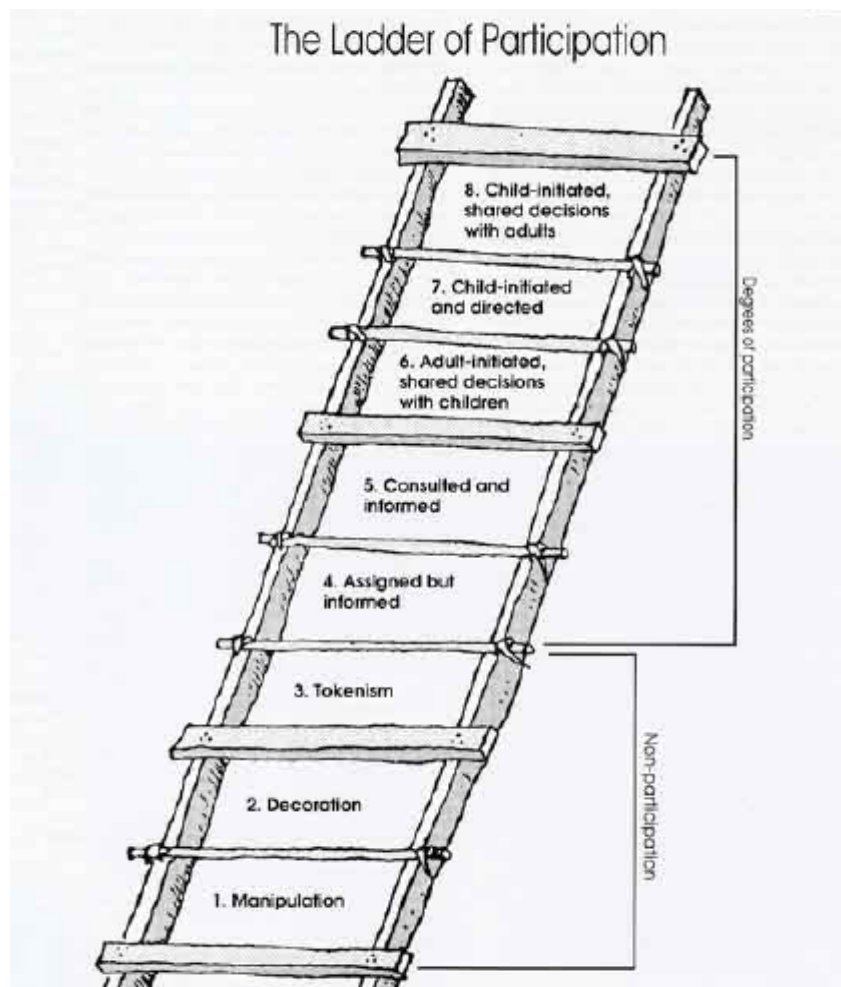


Figure 2.1 – Ladder of children participation (Hart, 1992)

Figure 2.1 shows the ladder of children participation which is set up by Hart. In the ladder, he also distinguished eight rungs however the rungs are labelled in a different way than Arnstein (1969) did. The lower three steps are forms of non-participation, in these steps children do seem to contribute to a project but don't have any real influence, don't have real understanding of the subject or have no opportunity to formulate their own opinion. The higher steps are degrees of participation in which children do formulate their own opinion, contribute or even manage the project and sometimes even initiated it. In these steps the involvement of adults takes a less prominent role (Hart, 1992).

According to some, consultation is a form of participation whereas others see it as a separate category. Sinclair (2004) states that in practice participation is often used simply to mean being listened to or consulted, in contrast to active participation where the involvement of children does make a real difference. Shrier (2001) and Hill et al. (2004) have matching views on the difference between consultation and participation, according to them the crucial distinction is that in participation children are involved in decision making whereas in consultation children do not influence decision making.

According to Hart (1992) young people's participation cannot be discussed without considering power relations and the struggle for equal rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (OHCHR, 1989) has had significant implications on the improvement of young people's participation. Greater parts of the Convention are about the protection of children's rights. However articles 12 and 13 elaborate on rights of children to express themselves and form their own views.

Article 12:

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child

Article 13:

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

In 1996, the United Nations Children's Fund initiative Child-Friendly Cities was launched. It was thus declared that the well-being of children is the key indicator of a healthy habitat, a democratic society and good governance committed to children's rights (Wilks, 2010). Our current cities are conceived and built by adults; the CFC initiative has been developed to provide an alternative to this view (Riggio, 2002). Child-Friendly Cities were conceived as a means to integrate children's rights into city decision-making and governance (Derr & Tarantini, 2015). In 2004, the Unicef Innocenti Research Centre published a framework for action on building child friendly cities. According to the authors the publication is "a framework to assist any city to become more child-friendly in all aspects of governance, environment and services" (UIRC, 2004). The framework consists of nine building blocks from which the first building block is children's participation.

The paragraphs above seem to underpin the importance of a young people's view in participation processes. As Hart (1992) argued a great part of the need for youth participation is to let youth develop towards responsible and participating adult citizens. Hart points out that participation in planning processes can have educational value for young people. However, participation in planning processes is said to provide more, diverse benefits. Cele (2006) argues that young people possess certain competences that planning should incorporate. For example; Lenninger (2008) states that a youth quality is to easily adopt the views of another group and work with this view.

Furthermore, competences can be developed through participation. As a result of diversity in projects and differences between young people in diverse parts of the world, the competences which are being developed differ (Chawla & Heft, 2002). According to Chawla & Heft (2002) participation in planning processes is a way for children to learn the built and natural world around them as well as the people who share its use and control. They even value personal learning equally important as the intended material outcomes of a program. Cele also elaborates on the educational value:

“Processes of this kind are related to environmental education. By interacting with place and reflecting on their own and other children’s experiences, children are encouraged to think independently about their experiences, and they are provided with abilities to understand that other children live different lives than they do.” (Cele, 2006 p. 212)

Involvement in design and planning of their own environment can have learning effects in the development of youth (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002). According to Chawla and Heft (2002) they develop active and responsible citizenship. Moreover, they see consultation as way to develop competences as life skills, which is an important part of psychological well-being. According to these authors the main reason to perform participation with youth is for the personal development of youth.

However, youth participation also has value for the built environment, which is the subject of planning processes. Weller (2006) distinguished a few key issues that youth values. These issues can easily be transferred to participation processes. Key issues for young people are; the desire to be a respected and valued member of society; being consulted and being able to participate in a meaningful way; having teenage-centred services and places in a community; respect for their own spaces. These issues also come forward in what, to adults, seem to be simple acts, issues or relations however for youth these are ‘big issues’. As an example, Weller took a discussion between youth in his research about ‘the bit of wall we always sit on’ (Weller, 2006 p. 105). To adults these subjects are viewed completely different than teenagers do themselves (Weller, 2006).

Furthermore, youth often has little influence in choosing the environment they grow up in or how their communities develop. Yet these public spaces and neighbourhood environment play a great role in their social and emotional growth. The views and perspectives of youth regarding their urban environment as a platform to develop bonding social capital are often different to the views of adults. However, youth are often not consulted or able to participate in the process of planning the communities they are a part of (Passon et al., 2008). Osborne et al. (2015) showed that the views of youth and adults towards urban planning in their environment, with social capital as theoretical lens, produce great differences. Furthermore Cunningham et al. (2003) also point out that children can reflect on the way their environment functions and what characteristics are missing. These might not be groundbreaking insights and ideas but do point out what is relevant to youth. Furthermore, these insights can improve planning processes by infusing creativity and fresh perspectives into design (Cilliers & Timmermans, 2014).

The section above is an example of the argument that involving youth in planning processes has benefits, as well in personal development as in contributing with ideas and insights. These benefits have not been discovered suddenly. Just like participation of adults in planning processes it has developed from forms of non-participation to degrees of tokenism and even citizen power as distinguished by Arnstein (1969).

2.3 Institutional influence

The field of participatory research with youth and children has received much attention in the academic field. However, Derr & Tarantini (2015) state that until now not as much attention has been given to what can be achieved through sustained integration of children into municipal planning processes. Participation of children and youth has been institutionalized in some instances at different scales (Derr et al., 2013; Blanchet-Cohen & Torres, 2015; Freeman et al., 2003). Freeman et al. (2003, p. 53) state that the involvement of children in planning processes remains a subject that is “neglectful of young people’s needs and desires despite the intended goodwill of the professionals involved”. Despite good intentions to empower youth there are not many successful examples. Efforts that have tried to achieve authentic participation in urban planning have received critiques for possibly manipulating participants and keeping hierarchical power relations during the process (Bosco & Joassart-Marcelli, 2015).

It is being said that children are excluded from formal planning processes due to a high degree to the rigidity and complexity of the planning process (Derr & Tarantini, 2015). Children are not yet able to think on a high level of complexity or abstraction. However, according to Piaget (in; Belsky, 2013) they are developing this ability in their childhood and from about twelve years, youth are able to reason on the same level as adults. Another reason why participation of youth in planning processes is not fully integrated is due to neoliberal influences and planners’ lack of competence (Derr & Tarantini, 2015). These neoliberal influences in which private actors are increasingly included and more influential in planning practice is financially beneficial for cities. However, there is also a risk that an increase in private actors may push the social aspects of planning into the shadow of other, more lucrative, aspects. One of these social aspects of planning might be citizen participation (Cele & Burgt, van der, 2013).

Another issue is the way planners’ deal with youth participation. Youth competence and meanings differ from adults, thus it is not logical to use the same planning practices for youth and adults. With using the same practices planning practitioners are likely to fail in recognizing children’s’ competences and meaning. As Thomas (2007) states this involves listening to children’s ideas and wishes, rather than defining their needs top-down. According to Cunningham et al. (2003) this is visible in the way cities are designed and developed. Cities are structured to meet adult desires, which don’t match the desires of children. Children experience space in a different way than adults do and can add valuable information, new visions and insights about their own environment. Interestingly, young people tend to be better than adults in adopting views of another group (Lenninger, 2008).

Participation of youth and children in such processes has long been one-way communication. Processes in which children are informed about decision making in adult owned processes and organizational environments (Halsey et al., 2006). In this view youth and children’s agency is usually seen as a distinct entity, participating apart from adults and co-existing with adults’ agency. However adult involvement and implementation is assumed in youth participation (Hinton, 2008). In this view youth have often been seen as experts about their own lives. Later, there have been examples where this perspective is left behind and shown that dialogue in collaborative projects has reciprocal benefits for youth and adults (Birch et al, 2017). Despite the field has been studied for a while this only it took long before it was really recognized.

Derr & Tarantini (2015) describe in their research how effectiveness of participation is influenced by the way contact is made with youth. For a start, they say it is important to visit the places where youth is and what they view as important. They are most comfortable in their home terrain and they are more freely and likely to participate in an active way when they are comfortable (Derr et al., 2013). They also viewed and heard that the way contact is made is important. The language of a planning professional and a child are different and this may cause troubles in understanding each other. It is the task of a professional to switch between the abstractness and complexity of the planning process and speaking to, listening to and understanding a child.

As been said participation is not new in planning, the same accounts for participation of youth in planning. Research of Nordenfors (2010) shows that in Sweden 91 percent of all municipalities use methods of youth and children participation in different forms of policy making. Furthermore, the research shows that the three most used methods are questionnaires, youth councils, and reference groups with children and young people. Almost a quarter of the municipalities stated that they even use at least four methods by which youth and children are able to influence decision-making. However, in the same research Nordenfors (2010) shows that in the field of community planning the opinions and views of youth and children are hardly taken into account. In other policy areas like; culture and leisure, social services', individual and family care, preschools and schools, the views and opinions of children and youth are taken into account much more.

Blomkvist (1999, in; Englund, 2008) states that to successfully implement youth and children participation as formulated in the Convention of Children's Rights, it is necessary to have a clear understanding that it is a separate area and there should be time invested in implementation. Furthermore Englund (2008) pointed out that policy makers have diverse attitudes towards implementing children and youth participation, she distinguished four types of attitudes. These attitudes influence the probability of a successful implementation to quite a big extent. She states that learning, knowledge processes and implementation are interdependent. In accordance with Englund's research Lenninger (2008) studied where, how and in what contexts children and young people are involved in planning and/or management of the city's outdoor environment in concrete planning situations in the Swedish context. Result of that research is the conclusion that the awareness of existing knowledge about the relation between physical environments, time spent outdoors, health and well-being and children's play is very low. Consequently, Lenninger states that the problem is not a lack of research, but how existing knowledge reaches officials and politicians and how this knowledge is turned into practice.

Furthermore Nordenfors (2010) saw in his research in Sweden that when children participate in projects, there is hardly feedback to children about how their views are used in planning processes. In these processes knowledge is often translated to abstract levels which are hard to understand for children. He went on to state that involving young people in physical planning requires different working methods than officials of municipalities are used to. To change these working methods often takes a lot of time, which often is not available.

Lane & McDonald (2007) state that a risk of participation in planning is that the focus is too much on the process of participation. Basing these processes on the need to democratize the science and generating solutions out of local knowledge and participation may lead to improved management outcomes, however there is a risk that the following solutions are technically flawed, with all forthcoming consequences. Lane & McDonald describe this for planning in community based development however this may as well apply to youth participation as a specific subject. Furthermore, they suggest that when planning agency is given to local communities via participation the multi-scalar aspects of planning should not be abandoned. The governments should still take the wider scales into account.

Vandenbroecke et al. (2010) performed a research on youth participation in Dutch municipalities. They asked municipal officials how their municipality deals with youth participation via a survey. As a result of their research they concluded that most municipalities that responded do have budget for participation and even formulated it as a policy goal. Municipalities mostly perform participation on the lower levels of the ladder of Hart (1992). However, the bigger municipalities which have a higher budget more often perform participation on the higher levels on the ladder. The officials say that they mostly use direct contact to establish participation, they hardly use internet as a platform. The authors conclude that youth participation in Dutch municipalities still is in a stage of development. Moreover, the field in which participation mostly takes place are leisure activities, youth is hardly involved in planning public space. Also in the fields of public security and transport youth is not involved in the most municipalities (Vandenbroecke et al., 2010).

Similar research on youth participation has been performed on a slightly higher governmental level, the provincial level. De Boer et al. (2010) performed a Quick Scan on the implementation and performance of youth participation on provincial level in the Dutch context. They concluded that the most provinces have not formulated any policy on participation of youth, in provinces participation takes place fragmented and incidental. The most common forms of youth participation which are used are thinking along and coming up with ideas, which can be placed on the middle levels on the ladder of Hart (1992). The provinces stated that they find it hard to find representative groups and that due to busy agendas it is hard to arrange meetings with youth. Furthermore, they state that the abstraction of many projects does not appeal to youth and that it is a reason that youth does not want to participate (De Boer et al., 2010).

According to diverse international researchers the role of the institutional context plays a big role in youth participation. Vandenbroecke et al. (2010) and De Boer et al. (2010) came to the same conclusion, more specifically for the Dutch context. Municipal budget and workforce also seem to play a role, resulting in too little possibilities to do proper participation with youth in planning. In accordance with the research by Englund (2008) that showed that it requires investing time and a certain attitude from policy makers to succeed in youth participation.

2.4 Conceptualization Youth Participation

In the following sections is conceptualized how youth participation can be viewed. Multiple questions will be combined in the conceptualization of youth participation. What are important features for young people to do proper youth participation? What are conditions for youth to participate in municipal projects? What are institutional thresholds for participation of youth. The conceptualization is drafted from a youth's perspective. The final questions which all these questions contribute to is; how can participation of youth in planning processes be conceptualized from a theoretical perspective?

In the previous chapters already some benefits, drawbacks and conditions on doing youth participation were mentioned. Benefits are for instance the addition of fresh insights in processes (Cilliers & Timmermans, 2014) or the competences that youth holds which are usefull in planning processes (Cele, 2006). From the perspective of youth diverse learning effects (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002; Chawla & Heft, 2002; Cele, 2006) are beneficial as well as the protection of what youth views as important in their environment (Weller, 2006; Osborne et al. 2015). These are benefits from the point of view of youth, drawbacks from the perspective of youth are hardly mentioned. A drawback that is mentioned is that it takes time to participate and that processes of take time over a long period whereas youth often has busy and dynamic agenda's (Vandenbroecke et al., 2010).

This does not mean that there are no drawbacks on youth participation, because these are mentioned by diverse researchers. For instance, some drawbacks in the institutional context are mentioned. Doing proper participation may lead to focussing too much on the process instead of the result. This may lead to good management outcomes on the other side there is risk on technical flawed solutions (Lane & McDonald, 2007). Lane & McDonald also mentioned that in participation processes it is harder to pay attention to the multi-scalar aspects of planning. In participation processes with youth this is even harder because they are interested in concrete, quick results instead of more abstract, long term effects (De Boer et al., 2010; Derr & Tarantini, 2015).

Participation processes with youth ask for a different attitude and approach from officials in comparison to participation with adults (Englund, 2008; Nordenfors, 2010). However, doing proper participation on higher levels of the ladder of participation requires investing time and money by governmental organizations. For participation processes with youth, even greater investments of time and money are needed, often both are not available in governmental organizations (Nordenfors, 2010; Vandebroecke et al., 2010). The needed investment can be seen more as an obstruction for governmental organizations to do youth participation. In combination with the perception that processes are too complex for youth and the rigidity of planning processes (Derr & Tarantini, 2015), time and money seem to be the main reason that youth participation is not yet common in planning processes. The lack of time and money does not allow officials to change their attitudes and working methods towards youth participation (Nordenfors, 2010). For instance, bigger municipalities tend to have the time and money to invest in adapting methods and attitude to do youth participation (Vandebroecke et al., 2010). Both Nordenfors (2010) and Vandebroecke et al. (2010) concluded that there are policy fields where youth participation is more common. However, both saw that in the field of planning the views of youth are hardly considered.

Whereas for governments there seems to be an obstruction to perform participation on higher levels of the ladder of participation, for youth there seem to be some conditions to contribute in participation processes. In the research of Nordenfors (2010) only 8 percent of the young people who took part in the survey replied that they didn't want to have any influence at all. This implies that the greater part of young people would like to have some kind of influence. The reason that they are not participating might be that they are not asked to participate. On the other hand, it is possible that their conditions are not met and because of that they are not willing to participate.

Some of these conditions are written down by Taylor & Percy-Smith (2008). They formulated these conditions as being dilemma's that come forward in doing meaningful and effective participation of young people. The dilemma's or conditions that they formulated are mentioned below;

- Moving beyond consultation.
This is in line with the ladder of participation as formulated by Hart (1992) and is about doing more than consulting or informing youth;
- Preoccupation with Formal Adult Decision Making structures and Agenda.
Often the formal public decision-making processes are made in accordance with adults and based on adults' rules of engagement. However, this often doesn't correspond with young people lived realities and cultural views (Weller, 2006; Passon et al., 2008; Osborne et al., 2015). Where there is space for youth to participate in very diverse activities, they are frequently absent in adult-lead decision-making spaces where communities and community-life are shaped (Taylor & Percy-Smith, 2008);
- Failure to recognize young people's autonomous action in everyday life.
Young people are encouraged to have their say in local youth councils, however when they participate they encounter adult values and priorities. Hinton (2008) even calls the research on childhood until now adult-centered;

- **Lack of Outcomes and Changes.**
Young people would like to see results and change when they participate. However, often this is not happening, for example in more abstract cases where outcomes often take longer to come forward. Abstraction and long term outcomes does not appeal to youth and is a reason not to participate (De Boer et al. 2010). Or as Taylor & Percy-Smith (2008 p.383) say; “Young people are frequently consulted or given a say, but rarely do they hear what happens to their view and even more rarely does change follow”;
- **Lack of Dialogue Mutuality and Integration.**
Often young people are not integrated in the dialogue, they only get to parttake in their own ‘safe’ spaces apart from adults (Taylor & Percy-Smith, 2008). Nordenfors (2010) and Vandebroecke et al. (2010) both saw that youth is only allowed to participate in certain fields, nonetheless they also have interest in areas they do not get to participate in. This is also about not having one-way communication but also involves listening to children’s ideas and wishes, rather than defining their needs top-down (Thomas, 2007).

In addition, it seems important for youth to feel comfortable in participation processes (Derr & Tarantini, 2015). This comfortable feeling can be reached through doing participation in places that youth are familiar with, this will stimulate active participation (Derr et al, 2013). Using language that appeals to youth instead of using language by which planning professionals communicate among each other, also helps in making youth feel comfortable.

To get a view of all the factors that play a role in youth participation a conceptual model has been constructed. This model shows what influences performing or not performing youth participation processes. Some aspects can be viewed from a double perspective. For example the complexity and rigidity as an obstruction, this is mostly from the governmental perspective. However, the complex and rigid processes do not appeal to youth as well and by that forms an obstructions to participate.

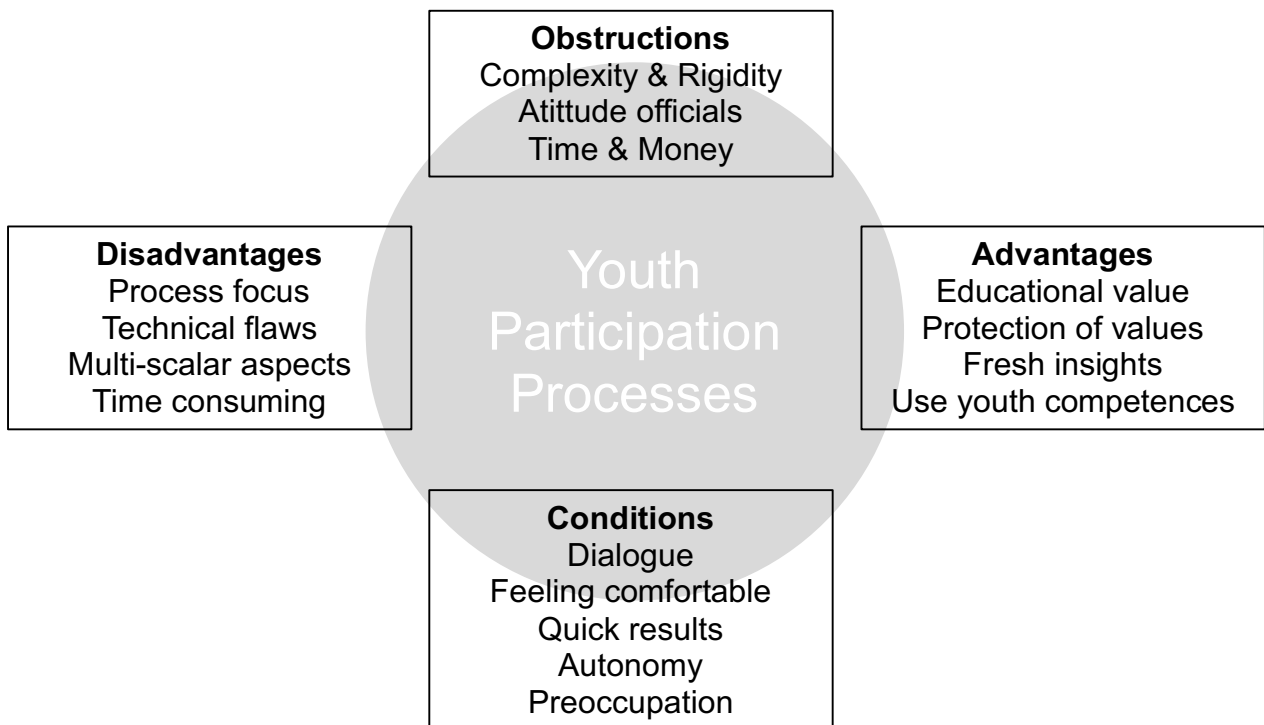


Figure 2.2 – Conceptual framework on Youth Participation in Spatial Planning

3. Methodology

This research focusses on relating the theory mentioned in the previous chapter to an empirical research. This way the theory can be made more concrete and the results can be used in the context of spatial planning. The core of the empirical part of this research lies in the last two research questions;

- How is participation of youth in planning processes been done until now?
- To what extent does youth want to play a role in the planning process?
- From a youth perspective, what are valuable additions to the planning process?

These three questions make use of theoretical information which is brought together to answer the previous research questions. To expand this body of knowledge young people are asked to share their view on participation in planning processes.

3.1 Methods of research

Two out of the three research questions which are mentioned above are aimed at collecting the views of youth on participation processes. To match the perspective of the research questions with the methods, young people are asked to participate in the research and share their views on spatial planning, participation in spatial planning and additions youth can have to these participation processes. To collect the views of young people secondary schools have been approached and asked to co-operate in this research. The schools and a selection of their students were asked to take part in a focus group research to get in-depth information and reasoning about the topic.

Conducting a focus group has been chosen to make two-way and open communication possible in this research. Focus group research is useful in investigating more complex behaviours, opinions and experiences (Clifford et al. 2010). Having a focus group meeting gives the opportunity to discuss subject and when needed clarify certain subjects and questions. Regarding the topic, it is likely to need clarification because probably only a few of the participants in the research have ever participated in a planning process or similar process. Moreover, a focus group meeting gives the possibility to be flexible in the formulation of question. For the participants, it gives the possibility to formulate their own answers instead of being restricted to beforehand formulated answers as in a survey. Moreover, according to Shaw et al. (2011) focus group is one of the best methods to do research with children or youth. Because it makes a good level of data collection possible and it is also a quite flexible method which helps in assuring a good understanding of the topic, questions and discussion among the participants.

In the set-up of this research multiple methods have been considered. Originally the intention was to conduct surveys among youth in high schools. However, the advantages of a survey did not exceed the disadvantages. Advantages for a survey are that it provides insights in experiences and motives of a population as whole and that it gives the possibility to get a lot of respondents. Survey research can be standardized for a great part which makes it quite easy to process a lot of results. On the other hand, this standardization can also be a disadvantage because it does not lead to in-depth results. Moreover, a risk of survey research is that the pre-formulated choices do not match the thoughts of respondents. Another risk is that the questions are misinterpreted by the respondents (Christiaans et al., 2004).

Another option in this research was to conduct in-depth interviews with young people. An advantage of this research method is that interviews can be structured for a great part and very specific and in-depth results can be obtained. This gives clear results which are of good use for the research. However, as for every method interviewing also has disadvantages. One of the main disadvantages is specifically applicable in research with youth and children.

In a one-on-one interview youth are more likely to feel some form of anxiety because of the relationship between adult interviewer and youth as being interviewed (Morrow, 2008). This is even stronger when the interviewer and the respondent do not know each other. With a focus group this feeling is less strong because this meeting is done together with a group of peers, this can give them a more comfortable feeling. This is in accordance with the view of Derr & Tarantini (2015) on meetings with young people.

The desk research question also concerns youth. However, the question is based on the viewpoint of municipalities towards youth participation. To gain information from that perspective two research methods have been used, the first is a desk research on studies of youth participation in planning. The context which is research is not case-limited, other This desk research will show how participation is done and show difficulties and obstructions from the viewpoint of governments. The desk research will mostly focus on municipal level documents because these mostly are more appealing and less complex to youth which is in accordance with Derr & Tarantini (2015). However, knowledge of higher policy levels will be involved when found during the research.

An interview with an official of the municipality of Vlagtwedde is conducted. The official is working in the same municipality as were the high school is located. By this the same context is being discussed whereas the points of view are different. The interview has been conducted to discuss the standpoint of the official and the municipality towards participation and to discuss the opportunities and disadvantages from an institutional point of view. Eventually the officials are the people who should be accompanying these processes and implement these processes. Using this method should give some insight on the research question; How is participation of youth in planning processes been done until now? For a more complete answer towards this question additional literature research will be done, mainly focussing on policy documents that describe participative planning processes with youth.

The choice to conduct an interview with an official and doing desk research is done because both can confirm and argue each other. To prevent misinterpretation of data by the researcher, double-checking information via two connecting methods is used. Using one method of qualitative data collection this can lead to biases and misunderstanding of results. By using multiple research methods this misinterpretation can be prevented (Morrow, 2008).

Furthermore, usage of individual methods will not provide answers to all the research questions that should be answered. Only asking young people in a focus group session will not provide an overview of how participation of youth in planning processes has been done until now. The same can be said for interviewing an official. That method is not sufficient to give insights in the opinions of young people regarding participative planning. A combination of the three methods will give a more complete view of the topic.

For this research is chosen to conduct an in-depth case study, it was also a possibility to do a comparison between diverse municipalities. However, this had some implications which would be disadvantageous. For example, multiple schools and officials should agree to take part in the research. For officials, this is probably not a problem but it is not easy to arrange the participation of classes of multiple schools, mostly regarding the parental consent. The investment to arrange this for one school already is a challenge. Also, when comparing two cases the emphasis of the research easily slides away from the theoretical background towards comparing the cases, which tends to be more descriptive. With one in-depth case the local practice can be more thoroughly analysed.

3.2 Collecting data among youth

Collecting data among youth does differ to some extent from collecting data among adults. According to Morrow (2008) this has four implications to take in account as a researcher. Firstly, the competences, perceptions and frameworks of reference of youth may differ due to a range of social differences, such as culture, age, personal characteristics and so on. The researcher should take this into account, one way to do this is by making sure that the age diversity of groups is not too great (Gibson, 2007). Moreover, the researcher should be careful with making statements about these topics. Secondly, children are potentially vulnerable to exploitation in interaction with adults (Lansdown, 1994). By doing a focus group meeting, the ratio of youth and adults is in the advantage of youth. Due to this ratio the youth, who know each other and are bonded, are less likely to be tricked into exploitation.

Thirdly, the power relation between an adult researcher and a youth participant may become problematic. However, the research is intended to be participative the results are likely to require analyses and interpretation. This is probably not done by youth themselves and needs knowledge that probably is not available to youth (Mayall, 1994). Because of this it might be helpful to reflect on the result coming forth from the research together with youth. This way they can check if the interpretation of the research corresponds with their opinion and meaning.

Lastly, research with children is often school-based and requires agreement to participate from adult gatekeepers. Whereas this research is supposed to take place in a school environment there are also school regulations that should be considered. Both have ethical implications in relation to informed consent. How these ethical implications are dealt with is elaborated on in section 3.5.

The understanding of youth in high school and academics or professionals in planning is quite different. The use of specific language which is unknown to youth should be avoided in both survey and focus group research. This is what Morrow (2008) also tried to emphasize and what also comes forward in the conceptual model. Interestingly Derr et al. (2013) support the same view for participation processes. It seems that in communication between researcher or professional and youth is a point which needs extra attention.

Specifically, for focus groups Gibson (2007) states that other aspects are very important to consider. Firstly, for youth in the age from twelve to fifteen it is possible to have a meeting with a larger group than for children between six and ten. However, groups should not be too big to prevent that not all members are participating (Gibson, 2007). Secondly, Gibson states that it is important that the variety in age between participants is not too great, the maximal difference can be two years' difference. Furthermore, Gibson, also elaborates on the theme of location choice. It is good to choose a location familiar to the participants but, according to Gibson too much familiarity should be prevented. Moreover, with the choice of a good location also distracting features should be minimized (Gibson, 2007).

3.3 Conceptual model and data collection

The conceptual model is based upon a wide variety of literature on participation processes and specifically youth participation. This forms the basis to further dive into youth participation processes and specifically the perspective of youth on these processes.

As been said two types of research are conducted, interviewing an official and doing a focus group meeting with young people. From both perspectives, the view on participative planning processes is interesting and can be applied to the conceptual model. With both methods, multiple aspects can be addressed and form the basis of both the interview as the focus group research.

Clearly the conceptual model can be divided into four elements (Obstructions, Conditions, Advantages, Disadvantages) which can be used as a base to get the research results. Both the interview guide and the focus group guide are set up based on these four parts. The participating youth will be asked to share their view via multiple questions which are derived from the four sections. They are, for example asked about what they see as reasons to participate and what they think they will get out of participation processes. Via questions like these the advantages will come forward. Other questions or discussion statements have been designed to view one of the sections in a slightly different way or to address one of the other sections.

The conceptual model is based on earlier conducted literature research and forms the basis for the further research. During this research, the theory is tested against the practical background. This means that it will be tested to what extent the elements mentioned in the conceptual model do apply in practice. The three methods will all be used to test the diverse elements (Obstructions, Conditions, Advantages, Disadvantages) but are not all equally meaningful in testing it. For example, the conditions which are formulated in theory do apply more to youth than they do to officials. The testing of that element is more focussed on the focus group with youth, this is also shown in figure 3.1.

	Desk Research	Interview	Focus Group	Total
Obstructions	3	4	3	10
Conditions	2	2	6	10
Advantages	2	2	6	10
Disadvantages	2	4	4	10

Figure 3.1 - Division research methods and elements conceptual model

3.4 Procedure data collection

In this paragraph, the procedure of data collection for the diverse research methods are presented.

Desk research

During the desk research, diverse policy documents and policy studies will be searched in municipal websites and via search machines. Keywords in searching will be: Youth Participation, Planning Participation, Ladder of Hart, Municipal Participation, Participation Proces, Youth Involvement, Policy Involvement, Youth Collaboration, Collaborative Planning. Also, combinations of searching terms are used. This research method is particularly valuable in giving insights in the obstructions that governments experience regarding youth participation in planning. It will lead to diverse understandings. Firstly, how often youth participation is done and to what extent it is introduced in municipal organisations. Secondly, it shows what the experiences of municipalities with youth participation are. And lastly, the desk research will show what opportunities and challenges officials run into when participation processes with young people are undertaken. This method does not necessarily focus on the case but also takes into account a wider view.

Interviewing an official

Part of the research is interviewing a policy maker of the municipality in which the young people live and go to school. The interview will be structured on the basis of the conceptual model. The four sections will be thoroughly discussed during the interview and the view of the policy maker from the municipality will be used in addition to the desk research. Whereas, in the desk research the Dutch context is viewed, during the interview the situation for the municipality will be discussed. The interview fits in between the desk research and the focus group which is fully focussed on the local situation and how that is experienced by youth. The interview will be held with Magda Söllner who is concerned with area

development on the spatial department and has experience with participation processes. To structure the interview an interview guide has been constructed and is added in appendix D.

Focus Group

The focus group is used to get the specific opinion of young people, how they view participative processes and how they would like to participate. The other method is the interview of an official, combined with policy document research this will give insights from the point of view of policy makers about participative planning with youth.

The research mainly focusses on the insights of youth and that is why they are intensively questioned in a focus group meeting. The questions have been mainly inspired by the conceptual model which is based on academic literature. Consequently, in the end the results of the focus group will show if the diverse insights from the literature research do play a role and to what extent the diverse statements play a role. Questions have been based upon the four segments of the conceptual model. That means that the segments form the build-up of the survey and give structure to the survey. The focus group guide is added in appendix C.

The respondents were asked to value the diverse elements of the conceptual model via questions diverse questions. By doing this, insights will be gained about what is important to youth in participation processes. Not all questions are 'normal' interview questions. For example, to get to know in which situations and locations youth likes to participate and to get a feeling for the degree of complexity they want to be involved in they are asked to draw on a map. This map will show, after they drawn on it where the participants live and which locations are important to them and where they would like to participate. From additional reasoning to their drawing information can be derived about the locations they would like to participate and which factors influence that. The thought behind this method comes from mental map making, which can provide insights on the views that people have of their environment (Lynch, 1960; White & Green, 2012; Lehman-Frisch e.a., 2012). According to Trell & van Hoven (2010) this can also be done in a group context and trigger spontaneous discussion about places and activities. This might be valuable in getting more in-depth information and reasoning.

As Morrow (2008) and Derr et al. (2013) elaborated on communication with youth is very important. It is important that researcher and respondent do understand each other so that both questions and answers will not be misinterpreted. This is even more important in the focus group session which is been held. To reduce the chance on any communication problems and via that also reduce the chance on confusion in results, the guide for the focus group meeting will be reviewed. The reviewing will be done by teachers and a pedagogical researcher, both work with youth more often and are able to signal how good questions are asked to youth. Moreover, they are not planning professionals which makes that they can help signalize the use of technical language.

The focus group sessions will be held in a group from around ten young people in their own school and one of their teachers will be attending the group session. This makes sure that youth does feel comfortable and safe when attending this session (Derr & Tarantini, 2015). Also, according to Shaw et al. (2011) the groups should not be too big to stimulate discussion. Furthermore, to encourage a more dynamic, interactive and creative session Shaw et al. (2011) advise not to use formal methods of questions and answers. Because the session is semi-structured it has to some extent the characteristics of how a participation process could look like. Together answers will be sought and insights will be shared. According to Derr & Tarantini (2015) complexity seems to be a problematic factor in participation processes. To test this, diverse but short cases will be discussed during the focus group session also via the previously mentioned map drawing.

Gibson (2007) provides more information and guide lines on how to organise a good focus group session. He states that the role of a moderator is very important. The moderator should facilitate discussion in a non-directive and unbiased way, based on pre-determined questions. To observe group interaction, supervise recording equipment and to take notes a second moderator is recommended. The second moderator will be a teacher of the school where the session takes place and the first moderator is the researcher. In the role of second moderator participating in the discussion is not recommended (Gibson, 2007).

The focus group for this research will be held on 9 June at the secondary school RSG Ter Apel in Ter Apel. The school provides education for the region around the village of Ter Apel. The area around the school is quite rural and thus the participants in the research are not all living near the school. Some have to cycle up to twenty kilometres to go to school. However, because the villages are small and Ter Apel is one of the bigger cores in the region the environment is known to all participants.

During the research ten students will take place in the focus group, their age varying from twelve to fourteen years young. The students are all taking geography classes and the focus group meeting will take place during a geography class. The meeting will be audio recorded and next to the participants involves a moderator and an observer. The observer is their geography teacher and he will focus on observing the group processes. The moderator will lead the discussion and pose questions and statements to the participants. The questions and statements are based on the conceptual model and can be found in Appendix A. One part of the focus group research is about how young people view their own environment and what they see as important in their environment. This will be measured via map drawing and observing the discussion in the group during the map drawing. The group will be asked to mark their home with a letter which is personal to them. The following step is to all circle places and spaces which are important to them.

3.5 Ethics

As stated in section 3.2 research in collaboration with youth or with minors in general asks for extra attention in regard to ethics. From a legal point of view all respondents are under parental authority and should be treated as such in a research. This means that their data should be protected at all times. Furthermore, this implies that not only the respondent should be asked to participate but also their parental authority (Morrow, 2008). In addition to that, when the research is done via the school the respondents are attending, the teacher or the school should grant permission to do the research (Lehman-Frisch et al, 2012). Both are the case for this research and so, before taking the survey, parents, school and respondent should have granted permission. The informed consent letter and the document in which the research is explained to the students are both documented in Appendix B.

Another ethical aspect is the rule that the trust of child and parent cannot be violated. Additionally, also the child's privacy cannot be violated (Hopkins, 2010). Hopkins (2010) gives some examples how the privacy and trust can be secure. Choosing pseudonyms and formulating questions as neutral as possible are processes that should be viewed critically. Moreover, Hopkins states that the private situation of a respondent should not be violated more than necessary. Additionally, he thinks that the writing with regard to the research about the respondent should be in a positive way (Hopkins, 2010). Finally, Hopkins states that a research with minors should be performed 'power neutral'. This means that it is unethical to force youth to take part or to convince youth of some perception or opinion during the research or to let youth feel some kind of pressure.

During interviews it is important to have a good understanding between the researcher and the respondents (Dunn, 2010). This also applies for focus group research because in both a conversation between respondents and researcher takes place. However, it is still important

to take in account ethical aspects. For example, the aspect of power relations between researcher and respondent and in this case evenly important, between adult and youth. During the focus group session youth should be approached in a friendly way and feel comfortable. That is one of the main reasons that a teacher will be attending the meeting, that is a more familiar person to youth and is more likely to make them feel comfortable.

4. Results

In this chapter the results of the empirical analysis are presented. The main focus in this chapter is on answering the research questions which have been presented as empirical questions in the previous chapters. Nonetheless the theoretical section of this thesis is supportive to this chapter. Also the statements which are collected with the methods will be connected to theoretical statements, this way the relationship between the theoretical knowledge and experience will be connected. The chapter is built up and divided on basis of the three empirical questions;

- How is participation of youth in planning processes been done until now?
- To what extent does youth want to play a role in the planning process?
- From a youth perspective, what are valuable additions to the planning process?

4.1 Youth participation in the Netherlands

In advance of this research two reasonable and useful reports were published in which research was conducted among municipalities and provinces in the Netherland. The first research was commissioned by the ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport and was about the state of youth participation among municipalities in the Netherlands. The research was done by Mak, Gilsing & Wróblewska (2016) from the Jonker Verwey Institute. Whereas this thesis is specifically about participation in spatial planning, that research was more general youth participation in Dutch public policy. With the research the ministry also wanted to measure to what extent municipalities have implemented the 'Jeugdwet' or in English the law on youth which came to effect on the first of January 2015 (Mak et al., 2016).

The Jeugdwet (Overheid, 2016) is for the greatest part about organizing support for youth and preventing problems with and among youth on an administration level that is the closest to the youth themselves. However, the law has also a part in which youth is encouraged to use their own strength and giving direction to their own lives (Rijksoverheid, 2015). This does not specifically mean that participation processes in planning are now mandatory for municipalities but Mak et al. (2016) did take that into account in their research. They researched the role of youth in the development of research as well as the effectuation of municipal policy. Their research consisted of a survey which was sent to all Dutch municipalities, eventually 122 municipalities did respond and filled in the entire survey.

The interview with Magda Söllner of the municipality of Vlagtwedde made clear that youth participation is not regular business in municipalities. During the interview, she elaborated on participation and specifically youth participation in the municipality of Vlagtwedde. She stated clearly that from the municipality there were no plans to do participation with youth. But when youth shows initiative to a project they would be open to talk and work with youth. Also, there are no policy documents of the municipality of Vlagtwedde that mention youth participation. The combination of policy documents and the interview is used to elaborate on youth participation in the Dutch planning and the findings are related to the conceptual model.

Obstructions and Conditions

In their research Mak et al. (2016) found out some interesting facts, for instance that bigger municipalities are more likely to involve youth in policy making (on all policy terrains). Just over sixty percent of small and medium municipalities (under 20.000 and 20.000 to 50.000 residents) involve youth in policy making whereas this percentage is above eighty percent in larger and the biggest municipalities (50.000 to 100.000 and more than 100.000). Furthermore, in the research the municipalities have also been asked to elaborate on which policy-themes they are involving youth and on what level of participation.

During the interview Magda Söllner made similar remarks to the possibilities of small municipalities on youth participation and even on all forms of participation. She made clear that the time, money and officials at a municipality are limited, certainly in a municipality as Vlagtwedde that is reasonably small and has a relatively small municipal organization. Due to this limitation, the municipality must be cautious in determining the projects that ask for participation processes because they take time to set up and produce results. This is the case for all participation processes and in Magda's opinion not more for youth participation processes. For greater, more profound projects they do set up participation processes with stakeholders and residents. For smaller projects the municipality of Vlagtwedde works accordingly to the current regulations that prescribe plans and documents should be available for the citizens' perusal.

In the municipality of Vlagtwedde there have been some examples of groups of youth or children who took the initiative to start a project. Examples are initiatives to expand a playing zone around a school. The initiative for the project came initially from children of the school and eventually the project has been realized with help from the municipality. Magda Söllner emphasized on the fact that the municipality is open for initiatives from citizens and youth. However, the municipality is not planning on purposely doing more projects with youth.

Youth participation does not necessarily have to take place on a municipal level. On the level of provinces youth participation can also take place which De Boer et al. (2010) have researched. They concluded that in 2010 just one of the provinces have integrated youth participation in policy. However, most of the provinces were working on stimulating and integrating youth participation in their organization and projects. Interestingly one of their conclusions was that provinces mostly use youth participation to increase involvement, awareness about the spatial environment and to create support. Interestingly, during the interview the multi-scalar aspects, complexity and rigidity of projects were discussed. Magda Söllner stated that these are indeed hard components for youth but she also stated that this is not solely the case for youth. According to Magda Söllner these are little different from processes with adults. These are all subjects which are also hard for adults in participation processes. However, she thinks that these can all be partly overcome via a good preparation and designing a good process.

On the level of municipalities, the level of abstraction is supposed to be lower because the projects are more concrete and locally situated. Due to the local environment, young people tend to have more knowledge about the surroundings and can reflect on the situation and come up with valuable ideas. Whereas earlier was mentioned that Belsky (2013) wrote that children from the age of twelve can reason on a higher level of abstraction it seems hard for them to capture the abstraction level that provinces work with. De Boer et al. (2010) themselves already mention that youth choose quick results and concrete projects rather than abstract issues in spatial planning.

Advantages & Disadvantages

In their research De Boer et al. (2010) also asked provinces about the values they see in youth participation. The provinces mentioned mostly value the fresh ideas of youth and that participation processes also can be valuable for young people as a learning process. Furthermore, also some disadvantages were mentioned, these include the difficulties youth have with a high level of abstraction and finding a representative group to participate.

During the interview the advantages and disadvantages on youth participation were discussed. According to Magda Söllner there are some differences between youth and adult participation as well in results as in the process. An example are the working methods, she emphasized on the fact that participation processes with youth ask for a different approach than processes with adults. The differences in these processes are mostly based on making youth feel comfortable and giving them the opportunity to think up creative ideas. This makes

the processes different from working with adults. To get in contact with youth, officials should visit youth for example in classrooms. However, Magda Söllner emphasized that it costs a lot of time, energy and work to set up something like that which makes the threshold to do such a meeting quite high. In the municipality of Vlagtwedde for great projects, processes are often shaped via walk-in meetings and are free for every citizen to walk-in, also young people. However, often these meetings do not attract young people, according to Magda Söllner this can be due to a lack of interest from young people, who rather point their attention on other activities.

Mak et al. (2016) asked in what themes municipalities are involving youth. This is structured via diverse categories in the survey which can be connected to the theme spatial planning. For example, the category called Leisure concerns playgrounds and youth meeting places. Moreover, there are categories called Designing public space/Spatial planning/Housing and there is another category called Traffic (safe routes). These three categories can all be grouped under the theme spatial planning. However, the amount of youth involvement differs a lot between the categories. In table 4.1 the three themes are shown along with the percentage of municipalities that involve youth per theme. Also, in the tables the difference in participation levels is shown, in this case there are just four levels; informing, consulting, participating and stimulating initiative.

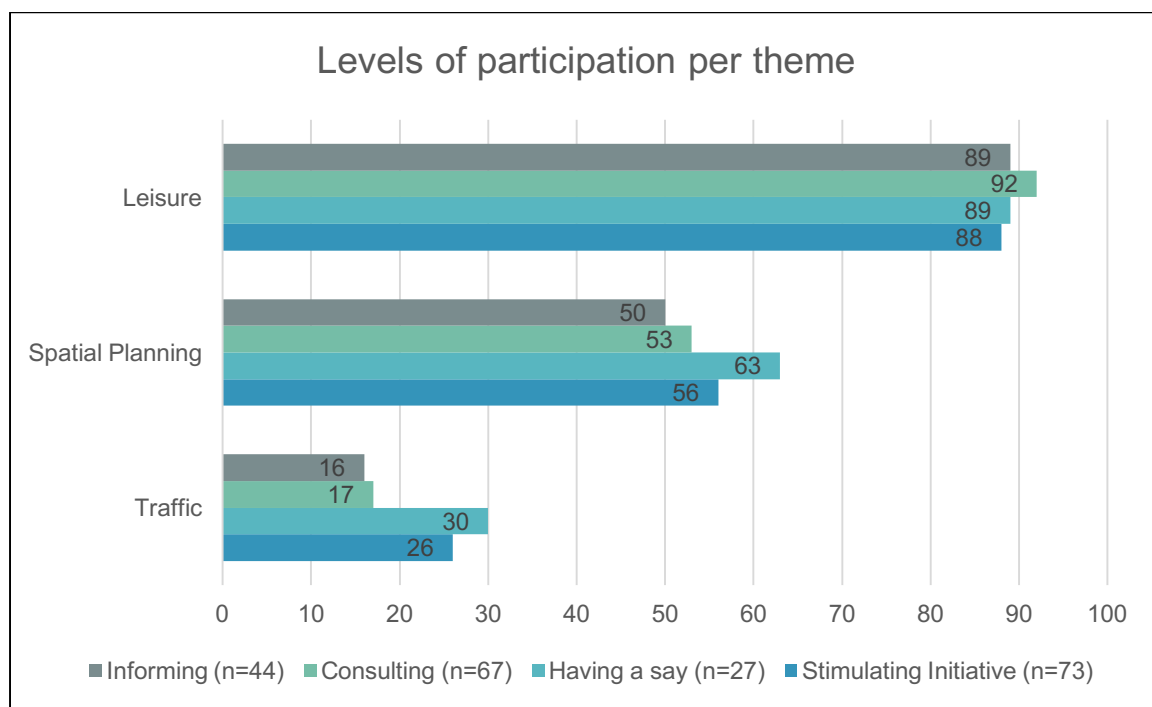


Figure 4.1 – Levels of participation per theme. (Mak et al., 2016, edited)

It is good to highlight that in figure 4.1 there is difference between the diverse bars, every level of participation has had a different number of reactions of municipalities. Before answering the question about the categories, they have been asked about what level of participation they work with, the 122 municipalities were able to give multiple answers. So out of 122 municipalities only twenty-seven have said that they do youth participation on the level that they let youth have a say. Moreover, more than half of the municipalities say that they stimulate the youth in taking initiative.

Interesting is the fact that in the category leisure (figure 4.1) the percentage of participation on all levels is very high. This category is formed by playgrounds and youth meeting places, places that are specifically for youth and for spare-time, things that can be labelled as fun. Spatial planning and traffic are both less specific for youth but not less important (Mak et al., 2016).

The main benefit of doing meetings with youth according to Magda Söllner is the fresh insights and new ideas it delivers for a project. Whereas sometimes it is thought that youth have a great imagination without the plans being executable, during the interview Magda Söllner emphasized that youth often delivers insights and ideas that are very well executable. The fresh ideas mostly come forth from the notion that youth are not withheld by any restrictions, they do not think about finances and procedures. However, this is sometimes also a disadvantage because procedures and finances are a compulsory part of projects, plans do take some time to be implemented. According to Magda Söllner youth does not consider the time it takes to implement these plans which makes them impatient, they rather want something to be built tomorrow than next year. The amount of time these procedures take often leads to youth not being interested in participating.

Conceptual model

In comparison to the conceptual model, Magda Söllner made clear during the interview that some factors are important in working with youth. She recognizes that youth often have fresh insights and that they would like to protect their own values. Moreover, also the time component and the conditions from the viewpoint of youth are recognized. On the other hand, some statements in the conceptual model are, according to Magda Söllner, not just obstructions or disadvantages in participation processes with youth. As an example, she mentions the complexity and rigidity, multi-scalar aspects and process focus. Those are not just hard for youth, these are often also hard for adults who are not very familiar with planning processes. From the viewpoint of officials Magda Söllner states that she does not really know about the educational value for youth. Moreover, she states that from the viewpoint of an official this is of less relevance than it is for a teacher.

Based on the literature and the interview it is visible that not many participation processes about planning take place with youth. The bigger municipalities do have more experience with youth participation in general, and therefore also in planning. This seems a general trend, the bigger municipalities do have more resources to do participation processes than the smaller municipalities, this is agreed upon during the interview. Furthermore, the attitude of officials also plays a role in doing participation processes, as Magda Söllner said, some, mostly older officials consider themselves experts whereas participation processes often ask for officials who accompany the process.

4.2 Youth on participation

This section emphasizes on how youth views their role in planning processes. These views are based on the focus group session which have been held with a group of second grade students from the secondary school in Ter Apel. In total, ten students took part in the focus group, the greater part of them being thirteen-year-old and some of twelve years young. The focus group was structured via a guide which is based on the conceptual model that has been showed in figure 2.2. The interview guide can be found in Appendix A. During the interview, also a small drawing exercise have been conducted. The drawings have been made on a map of the municipality in which the participants live. Based on these drawings it was partly possible to recognize places or locations that are important to this specific group of young people.

From the focus group two files have been produced, the first is an audio file of the focus group. The second product is a map where the participant had to draw on, this product is elaborated on later. The audio recording has been transcribed to be able to analyze the subjects which have been part of the session. Because in the focus group multiple persons are taking part in the role of participant it takes a little other form of transcribing than with a regular interview with just one or two interviewers and an interviewee. In focus group transcripts, it is important to not only transcribe what is said but also interpret the situation, for example when jokes are made (Stewart et al. 2009, in: Bickman & Rog, 2009). Also the interpretation of how sentences or words are said is important, for example to recognize if people are hesitating or in doubt. These observational remarks may be added to the transcript by the author as they might be useful (Stewart et al. 2009, in: Bickman & Rog, 2009).

The second product that has been produced are drawings on a map of the municipality in which the participants live. On this map of the municipality some village names where already shown as well as the secondary school that the participants were attending and where the focus group was hosted. The participants firstly had to point out their own home. This was necessary to show relations on the map; how wide their scope is in the municipality. It is possible that someone who lives close to the school or village center perceive those places as more important than young people do who live in another village or in another neighborhood.

Participation from a youth perspective

To know what role youth wants to play in planning processes it is for a start important to know how they view their spatial environment, what they think what should be done and how they view collaborative planning processes in general. Youth and children have viewpoints and needs that qualitatively differentiate from the viewpoint of adults (Skivenness & Strandbu, 2006). The participants were asked to elaborate on how they view their environment, if they do sometimes think about the spatial design regarding safety, practicality and aesthetics. The initial answer was precarious but negative, they did not consciously think about their environment, they described themselves as 'consumers' of the spatial environment.

However, they later did mention that they do value well maintained roads and cycle paths and that they like to have opportunities to eat their food along the way or buy food. The routes they use daily are important to them, also because some of them must cycle up to twenty kilometers in order to get to school. They do value a well-designed daily environment. However, they do differentiate in which places are more important, the well-designed home environment is more important than the environment of their school or sporting facility. However, the school environment could be improved according to the participants. These are examples of the experience of their daily spatial environment, places that youth often visits and uses, for those places they do appreciate well-designed, safe places. This corresponds with the suggestion that young people seem to give more importance to social relations and personal meaning of places rather than physical features of spaces (Derr, 2002).

Some of the participants mentioned knowledge of participation processes, due to their parents participating in such processes. In general, they do value those processes and where able to specifically mention why they value participative or collaborative processes. The element of having a voice and collective decision-making played a role, literally they said;

“Because then multiple people can have their say, it is not just two people who decide”

Because multiple people have the opportunity to voice their opinion, not just two people who will decide. They view that having a voice is important to come to good solutions and that shared opinions do count. Moreover, the participants do think it is reasonable to let them have a voice, certainly on subjects that feel connected to and do have an opinion on. But, the item of money does play a role in who should have a voice, because according to them it is better to let adults decide when it is about a lot of money. What a lot of money is, was hard to say. However, for a railroad or highway adults should be asked whereas for a playing ground or the area around the school they do think they could decide along.

Geographies of youth

Moreover, to visualize the situations the participants have been asked to draw on a map. These drawings showed the same feeling of space, the participants draw circles around places they feel that are important to them. The figures show mostly area's close to their home, where they personally feel connected to. During the discussion which came with the drawing, school sites, sport facilities and local facilities as a local market or meeting place were also mentioned. The participants themselves emphasized on the places that are important to them and not on physical places that they feel need improvement. Again, this is in line with the suggestion that young people seem to give more importance to social relations and personal meaning of places than the physical features of place as mentioned by Derr (2002). Figures 4.2 and 4.3 illustrate this. In figure 4.2 the letters (A, C, R, the first initials of three participants) approximately indicate the homes of three of the participants whereas the circles are what they view as important. In figure 4.3 this is the same for the letters (R, C) and the circles.

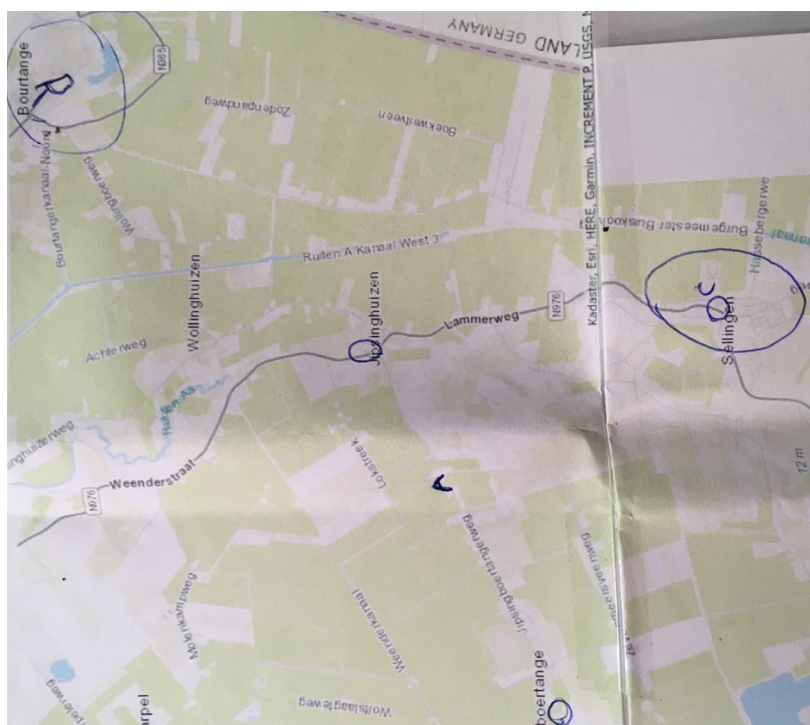


Figure 4.2 – Part of map drawn by three participants.



Figure 4.3 – Part of map drawn by two participants.

During the focus group the drawing also have been discussed, to get to know the reasoning behind the drawings that the participants made. Also, visible in the figures above are circles around whole villages or village centres. At first the participants argued that those are important because of the facilities in the centres, however they also argued that those are meaningful because one of the participants lives there or in the proximity of the centre. The following discussion among two of the participants illustrates how places are valued, being in accordance with what Derr (2002) elaborated on.

“What are other places which are encircled?” – I

“Valthermond, Sellingen.”- R1

“Jipsingbourtange haha. That place does not have anything.” - R2

“So what. I do live there.” - R3

“There is nothing to do there, there is nothing there. You can only visit the house of X. Just demolish the place because there is not much housing.” - R2

“There is housing over there, they are even building new houses. It really is a good place.” - R3

This discussion shows two things, the first and main finding is that youth does value places they are socially related to. For participant R3 the place of Jipsingbourtange, which is a hamlet in the proximity of Ter Apel, is very important and the participant defends the place. However, the other participant just sees it as a hamlet without any social relations to the participant. That is the other obvious finding, places do have diverse meanings to people.

Youth on youth participation

Furthermore, the participants are asked about processes which specifically focus on youth participation and how they view their role in such processes. This part can directly be linked to the various parts of the conceptual model. The questions during the group session and thus the discussion was based on the four parts of the conceptual model. At first the participants were asked to elaborate on what they view as advantages or reasons to participate in planning processes.

The participants reacted precarious on the question, they could relate to that participating in such a process would have educational value. However, they did not come up with an answer themselves, they found it hard to elaborate on specific reasons to participate. However, when the question was made more specifically they could relate to it. Some of them said that they would participate if it was fun to do or when it was about situations that they found important. Another reason to participate is when the subject of the process is an environment that affects them. The example that has been used in the focus group was their own school which will be renovated and enlarged. They agreed on that they would have liked to have a voice in the planning of the renovation and enlargement, because they use it and have ideas on the topic of how to make it better. Pointing out advantages that were clear was found hard but the eventual topics that are mentioned seem to match the advantages that are mentioned in the conceptual model. Youths' insights and protection of their values seem to go hand in hand and showed in the discussion, the educational value was also something that the group could agree on.

Whereas it was hard to elaborate on the advantages the participants were much more decisive in addressing disadvantages of participating in such processes. The firm answer on which the group agreed was time-bound. They thought it would cost them time at the expense of their free time, they would rather like to do leisure activities. Also some argued that they did not see such a process a very fun thing to do, it would be boring to participate in a planning process. Comparing this to the conceptual model, it can be said that this attitude corresponds with the disadvantage that is mentioned. In the following discussion this comes forward.

"Why wouldn't you participate in a process?" – I

"Because it takes time." – R1

"Also costs money, takes effort and is boring." (multiple participants) – R2

"We have to study for school" – R3

"That is true, if the teachers give less homework we might be able to compromise." – R4

However, the attractiveness of a process can be conceived as a condition for participating in a participative planning process. This is not mentioned in the conceptual model nor emphasized on in the diverse sources that have been studied. Of course, this could have been seen as a clear condition which was perceived as not necessary to mention. But, youth seems to view this as different, certainly when these processes contest with leisure activities.

The vertical contraposition of obstructions and conditions was harder to point out to the young people. Mainly the concepts of complexity and rigidity are hard to test. To eventually get clear results on those topics and see how they view complexity, examples of projects have been used. Situations and places on diverse scale levels have been listed to see how young people value these situations. This form of questioning showed a clear division in what kind of projects and what scale level attracts young people and the projects that do not appeal at all to young people.

The participants reacted most positive to example projects which were very local such as playgrounds, sporting facilities and the surrounding of their home. They reacted positive and enthusiastic when these situations were mentioned. Notably they did not react evenly enthusiast when the school environment was mentioned. This is remarkable because the participants all visit the school environment on daily basis and they most likely have social relations and a personal meaning regarding this place. However, based on the reaction of youth during the session it seems that they have a less positive association to school than to the other subjects. Moreover, this might be influenced by their overall attitude towards school which is said to be not very positive (Keys & Fernandes, 1993). Contradictory to the school environment was the enthusiasm on participating in projects which involved playgrounds and sporting facilities, which seem to evoke positive feelings.

Projects on a higher scale level which are more complex do not appeal to young people. Reactions towards projects on plan-making for the city center, long-term vision making and sustainability plans where not appealing to the participants. Their primary reaction on participating was mostly negative and even their overall reaction to these plan-making situations was also not positive. They did not seem to believe in the success of making long-term visions and sustainability plans for their municipality. Moreover, their reactions on participating in upgrading or planning new bus trajectories was the following; they mentioned diverse bus trajectories from their house to school or every big city in the Netherlands. They reacted with laughter to the diverse examples for bus trajectories they brought up.

During the session, also the planning of a windmill park was mentioned. Interestingly, this is a quite current subject in the region because there are windmill parks being planned in the surrounding (Windpark Drentse Monden Oostermoer, 2017). However, these plans do encounter a fair amount of protest in the region. The students did react in a unanimous way. They shared the opinion that plans like that should be made by adults, which seems to imply a sense of complexity. Furthermore, they think those processes are very boring.

“And the planning and building of a windmill park?” - I

“Nooo” (al participants together) - R

“Boring” - R1

“My parents will do that” - R2

“Why don’t you want to participate in that project?” - I

“Because that is business for adults” - R1

“Indeed, business for adults” - R

However, this opinion might be influenced by their experience with windmill projects. The regional attitude towards building a park of windmills is mostly negative (Platform Storm, 2017). Moreover, these projects are on a higher scale level and complexity than the levels that seem to appeal to youth. Furthermore, on the question if they would prefer long-term projects or short-term projects the answer was very clear. The short-term projects are preferred. The participants where very clear and additionally they mentioned that short-term projects where preferred because in a couple of years the situation would have changed and they will not benefit of the project. Moreover, due to their knowledge on the windmill project they seem to know how rigid and time-consuming processes can be and they dislike this rigidity.

Youth on adults and participation

Also, they seem to prefer to not get involved too much in such projects but do want to have a say in the decision-making process. Most of them rather give their opinion in the finalizing stage of a project. Choosing between a couple of options or voting yes or no for a plan seemed the most appealing to them. They do want to be involved in the decision-making however according to their reactions they do not necessarily want to be involved on higher steps of the ladder of participation (Hart, 1992). Moreover, later Hart (2008) reflected on his ladder metaphor as it not being a ladder to measure the degree of participation but as a framework which give place to how youth views their position youth in ratio to adults. Thus, it frames how youth is feels they are placed in participation with others. The amount of time which youth invest does not seem to be the most important nor is the moment when they enter the process (Hart, 2008). This attitude comes back in the following section of the focus group.

The participants were asked to react on participating with adults in such processes. Their reaction to making a choice between participating with or without adults was clear, they would like to perform without adults. This question asked for a response based on duality, the one or the other. However, their explanation of this answer balanced the situation quite a lot. The participants feel that when they participate with adults their voice is less well heard.

“Suppose a participation process starts. Do you think it is important that you, as youth, can have a say on yourself?” – I

“Yes ,alone.” – R

“Or with adults?” – I

“Alone” – R

“Rather have a say alone because then we have a stronger voice” – R1

“Alone, because otherwise we will have more of a hassle” – R2

The participants think they should have a majority so their opinions and meanings are well heard and are not out voiced by adults. Regarding Harts' own reflections to the ladder of participation this is exactly what the ladder should provide a framework for, not measuring the participation but putting the participation of youth in relation to adult involvement (Hart, 2008). Moreover, the participants all agreed on the importance of a well-working plan which is valuable for everyone rather than the implementation of their plan. For that reflections of others, adults and professionals should be considered they agreed.

During the focus group session, the young people mentioned how they view that participation processes should start. In their opinion these processes should be initiated by adults and they should be approached by adults. However, they emphasized that in their opinion the initiative for participating in these processes should lay with the professionals or adults. Moreover, for most of them it was a condition that the process should not take up a lot of spare time, they preferably participate during school hours, for example during a geography class. However, physically viewing a building site and participating on-site also appealed to a part of the group. Most of the group remained with their standpoint of participating during school hours.

Finally, the participants elaborated on how they view the end-result of a participation process. With a lot of realism, they concluded that some of their plans may be utopian and not realistic if they participate in a planning process. Also, they thought their plans may be technical impossible to execute or financially not reasonable. Moreover, they think that plans

should not only fulfill their wishes or should be made to their opinion but should be made to fit everyone and thus should be to everyone's satisfaction. They do value the presence of others, adults and professionals in these processes to come to the most fitting plan for everyone. This statement is in accordance with what Lenninger (2008) elaborated on, youth and children are more open to views of others and able to work with these views.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This chapter is about evaluating, looking back, reflecting and looking towards the future. Firstly, the conclusions of this research are elaborated on. The final answers to the research questions can be found in the first paragraph of this chapter. Secondly the process towards the results and the results themselves are discussed. What could have been better and how did the decisions during the process work out? Also, the results are placed in the context of academic research and the Dutch planning context. Finally, based on this research some recommendations for further research and planning practice are formulated.

5.1 Conclusion

Youth does want to play a role in the planning process, however, there are some conditions to participating. In short those are related to the time that a process takes and how quick results can be seen. So, they would rather see a project being realized in two months than in two years. Also, they do like to spend their spare time doing other activities. Moreover, they want to be taken serious, which they feel the most when they can participate with a numeric majority over the adults taking part. Also, if they see a part of their plans back in the end-result they will be satisfied, with the understanding that some plans might not be realistic in technical feasibility or available resources. Furthermore, youth does not want to be involved in all projects. Projects that take a lot of time, cost lots of money and are concerned with high complexity are labeled as 'adult projects'.

Youth can have valuable additions to the planning process, their contribution is often seen as fresh, full of ideas and thus welcome. Magda Söllner elaborated on that youth does experience their life different than adults and thus views certain things differently or do not view barriers that adults view. Moreover, youth themselves also feel that they see things differently than adults and are therefore afraid that their ideas will not stand if adults participate along with youth. Also, youth has feels connected to certain places and does know and can point out wat they view as important for those places.

The main reason to participate and that makes participation processes successful is not mentioned in the framework. Youth themselves elaborated on the missing part and in the literature and during the interview this also came forward. Participation processes should be attractive to let youth take part, they should be made fun. When the processes are not fun to take part in, youth rather invest their spare-time in something else. When a meeting is organized during a class and students are required to take part it provides no certainty for a good result. In situations like these youth is not really motivated and does not seem to strive for the best result. To get the best result, attractiveness of a participation process seems to be a key condition. During the focus group, youth said that visiting interesting project sites can be interesting. Maybe, connecting to youth' interests will help, for example via games or other technology.

The most subjects came forward in both the interview and the focus group. The students found the dialogue, quick results and autonomy parts important whereas they did not really elaborate on the condition that they want to feel comfortable. They did prefer having a meeting in the school environment but that was mostly because it consumes less spare time when meetings take place during class. On the other hand, feeling comfortable can be interpreted as being comfortable with the people participating, there they clearly did prefer a process with other students and not necessarily with adults. This also came back in the dialogue and autonomy subjects, youth feels more listened to in a process with people of similar age. Magda Söllner showed during the interview that she viewed these points mostly the same, also based on the experience that open walk-in meetings do not attract youth. Furthermore, both youth and professional thought that pre-occupation is not necessary, this can be limited to giving options to choose with knowledge of the background.

Furthermore, the focus group also showed that youth is not very much interested in making plans from start to finish and rather make simple choices between plans which then can be implemented quickly. On the ladder of participation that is not particularly on the higher steps of the ladder. Therefore, it can be questioned if authorities should strive for participation on high steps of the ladder as it is designed by Hart (1992). Furthermore, it can also be questioned how important youth participation is because youth is just a small part of society. Youth prefers to participate autonomous, separate from adults, but it can be questioned if this is realistic. The amount of power and autonomy that can be given to youth should be considered consciously.

The obstructions did also show differences between the theoretical framework. The most discussed part was that of complexity and rigidity, Magda Söllner had the opinion that this is not only difficult for youth participation but for all participation processes. Due to the set-up of the Dutch laws and regulations the process gets quite difficult. Moreover, a lot of stakeholders can give their opinion about it, which makes it more complex. The work of Mak et al. (2016) showed that municipalities are more successful doing youth participation around leisure- and youth activities rather than spatial planning. A great difference between both is the amount of people the project affects, which is probably bigger for spatial planning projects than youth projects, making those projects more complex. Youth themselves also recognized the complexity, they mark certain projects as 'projects for adults'. These are more complex projects, on a higher scale level and elapsing a longer period. The limited time and money available with municipalities seems to be a correct statement, certainly in smaller municipalities. Bigger municipalities do seem to have the means to have officials focus on participation processes. In smaller municipalities, with less resources the officials often have less time to focus on participation processes and have more tasks over which they must spread their attention.

From the list of disadvantages the main thing that seems to differentiate from the framework is the process focus and the risk on technical flaws. Dutch municipalities do have or otherwise hire technical knowledge to prevent technical flaws. In contribution to this statement Magda Söllner questioned on what parts of a plan the participation of citizens let alone youth is asked. She stated that it is more reasonable to ask about certain colors of a bridge rather than about the technical effectuation of a bridge. She stated that both process focus and technical flaws do not certainly rule out each other but both have to be balanced well. What has been said for complexity does also account for multi-scalar aspects, youth themselves think that certain projects are 'adult projects', mostly on higher or multi scale levels. The fact that participation projects take time is both from the viewpoint of officials and youth difficult, youth gets less interested when it takes a lot of time and officials do not have an infinite amount of time.

Lastly, the advantages of youth participation. Mostly all seem to be true, youth values certain places they feel a personal connection to. Their fresh insights and other ways of viewing subjects are welcome in participation processes. Moreover, often these insights and ideas are very helpful and well executable, which is endorsed by Magda Söllner. For the use of youth competences, the same cannot be said, on the contrary, Magda Söllner has the feeling that youth is mainly focused on themselves, raised in an individual way. She had the feeling that youth is not necessarily better in adopting and working with views of someone else than other people as Lenninger (2008) stated. Magda Söllner thought this is quality is differentiating between people and not specifically between age groups. On the educational value, Magda Söllner and the students from the focus group thought that processes like these do have educational value, however this is often not the main reason to participate.

Figure 5.1 shows a revised version of the conceptual model. Figure 5.1 hints on how the conceptual model could look like with use of the insights based on this research. The main changes are the addition of fun, keeping spare time and the extraction of technical flaws and preoccupation. As been said, this is based on the conceptual model and adopted to the outcomes of this research, which can be discussed as will be done in paragraph 5.2.

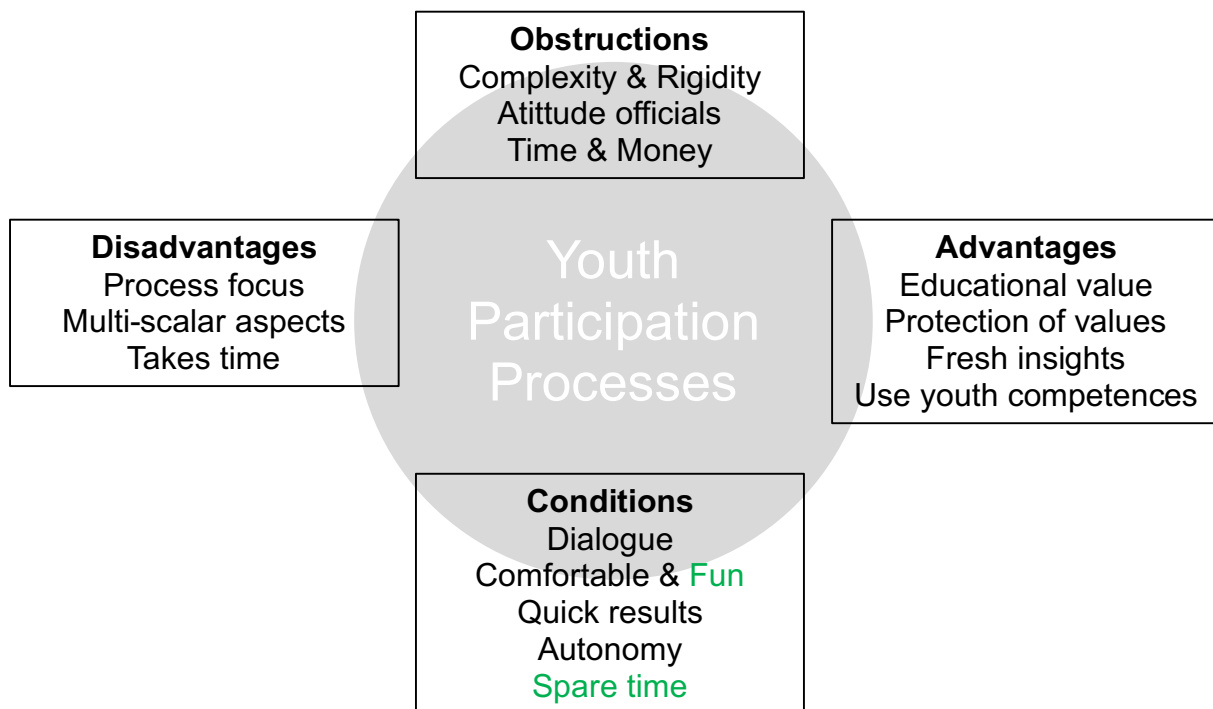


Figure 5.1 – Revised conceptual framework.

5.2 Reflection

The results of this thesis are in line with previous research and are therefore not very particularly shocking. However, some variables might have had influence on the results of the research or could have been done in another way. For example, the methods of research, which were desk research, an interview and the main method was a focus group. Both the interview and the focus group are methods which represent a case and do not represent a full population. For this research both the interview and focus group were related to the municipality of Vlagtwedde. A relatively small municipality next to the border of the Netherlands. As the research of Mak et al. (2016) showed, bigger municipalities do have more experience with youth participation. This might have resulted in slightly different reactions and experiences during both the focus group and the interview. Another municipality, for example a city like Groningen or Utrecht might have led to different results.

Furthermore, the research has produced data which cannot be used to represent the entire population of youth between twelve and fifteen years' young in the Netherlands. Simply because a non-representable part of society was asked to participate. However, the results that have been produced are in line with prior research and can therefore be used to support the previous research. All in all, this provides a good view of youth participation in Dutch planning. Additionally, the research does show insights to how youth participation in this case is perceived with some clear examples. Those examples, the citations and the case specific information are obtained specifically through using these methods. Shortly, the methods do not provide a broad view of Dutch planning on youth participation but the methods do provide specific information which also can be valuable.

Some question came up during the writing of this thesis, these questions are related to the ladder of participation, to what extent participation should be implemented and how the ambitions for the implementation are. The focus group meeting showed that youth is not particularly interested in participation in planning, in some cases they are but in general they are happy to let others make the plans and decisions in planning. However, it seems, based on literature that authorities do value participation of youth and want to expand it in the future. During the interview this also has been hinted. However, the literature and the interview also showed that municipalities find it hard to reach youth and involve them in plan-making and decision-making. For the future, it seems important to balance the ambition of authorities with the willingness of youth to participate.

5.3 Recommendations

In the discussion part of this research there already have been hinted on some downsides of the used methods of research. This research has added to the knowledge about youth participation in planning. However, there are some things that are not known until now and might be interesting to get to know. One example is the fact that this research focused on the municipality of Vlagtwedde, a relatively small municipality in the Netherlands. It will be interesting to know how bigger municipalities view youth participation in planning and how the youth in these bigger municipalities views participation. A similar research can be performed in diverse municipalities to be able to recognize differences between municipalities. On the long term this can maybe lead to clear recommendations on how to structure participation in diverse municipalities.

In the Dutch governmental landscape, some changes lay ahead in the future. Firstly, the new environment law will be implemented in 2018. This will lead to other working methods in planning in municipalities. That will probably also have implications for participation processes in municipalities. It will be interesting to know how participation can be implemented in this new environment law to get the most out of it. That is not just for youth participation but for all forms of participation.

Secondly, multiple municipalities are working towards a merger of multiple municipalities into one. In the province of Groningen this is a very current theme. The municipality of Vlagtwedde, where the research has taken place will merge per 2018 with the municipality of Bellingwedde into the new municipality Westerwolde. Mergers like these have consequences for the working methods in the new organization. It will also be interesting what effects the restructuring and merging of municipalities can have for participation processes and for policy on youth.

A part what was mentioned in literature is the reciprocal learning effect of youth participation in planning projects. However, it was not possible to show that effect in this research. Showing the reciprocal effects takes a longer period to measure among youth. It might be interesting to perform a longer-term research which focusses specifically on these learning effects. Then, the specific learning effects can be more explored and the true contribution of participating in projects in the development of young people can be researched.

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Appendix A – Informed Consent



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Geïnformeerde toestemming

Ik,(naam ouder/verzorger), stem toe dat (naam kind), mee doet aan een onderzoek dat uitgevoerd wordt door **Martijn Bentum (student Faculteit Ruimtelijke Wetenschappen, Master Sociale Planologie; Rijksuniversiteit Groningen)**.

Het kind is zich ervan bewust dat deelname aan dit onderzoek met als titel; “Youth owns the future - A research on the role that youth wants to play in building their spatial environment”, geheel vrijwillig is. Hij/zij kan de medewerking op elk tijdstip stopzetten en de gegevens die ver-kregen zijn uit dit onderzoek terugkrijgen, laten verwijderen uit de database, of laten vernietigen.

De volgende punten zijn aan het kind uitgelegd:

1. Het doel van dit onderzoek is... om inzicht te krijgen in hoe jeugd betrokken wil en kan worden bij de ruimtelijke planning van hun eigen leefomgeving. Door het onderzoeken van betrokkenheid van de jeugd over ruimtelijke opgaven, die gaan over hun eigen buurt, wijk of stad, kunnen zij een toekomstige invloed hebben op hun eigen specifieke wensen in hun leefomgeving. Het onderzoek bestaat uit een groepsinterview waarin vragen worden gesteld over de ruimtelijke omgeving en de planning van de ruimtelijke omgeving.
2. Deelname aan dit onderzoek zal meer inzicht geven... in hoeverre jeugd betrokken wil en kan worden om ruimtelijke opgaven van hun leefomgeving te beïnvloeden in ruimtelijke planprocessen.
3. Er zal het kind gevraagd worden... of hij/zij deel zou willen nemen aan het groepsinterview waarbij vragen worden gesteld over hun eigen leefomgeving en de inrichting daarvan.
4. Het hele onderzoek zal ongeveer 50 minuten duren en zal onderdeel zijn van een aardrijkskunde les.
5. Het onderzoek is anoniem. Er zal alleen naar de leeftijd gevraagd worden.
6. De gegevens die verkregen zijn uit dit onderzoek zullen vertrouwelijk worden behandeld en kunnen daarom niet bekend gemaakt worden op een individuele identificeerbare manier. De gegevens zijn alleen voor de onderzoeker beschikbaar.
7. De onderzoeker zal alle verdere vragen over dit onderzoek beantwoorden, voor, gedurende of na het onderzoek.

Datum: Handtekening ouder/verzorger:

Appendix B – Explanation research

Uitleg bedoeling onderzoek

Het onderzoek “Youth owns the future - A research on the role that youth wants to play in building their spatial environment”, is mijn masterscriptie voor de opleiding Sociale Planologie. Deze opleiding houdt zich bezig met de ruimtelijk omgeving, alles wat buiten gebouwd en aangelegd is, maar we houden ons vooral met de gebruikers van de ruimtelijke omgeving. We houden ons bezig met wat mensen van de ruimtelijke omgeving vinden en hoe ze er mee omgaan en hoe we dat kunnen verbeteren.

Vaak worden volwassenen gevraagd om mee te denken over het verbeteren van deze omgeving. Bijvoorbeeld wanneer een straat of wijk wordt gerenoveerd of wanneer er andere nieuwbouw of herinrichtings-projecten worden gepland. Jullie ouders worden in zo'n soort situatie bijvoorbeeld gevraagd om hun mening te geven. In steeds meer plannen worden ook ouderen benaderd om hun mening te geven. Dit is bijvoorbeeld om te bepalen of minder mobiele ouderen nog overal kunnen komen en wat handige oplossingen zijn zodat ouderen nog van alles kunnen ondernemen.

Maar, tot nu toe komt het niet zo veel voor dat ook jongeren, zoals jullie betrokken worden in dit soort projecten. Terwijl jullie ook zeker gebruik maken van de ruimtelijke omgeving. Jullie gaan iedere dag naar school, sporten en doen andere dingen waardoor jullie steeds in aanraking komen met de ruimtelijke omgeving. Dus waarom zouden jullie niet betrokken kunnen worden in het maken van plannen? Er zijn al verschillende manieren bedacht waarop dit kan gebeuren maar er staan nog andere vragen open. Bijvoorbeeld; waar willen jongeren nou wel over meedenken en waarover niet? En waarom willen jullie wel over bepaalde dingen meedenken en over andere niet, waar komt dat door. Op wat voor manier zouden jullie willen meedenken? Of willen jullie eigenlijk alleen maar je mening geven?

Dat zijn vragen waar ik me in dit onderzoek mee bezig houdt en ik hoop dat jullie daaraan mee willen werken en voor inbreng willen zorgen.

Ik ben jullie bij voorbaat al dankbaar.

Martijn Bantum

Appendix C – Guide focus group

Guide Focus Groep Meeting

1. Introductie aan de hand van korte, beeldende presentatie waarin planologie in het algemeen wordt toegelicht. Hiermee wordt context gegeven aan het onderwerp, waar gaat het nou om, waar houden we ons mee bezig?
2. Vervolgens een korte uitleg over het onderzoek waarbij participatieve planning in het algemeen wordt uitgelegd en vervolgens de gedachte achter planningsprocessen met jeugd. Specifiek worden ook de deelvragen even genoemd.
3. Het interview zal niet meer dan een les in beslag nemen en ik wil jullie vragen om niet alleen antwoord te geven op de vragen maar ook te vertellen waarom je iets vindt. Jullie mogen deze vragen ook aan elkaar stellen. Om uiteindelijk de gegevens te kunnen verwerken wordt de audio opgenomen. Benadrukken dat de gegevens op een anonieme wijze verwerkt worden

Over planning in het algemeen.

Denken jullie er weleens bewust over na hoe de omgeving eruit ziet? Waaraan denken jullie dan?

Hoe belangrijk vinden jullie het dat jullie omgeving functioneel, veilig, esthetisch goed (mooi), praktisch en goed onderhouden is? En waarom?

Verschilt dat ook nog per locatie? Welke plekken vind je dat belangrijk?

- Huis, wijk, school, vereniging, centrum etc.

Hebben jullie weleens ideeën over situaties? Dat jullie denken, dit kan beter of anders?

Is één van jullie ooit betrokken geweest bij het aanpakken van een omgeving/plannen maken voor deze aanpak? Zo, ja in wat voor vorm?

Wat vinden jullie van het idee dat bewoners/gebruikers mee plannen mogen/kunnen maken voor de omgeving?

Vinden jullie dat jongeren daar ook een plek in kunnen hebben?

Welke omgeving?

Jullie hebben voor jullie allemaal een kaart liggen met daarop het dorp. Ik zou graag willen dat jullie allemaal hierop aangeven waar jullie ongeveer wonen. Hiervoor hebben jullie allemaal een eigen kleur potlood.

Met dezelfde potlood mogen jullie nu plekken gaan aangeven op de kaart waarvan jullie het belangrijk vinden dat deze goed zijn. Goede ruimtelijke kwaliteit hebben, veilig zijn, praktisch zijn etc. Terwijl je aan het tekenen bent mag je de locatie een nummer geven. Geef (mondeling) aan waarom je deze plaats kiest.

Stel dat er voor deze locaties plannen gemaakt gaan worden om het te veranderen. Bij welke wil jij betrokken worden? Waarom juist bij deze en waarom bij anderen niet? Zouden jullie hier een volgorde in kunnen aangeven. Eventuele andere locaties kunnen ook toegevoegd worden?

Voordelen

Stel dat er zo'n proces zou plaatsvinden. Wat zouden voor jou redenen zijn om mee te doen?

- Leerzaam, interessant, woonomgeving=belangrijk, woonomgeving kan beter, volwassenen andere dingen dan ik etc.

Nadelen

Wat zou voor jou een reden zijn om niet mee te doen in zo'n soort proces?

- Tijd, meer iets voor anderen, niet interessant, voor volwassenen, heb er zelf niet zoveel aan.

Deelname project

Stel er zouden in de omgeving een aantal verschillende projecten gaan gebeuren in de ruimtelijke omgeving. Aan welke zou jij mee willen doen?

- Aan de hand van een aantal cases wordt getest op abstractie:
Schoolomgeving, wijkaanpak, speeltuin, sportpark, windmolenpark, toekomstvisie, ontwikkeling buslijn, duurzaamheidsaanpak etc.

Waarom wel en waarom niet aan iedere case?

Aan wat voor project zou je liever meedoen? Iets wat heel snel klaar is, bijvoorbeeld het aanpakken een speeltuin. Het nieuwe centrumplan, dit duurt iets langer. Of bijvoorbeeld een nieuwe snelweg/windmolenpark, dit duurt vaak minstens 5 jaar of langer.

Conditions

Stel je voor dat je inderdaad zou deelnemen aan zo'n proces wanneer zou je dan eigenlijk willen instappen. Is dit vanaf het begin, waarin de voorwaarden worden neergezet en het allemaal nog een beetje vaag is. Of is dit vanaf later, zodat je echt kan mee denken over hoe het eruit ziet? Of wil je kunnen kiezen tussen een paar opties? Of wil je aan het eind geïnformeerd worden?

Op welke manier wil je betrokken worden?

Samen met volwassenen? Samen met andere jongeren een eigen plan bedenken? Enquête? Speciaal gevraagd worden door iemand van de gemeente wat wij belangrijk vinden. Volwassenen vragen wat wij van hun plan vinden.

Waar vind je dat het plaats moet vinden?

Stel dat iemand van de gemeente hier op school zou komen en dat die dan zou vragen mee te denken met hem. Als het zou plaats vinden na schooltijd hier in het lokaal zou je dan meedoen? Als het zou plaats vinden na schooltijd in het gemeentehuis zou je dan meedoen? Wat is het verschil voor jullie tussen beide? *Op locatie van het project?*

Wanneer is het project geslaagd? Wat wil je ervan terugzien eigenlijk?

Wanneer is het succesvol, als volledig jouw plan er inzit of als iedereen tevreden is?

Appendix D – Interview guide municipality

Interview guide gemeente

Korte intro onderzoek: Het onderzoek gaat in op de rol die jeugd (12-15) wil en kan spelen in de ruimtelijke ordening. En dan met name in participatieprocessen. Ik probeer erachter te komen in welke situaties ze wel of niet betrokken willen worden, waarom in die situaties wel of niet en op welke manier ze betrokken willen worden.

Doel van interview: Het grootste deel van het onderzoek richt zich op wat jongeren willen maar om op een realistische wijze te kunnen implementeren is natuurlijk ook de andere kant nodig, de overheid. Het doel van dit interview is om er gedeeltelijk achter te komen wat afwegingen zijn in participatieprocessen, wat als voor- en nadelen wordt gezien en in hoeverre u verschil ziet met 'normale' participatieprocessen.

Verloop interview: Met uw goedkeuring zal ik het interview opnemen met mijn telefoon zodat ik de gegevens kan terugluisteren en op de best mogelijke manier kan verwerken. Het interview wil ik graag beginnen met een korte introductie u en uw werkzaamheden. Vervolgens zullen we ingaan op de participatieprocessen. Ik verwacht dat het interview ongeveer 45 minuten in beslag zal nemen.

Algemeen

Voorstellen van de geïnterviewde – Wie bent u? Wat is uw rol bij de gemeente op dit moment en wat was dit in het verleden? Waar bestaan uw voornaamste werkzaamheden uit?

Hoelang werkzaam bij gemeente?

In welke rol?

Ervaring bij andere gemeenten?

Participatie met jeugd

Bent u zelf in enige vorm bekend met participatieprocessen met jeugd of kinderen?

Zo ja, wat zijn uw ervaringen daarmee?

Zo nee, waarom niet? Zijn de juiste projecten daarvoor niet langs gekomen of is daar een andere reden voor?

In wat voor projecten zou u overwegen om een participatieproces met jeugd op te zetten? Dit mag een specifieke case zijn maar ook een meer algemene situatie.

Welke vorm acht u geschikt om met jongeren samen te werken. Of heeft u via collega's vernomen dat bepaalde vormen juist wel of geen succes waren.

Wat ziet u als voordelen van het samenwerken met jongeren in ontwerpprocessen in de ruimtelijke ordening?

Wat ziet u als nadelen van het samenwerken met jongeren in ontwerpprocessen in de ruimtelijke ordening?

Ervaring 'normale' participatieprocessen.

Uiteraard heeft u of in ieder geval de gemeente, ervaring met vormen van participatie. Gedeeltelijk zijn deze formeel, in het kader van de WRO maar er bestaat ook enige vrijheid in het vormgeven van participatie in de ruimtelijk ordening. Wat is uw ervaring of de ervaring van de gemeente met participatieprocessen?

Hoe regelmatig maakt u gebruik van participatieprocessen? Hoe vaak is de vorm van participatie afgeleid van de WRO en hoe vaak wordt er zelf invulling aan gegeven?

Welke participatievormen komen naar uw idee het meest voor bij uw gemeente of andere organisatie waarmee u bekend bent?

Wat is de voornaamste reden om te kiezen voor die benadering?

Kan u een verschil beschrijven tussen participatieprocessen met kinderen of jeugd en met volwassenen? (In het geval van weinig ervaring, een inschatting maken?)

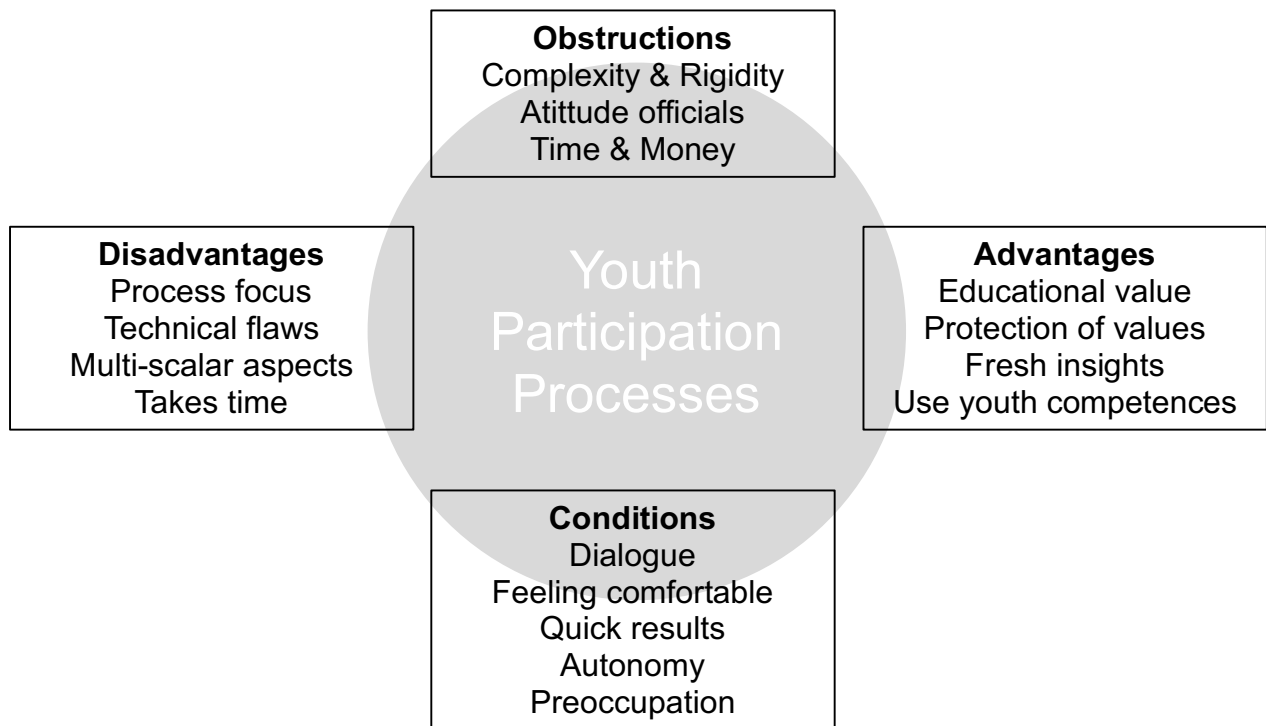
Verschillende elementen participatie met jongeren.

Op basis van diverse wetenschappelijke bronnen heb ik een theoretisch kader ontwikkeld waarin de voordelen, nadelen, voorwaarden en belemmeringen voor het doen van jongerenparticipatie in ruimtelijke ordening zijn opgenomen.

Ik zou graag van u per categorie eerst een reactie ontvangen. Vervolgens kunnen we het kader langsgaan en kijken of u zich daarin kan vinden of dat u bepaalde zaken juist anders ziet of ervaart. Primair gaat het om uw visie vanuit de beleidszijde maar u mag ook andere inzichten benoemen.

- Belemmeringen, wat maakt het lastig om het goed uit te voeren in een gemeente of überhaupt in beleid?
- Voorwaarden, onder welke voorwaarden dient het volgens u plaats te vinden?
- Nadelen, welke zaken zijn volgens u nadelig in participatie met jongeren? Dit mag in vergelijking met 'normale' participatie maar ook juist over participatie in het algemeen.
- Voordelen, wat zijn volgens u de grootste voordelen van participatie met jongeren? En hoe verschilt dat van participatie met volwassenen?

Theoretisch kader:



Vanuit het theoretisch kader heb ik een aantal dingen geselecteerd waarop ik graag uw reactie wil ontvangen.

- Als een belemmering wordt de complexiteit en rigiditeit van projecten genoemd, hierdoor is er weinig ruimte voor afwijking van processen en daarom zou participatie met jongeren niet ideaal zijn.
- Als tweede het aspect tijd en geld (misschien wel in combi met houding officials). In de gemeentelijke organisaties is er onvoldoende ruimte en geld voor dit soort processen.
- Vanuit de voordelen; Jongeren zouden voor een frisse blik kunnen zorgen, kijken anders naar bepaalde zaken, in hoeverre ziet u dit als een voordeel/toegevoegde waarde? Kunnen alleen jongeren dit bieden?
- Een ander is de bewaking van waarden van jeugd. In andere vormen van participatie komen dan de belangen van jongeren ook expliciet naar voren?
 - o Voorbeeld: Schoolzone aanpak Ter Apel – SWBS Pork?
 - <https://www.vlagtwedde.nl/Nieuws/Persberichten/2017/januari/Vernieuwde-schoolzone-SWBS-Pork-Ter-Apel-officieel-geopend>
- Vanuit de nadelen wordt genoemd dat er voor gewaakt moet worden dat het proces niet te veel voorop komt te staan aangezien dit anders benaderd moet worden dan bij volwassenen. Men schijnt bang te zijn voor technische problemen in het ontwerp hierdoor. Ook kost het vaak tijd. Hoe kijkt u hier tegenaan?
- Als laatste, een reden die wordt aangevoerd is dat jeugd het inzicht in de abstractie van diverse schaalniveaus ontbreekt. In hoeverre ziet u dit als een probleem? In relatie met de projecten waarvoor u jeugd zou benaderen?