

Citizen Participation in Environmental Planning Processes

How the perception of stakeholders about citizen participation in environmental planning processes aligns with how participation is secured in policy documents.

Author: Eline Bolt

University of Groningen

Faculty of spatial sciences

Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning

Bachelor project 2021

June 11, 2021

Supervisor: D. Jong

Abstract

In the Netherlands, the rise of the 'participation society' has put increasing emphasis on involving citizens in planning, designing, decision-making and governance. Public participation is institutionalized in all spatial planning processes. However, a gap can be noticed between the desired and the actual level of public participation. Aiming to close this gap is essential in order to provide benefits in the form of more efficient interaction and better accepted projects. With the help of a case study on the EemsDollard2050 projects, this research aims to assess the why, who, when, and how of citizen participation in a planning process, to find out how the perception of stakeholders about citizen participation in environmental planning processes aligns with how participation is secured in policy documents. For this, Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation is used to assess the level of participation and to discern the difference between the actual and the desired level of participation. A literature review found that participation is just institutionalized in the form of an involvement regulation, and a right to challenge. This still gives policy makers a lot of freedom in the design of participation. Regarding the perceived participation of stakeholders, the data gathered from interviews and a survey suggest that participation levels are dependent on the phase of the planning process, and on how the residents are affected by the change. A shift towards higher levels of participation in earlier stages can be observed not only in policy, but also in society, as environmental planning is argued to increasingly need the input of residents.

Table of contents

Abstract.....	1
1. Introduction	3
2. Theoretical framework	4
2.1 Defining citizen participation	4
2.2 Participation in decision-making	5
2.3 Conceptual model	5
2.4 Expectations	6
3. Methodology.....	7
3.1 Data collection.....	7
3.2 Data analysis.....	7
3.3 Ethical considerations	8
4. Results	8
4.1 Acknowledgment of participation in policy	8
4.1.1 Why	8
4.1.2 Who	8
4.1.3 When	9
4.1.4 How.....	9
4.2 Acknowledgement of participation in the case study.....	9
4.2.1 Why	9
4.2.2 Who	10
4.2.3 When	11
4.2.4 How.....	12
5. Conclusions	12
References	15
Appendices	18
Appendix A – Research questions	18
Appendix B – Interview Guide	18
Appendix C – Survey design	21

1. Introduction

Decentralized, 'community-based' approaches in climate adaptation planning are now viewed as a key strategy to confront global climate change (Fischer, 2021). This is because the realisation that some public issues are often too complex for the local government to solve alone is growing (Uittenbroek et al., 2019; Zuidema & de Roo, 2015). Therefore, interest around participation in environmental decision-making has increased in recent decades (Luyet et al., 2012). A global shift can be observed from a 'planning for the people' to a 'planning with the people' approach (Adjei Mensah et al., 2017). Also in the Netherlands, a rise of the so-called 'participation society' can be noticed. Such a 'participation society' requires all citizens to take responsibility for their own lives and their environment. This shift comes with an increase in community engagement, by involving citizens in planning, designing, decision-making and governance (de Weger et al., 2020). Active participation is argued to lead to legitimate and informed decision-making, accounting for the needs of society (Wang & Chan, 2020).

One widely adopted framework to clarify the influence of the public on decision-making is Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation. This framework is used to categorise the level of citizens' power in decision-making, by measuring the extent to which they can influence the end product. Herein, the gap between the desired and the actual level of public participation is the phenomenon later called the Arnstein gap (Arnstein, 1969; Bailey & Grossardt, 2006; Wang & Chan, 2020). Decreasing this gap increases the quality of public involvement, which explains the societal relevance of exploring it (Bailey & Grossardt, 2006). Also, aiming to close this gap is essential to provide for efficient communication and better accepted projects (Wilker et al., 2016). Uittenbroek et al. (2019) mention the lack of empirical studies on how public participation is actually practiced, and of studies on how participation processes are designed, therefore indicating the academic relevance of studying this. Additionally, from the perspective of the public, current research often lacks a specific empirical grounding in citizens' own expectations and experiences of participation. This is, however, necessary to be able to understand what citizens demand from democratic institutions today, and how they can make a valuable contribution (Brenninkmeijer, 2021; Zakhour, 2020). This research thus aims to assess the why, who, when, and how of citizen participation in a planning process, to find out how the perception of stakeholders about citizen participation in environmental planning processes aligns with how participation is secured in policy documents. The central question this research tries to answer is:

How does the perception of stakeholders about citizen participation in environmental planning processes align with how participation is secured in policy documents?

To provide an answer to this main question, a list of sub questions is formulated (Appendix A, p.18). First, it is essential to know to what extent policy documents acknowledge citizen participation in environmental planning processes. Second, the view of stakeholders on citizen participation needs to be assessed, by considering the view of policy officers and that of citizens. The extent to which citizens themselves feel they participate in environmental development of their surrounding environment will be investigated. To research actual levels of participation, this research will investigate the instruments for participation that are used in the different stages of the environmental planning process.

To specify this topic, a case study is used to assess how stakeholders assess participation in reality. The case study that is used is the integral coastal project in the area between Delfzijl, the Eemshaven, and the Dollard, which currently lies under the umbrella of EemsDollard2050 (Punter et al., 2020). The EemsDollard2050 project is an integrated project, consisting of many smaller projects along the coastline which were previously taken on separately by different organisations. The coastal project is

an example of a climate adaptive project. In climate change adaptation, and especially that related to flooding and water themed adaptation, the need for public participation has been featured significantly, which is why this case is particularly interesting (Hügel & Davies, 2020). The project, among others, focuses on safety, the design of the waterfront, and the management of the storage place for excess polder water (Punter et al., 2020). It aims to increase safety but also the quality of nature, agriculture and recreation (EemsDollard2050, 2021b). The end responsibility lies with the steering group, consisting of representatives from all involved parties, the province, water boards, municipalities, the Ministry of Agriculture, nature and Food quality, companies, and environmental organisations. This steering group mentions participation as a specific pillar within the project (EemsDollard2050, 2021a).

The following chapter will outline the concepts and theories that are relevant to this research. Afterwards, the methods of this research will be discussed. Then the results of the data gathering will be outlined, from which the discussion and conclusion will follow.

2. Theoretical framework

To assess the extent of citizen participation in environmental planning processes, it is crucial to know more about the concept of participation, and how it can be embodied in environmental planning processes. The following paragraphs will therefore provide background on these concepts, and how they are related, to explicate what this research focuses on.

2.1 Defining citizen participation

Citizen participation is a broad concept used in many contexts and is argued to have not one single definition (Hügel & Davies, 2020). Alternative terms are ‘public participation’, ‘stakeholder engagement or involvement’, ‘new public involvement’ and ‘community or civic engagement’ (Sarzyński, 2015). Participation is often viewed as an umbrella term, including numerous forms of interaction with citizens, from informing them halfway the process through dialogue or debate to including the implementation of jointly agreed solutions (Hügel & Davies, 2020). Arnstein however defined it more abstract, citizen participation being the redistribution of power, that enables the ‘have-not’ citizens (citizens that were excluded from political and economic processes) to be included in the future, to share in the benefits of the prosperous society (Arnstein, 1969; Wang & Chan, 2020). All these forms of participation can be summarised as the passive or active involvement of individuals or groups in a decision-making process (Scherhauer, 2021).

Arnstein (1969) developed a typology of eight levels to create clarification around the concept of citizen participation (Figure 1). These eight levels each corresponded to the extent of citizens’ power in determining the end product. The higher the position on the ladder, the greater influence the citizens have in decision-making (Wang & Chan, 2020). Arnstein was the first academic to clearly define the different gradations of participation, and this theory is widely used in social sciences (Bailey & Grossardt, 2010). To categorise the levels of participation, Arnstein’s framework will be used in this research.

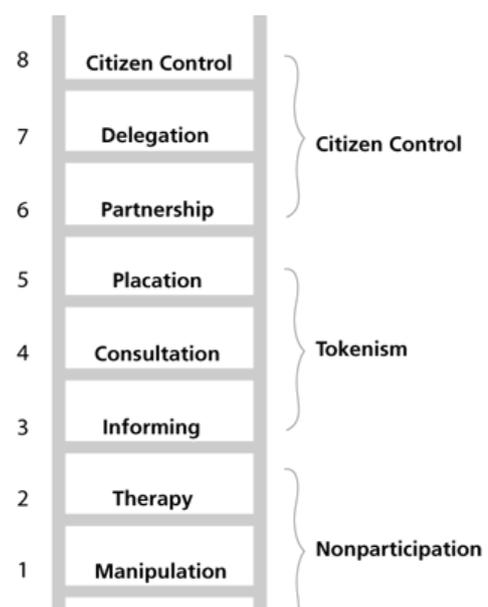


Figure 1 - Ladder of degrees of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969)

Arnstein (1969) also mentions that ‘participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless’ (p.216). This relates to the argument of Fischer (2021), that decreased distance between governments and citizens does not automatically mean governments are more responsive (Zuidema & de Roo, 2015). For that to be true, mechanisms need to be in place that grant citizens some power over governments. The Arnstein Gap illustrates that a redistribution of decision authority is a prerequisite for increased justice (Bailey & Grossardt, 2010). The Arnstein Gap therefore is an interesting tool to identify to what extent the stakeholders’ desires about their involvement are fulfilled.

2.2 Participation in decision-making

Within planning processes, participation takes place at different levels, but also at different times in the planning process (Uittenbroek et al., 2019). A decision-making process entails several possible stages of involvement, namely the pre-decision stage, the decision stage, the post-decision stage, and the feedback stage (Sarzynski, 2015). On January 1st, 2022, the Dutch ‘Omgevingswet’ (Environmental law) will be launched, setting out the

directives for participation for the different instruments it encompasses. This new Omgevingswet acknowledges the same four phases in a spatial planning process as depicted in Figure 2 (Informatiepunt Leefomgeving, 2021b).

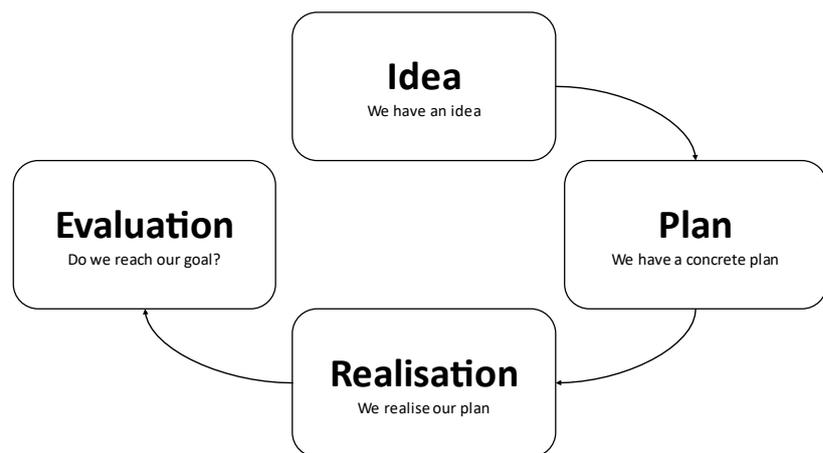


Figure 2 - Phases in a planning process (Informatiepunt Leefomgeving, 2021b) and Sarzynski (2015), created by Author

Figure 2 visualises these four main steps in a more elaborate form. The diagram is based on the participation compass that will be guiding in the new Omgevingswet, and on literature (Palermo & Hernandez, 2020; Uittenbroek et al., 2019). In this research, the framework is useful to determine and order the different parts of the planning process.

2.3 Conceptual model

This research has adapted the framework of assessment of participation from Uittenbroek et al. (2019). Where they assess ‘*who participates, when and how?*’, this research adds the ‘*why*’ and ‘*what*’ to this. Here, the ‘*what*’ assesses the level of participation as explained by Arnstein (1969), and the ‘*why*’ is added because Uittenbroek et al. (2019) argue in their conclusions that more research is needed about the objectives of participation.

Figure 3 shows how this all comes together in this research. It shows how the view of stakeholders is compared to the actual framework of participation, and what level can then be determined according to Arnstein’s framework. Here, ‘*why*’ is about the objectives of participation relating to obligations regarding participation in policy, but also to personal objectives of policy makers. The ‘*when*’ discusses the phase of the planning process in which participation takes place, as participation often differs in different stages of the planning process (Uittenbroek et al., 2019). Then, the ‘*how*’ relates to the

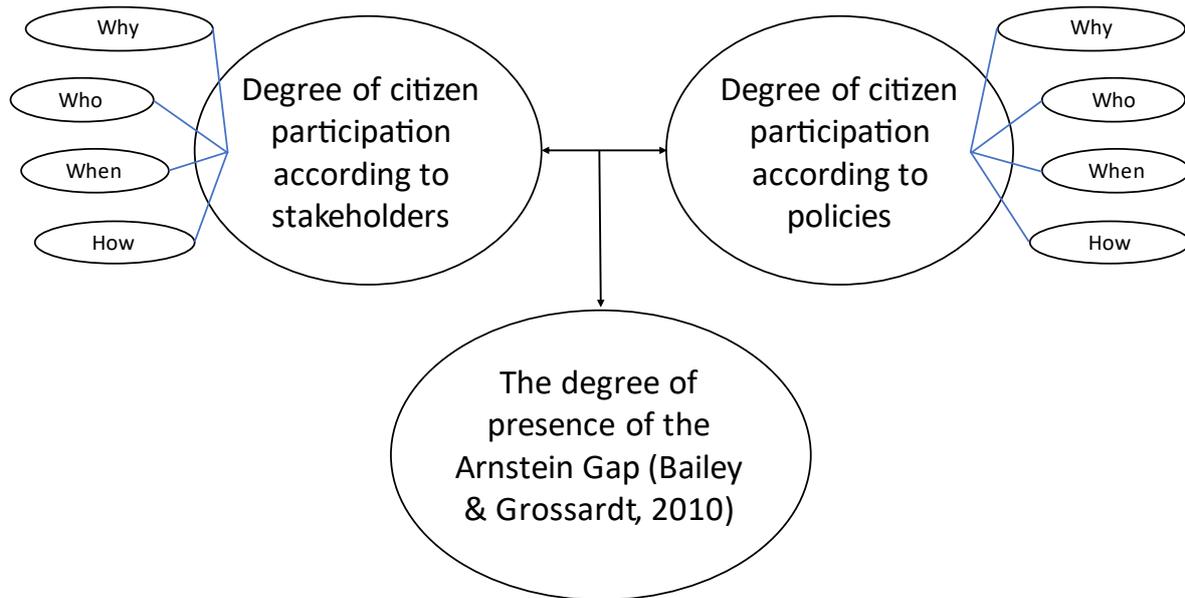


Figure 3 – Conceptual model (Author, 2021)

instruments that are used to involve citizens, and what can characterize participation efforts. The ‘who’ relates to characteristics of the participants. Lastly, the ‘what’ can function as a conclusion of the why, who, when, and how, as it determines the level of participation according to the participation ladder. In order to do so, the characteristics of each level of participation, as defined by Arnstein, are identified and compared to the results of the case study. This way, the Arnstein Gap can be identified, which is the metric by which the existing deficiency of public involvement can be measured (Bailey & Grossardt, 2006). Subsequently, the difference between where public participation in environmental planning is situated in the public eye, and where it should be in the eyes of the stakeholders can be identified.

2.4 Expectations

First, this research analyses how citizen participation in environmental planning processes is secured in policy documents. Following from the research by Uittenbroek et al. (2019), it is expected that citizen participation in its generic form is established as an important pillar within Dutch policy documents. Furthermore, the Dutch Climate Agreement states that the wishes and troubles should be considered noticeably in the choices that are made regarding climate action (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, 2019). Following from this, I expect this described level of participation to be in between consultation and partnership on the ladder of Arnstein.

Second, this research tests the perception of citizens about their participation in environmental planning processes. Bailey & Grossardt (2010) found that the mean level of the perception of public participation in transportation planning in the USA was 3,5, thus, in between informing and consultation. I combine this knowledge with the findings from Uittenbroek et al. (2019), that public participation in the Netherlands is often limited in scope. This leads me to the expectation that the extent of public participation within the case study can be categorized at the third or fourth level on the participation ladder, at the level of informing or consultation.

In an optimal situation the Arnstein gap would be non-existing, which would mean the actual participation is at the same level as the desired level of participation (Bailey & Grossardt, 2006). In this case study, the width of the Arnstein Gap as described by Bailey and Grossardt (2006) is expected to be a at a maximum of four levels, bridging the gap between informing and partnership.

3. Methodology

Following from the previous chapters, this chapter contains an explanation of the data collection and analysis methods used in this research. These methods are based on the research questions mentioned in chapter 1, and the theories discussed in chapter 2.

3.1 Data collection

To answer the research question, firstly insights were needed into how policy documents address the importance and the extent of participation. A content analysis of relevant policy documents, media articles, scientific papers, and internet websites was done to achieve this. Hereby, only documents relating to Dutch environmental planning were assessed.

To gather specific insights into the case study, three interviews were conducted with policy officers. Since the projects that fall under the EemsDollard2050 project take place at different times and places, interviewees that took part at different times and places of the planning process were asked to participate, to gain a full understanding of the developments (Punter et al., 2020). To plan interviews, several policy officers were e-mailed that are mentioned online as being representatives for the different projects, which led to one interview. In the first interview contact details of a second interviewee were gathered and in the second interview contact details of a third. Thus, the snowball technique was applied, which can be referred to as a form of convenience sampling (Geddes et al., 2018). The first two interviewees were environment managers that were involved in several projects in the past and present, and who were responsible for participation. The third interviewee was an employee from the municipality, responsible for area-oriented working and citizen participation. In all interviews, interviewees were asked about their expectations and experiences regarding participation, and about their perception of the level of participation according to the participation ladder (Arnstein, 1969; Bailey & Grossardt, 2010). The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way which makes the interviews flexible so they could progress in a more natural way (Clifford et al., 2016). An interview guide was used with questions prepared beforehand (Appendix B, p.18).

To gain insights into the view of residents in the realms of the case study, a survey was distributed. The survey was designed in Google Forms and shared twice in a Facebook group with 3.5 thousand members called 'Voormalige gemeente Delfzijl zo als het is en zo als het gaat worden' ('Previous municipality Delfzijl as it is and as it is going to be'). The survey was also shared among acquaintances that live in Delfzijl, who possibly shared it with their acquaintances. The survey consisted of open questions which can be found in Appendix C (p.21). It included a question whether the respondents were open for a couple of follow-up questions. Respectively, 4 respondents received some more in-depth questions in their mail, which were based on their answers to the survey. Only one resident responded to these in-depth questions. The survey was filled in by 13 respondents. Furthermore, a member of the Facebook group recommended me to speak to a spokesperson of the citizen advisory group, whom I contacted via Facebook. He was interviewed through a phone call.

3.2 Data analysis

The transcribed interviews were colour coded, where the colours all stand for an aspect of the conceptual model (Figure 3). This enabled finding patterns and associations in the data (Clifford et al., 2016). The code scheme used for the analysis was built around the theory of Uittenbroek et al. (2019), as quotes relating to the 'why, who, when, and how' all were assigned a separate colour. The trends in coding then were compared to findings from literature and policy documents in order to answer the main research question.

The survey gathered qualitative data on the perception of residents. The answers were sorted and categorised according to the why, when, who, and how framework, so that quotes could be used to investigate the perception of citizens on participation in the case study.

3.3 Ethical considerations

To establish an ethical conduct of research, the interview participants were asked for consent in sharing the outcomes of the interviews for purposes only within this research programme (Clifford et al., 2016). Furthermore, the data does not name the participants' full names. The risk of harm due to interviews was to be minimised, especially regarding the current Corona crisis. Therefore, it was possible to conduct the interviews digitally, instead of face-to-face. Furthermore, the risk of wrong translation of quotes was minimised, since the interviews were conducted in Dutch.

Regarding the survey, in the introduction all participants were informed about the anonymity of their answers and about the research and data processing. They were not asked for their specific address, so their answers cannot be traced back to someone. It should be considered that only a select group of people filled in this survey, which can make for a volunteer sample, consisting of individuals who self-select from the population (Burt et al., 2009). This could have biased the results.

4. Results

The following paragraphs will elaborate on the acknowledgement of participation in policy, and provide insights into the why, who, when, and how of participation. After that, the results regarding the view of stakeholders are elaborated on. In the following chapters these two views will be compared to answer the research question.

4.1 Acknowledgment of participation in policy

4.1.1 Why

Currently citizen participation in the Netherlands is primarily used as an instrument to strengthen and support the current representative democracy (Dreijerink et al., 2008). Citizens are increasingly expected to take an active role in the public domain (van de Wijdeven et al., 2013). Furthermore, a growing distrust in representativeness and a growing dissatisfaction about decision-making can be observed globally but also in the Netherlands, something to which citizen participation is seen as a solution (Pul & van Rootselaar, 2008). Currently, it is still the case that citizens have the right to information and can be consulted when the government thinks this may yield interesting information, but the government remains responsible for making decisions in the end (Dreijerink et al., 2008).

4.1.2 Who

As mentioned before, all passive or active involvement of individuals or groups in a decision-making process is recognized as participation in this research (Scherhauser, 2021). Researchers however diverge on the opinion whether public participation implies the participation of everybody, or only 'stakeholders' who are believed to represent 'the public' (Uittenbroek et al., 2019). Currently, in environmental planning in the Netherlands, policy makers are free to choose whoever participates, and can thus choose for a party to represent other citizens. Regarding the participation of citizens, people participate mainly in decision-making processes because of their own interests in the outcomes of the process (Dreijerink et al., 2008). Therefore, it is important to specifically identify to what extent residents will be affected by the changes in the first stages of the planning process. In the Dutch spatial planning law ('Wet Ruimtelijk Ordening'), citizens are only able to object or appeal in a decision-making process. In the upcoming Omgevingswet however, there is more of a focus on involving citizens directly beforehand (Hurenkamp, 2020).

4.1.3 When

All administrative bodies are obliged to involve stakeholders in making decisions as the 'right to citizen participation' is laid down in several laws. Municipalities also needed to have an involvement regulation ('inspraakverordening'), which means they need to have a regulation on how residents and stakeholders are involved in the preparation of municipal policy (Kennispunt lokale politieke partijen, 2021). In 2019 a proposal was presented which would change this into a public participation regulation ('participatieverordening'). The proposal encourages local authorities to involve residents in the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of policy, and to document this. Local authorities will still be able to decide for themselves how they involve residents in the various policy phases (Informatiepunt Leefomgeving, 2021a). According to some, the ideal situation would be that citizen participation takes place when policy options are being studied and preferably when the problem is defined. This is, however, not always the case (Dreijerink et al., 2008).

Currently, the Spatial planning law ('Wet Ruimtelijke Ordening') from 2008 is still in use, which took a step back in the ongoing rise of bottom-up approaches. For the first time, the central government and the provinces were able to make the destining of spaces binding. The new law would increase the distance between citizens and the decision-making powers (Tan et al., 2019). A 'Right to challenge' regulation has been proposed in the Netherlands, which would enable citizens to take over certain tasks of the municipality when convinced it could be done more efficiently. It is a way of facilitating citizen initiatives, for which the need but also the interest is growing (den Ouden et al., 2019; Kennispunt lokale politieke partijen, 2021). It shows even more the growing interest for bottom-up decision-making.

4.1.4 How

The amount and variety of participation practices can differ significantly per project, since government bodies are given much freedom in the design of public participation (Uittenbroek et al., 2019). Methods that can be used are for example public meetings, surveys, one-on-one conversations, or sharing written information (Brennkmeijer, 2021). Informally, a digital assessment framework for citizen participation has been developed for aldermen, municipal officials, and council members. This framework identifies fitting methods of participation, according to the phase and objective of the participation (Digitale Overheid, 2021).

Over the last years, a change can be observed in participation instruments. E-participation is becoming increasingly important, and it is argued that the internet as a participation medium can change public engagement significantly (Knapp & Coors, 2008). Also, in the past year, the citizens' forum has entered the social agenda as a way of increasing and improving the direct influence of citizens in policy. It is a form of intensive participation, in which a selected group of citizens develop their own ideas or solutions within certain frameworks, thereby taking joint responsibility (Brennkmeijer, 2021; Staatscommissie Parlementair Stelsel, 2018).

4.2 Acknowledgement of participation in the case study

4.2.1 Why

Research from Zuidema & de Roo (2015) suggests that relying on central government control is often incompatible with the societal conditions we face. In line with this, interviewee 3 mentioned that the growing importance of participation has to do with this: *"You can also see that this movement has developed much more nationally, partly because of the Omgevingswet. But from politics this once arose out of just bitter necessity because the trust between residents and politics was very bad years ago, and from that point of view, politicians already started working area-oriented."* The citizen from interview 4 had also recognised this in the municipality: *"What struck me is that many citizens in Delfzijl*

thought very negatively about Delfzijl. And I thought that should change. And that negativity was mainly due to the fact that people were not sufficiently informed by municipalities and other government agencies about activities.” From this followed how important participation is in countering this. Interviewee 4 mentioned: *“in this way [by involving citizens], you also cultivate trust towards your citizens. Because of the information you provide as a municipality, and that does not have to be a municipality, it can also be a water board, but it is all about informing those citizens.”*

Interviewee 2 mentioned another reason for engaging citizens in a project, and emphasized the importance of everyone accepting the plan to receive permits for the project. He told: *“that was my ultimate goal, that we obtain the permits, the many procedures that we have to go through, that we do not encounter a lot of views and a lot of objections and appeals.”* As mentioned before, even though participation is institutionalized, it is to a limited extent (Uittenbroek et al., 2019). Interviewee 1 mentioned the extent to which participation is obligated is actually limited: *“The minimum was that you make known when you submit permits for public consultation and when you will determine them. [...] What I don't actually call participation.”*

Interviewee 2 also remarked that the objective of participation also depends on the project, and the intention of the project. *“That dyke improvement had to be done. [...] And whether or not people were in favour of dyke improvement, that was going to happen”.* And on the other hand, he talks about the project Groote Polder, also part of EemsDollard2050, in which a brackish water nature reserve, recreation area and natural sludge trap will be implemented in the area. Since this project has much more leeway, he tells: *“where I am now, you have a completely different basis, so the residents will have much more influence on the layout and decision-making there than with such a dyke improvement.”* Therefore, he says *“There I really want to give people the opportunity to think along.”*

4.2.2 Who

Arguably, people will not see the importance of something until something really happens and affects them directly (O' Brien & O' Keefe, 2015). This can be related to the dyke revitalization project, in which it is important that the participants see the necessity, as the following quote from interviewee 1 illustrates: *“you must always be able to make a very clear link with where it hits this resident or landowner, otherwise it makes no sense to sit around the table”.* The following quote from interviewee 3 illustrates the same: *“Because yes, the dyke is not something that directly affects their street. But if there were to be a dyke breach, it would suddenly be panic and crisis, because then they understand the usefulness and necessity. So, you have to tell them why in advance.”*

The previous quote emphasizes the importance of informing residents beforehand about the necessities of the developments and providing them with enough knowledge on the issue, likewise interviewee 3 mentions: *“a condition for participation is that you also inform the residents sufficiently. [...] If you do not inform them enough, you cannot ask them to find out anything about it. So, my advice is always, are those people sufficiently informed to let them participate in the discussion or even to participate in decisions about topics. And if not, that's your first step.”* Van de Wijdeven et al. (2013) agree that one of the main preconditions for participation is indeed the capacity to participate.

Two interviewees mention a general change in having a say in society. Zuidema & de Roo (2015) also say fragmentation has fuelled an increase of different interpretations regarding the issues policies mean to address and the desires that citizens hold on to. Interviewee 2 states: *“People are always so articulate nowadays, look earlier [...] then you also had a room full, [...] and whether they liked it or not you got away with it. But that is no longer possible nowadays. [...] Yes, so I see a bit of a shift from more and more customization, more and more one on one if that is possible.”.* The interviewee thus mentions this general shift in society has also influenced the participation practices, and that higher levels of

participation are needed in order for people to accept a plan. This is in line with findings from (Rivas et al., 2021), that higher participation of citizens and stakeholders, especially at the local level, significantly facilitates the acceptance of an environmental plan. A statement of interviewee 3 is in line with this: *“Yes, because you used to see of course people were only informed, [...] so it was very one-sided actually wasn't it, only from the municipality. Then you got the step that people also had a say. But now we use the participation ladder, and you can already determine in advance to what extent they have a say how far it may go.”*

Uittenbroek et al (2015) mention there are different views as to whether public participation implies the participation of everybody or only ‘stakeholders’ who are believed to represent ‘the public’. The data has also implied this divergence in views, as interviewee 1 states: *“I think that in the project we also often looked at the municipality as representing the resident as well. [...] But it does not absolve you from talking to residents yourself”*. A participant from the survey however answered the following to the question whether he/she was satisfied with the level of participation: *“No, everything has been settled with the Municipality and in particular former mayor Emme Groot. Very bad thing not to involve the residents in this.”* Interviewee 4 however indicated the presence of a citizen advisory group, so that would imply the direct involvement of citizens.

4.2.3 When

Dreijerink et al. (2008) state that citizens must be involved at those moments in the process where they can influence decisions. Likewise, the interviewees mentioned the importance of involving citizens in the first stages of the planning process, like interviewee 2 formulated it: *‘Make sure you inform everyone well at the front, take them well with you, so that nothing comes as a surprise.’* He added to this that in this first phase of the planning process, the ‘idea phase’ (Figure 2), there is still a lot of leeway regarding the plans. He adds that in this phase, *‘I am always very careful, in that exploratory phase, when you are still looking for the best solutions, to already start sending a lot. It is much smarter to collect a lot: the local knowledge of the people, but also their wishes, also the concerns, which we can take into account in the design.’*

But even though stakeholders acknowledged the importance of involving residents in advance, a respondent from the questionnaire noted the following: *‘Actually, we were not involved in advance’*. This can have to do with the fact that when the project started, the dyke had to be revitalized very quickly, which put a lot of pressure on the planning process. Interviewee 1 illustrated how this did not benefit participation: *“it took five years from the first ideas of dyke improvement and the double dyke to completion. Normally it takes you ten years, maybe eight years. [...] So yes, of course, that also puts participation under pressure. But [...] especially in the final design phase and realization phase, we have done a lot and we have also put many things right, I think.”*

In the following phase, the ‘plan phase’ (Figure 2), interviewee 2 mentions the importance of asking for input from residents: *‘I really want to be physically around the drawing table with those residents and let them think along and that, [...] I would really like to give people the opportunity to think along.’* Then, as soon as the plan for the development is finished, interviewee 2 mentioned: *‘if we know exactly what we want to do there, I often say that we can really tell at pavement tile level and at lamppost level what residents get in their backyard, then we will also set up a visitor centre.’*

Like Arnstein (1969) implied in his research also, participation without redistribution of power is an empty and unsatisfying process for the powerless. It is important that there is actually room for the input of residents, and that it will be acknowledged. Interviewee 1 mentions it depends a lot on the quality of the input of residents, but also that in order to actually do something with the input it is necessary that *‘we (policy makers) are clear about decisions that have already been taken. [...] about*

where we are in a process [...] and where there is still room for input. Interviewee 4 recognised there was much room for the citizens to actually provide input, and that the input was actually taken along in the plans: *“And what struck me is that we as citizens have had even more input than at the station project (= previous project in Delfzijl). We brought in ideas. [...] and there have been many more things, smaller things, on which we, as citizens, also had a lot of influence”*. This suggests there was room for residents to provide input in the process.

4.2.4 How

In the case study was a clear distinction between two methods of participation according to interviewee 1: *‘conversations that took place with landowners, and you just have the information provided to residents.’* It became clear that people who are directly impacted by the dyke revitalization were much more involved in the process than residents who were not directly affected: *“So we had real discussions with the people directly behind the dyke, with houses directly behind the dyke and the landowners”*. Even though they were able to express their concerns, interviewee 1 did not see that the citizens agreed to share planning and decision-making responsibilities, which is how Arnstein (1969) described the partnership level of participation: Interviewee 1 mentions: *“Yes well landowners had to negotiate a bit. Yes, I don't quite know if you can call it a partnership, I wouldn't call it that.”*

For other residents, some public meetings were organised as mentioned by interviewee 2: *“Years ago, with the start of that dyke improvement, I organised a broad walk-in evening a few times”*. One of the survey respondents mentions they attended an information gathering and was satisfied with the information that was provided to them. On the other hand, a resident from Bierum, where part of the dyke strengthening took place, mentions they were not satisfied with the participation in the process since they were not asked to provide input beforehand, which indicates the participation of these residents was on the level of informing. They declare they were *“Informed through a personal letter to all residents in the neighbourhood”*. The citizen in interview 4 did state there were plenty of opportunities to be involved in the project, even though many (8 out of 13) respondents in the survey indicated they were not involved in the developments.

Bureau Statement was asked to provide the participation methods for the project like flyers and the website. Also, interviewee 1 mentioned the use of social media to inform and involve citizens: *‘we have also consciously used social media to give people a look behind the scenes of all kinds of interesting details. And to include them in it’*. The citizen in interview 4 recognised this and stated that the organisation of the dyke strengthening *“informed the citizens very well. And they did that with publications and their own Facebook sites, they sent a flyer around the neighbourhood and things like that”*.

5. Conclusions

Despite the apparent importance of public participation in practice and literature, the question arises about the deliberate design underlying citizen participation efforts. From this follows the aim of this research: to analyse how citizen participation in the Netherlands has been designed in policy and in practice. This research has added to the body of research investigating the underlying structures that come with participation practices. This is done using results from a case study that has underlined the essence of a participatory process. The focus of the analysis was on obtaining a deeper understanding of the why, who, when and how of participation in environmental planning, which remains under-researched in planning practice. Results were derived by analysing stakeholder interviews and written insights and relating those to the desired participatory processes as instructed in policy. This was all done through the lens of the ladder of participation.

Admittedly, the findings are still descriptive. It however does illustrate some interesting observations on the design of public participation. The case study illustrated the perceptions of stakeholders and citizens on the design of participation. It however should be noted that the case study in this research does not allow for a complete picture of participation practices in the Netherlands, as its scope is rather limited and since the design of participation is still very much dependent on policy officers, as the results have pointed out. This is important to note because participation is very much context driven: cultural, political, and historical contexts have important consequences for the choice and success of a participatory process (Wilker et al., 2016). Regarding the obtained data, the lack of respondents to the survey, and the high number of respondents (8 out of 13) that indicated they were not involved in the development, could imply there really was a lack of people that actually felt involved in the project.

Nevertheless, this research has provided interesting insights into how the perception of stakeholders about citizen participation in environmental planning processes aligns with how participation is secured in policy documents. Regarding the 'why' of participation, the findings from the case study verified the objectives of participation that are often mentioned in policy documents. The objectives of participation mainly relate to cultivating more trust towards citizens. Looking at the 'who', the results pointed out that both in policy and in the case study, mainly citizens with interests in the outcomes or who are directly affected participate in a planning process. However, policy does not differentiate by these characteristics between citizens. Regarding the 'when', results from the case study pointed out that involving citizens in the first stages of the project is preferred and aimed for. Nevertheless, policy only obliges municipalities to inform citizens about decisions that have already been taken. Looking at the 'how', in policy, participation methods are not formally guided. In reality, many different instruments are used, and new forms of participation are arising. The case study suggested that a shift towards more custom participation is witnessed.

Relating these findings to the first expectation of this research, it can be concluded that a minimum of participation efforts at the level of informing is institutionalized, as policy makers are obliged to inform residents about changes in their environment. Since participation is solely institutionalized in the form of an involvement regulation, and a right to challenge, this makes it not tied to one particular level of participation because policy makers still have much freedom in the design of participation. Nevertheless, it also needs to be noted that a shift towards higher levels of participation in earlier stages can be observed with the arrival of the Omgevingswet. The second expectation was that the extent of public participation within the case study can be categorized at the fourth level (consultation) on the participation ladder at most. From the findings can be concluded that participation levels are dependent on the phase of the planning process, and on how the residents are affected by the change. The second expectation of this research can thus be abandoned. However, a minimum of citizen participation on the level of informing can also be identified here.

From the above presented results it can thus be concluded that the desired and the actual level of participation are both minimally at the level of informing. Since both the actual and the desired participation are very much context-dependent, and since the characteristics of participation depend very much on the extent to which citizens are affected, the overall gap for the case study cannot be identified. The expectation that the Arnstein gap would be at a maximum of four levels can, however, be accepted, because the findings imply that the power of citizens never reached the upper two levels of citizen control. This suggests that the gap stays within a scope of four levels, levelling between informing and partnership.

The identified trends and themes raise a number of issues that demand more careful consideration in further research. Participation practices are becoming more customized, as society changes, something that is supported by the case study. There is a need for more insights into whether

characteristics and levels of participation will change with the arrival of the Omgevingswet and with the possible approval of the participation regulation that has been proposed. Furthermore, more research is needed into the opinions and wishes of residents in environmental planning, something which this research has not been able to cover completely. As mentioned before, aiming to close the Arnstein gap in environmental planning is essential in order to provide substantial benefits in the form of more efficient interaction and better accepted projects.

References

- Adjei Mensah, C., Andres, L., Baidoo, P., Eshun, J. K., & Antwi, K. B. (2017). Community Participation in Urban Planning: the Case of Managing Green Spaces in Kumasi, Ghana. *Urban Forum*, 28(2), 125–141. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12132-016-9295-7>
- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder Of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 35(4), 216–224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225>
- Bailey, K., & Grossardt, T. (2006). Addressing the Arnstein Gap: Improving Public Confidence in Transportation Planning and Design through Structured Public Involvement (SPI). *UKnowledge*.
- Bailey, K., & Grossardt, T. (2010). Toward structured public involvement: Justice, geography and collaborative geospatial/geovisual decision support systems. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 100(1), 57–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00045600903364259>
- Brenninkmeijer, A. (2021). *Betrokken bij klimaat - Burgerfora aanbevolen*. Adviescommissie Burgerbetrokkenheid bij Klimaat: Groningen.
- Burt, J., Barber, G., & Rigby, D. (2009). *Elementary statistics for geographers*. (Third). Guildford Press.
- Clifford, N., Cope, M., Gillespie, T., & French, S. (2016). *Key Methods in Geography* (R. Rojek, Ed.; Third). Sage.
- de Weger, E., van Vooren, N. J. E., Drewes, H. W., Luijkx, K. G., & Baan, C. A. (2020). Searching for new community engagement approaches in the Netherlands: A realist qualitative study. *BMC Public Health*, 20(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-08616-6>
- den Ouden, W., Boogaard, G., & Driessen, E. M. M. A. (2019). *Right to Challenge*. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2019/03/31/right-to-challenge>
- Digitale Overheid. (2021). *Inwoners betrekken met hulp van ParticipatieWijzer*. Nieuws Digitale Overheid. <https://www.participatiewijzer.nl/>
- Dreijerink, L., Kruize, H., & van Kamp, I. (2008). *Burgerparticipatie in beleidsvorming -Resultaten van een verkennende literatuurreview*.
- EemsDollard2050. (2021a). *Organisatie EemsDollard2050*. <https://eemsdollar2050.nl/over-het-programma/organisatie-van-het-programma-eems-dollard-2050/>
- EemsDollard2050. (2021b). *Pilot Dubbele Dijk*. <https://eemsdollar2050.nl/project/dubbele-dijk/>
- Fischer, H. W. (2021). Decentralization and the governance of climate adaptation: Situating community-based planning within broader trajectories of political transformation. *World Development*, 140. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.105335>
- Geddes, A., Parker, C., & Scott, S. (2018). When the snowball fails to roll and the use of ‘horizontal’ networking in qualitative social research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 21(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2017.1406219>
- Hügel, S., & Davies, A. R. (2020). Public participation, engagement, and climate change adaptation: A review of the research literature. In *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* (Vol. 11, Issue 4). Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.645>

- Hurenkamp, M. (2020, January 22). *Participatiesamenleving: de opkomst en neergang van een begrip*. Sociale Vraagstukken. <https://www.socialevraagstukken.nl/participatiesamenleving-de-opkomst-en-neergang-van-een-begrip/>
- Informatiepunt Leefomgeving. (2021a). *Aan de slag met participatiebeleid*. <https://iplo.nl/participatieomgevingswet/participatiebeleid/>
- Informatiepunt Leefomgeving. (2021b). *Participatie per fase met het kompas*. <https://iplo.nl/participatieomgevingswet/participatie-per-fase/>
- Kennispunt lokale politieke partijen. (2021). *Burgerparticipatie: Verantwoordelijkheden en wettelijke bepalingen*. <https://www.lokalopolitiekepartijen.nl/dossier/burgerparticipatie/>
- Knapp, S., & Coors, V. (2008). The use of eParticipation systems in public participation: The VEPs example. *Proceedings of the Urban and Regional Data Management - UDMS Annual 2007*, 93–104.
- Luyet, V., Schlaepfer, R., Parlange, M. B., & Buttler, A. (2012). A framework to implement Stakeholder participation in environmental projects. In *Journal of Environmental Management* (Vol. 111, pp. 213–219). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2012.06.026>
- Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy. (2019). *Klimaatakkoord*. <https://www.klimaatakkoord.nl/documenten/publicaties/2019/06/28/klimaatakkoord>
- O' Brien, G., & O' Keefe, P. (2015). Climate Governance and Climate Change and Society . In U. Fra.Paleo (Ed.), *Risk Governance - The Articulation of Hazard, Politics and Ecology*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9328-5>
- Palermo, V., & Hernandez, Y. (2020). Group discussions on how to implement a participatory process in climate adaptation planning: a case study in Malaysia. *Ecological Economics*, 177. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2020.106791>
- Pul, H., & van Rootselaar, A. (2008). *Burgerparticipatie in besluitvorming op lokaal niveau*. https://www.academia.edu/30353179/Burgerparticipatie_in_besluitvorming_op_lokaal_niveau
- Punter, H., Veldman, J. R., & Bosch, A. L. (2020). Pioneering in a field of influence. Township of Delfzijl proud of result waterfront development | Pionieren in een krachtenveld. *Landschap*, 37(3), 147–155.
- Rivas, S., Hernandez, Y., Urraca, R., & Barbosa, P. (2021). A comparative analysis to depict underlying attributes that might determine successful implementation of local adaptation plans. *Environmental Science and Policy*, 117, 25–33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2020.12.002>
- Sarzynski, A. (2015). Public participation, civic capacity, and climate change adaptation in cities. *Urban Climate*, 14, 52–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.uclim.2015.08.002>
- Scherhauser, P. (2021). Better research through more participation? The future of integrated climate change assessments. *Futures*, 125. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2020.102661>
- Staatscommissie Parlementair Stelsel. (2018). *Eindrapport Lage drempels, hoge dijken*. <https://www.staatscommissieparlementairstelsel.nl/documenten/rapporten/samenvattingen/12/13/eindrapport>
- Tan, W. G. Z., Levelt, M., & Stapper, M. (2019). Ladder op, ladder af: 50 jaar participatie. *Rooilijn*, 52(3), 160–167.

- Uittenbroek, C. J., Mees, H. L. P., Hegger, D. L. T., & Driessen, P. P. J. (2019). The design of public participation: who participates, when and how? Insights in climate adaptation planning from the Netherlands. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 62(14), 2529–2547. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568.2019.1569503>
- van de Wijdeven, T., de Graaf, L., Hendriks, F., & Marieke Van Der Staak, M. v. (2013). *Actief burgerschap: Lijnen in de literatuur*.
- Wang, A., & Chan, E. H. W. (2020). The impact of power-geometry in participatory planning on urban greening. *Urban Forestry and Urban Greening*, 48. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2019.126571>
- Wilker, J., Rusche, K., & Rymsa-Fitschen, C. (2016). Improving Participation in Green Infrastructure Planning. *Planning Practice and Research*, 31(3), 229–249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02697459.2016.1158065>
- Zakhour, S. (2020). The democratic legitimacy of public participation in planning: Contrasting optimistic, critical, and agnostic understandings. *Planning Theory*, 19(4), 349–370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095219897404>
- Zuidema, C., & de Roo, G. (2015). Making Sense of Decentralization: Coping with the Complexities of the Urban Environment. In U. Fra.Paleo (Ed.), *Risk Governance: the articulation of hazard, politics and ecology* (First). Springer Netherlands. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9328-5>

Appendices

Appendix A – Research questions

Main research question:

How does the perception of stakeholders about citizen participation in environmental planning processes align with how participation is secured in policy documents?

Sub questions:

What is the view of stakeholders on citizen participation within an environmental planning process?

To what extent do stakeholders feel this is relevant and necessary?

To what extent are citizens in practice involved in environmental planning projects?

What methods/instruments are used in the different stages of an environmental planning process to involve citizens?

How do policy documents acknowledge citizen participation in environmental planning processes?

Appendix B – Interview Guide

The interview will start with an introduction of me and this bachelor project. After this, I will propose an informed consent to the participant. I will read the informed consent out loud and after each section the participant can indicate whether they agree or not. It will also be possible to ask questions about the informed consent if they arise.

Informed Consent

- I declare that I have been clearly informed about the nature, method and purpose of this research. I know that the data and results of the research are made anonymous and will only be disclosed confidentially to the described educational institution (University of Groningen).

- I understand that any recording material or editing of such can only be used for analysis and/or scientific presentations.

- I agree voluntarily to participate in this study.

- All my questions about participating in this research are answered.

Interview questions for interview 1 and 2

1. How are you involved in the project of the dyke revitalization in Delfzijl?
Dutch: Wat is uw rol binnen het dijkverbetering project in Delfzijl?
2. To what extent do you think public participation was incorporated in this project?
 - On a level from 1 to 8?
 - What efforts were made to involve citizens in the project?
 - Where they successful according to you?
 - Dutch: In hoeverre was burger participatie geïntegreerd in dit project?*
 - Op een schaal van 1 tot 8?
 - Wat voor inspanningen zijn er gedaan om burgers te betrekken in het project?
 - En waren die succesvol volgens u?
3. To what extent do you think public participation is relevant in such a project?
 - Does it have an impact?
 - And might that be different in climate adaptation or mitigation planning?
 - Dutch: In hoeverre is burgerparticipatie relevant in planologie?*

- Heeft het ook echt een impact?
 - En zou het ook verschil maken of het om een klimaat adaptief project gaat?
4. To what extent do you think public participation is secured in policy?
 - Are there any obligations relating to this?
Dutch: In hoeverre zijn er volgens u regelingen verbonden aan burgerparticipatie in planologische processen?
 - Zijn er ook verplichtingen daarin?
5. Do you think anything should or could have been different regarding the involvement of citizens in this project?
Dutch: Wat betreft burger participatie binnen dit project, had dat er volgens u anders uit moeten of kunnen zien?

Interview questions for interview 3

1. Can you tell something about your job?
Dutch: Kunt u iets over uw functie vertellen?
2. Do you think that local residents / residents of the municipality really feel involved in changes in their living environment?
 - In what ways does the municipality try to involve them?
Dutch: Denkt u dat omwonenden/inwoners van de gemeente zich ook echt betrokken voelen bij veranderingen in hun leefomgeving?
 - Op wat voor manieren probeert de gemeente ze te betrekken?
3. Does participation really have an impact?
 - Has anything been done with the opinions of local residents?
 - What was done when people were vehemently against it?
Dutch: Heeft die participatie ook echt een impact?
 - Is er iets gedaan met de meningen van omwonenden?
 - Wat werd er gedaan wanneer mensen fel tegen waren?
4. Is participation in municipal decisions different now compared to the past?
 - And in that regard, will a lot change under the environmental law?
 - Development around citizen forums?
Dutch: Is de participatie in gemeentelijke beslissingen nu anders vergeleken bij het verleden?
 - En verandert er wat dat betreft veel onder de omgevingswet?
 - Ontwikkeling rondom burgerfora?
5. A lot has happened on the coastline of course in recent years. Have you also had to do with this in terms of involving residents?
 - To what extent was citizen participation integrated in this project?
 - And were they successful in your opinion?
 - Who was responsible for this?
Dutch: Er is veel gebeurd aan de kustlijn natuurlijk in de afgelopen jaren. Heb je hier ook mee te doen gehad wat betreft het betrekken van inwoners?
(In hoeverre was burger participatie geïntegreerd in dit project?)
 - En waren die succesvol volgens u?
 - Wie was hier verantwoordelijk voor?
6. With regard to citizen participation in this project, do you think it should or could have looked different?

Dutch: Wat betreft burgerparticipatie binnen dit project, had dat er volgens u anders uit moeten of kunnen zien?

7. I also read that the municipality is trying to create more space for residents' initiatives, is there a lot of enthusiasm for this?

Dutch: Ik las ook dat de gemeente meer ruimte probeert te scheppen voor inwoners initiatieven, is hier veel animo voor?

Interview questions for interview 4

1. What exactly are you involved in and in what way?
Dutch: Waar bent u precies bij betrokken en op wat voor manier?
2. What is the reason you were involved?
Dutch: Wat is de reden dat u er bij betrokken bent geweest?
Why are you involved higher than averagely compared to other residents of Delfzijl?
Dutch: Waarom u misschien gemiddeld meer dan andere bewoners van Delfzijl?
3. Was input requested for all changes in Delfzijl before they actually started working out the plan?
- If yes, in what way?
- Did that have an impact?
- Do you think people should be able to decide along about these kinds of things?
Dutch: Is er om input gevraagd voor alle veranderingen in Delfzijl voordat ze echt met uitwerking van het plan bezig gingen?
- Zo ja, op wat voor manier?
- Heeft dat ook impact gehad?
- Denkt u dat mensen over zulke dingen moeten en kunnen meebeslissen?
4. Has the dyke revitalization had any consequences for yourself?
- Do you live near the dyke?
Dutch: Heeft de dijkverbetering gevolgen gehad voor u zelf?
- Woont u er dichtbij?
5. In what other ways were citizens involved?
Dutch: Op wat voor manieren werden bewoners nog meer betrokken?
6. Did anything change over the years in that regard?
Dutch: Is daarin ook iets veranderd over de jaren? (In het begin van de dijkverbetering weinig)
7. Do you think citizens were informed well-enough about all the changes that the project would bring about?
Dutch: Denkt u dat bewoners genoeg werden geïnformeerd over wat er allemaal zou veranderen?
8. Did you notice any dissatisfaction or maybe positive remarks from citizens from Delfzijl about the new coastline?
Dutch: Heeft u gemerkt dat er ontevreden waren of juist positieve punten van bewoners in Delfzijl over de nieuwe kustlijn?

Appendix C – Survey design

Betrokkenheid Dijk- en Kustverbetering

Ik ben Eline, derdejaars student sociale geografie, en ik ben momenteel bezig met mijn afstudeerscriptie. Hiervoor doe ik onderzoek naar hoe burgers betrokken worden in veranderingen in de omgeving, en kijk ik specifiek naar alle veranderingen in- en rondom de dijkverbetering in Delfzijl en de EemsDollard2050 projecten. Ik zoek daarom mensen die op wat voor manier dan ook betrokken zijn geweest in een van deze projecten; hoe uw mening is meegenomen, of juist niet, of u bij een informatieavond bent geweest of bij het bezoekerscentrum ergens in de afgelopen jaren. Ook het volgen van het nieuws of bijvoorbeeld de sociale media over de veranderingen valt onder betrokkenheid. Als u op een manier betrokken bent geweest zou u me heel erg helpen door deze korte enquête in te vullen.

Het invullen kost ongeveer 5 minuten, de resultaten zijn anoniem en kunnen niet aan een persoon gelinkt worden. Eventuele vragen kunt u sturen naar elinebolt@gmail.com

Alvast bedankt voor het invullen!

Bent u betrokken geweest bij één van de kustlijnprojecten in en rondom Delfzijl? Dit houdt in: heeft u de ontwikkelingen gevolgd, bent u bij een informatiebijeenkomst geweest, hebben de ontwikkelingen invloed op u gehad of heeft u hier gesprekken over gehad?	- Ja - Nee
Bij welk project bent u betrokken geweest?	Open question
Hoe bent u precies betrokken in de ontwikkelingen?	Open question
Bent u tevreden over de mate waarin burgers betrokken werden bij de plannen en ontwikkelingen?	Open question
Zou u bereid zijn om nog wat dieper op de vragen en antwoorden in te gaan?	- Ik wil een online interview om dieper op de vragen/antwoorden in te gaan - Ik wil een aantal vragen via de mail beantwoorden
Wat is uw leeftijd?	0-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70 71+
Wat is uw postcode? (Huisnummer is niet nodig)	Open question
Wat is uw e-mailadres? (Niet verplicht, alleen als u vragen via de mail zou willen beantwoorden)	Open question