



Taking care of society:  
*Shaping social participation in  
Friesland*

**Ruby Laws**

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### ***Shaping social participation in Friesland***



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## Acknowledgements

Returning ‘home’ to do research ‘in my own backyard’ was something I was slightly nervous about before I started. However, when I started exploring this ‘backyard’, soon enough I felt at home (again), although with a completely different perspective. I spoke to people I would otherwise never speak to and I was able to discover all sorts of beautiful initiatives. I would like to thank everyone who took the time to talk to me about what participation for them means, what they want to achieve with their initiatives and share their enthusiasm with me.

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## Introduction

*It is unmistakable that people in our current networking- and information society are more self-assertive and independent than before. Combined with the need to diminish the deficit of the government, this leads to the eventual changing of the classic welfare state into a participation society. We ask everyone who is able, to take responsibility for his or her own life and environment.<sup>1</sup>*

In 2013, the Dutch King Willem Alexander coined the term ‘participation society’ in his yearly speech. As a consequence there was quite a bit of uproar about the meaning and consequences of this term. In this quote the end of the (classic) welfare state is announced, together with a call for more responsabilisation of citizens for their own lives and environments. To announce the altering of the classic welfare state into a participation society entails the withdrawal (or lessening) of the presence and role of government in society as well.

The speech of King Willem Alexander originated within a context where (citizen) participation was (again) a hot topic within the Netherlands and beyond.<sup>2</sup> The idea of a participation society has had a lot of publicity in recent years, but the term ‘participation society’ is not a new one. In 1974 the Netherlands Institute for Social Research already defined the “*deal of the participation society*” as ‘*a society where its members participate in as many parts as possible*’.<sup>3</sup> After this first introduction of the term ‘participation society’, it has been used in many different contexts, which shows its different perspectives.

### **Framing participation**

There is an abundance of research on ‘participation’, and specifically ‘citizen participation’; Two perspectives on ‘citizen participation’ can be distinguished, according to Zandbergen

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<sup>1</sup> Rijksoverheid, “Troonrede 2013,” September 17, 2013, accessed January 20, 2016, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/toespraken/2013/09/17/troonrede-2013>. Own translation.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance the “Big Society Programme” in the United Kingdom: Gov.uk, “Government Launches Big Society Programme,” June 18, 2010, accessed on July 26, 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-big-society-programme--2>.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Vis, “Participatiesamenleving het Einde van de Nederlandse Verzorgingsstaat?” June 08, 2016, accessed on July 04, 2016, <http://stukroodvlees.nl/participatiesamenleving-het-einde-van-de-nederlandse-verzorgingsstaat/>. Own translation.

and Jaffe (2014, 7): on the one hand the idea of 'citizen participation' as a means of democratic empowerment, on the other hand as a consequence of neoliberal governmental policy, legitimising the drawback of the state and thereby leaving citizens to fend for themselves, making it more disciplining (Cruickshank 1990). This divide can be characterised by defining participation both as a right of citizenship *and* as a duty of citizenship (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000, 3). Leal (2007) argues that because of this wide applicability, 'participation' can lose its meaning and consequently make policy on participation unclear. A consequence of the haziness of participation is that a whole variety of practices can be carried out and legitimated under its label (Richardson 1983).

Whereas Zandbergen and Jaffe make a distinction between two perspectives on participation, I argue that these two perspectives do not necessarily exclude each other, and that the different perspectives depend on the framing of citizen participation within a specific context as well. It is this framing of participation that is of interest within this research, because with the renewed publicity and popularity of the concept and implementation of citizen participation, it is interesting and important to look at what the concept means for different actors. What do different actors understand by participation? Who shapes the discourse around participation? How have ideas about responsibility changed within this discourse?

These questions are related to citizenship discourse and what meanings are attached to citizenship; whereas before citizenship was mainly a status - carrying rights and entitlements - within a participation society citizenship is transformed into a different set of responsibilities and duties (Newman 2011, 117).<sup>4</sup> As a consequence of this shift, another type of citizen is required, a more responsible and active citizen; an area where this shift is especially visible is in the area of (social) participation. In the shift in the definition of citizenship that focuses more on responsibilities and duties, citizens are required to be more self-reliant and proactive. Analysing the discourses around social participation is crucial when researching how social participation is perceived and implemented, which I will label the 'shaping' of social participation. A part of these discourses is how social participation is promoted, and how this promoting connects with expectations of citizenship.

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<sup>4</sup> Ideas of citizenship have of course changed throughout the ages. A discussion of these changes goes beyond the remit of this thesis.



*Research context and questions*

I have chosen to research this shaping of social participation in connection to the promotion of community and culture in the context of Friesland, one of the provinces of the Netherlands. This particular region has been of interest to researchers of culture (Mahmood 1992) because it presents itself as having a distinct regional culture, with its own acknowledged language. Policy on Frisian culture and language is firmly rooted in policies in Friesland: Use of the Frisian language is encouraged by governmental institutions, and funding is available for people who want to promote the use of the Frisian language.<sup>5</sup> With their policy on the topics of Frisian culture and language it is interesting to see what role this culture or identity may play in (shaping) policy on social participation. Does policy on social participation appeal to 'Frisianness'? Which elements of Frisian culture or identity are highlighted in the discourse on social participation? How does Frisian culture or identity figure in perceived desirable forms of citizenship? Flowing from these questions is my main research question:

*How do governmental institutions, civil society organisations and citizens shape social participation and what role does the context of Friesland play in this shaping?*

To answer this main question I will deal with the two main shapers of social participation in the empirical chapters: first outlining how governmental institutions shape social participation and what meaning is attached to this, secondly outlining how citizens shape social participation. References to the context of Friesland will run as a common thread throughout the chapters.

I have limited the scope of my research in two important ways. In the first place I have limited the topic of participation to social participation.<sup>6</sup> Social participation can be defined as focussing on the voluntary side of citizens to participate; citizen initiatives, voluntary work and being a member of an association are covered by social participation. Other types of participation include political participation, entailing voting and having a say in political

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<sup>5</sup> Provinsje Fryslân, "Frysk taalgebrûk," accessed on January 27, 2016, <http://www.fryslan.frl/3490/frysk-taalgebruk/>; Gemeente Leeuwarden, "Fryske taal en kultuer," accessed on January 27, 2016, <http://www.leeuwarden.nl/artikel/2010/fryske-taal-en-kultuer>.

<sup>6</sup> Translated in Dutch as *maatschappelijke participatie*, not *sociale participatie*.

decision making; social participation<sup>7</sup>, which means participating in social life, having social contacts; and working participation, or employment.<sup>8</sup> Because social participation particularly hinges on citizens taking more responsibility for themselves and those around them, this is the type of participation that takes a central place in this research, as I will focus on the communal aspects of citizenship as well.

Secondly I have limited the scope of my research by mainly focussing on citizens who 'participate', so people who are involved in citizen initiatives, voluntary work or an association. Because these citizens are actually involved in shaping social participation from 'bottom-up', they are relevant to this research. Citizens who do not 'participate' are not the main focus of my research, and any information about this group I have gained from previous research. The same goes for the other two group, consisting of government and civil society organisations (CSOs): I have limited my scope to focus on government officials or specific organisations that are involved in the topic of social participation.

### *Research aim*

The aim of this research is to twofold:

1. To add to the understanding of how specifically *social* participation is shaped by different actors via different power structure, especially because social participation focusses more on the voluntary side of participation than other forms of participation.
2. To get a better understanding of the role of cultural politics within a discourse on participation, or formulated differently: to shed light on the cultural rhetorical side of (social) participation.

These two sides of research on participation have, in my judgement, been underexposed, which will become clear when reviewing the theoretical framework, especially the link between cultural politics and discourse on participation.

### ***Theoretical framework***

This research is related to debates about governmentality (Foucault 1978) and how citizens are shaped by both state and non-state actors (De Koning et al. 2015). Governmentality

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<sup>7</sup> Translated in Dutch as *sociale participatie*.

<sup>8</sup> Movisie, "Participatie Ontward," accessed on July 28, 2016, [https://www.movisie.nl/sites/default/files/alfresco\\_files/Participatie%20ontward%20\[MOV-222582-0.3\].pdf](https://www.movisie.nl/sites/default/files/alfresco_files/Participatie%20ontward%20[MOV-222582-0.3].pdf). Own translation.

basically means 'the conduct of conduct': how citizens are shaped and framed by governmental institutions and other actors of power. Governmentality is more than a theoretical concept; it is a way of approaching a subject by looking at power sources and their outcomes, which will be the central theoretical aim of this thesis within the context of a discussion about social participation. Governmentality does not focus on the negativity of power relations, but it focusses on the productive dimension of power (Ferguson and Gupta 2002, 989). In relation to my research this is relevant when what it produces frames ideas about what the 'good citizen' is and its associated expectations of what citizenship entails.

### *The 'good citizen'*

Framing the 'good citizen' functions as a governmental instrument through which populations are managed (Bhandar 2010), so this framing is a working of governmentality. The framing of what 'a good citizen' is can be used in concrete state programs to directly influence citizens – for instance in education programs. At the same time the concept of 'the good citizen' can be promoted indirectly, for instance via political rhetoric or in the subtext of government policies (De Koning et al. 2015, 122).

What 'the good citizen' entails is dependent on the citizenship discourse within a particular context. Within the context of the Dutch participation society a shift can be seen from the idea of citizenship as a right with certain entitlements to the idea of citizenship as a duty with individual and collective responsibilities (Newman 2011, 117; Newman and Tonkens 2011, 14). This shift can be related to the concept of sustainable citizenship as described by Micheletti and Stolle (2012). Micheletti and Stolle developed the concept of sustainable citizenship as a broader definition of citizenship as mainly the rights and duties of citizens within a state. Sustainable citizenship broadens the responsibilities of citizens in three dimensions: a broadened spatial dimension (addressing responsibilities worldwide), a broadened temporal dimension (making citizens think about the past and future as well) and adding a material dimension (responsibility for nature and animals besides people) (2012, 88). Sustainable citizenship within the light of a participation society would entail a broader definition of the duties of citizens: to create a society where citizens are more responsible for their own lives and the lives of their fellow citizens.

I agree with the idea that the participation society is a way of exercising governmentality from both state and non-state actors, wishing to create 'good' and

‘sustainable’ citizens in the context of a neoliberal state (Koster 2014, 50). The responsibilisation of citizens can be seen as a form of governmentality (Ferguson and Gupta 2002, 989) and ‘being responsible’ (in several areas) as the contents of this ‘good’ and ‘sustainable’ citizen.

I do not want to use the concept of governmentality to solely focus on workings of power that flow from ‘top-down’ actors like government and organisations, but I will take into account the shaping power of citizens as well (De Koning et al. 2015). This breaks the dichotomous perspective of participation as being mainly exercised top-down from policy or participation being an empowering, citizen-led movement. However, power differences can still be seen in the framing of participation. Or more accurately said: some actors are more active or have more influence on the framing of participation. One place where this framing actively takes place is at the government level.

### *Cultural politics*

This framing of social participation, and its relation to the framing of citizenship, can be linked to cultural politics. Within cultural politics, certain ideological notions of ‘the people’ have been adopted by institutions, in order to promote and create new types of citizens, demarcating ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ (Mackey 1997, 137), in this case citizens suitable for a participation society and those that are not. A way to do this is to emphasise the importance of certain characteristics of culture in relation to the policy area in question. Through the deployment of culture as a political tool, this makes the policy or image of the ideal citizens seem natural and timeless, as culture is deemed timeless and natural as well (Wright 1998). Deploying culture as a political tool is a way of using cultural capital, a term developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1986). Cultural capital is one in the range of different kinds of capital that Bourdieu developed, and it means “*that culture (in the broadest sense of the term) can become a power resource*” (Bourdieu 1986). This power resource can be employed by government in their act of governing and shaping ideal citizens. Bourdieu distinguishes three different states of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986): the embodied state, where culture is internalised through socialisation, the objectified state, where cultural capital refers to objects, art and scientific instruments that can only be used with specific cultural knowledge, and the institutionalised state, referring to education. Especially the latter state is important to Bourdieu, and indeed the most applicable within the view of governmentality. Via the

institutionalised state of cultural capital, government are able to shape citizens via education. I argue that this would not only be applicable to education, but also to the way governmental institutions refer to culture or to social cohesion, based on a culture or identity, when making and implementing policies in areas other than education, for example in social services or neighbourhood support services .

The framing of social participation by referring to culture or to a certain community within policy is a way of exercising governmentality as well, because governmentality refers to all endeavours to shape, guide and direct the conduct of others (Rose 1999, 3). Framing policy or ideas, whether by government or by other institutions or person, contributes to the shaping of conduct, and can therefore be dubbed as governmentality.

To frame participation as something connected to culture or a community is to build upon existing structures, because a culture or a community is presented as something that has always been there, as something natural. Where Koster (2014, 56) explains that participation is framed as an enhancement and furthering of already existing structures, Love (2013) points out that, in her research on participation in rural Japan, participation is framed as something that is inherent to a group's identity or community, thus that the structure did not even have to be broadened. Tonkens (2013) looked at the word of *meedoen* (to participate), which implies that there are existing structures to engage with, instead of referring to "*active political involvement in the contestation and negotiation of these structures*" (Rana 2014, 9). In these three examples, participation is framed as engaging with existing structures. Interesting here is that the concept of participation is depoliticised, making it seem the only way forward in the new reality of the retreating welfare state and the neoliberal state (Koster 2014, 49). So while the focus on participation and the responsabilisation of citizens can be seen as a way of exercising governmentality, this link to governmental practice is hidden in its framing towards citizens.

The framing of participation as naturally emanating from a community, like Love (2013) outlined, can be connected to cultural and social capital. The practice of referring to a strong sense of identity and community by the Japanese government can be seen as using culture as a power resource, thus using cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). Using *social* capital, meaning networks, norms, trust and cooperation can become a source of power for government as well. But how is this sense of community, this sense of identity, this social cohesion established?

The identity of a larger group, or community, can facilitate social cohesion within that group. Benedict Anderson (2006) coined the term 'imagined community' when explaining how groups see themselves as a group or community, and specifically to explain the workings of nationalism. Language and media are here the most important aspects that unite people within a nation. This way imagined communities are constructed; imagined in the way that everyone could not possibly know everyone else within a nation, but via a common imagined identity (on the basis of a language, shared media and possibly a territory) this community is felt anyway (Anderson 2006, 6). Whereas Anderson applied the idea of the imagined community to the nation-state, Appadurai (1996) takes the concept of imagined communities within the context of globalisation. Nation-states are of less and less importance, and other imagined communities spring up on the basis of for instance ethnicity, subcultures or diaspora. Appadurai (1996, 53) looks at 'the imagination as a social practice', where social life is imagined within and across national borders. Different groups can identify themselves as a group via the instrument of imagination. The feeling of 'all being active, participant citizens' could be the basis of an imagined community within the context of a participation society. In the same vein the referring to an existing imagined community as a way of implementing participation could be the basis of an imagined community as well.

### ***Research Location***

Over time different forms of organising the relationship between government and citizens in the Netherlands have passed in review: varying from the concept of a full welfare state towards a more neoliberal state. These different forms of organising have as a consequence that different citizens are better suited to one system than another, there are different expectations of citizens (and of government), and responsibilities shift between these parties. The idea of a participation society has been publicised and popularised over the past few years within the context of the shift from a welfare state towards a more neoliberal state.

Local government have had the task to incorporate the idea of citizen participation into their policies in several areas, ranging from the subject of care to education, art, work

and so on. But what does the participation society entail? And what is understood by participation within the context of the Netherlands?<sup>9</sup>

Cornwall and Gaventa (2000, 3-4) give a short overview of different approaches to participation that have passed in review in the course of history: starting at the end of the 1960s there was a growing demand over the world from citizens to become more involved in decision-making processes, including in social policy. The most dominant form of participation at the beginning focussed on consultative mechanisms in the form of committees or consulting meetings. But *“with growing frustration over the limitations of the ‘user involvement’ concept of participation, writers and practitioners began to distinguish between viewing users as consumers and a focus on empowerment as the redistribution of power, to enable people to gain more control over their lives (Croft and Beresford 1996)”* (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000, 4). A development towards more active participation in policy formulation took place, appealing to basic civil rights of contesting.

Over the course of Dutch history different approaches to participation have passed in review as well, in line with the developments described above. Tonkens (2011) outlines in her article ‘The embrace of responsibility: Citizenship and governance of social care in the Netherlands’ the development of notions on responsibility, voice<sup>10</sup> and choice in the Netherlands. In the 1960s and the 1970s voice, autonomy and subsequently participation (of citizens) was seen as a right, whereas in the 1980s a transition was made to participation and responsibility from a right to a duty. This discourse carried on into the 1990s, only to change from 2000 on to stressing *community* participation as a duty more than *individual* participation. These developments show a shift from citizen participation, where citizens can have a say in policies but responsibility in the end is at the state, towards government participation, where responsibility is imposed on citizens, and government adapt to what citizens do. Defining the development from citizen participation towards government participation is taken up as well by *Partoer*, a research and consultant centre in Friesland.<sup>112</sup> But even if the content of participation points towards the citizens as the initiators, this

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<sup>9</sup> I explicitly say ‘The Netherlands’ here, because in different countries and different contexts the word ‘participation’ has very divergent meanings and connotations (Newman and Tonkens 2011, 19).

<sup>10</sup> ‘Voice’ meaning agency, consultation and contestation.

<sup>11</sup> Partoer is a commercial research center in Friesland that does research within the social domain.

does not automatically mean that citizens are the main shapers of the idea of participation. Power differences can still be seen in the framing of participation. Or more accurately said: some actors are more active or have more influence on the framing of participation.

In the local government of Friesland and in the local government of Leeuwarden (the capital of Friesland) the idea of the participating or active citizen has been taken up as well in several areas. In the area of care the Social Support Act (*Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning* or *WMO*) has been implemented, like in the rest of the Netherlands, which stresses “a communitarian idea of citizenship of taking responsibility for social care in your family and your community” (Tonkens 2011, 45). In the area of social participation campaigns like ‘*Iedereen doet mee*’ (Everyone participates) of the municipality of Leeuwarden, or the *Iepen Mienskipsfûns* of the Province of Friesland or the campaign around *Kulturele Haadstêd 2018* (Cultural Capital 2018) stimulate active involvement of citizens in the development of initiatives to benefit their living community.

A common denominator of these campaigns and policy on participation is that references are made to a communitarian idea of citizenship, gathered under the word *mienskip*, referring to ‘the Frisian community’.<sup>13</sup> In the context of Friesland it is interesting to research what influence the Frisian context has on these communitarian ideas of citizenship, and how potentially Frisian identity is connected to these ideas. Is the idea of a participation society different in Friesland compared to the rest of the Netherlands? What is contextual and historical so specific about Friesland to make it such an interesting case for studying how this participation works out, how it is shaped and what meanings are attached to it?

It is within the framing of social participation that the context of Friesland and the subject of (Frisian) identity come into the picture. In this research I will look at whether a Frisian identity is politicised within discourse on social participation, or what role the Frisian context has within the discourse on social participation. Taken to the extreme the conjuring up of the image of the Frisian citizens as resilient, pro-active and living in a place where

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<sup>12</sup> Partoer, “Minsken Meitsje de Mienskip”, accessed July 04, 2016, [http://www.partoer.nl/sites/default/files/news\\_attachments/partoer\\_minsken\\_meitsje\\_de\\_mienskip-def\\_0.pdf](http://www.partoer.nl/sites/default/files/news_attachments/partoer_minsken_meitsje_de_mienskip-def_0.pdf). Own translation.

<sup>13</sup> The translation of *mienskip* as ‘community’ does not fit the bill entirely, but comes close to the notions of community, social cohesion and caring that are implied by *mienskip*.



social cohesion is celebrated (coined by the term *mienskip*) fits in seamlessly with the ideal of a participation society with proactive citizens.

### ***Research methods and Research Population***

#### ***Studying up and studying through***

In 1974 Laura Nader appealed to the discipline of anthropology to 'study up', meaning that anthropologists should study and analyse powerful institutions and elites of complex societies, to counterbalance the abundance of anthropological studies done on poor, colonised and marginalised peoples (Nader 1974). Not only did Nader emphasise that research should be done on powerful institutions and elites, but that interrelations and connections between the powerful and people and institutions of subordinate socioeconomic strata should be studied, thereby creating a 'vertical slice' (Stryker and Gonzalez 2014, 11).

To study politics and governance, policies should be studied, because policies are used as tools of government, and by studying policies, systems of governance can be studied (Shore and Wright 1997, 14). However, studying policy has as a consequence that there is no one 'people' or community that suffices in studying. Merely 'studying up' in Nader's sense does not cover the workings of policy, and neither does 'studying down' capture the effects of policies, because both these aspects of the vertical slice do not reach the broadness of policies' influence. The 'method' that is most apt here is 'studying through', as developed by Reinhold (1994, 477-9), which means "*tracing ways in which power creates webs and relations between actors, institutions and discourses across time and space*" (Shore and Wright 1997, 14). "*'Studying through' essentially follows, analyses and studies networks between various actors, which is useful to conceptualize the mixes of "state" and "private," of "macro" and "micro," of "local" or "national" and "global," of "top down" versus "bottom up"*" (Wedel et al. 2005, 40)." I have not only studied policies, but specifically discourses around policies, which tells a lot about the formation of policies and the relationship between actors as well.

'Studying through' means working in various sites, associating with various actors and taking up new kinds of research methods and materials, like policy documents. Gusterson developed the term 'polymorphous engagement' for this practice, which means interacting

with informants across a number of dispersed sites and collecting data eclectically from many different sources (1997, 116). ‘Studying through’, or ‘polymorphous engagement’, also has consequences for research methods in various fields: in ‘studying up’, as part of ‘studying through’, conducting interviews is often the only means of gathering firsthand information (Wedel et al. 2005, 41). Because of this, cross-checking and contextualising data has been of upmost importance, which can be ensured by method triangulation. DeWalt and DeWalt (2011, 128) note on this subject: *“It is our belief that the use of different techniques with different strengths and limitations allows for the cross validation of conclusions by comparing them using data collected in different ways.”* I secured method triangulation by applying different methods to each ‘layer of actors’ of my research population. This allowed me as well to see if there were any discrepancies in gained information: a certain description of social participation could be given, which could contradict with the definition a government official would give me of social participation. This especially is interesting when researching the framing and shaping of a subject like social participation.

#### *Research population and connected methods*

My research population consisted of people living in Friesland who were connected to participation: this could be people working at government who were involved in making policy on social participation, people working at organisations who were involved in the topic of participation (CSOs<sup>14</sup>, funding organisations and interest groups) and finally citizens who were socially participating themselves. I chose these groups because they are all directly involved in shaping social participation. My research methods consisted of (semi-structured) interviews, informal conversations, participant observation, ‘being there’ and policy and literature research. I applied different methods to these different layers of my research population.

With the first layer, consisting of people working at government in Friesland, I mainly did interviews and informal conversations. Gusterson (1997, 115) noted that *“participant observation is a research technique that does not travel well up the social structure”*, but I do not agree entirely with this statement. I attended several seminars where the people present were mainly people working for governmental organisations, which allowed me to

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<sup>14</sup> Civil society organisations, CSO in short, which are non-governmental organisations.

conduct participant observation among this group. Finally I did a lot of literature and policy research on the reports and policies that were published by this layer.

This was the case as well for the second layer, the organisations, where the methods consisted mainly of interviews, informal conversations and some participant observation. I did do an internship at the *Fries Sociaal Planbureau* (the Frisian Institute of Social research), which allowed me to 'be there' and do more participant observation at an organisation which is situated between government and citizens (my first and third layer). In addition I discussed my 'results' during fieldwork with my supervisor there, which allowed us to identify issues, make research plans and define questions along the way, which Mullins (2011, 238) refers to as a *cyclical process*.

Finally for the last layer, the (active) Frisian citizens, I did less interviewing, but more participant observation, held more informal conversations and via volunteering I could 'be there' as well. I decided to choose three different citizen initiatives as being representative to focus on: an initiative situated in a city – a neighbourhood in Leeuwarden in this case, an initiative situated in a small rural village, and an initiative that is situated in between, having the influence of both a city and the countryside. I made this division because people I spoke to often emphasised the difference between rural areas and cities. Rural areas are recognised as having stronger social cohesion, more citizen initiatives and a stronger feeling of Frisian identity than cities.<sup>15</sup> To be able to compare different areas and how these issues of social cohesion, social participation and Frisian identity were connected to the size of a place, I chose these three initiatives. Besides focussing on these three initiatives I did speak to several other different citizen initiatives and read many documents on different initiatives. This allowed me to compare the information gained via participant observation and informal interviewing and document research.

### *Discourse analysis*

Over all layers I have conducted discourse analysis as an important method to deduce how social participation is shaped and framed by different actors. Discourse analysis is the study of language in use (Gee 2005, 8); this way you can deduce meaning. Gee (2005, 8) looks at

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<sup>15</sup> See research FSP:

[http://www.friessociaalplanbureau.nl/sites/default/files/field\\_dldbl\\_file/20160121\\_fbp\\_over\\_samen\\_leven.pdf](http://www.friessociaalplanbureau.nl/sites/default/files/field_dldbl_file/20160121_fbp_over_samen_leven.pdf).

meaning as an integration of ways of saying (informing), doing (action) and being (identity) next to looking at grammar. Whenever I talked to people, did participant observation or read a (policy) document, I noted which relations were defined as the subject (for instance youth and the municipality), what the perspectives on subjects like participation, responsibility and citizen initiatives were of the person in question and the goal of the conversation (for instance when a municipality wanted to ensure greater social participation from youth). This way a map could be made of how social participation was approached, what meaning was attached to it and consequently how it was shaped.

#### *A note on methodological nationalism*

Current debates about power, globalisation and the nation-state have been questioning the relevance of debating within the framework of the state or of a government. Ulrich Beck (2003) discusses in his article on methodological nationalism the trap of researching within the framework of a nation, which strengthens the view that the nation-state is the most important framework. This is the trap as well of the concept of governmentality, which, as originally formulated by Foucault (1991), presupposes the frame of the nation-state (Ferguson and Gupta 2002, 996). However, as I am interested in the influence of the regional context to national policy, I do have the nation-state as my frame of reference. What is important here is that *“nations are not just contexts that shape the meanings of citizenship in path-dependent ways but are actors who mobilise concepts and resources in particular political projects”* (Newman and Tonkens 2011, 21).

#### **Ethics**

To protect my research population and to do justice to the information that I have obtained, I have anonymised all the names in this research. I have chosen to mention the job titles of many of my research participants, because their words might reflect their jobs or their perspective on certain matters. Especially since my research population was so vast, to mention the function or job of a person would give more structure to my research. To inform people when talking to them, every time I talked to someone for the first time I explained what my research was about and what I would do with the stories that I collected; this way I did not do covert research. They always had the opportunity to ask questions about my research, whether it was about privacy or about content. I have treated more

personal and confidential information with respect, assuring the person that I would not tell other people about what they said, and made sure that if the information was present in this research, it would not be retraceable.

### ***Structure thesis***

This thesis will consist of three separate empirical chapters, followed by a conclusion. The first chapter will outline a ‘top-down’ view on social participation, mainly introducing a governmental and organisational view on social participation. Policy on social participation will pass in review, next to a discussion on a shift in the relationship between government and citizens. These topics contribute to an understanding of how social participation is shaped ‘from above’, and how this shaping creates an understanding of what citizenship entails and what a ‘good citizen’ looks like. Within this chapter I will have a look at what influence the Frisian context has on social participation policy, and how Frisian identity and community are intertwined with social participation in Friesland.

The second chapter will then zoom in to the social participation ‘on the ground’, a ‘bottom-up’ view. It will explain who participates, why people participate, why initiatives are set up, and what differences exist within social participation on the ground. This will provide the basis for researching how communities created because of social participation are set up and organised, what the basis is of these communities and initiatives and how different groups perceive social participation. Within researching these communities and the types of social cohesion that they generate (or the other way round), I will look at what the importance is of the context of Friesland and of Frisian identity. Is ‘Frisianness’ present ‘on the ground’; visible or less visible?

The third chapter will combine the first and second chapter and scrutinise any mismatches and differences between the two perspectives of the previous chapters. Where are the tensions in this thesis? Which meanings are attached to social participation and how can these be connected to governmentality: how is citizenship shaped? How is the Frisian context connected to (the framing and shaping of) social participation? I will illustrate how social participation is shaped and framed by different actors, and in line with the notion of governmentality, I will explore how *“the conceptual distinction between them is mobilised and crossed over, to explore these categories as ‘diagnostics of power’ integral to the formation of subjectivities and identity”* (Abu-Lughod 1990, 42), rather than oppose the two

perspectives from different actors. I will discuss power differences in shaping social participation, whilst breaking down barriers between the view 'from above' and the view 'from below'.

The conclusion will wrap up these three chapters and conclude what the case of social participation in Friesland illustrates and means for discussions on governmentality, citizenship, social cohesion and politicised (Frisian) culture.

## Chapter 1: A view from above

*The Province had a slogan: ‘de mienskip op ien’ [the community on one]. The slogan was printed on the coffee cups at the coffee machine as well. I was standing next to the coffee machine with my colleagues, when they started laughing. I asked why they were laughing, and they explained what was written on the coffee cups. I went back to my office space with my coffee and asked my colleague: “Is the community also number one in your world?” He responded: “Mei myn frou ek op ien?” [Can my wife also be number one?] So I called out to my other colleagues: “Could his wife also be his number one?”<sup>16</sup>*

The civil servant telling me this story was laughing heartily about this story, which he told to indicate that the province of Friesland was trying to fulfil the ‘needs’ of the Frisian community as best as possible. The quote highlights the relationship of a governmental institution - the Province - to its citizens - the *mienskip* - but in addition it shows the use of culture and referring to community in politics. First of all the slogan of the province is in Frisian, the regional language, just like the official name for the province is *Fryslân*. Secondly the slogan refers to a community, the Frisian community, appealing to an imagined community of Frisians via the use of the Frisian language, about which Benedict Anderson remarked “*seen as both a historical fatality and as a community imagined through language, the nation presents itself as simultaneously open and closed*” (2006, 146). This community is thus on the one hand open, inviting people in who learn the Frisian language, but in the same time the slogan excludes people who do not belong to the *mienskip* – whether language is the entrance to entering the *mienskip* or not. As we will see, references to the Frisian language, community or culture are made more often within policy of governmental institutions in Friesland, notably within the discourse of social participation. This chapter will look into how government shape the relationship between themselves and citizens on the topic of social participation and how this is connected to the Frisian context. Before looking more into the latter topic, it is interesting to review what is understood by the former topic – (social) participation.

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<sup>16</sup> Eelco, civil servant at Province Friesland, 21-04-2016.

The relationship between government and citizens was a recurring topic in my fieldwork, the stance differing from scepticism towards each other to an eager willingness to work together or move towards each other. The topic of participation especially highlights the issue of the relationship between government and citizens. However, defining or finding out what this 'participation' meant, or what people meant by using the word participation in policy or in conversations, was not an easy task. Whereas some institutional or government papers provide an overview of which different kinds of participation exist and what they entail, in the field people were less unanimous.

### ***What is participation?***

*"Joining in and do-it-yourself."*<sup>17</sup>

*"Being the co-creator of the next step in the human development."*<sup>18</sup>

*"Participation is that if you want to live in a beautiful street, you have to tend your own front yard; and to help your neighbour as well to tend his front yard."*<sup>19</sup>

*"To be in contact with people surrounding you."*<sup>20</sup>

*"Participation is sharing experiences, to join in, to think together and to co-create."*<sup>21</sup>

*"The feeling for yourself that you are participating in different factors."*<sup>22</sup>

These are a few of the answers people gave me to the question: 'What is participation (to you)?' The answers were often short, but their explanation afterwards shed a light on the paradigm within which they were talking or working, and what this meant for who they thought were most important in 'exercising' participation. Within policy making different paradigms can collide, resulting in broadening policy to fit several paradigms. Consequently some (policy) terms, like 'participation', are made very broad and possibly vague. Leal (2007) argues that because of this wide applicability, 'participation' can lose its meaning and consequently make policy on participation unclear. A consequence of the haziness of participation is that a whole variety of practices can be carried out and legitimated under its label (Richardson 1983). This issue was explained by a civil servant working at the Province of

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<sup>17</sup> Christiaan, civil servant at the municipality of Leeuwarden, 09-02-2016.

<sup>18</sup> Anne Peter, advisor of a CSO on villages in Friesland, 10-03-2016.

<sup>19</sup> Sietse, program manager at Cultural Capital 2018, 13-04-2016.

<sup>20</sup> Boukje, chairman of an interest group of neighbourhoods in Leeuwarden, 18-02-2016.

<sup>21</sup> Hanne, civil servant at the municipality of Leeuwarden, 19-02-2016.

<sup>22</sup> Eelco, civil servant at Province Friesland, 21-04-2016.



Friesland when I asked him what he or the Province meant by ‘participation’ or ‘social participation’:

*E: One of the things that I have ascertained is that, in this organisation, we use certain terms very easily, but we do not define them.*

*R: Why is that?*

*E: Well, the fellow workers at this organisation do not work from the same perspective or paradigm. For instance you have people who work very closely with the Provincial Executive and the Provincial Council - for instance with the directors and governors. They work within an administrative paradigm, as you could call it. And representatives will think: What would the Provincial Council think about this? What would the Frisian community think of this? These governors prefer to formulate goals with enough space of interpretation, so they can manoeuvre a bit. [...] And we policy researchers, we try to look at things from a more scientific paradigm. You should know this, because I sometimes notice that people, that we do not work on the same ‘wave-length’; we do not speak each other’s language.<sup>23</sup>*

Whilst different people might disagree about a definition of participation, within the definitions that people gave me in interviews three main lines of defining participation can be discerned.

Firstly participation as ‘joining’ - as something that is done together, something you can latch on to. Koster (2014, 56) explains this kind of definition of participation that it is framed as an enhancement and furthering of already existing structures, as the word ‘joining’ implies. Tonkens (2013) explored the word ‘*meedoen*’ (joining/participating), which implies that there are existing (and imposed) structures to engage with, instead of referring to “*active political involvement in the contestation and negotiation of these structures* (Rana 2014, 37).” These definitions is connected to top-down structures of participation, and via these structures the expected roles of participants are shaped, thus exercising governmentality.

Secondly participation could be defined as ‘do-it-together’ or ‘co-creating’, relating to the first perspective, which points out the communal aspect of participating. Here the emphasis is on both *independence* and *interdependence*, which can create solutions to

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<sup>23</sup> Eelco, civil servant at Province Friesland, 21-04-2016.

shared problems, generate social capital in the community and create solutions together with government (Newman 2011, 114-5). This perspective on participation is relevant for the connection to the Frisian context, because when addressing a group of individuals who are connected because of participation – for instance citizens within a neighbourhood initiative – to influence this group an appeal has to be done to the common ground of the group, which could for instance be residents of a village or entrepreneurs on the topic of sustainable energy, but in the broadest sense in Friesland it could be ‘Frisians’ or the Frisian population. I will elaborate on this ‘common ground’ in chapter 2.

Finally participation could be defined as ‘do-it-yourself’, referring to the capacity to act as an individual and to the responsibility that individual has to act. This is very much a neoliberal approach to participation, where individuals are the entrepreneurs of their own lives, or ‘firms’ (Ferguson and Gupta 2002, 989).

### ***The active citizen***

All these three approaches of participation have as a common denominator that they focus on the ‘active citizen’. Phrases like ‘joining in’ and ‘you have to tend your own front yard’ imply an active stance towards your duty as a citizen, or as a participant within a community. ‘Active’ can be defined as *“one who is no longer dependent on the welfare state and who is willing to take a full part in the remaking of modern societies”* by *“taking on a range of responsibilities for the self, for the care of others and for the well-being of communities”* (Newman and Tonkens 2011, 9). ‘Active’ can therefore be paralleled with ‘responsible’. The emphasis on responsibility and self-organisation are forms of governmentality (Foucault 1978), because it is a technique of government who try to shape citizens to best suit their policy aims (Burchell, Gordon and Miller 1991, 7).

For individual civil servants or for policy makers the issue of responsibility is a slippery slope: where to draw the line between what government are responsible for and what citizens are responsible for? A civil servant at the municipality of Leeuwarden directly addressed this issue: *“It is a hard consideration to make as a municipality: If you are talking about citizen participation, where do you begin, and where do you stop? Do you just not even*

*start, or will you do it for people, or will you help people, teach them how to do it themselves? These are the dilemmas.”<sup>24</sup>*

These dilemmas are rooted in the history of the development of Dutch society and its appurtenant policies. As was outlined in the introduction, the shift from a welfare state to a more neoliberal state brings with it a transition in the relationship between the state and citizens, together with a shift in responsibilities. Hanne Dykstra, from the municipality of Leeuwarden, talked about the shifting relationship between government and citizens: *“The common thread within participation is the intersection between society and the system world. There the common thread is situated, and there lies the challenge as well. This is not often discussed. Before the government was ‘the herd of public values’, and the government took all agency of citizens, but the question is: do people feel ownership over society?”<sup>25</sup>* The question ‘do people feel ownership over society’ can be paralleled with the question ‘do people feel responsibility for society and their duties within society’. However, what the duties are of a citizen within society are dependent on what the definition of a (good) citizen is. This is the domain of citizenship agendas, where normative shaping of ‘good’ national citizens takes place through the configuration of values, beliefs and sentiments (Foucault 1991; Rose 2000). Next to exercising this governmentality via programs, it can also be done via political rhetoric or in the subtext of government policies (De Koning et al. 2015, 122). Transferring responsibility from government to citizens under the umbrella of social participation is a way of influencing citizenship agendas which call for active citizens to take responsibility for their own lives. How do government then frame this active citizen?

### **Assumptions**

When talking with people working a government or organisations, certain assumptions about citizenship were made, and by not questioning these assumptions they are rendered natural and obvious, hiding the framing power behind these assumptions, because they are not defined as techniques of government (Lemke 2001, 201). What some of these assumptions were, was made clearer at events/symposia between government officials, entrepreneurs and CSOs. One such event addressed the topic of social initiatives, what these

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<sup>24</sup> Christiaan, civil servant at the municipality of Leeuwarden, 09-02-2016.

<sup>25</sup> Hanne, civil servant at the municipality of Leeuwarden, 19-02-2016.

initiatives mean and how important they are within Dutch society and policy. The event started as follows:

*It was a Thursday afternoon and together with me a group of some eighty people were sitting in a light, open room that looked out over the IJ in Amsterdam. All heads were turned towards the side of a room where a small stage was set up with two heavy armchairs and a sofa. A woman was standing on the stage and was enthusiastically introducing the event, about social initiatives, of the day:*

*“First of all I would like to know who we all are, so my question for you is: who of you would describe themselves as working for the government?”*

*About a third of the people raised their hands.*

*“Who sees themselves as an entrepreneur?” “As a civil servant?” “As a researcher?” “As a connector?”*

*With each question again a group of people raised their hand, some people falling into several categories.*

*“Have all people been able to raise their hand, or is there still something that I should have asked?”*

*A man at the back of the room raised his hand, and so the woman ran towards him. “Yes, how would you describe yourself?”*

*“As an active citizen.”*

*People in the room burst out in laughter. The woman ran back to her spot on the stage, and asked: “Who would describe themselves as an active citizen?”*

*All hands went up in the air, again accompanied by the sound of laughter.<sup>26</sup>*

The people present at this day laughed, because there was the assumption that the characteristic ‘active citizen’ was something self-evidently belonging to everyone (at the day at least). These assumptions form the backbone for making policy about desirable forms of (active) citizenship, without taking into account how these previous definitions and assumptions came to be in the first place. These assumptions are created within their own paradigm, in this case a paradigm of government officials, entrepreneurs and CSOs. These paradigms are strengthened by events like these, where like-minded people visit the same

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<sup>26</sup> Field notes, 26-05-2016.

event and discuss topics about which they might already have the same perspective on. This was confirmed when asking different attendees of these events why they attended the events. *"I'm not expecting to learn new things, I probably will know everything that will be said this evening"*, a civil servant working at the municipality of Leeuwarden answered me at an event about the relationship between the city and the countryside. What was the reason then? *"To see other people, networking, to catch up"*, he replied. And this was very obvious as well. From the moment we entered the Multifunctional Centre where the event took place all people seemed to know each other. Jurjen, who I had interviewed the previous week, came up to me at the end of the evening and confirmed my observations: *"I think everyone was here. It is just like a party: Hey! Hi! [waving around like greeting everybody] Everyone knows each other. But those short lines of communication are also our strength: this way we can actually get things done."*<sup>27</sup>

The danger in these assumptions lies in that people working at government or organisations may have a different view about how they picture the relationship between themselves and citizens than the citizens they are talking about.

### ***'Take care'***

Examples from the field pointed at least in one direction: that responsibility was not totally given out of hand. Government still had something to say about the outcome of social participation and its initiatives. This can be viewed in a positive light ('government do not let citizens 'fall)'), or in a more negative light ('government want to keep control over everything'). At a symposium on the relationship between city and the countryside one of the guest speakers, a previous representative in the province of Gelderland spoke about the stance government should take towards initiatives: *"As a government you are also the owner of things you have not come up with: Take care."*<sup>28</sup> Jurjen gave as a reason: *"That's your job as a government."*<sup>29</sup>

Being responsible for bottom-up initiatives was an issue that was debated during these events, as sometimes citizen initiatives were incorporated into government policy (Koster 2014, 51). Incorporating these initiatives in the structures of government, which did

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<sup>27</sup> Field notes, 25-02-2016.

<sup>28</sup> Field notes, 25-02-2016.

<sup>29</sup> Jurjen, civil servant at the Province of Friesland, 19-02-2016.

not in the first place initiate them, was a point of frustration, as a woman at the Amsterdam event explained in relation to her own initiative: *"I have started an initiative called 'Smart Seniors', which tries to encourage seniors to develop their talents. The problem is that the council wants to use our initiative in their own structures, in their own programs. That is the most stupid thing you could do, because that way it will not flourish like it would otherwise."*<sup>30</sup> In this case a bottom-up initiative was incorporated into existing policy of the local government. The reason why her initiative would not flourish within the programs of her municipality was because the initiative flourished without limits and structures that are present in the program of the municipality. Within a program of a municipality there are more strict definitions of a program and its goals, whilst before it was more open to interpretation, giving it space to expand and develop.

The view that a government should 'take care' of citizen initiatives tallies with the constructed image of the relationship between the two, which is constructed by both government and CSOs. What does this relationship look like?

### ***From a vertical to a horizontal relationship***

A recurring topic was the 'tilting' of the relationship between the government and citizens: from a vertical hierarchical relationship to a horizontal equivalent relationship; from citizens moving towards government to government moving towards citizens. This means that instead of citizens working towards government by 'having a say' in government policies, government should work towards citizens to adapt to already existing initiatives and 'energy' from society. The classification of working from a vertical to a horizontal relationship is a spatialising image. Ferguson and Gupta (2002, 983) explain in their article 'Spatializing States' that using spatial metaphors is *"productive, in the Foucauldian sense, in that it constructs a common-sense state that simply is "up there" somewhere, operating at a "higher level."*<sup>30</sup> The vertical image of a state being 'higher' than citizens is a construction that takes place via imaginative processes so that it renders states effective and authoritative.

In this case, however, state itself is proposing and promoting a shift away from this constructed vertical image towards a horizontal spatial relationship. This shift could undermine the authoritative status of the state and this is the goal of this shift as well. To change the foundations of the relationship between the state and citizens is a way of

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<sup>30</sup> Field notes, 26-05-2016.

‘moving towards the middle’. This self-criticising of the state makes the state less important (Tonkens 2011, 47).

This focus on the shift from vertical to horizontal, from citizen participation to government participation, have impact on the discourse on governmental policy and on what is expected from both citizens and government. Whereas with a vertical relationship and citizen participation, it is expected that government set the tone, make policy and take responsibility for the lives of citizens, with a horizontal relationship and governmental participation responsibility is shifted to citizens. This entails that citizens are expected to be ‘active citizens’ who take responsibility over their own lives and acknowledge the new relationship between themselves and the state, attributing as well to the new imaginative process of rendering this relationship horizontal. The role that is left for government is a facilitating role, so *“the enabling role of the municipality is emphasised instead of its legal functions”* (Newman and Tonkens 2011, 183).

This imaginative process, however, is not always shared by citizens, because the ‘former top-down’, i.e. the state, is ahead of citizens in thinking about this horizontal relationship, which means that the imaginative process is not mutual. At the end of a conversation with a civil servant working at the municipality of Leeuwarden I mentioned that I would be speaking with the chairman of an interest group of neighbourhood associations, who she would be acquainted with. We just had a discussion on the tilting of the government and the new positions government and citizens should take. After I mentioned that I would be speaking to her, she seemed embarrassed and said: *“She is still very much attached to the old official world”<sup>31</sup>; she is on the other side, where government still have to do a lot for citizens.”<sup>32</sup>* She showed his uneasiness with me talking to her, which would mean I would get a view of what the other side of the story was.

### **Talking mienskip**

Returning to the beginning of this chapter - the anecdote of the civil servant telling me about the slogan *“De Mienskip op ien”* - culture or references to certain (social cohesion) characteristics can contribute to the imaginative process of constructing a horizontal

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<sup>31</sup> Translated in Dutch as ‘ambtelijke wereld’.

<sup>32</sup> Hanne, civil servant at the municipality of Leeuwarden, 19-02-2016.

relationship with new roles for both the government and citizens. A recurring word in the discourse around social participation is *mienskip*, meaning as much as community, solidarity, social cohesion and having social capital. The word has been popularised over the past few years partly because it has been taken up in the title of the program of Leeuwarden becoming Cultural Capital of Europe in 2018. Since the beginning of the campaign around Cultural Capital 2018 in 2013 *mienskip* has been used much more in newspapers and online articles, as well as it being taken up in titles of policies and programs.<sup>33</sup> For instance the fund for citizen initiatives from the municipality of Leeuwarden and the province of Friesland are respectively called *Mienskipsfonds* and *'t Iepen Mienskipsfonds*. At another instance I asked a researcher why they had called their rapport of an overview of citizen initiatives in Friesland *"Minsken meitsje de Mienskip"*<sup>34</sup>, to which she responded: *"It is a bit to promote our organisation as well."*<sup>35</sup> Whenever I dropped the word *mienskip*, there were mixed reactions about the word, calling it 'an infected word'<sup>36</sup>, 'labelling'<sup>37</sup> or 'a magic word.'<sup>38</sup> In his book 'The Frisian: in search of the Frisian identity', Erik Betten touches upon the use of *mienskip* in trying to refigure the relationship between government and citizens: *"The year 2013 is all about Leeuwarden and Friesland having a shot at the title of Cultural Capital 2018. The key word therein is mienskip, partly as a unique Frisian characteristic, partly as something that has to unfold yet. The question is whether the project [...] could incite commonality by denominating this commonality. Because determining that people should feel festive from top-down doesn't work. On the other hand no guarantee can be given that spontaneous enthusiasm will start from bottom-up"* (Betten 2013, 153). This quote from the book shows the dilemma of the campaign of Cultural Capital 2018: the campaign is fuelled from bottom-up, something that government are focussing on and hoping for as well in policies. But how this goal is to be reached is not always clear. Referring to *mienskip*, however, is a way of seducing citizens into this journey, a way of using cultural politics. This does not mean that *mienskip* is empty and that it is all politics, because *mienskip* could be present as well. According to one of the program managers of Cultural Capital 2018 this has to do with the history of Friesland:

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<sup>33</sup> Lexis Nexis, word 'mienskip'.

<sup>34</sup> Translated in Dutch as 'People make the community'.

<sup>35</sup> Ytsje, consultant at a research center in Friesland, 17-03-2016.

<sup>36</sup> Field notes, 23-02-2016.

<sup>37</sup> Hanne, civil servant at the municipality of Leeuwarden, 19-02-2016.

<sup>38</sup> Christiaan, civil servant at the municipality of Leeuwarden, 09-02-2016.



*This has to do with the DNA or the history of this area. In the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century Friesland was a collection of small communities based around man made mounds [terpen], actually. Small villages were settled around those small communities, and if they wanted to survive, they had to work together with the small communities beyond, because one community did the fishing, and the other community did the baking, so to speak. So you really had to exchange, it was never a very centralistic area, but always an area with a very distributed network. [...] This says something about how you are organised, how you work together; that you need each other. The kind of implied... and that is what mienskip means to me: mienskip is about an implicit, natural collaboration with each other. Without asking for it you are working together.”<sup>39</sup> This explanation was echoed on more occasions, for instance at symposium on the relationship between the city and the countryside in Friesland. When one of the workshop leaders asked us where we were already excelling in, answers were “We are good at being together and working for each other”, whilst another participant, a mayor of a municipality in Friesland, answered: “Yn ‘t mienskipsgemoel!”[the sense of community].<sup>40</sup> The latter remark did not go without some jeers, however.*

### **Concluding thoughts**

By way of a provisional conclusion, this chapter has given an overview of how (discourse around) social participation is shaped from the governmental and institutional perspective. It has become clear that since 2000 a notion of the ‘active’ and ‘responsible’ citizen is conjured up in discussions around social participation. Citizens are held responsible for their own communities, whilst government still exercise influence over the outcomes of citizen initiatives. This is framed within a shift in the relationship between citizens and government: from a vertical towards a horizontal relationship, where both sides are portrayed as co-creators of civil society. To promote the responsibility of citizens for themselves as well as for others within their community in the context of Friesland the notion of *mienskip* is used, to signify the already existing communal structures embedded in Frisian identity.

If these are the outcomes of the perspective of government and institutions, the questions naturally flowing from this perspective are: what is the citizen perspective? What

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<sup>39</sup> Sietse, program manager at Cultural Capital 2018, 13-04-2016.

<sup>40</sup> Field notes, 25-02-2016.

Taking care of society  
Ruby Laws

effect does this shaping have on citizens? And are citizens merely receivers of these effects of power, or do they have influence on the shaping of social participation as well? And finally: is the link with the Frisian context experienced by citizens like it is articulated within policy documents as well?

## Chapter 2: A view from below

Foucault introduced a continuum of governance, with at one end the techniques of political government, to the other end of governing the self. Governing the self is about self-regulation and how individuals shape their own lives and their own identities - as (active) citizens for instance - to *“transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality”* (Foucault 1988, 17). Techniques of the self are connected to social participation because by starting up initiatives and volunteering, practicing and shaping their own lives, citizens influence policy on participation. These initiatives are the examples which government use to base their policies on, or as Rose (1999, 4) articulated it: *“To govern is to act upon action”*. This action thus shapes social participation from below, so it is interesting to dissect what this action on the ground looks like and who these active citizens are who are enabling this action. Therefore this chapter will provide an overview of different aspects of this action ‘on the ground’: *Who* participates and therefore shapes social participation? *Why* do these people participate? *Why* are initiatives set up and *how* do they start? *Where* do these different initiatives start? And finally: what is the importance of *support*?

### ***The usual suspects***

*“It all started somewhere around the year 2000. This land was a wilderness, a complete wilderness; the place was littered with weeds and blackberries. The land was owned by the council and leased for a part of it, meant to be a plantation. A good friend of mine, Bert, was in a bad place at that time and he decided he wanted part of the land. He wanted to clear his head by cultivating vegetables. The only problem was that Bert had one handicap, and he still has that handicap, namely that he has no knowledge on how to cultivate vegetables. It is a common thing: people who want to clear their heads want to start cultivating. To work with or in the ground has a certain aura of clearing the head. I, on the other hand, have gardening in my genes. That’s why Bert asked me to help him out in the first place. I told him: I will do it, on one condition. The thing is: I have had a plan since I was 20 years old, namely the plan to combine a vegetable garden with culture. So that means the garden would be for*

*children, for education and for people who have become unemployed for one reason or the other. I was a precursor in this, and have always been, also in other sectors.”<sup>41</sup>*

*I was sitting in the ‘Praathús’, literally translated as ‘talking house’, together with Gerben, who was telling the story of how the vegetable garden, which we were looking out upon, had started. It was warm inside due to the wood stove that was brimming with logs. Piet, who was responsible for the Praathús today, preferred it hot inside. Before my conversation with Gerben the usual morning ritual had taken place: the volunteers of the day were sitting around the table on the make-shift veranda of the Praathús, Gerben was standing at the head of the table and delegating the work that had to be done for the day. Ron and Lúzen would be working ‘in the village’, weeding and repairing the street. Toon, Tettie en Anne-Peter was asked to be working at the open-air theatre, and Marjan, Melissa and I would be doing some sowing and planting. Some other volunteers have the same task every time: managing the shop, managing the Praathús, building a new canteen etcetera. After Gerben had ticked off the list of the day people set out to do their job for the day; the jobs that had been devised by Gerben.*

This morning ritual, together with what Gerben told me during my conversation about the garden with him, signified one important factor: that Gerben was important for the garden. This supposition was reinforced by Klaas, one of the coordinators of the garden, during my first visit to the garden. While Klaas took me for a tour across the garden, he revealed to me the secret of the success of the garden: First of all they had secured continuation over all these years, and secondly the success was due to Gerben: *“The garden is Gerben.”<sup>42</sup>* The garden is one example of a citizen initiative that falls under the category of ‘social participation’, one of the initiatives that can apply for funding under the policy of social participation. Key in these initiatives is the people who are involved, the volunteers.

People like Gerben are part of the reason why these initiatives exist. These are the initiators, the entrepreneurs - be it because of idealistic or economic reasons. These initiators are citizens, who are able to set up initiatives or take care of tasks formerly carried out by the state, and they are set apart from other citizens because they may have other

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<sup>41</sup> Gerben, initiator of a vegetable garden, 12-04-2016.

<sup>42</sup> Field notes, 23-03-2016.

capacities, have more time on their hands or more energy to take these roles as front-runners in social participation (Koster 2014, 50).

At different citizen's initiatives I visited, these key figures could always be identified. Sometimes they were the initiators of an initiative (often when an initiative had not existed for a long time); sometimes they were key figures in an initiative that had existed for a long time. Whilst I was visiting a neighbourhood association in Leeuwarden one day, I was talking with some people who volunteered there. When asking what was the importance or goal of the neighbourhood association and how this goal could be achieved, one of the volunteers pointed to Wesley. Wesley had been a volunteer for more than thirty years, occupying different functions over the years. Wesley replied: *"A while ago someone said to me: every neighbourhood organisation needs its own Wesley. I had never thought of it that way."*<sup>43</sup>

Koster (2014, 50) explains in his article 'Bridging the Gap in Dutch Participation Society' that in the Dutch context *"active citizens are considered key to the success of the participation society (Specht 2012)"*. These active citizens are *"political brokers who bridge the gap between the retreating state and its citizens"* and are *"mediators between the state and their fellow citizens"* (Koster 2014, 50). Individuals like Gerben and Wesley are key to the success of the initiatives and consequently key to the success of the Dutch participation society as well.

This gives a glimpse into the importance of these key individuals in the setting-up of the initiatives. The question remains why such initiatives are set up in the first place.

### ***In the beginning***

The reasons why initiatives are set up vary, but are often a mix of three factors: because people have certain ideals, because the possibility presents and because there is a need for it. What all three factors have in common is that they are all bottom-up forces from individuals or groups that start an initiative without the direct involvement of organisations or government in the first place (later-on in the process links between the initiatives and government often take place). I will shortly give some examples of these three motivations for starting an initiative.

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<sup>43</sup> Wesley, active at a neighbourhood organisation, 06-04-2016.

*Because people have certain ideals*

This is the case with the vegetable garden. It did not start from a certain necessity (although you could argue the necessity was that Bert needed an activity or an outlet). There was not, however, a gap in government services for instance. Gerben even approached the council himself; saw the opportunities and the gaps in government services where the garden could go.

The initiator of a food forest in Leeuwarden, Alina, had a similar kind of motivation to start up her initiative. She explained that she thinks it is very important that people, and especially children, experience the planting, growing and harvesting of food. Especially since she has a young son right now, she feels she would like to give him this opportunity to learn about food and how it grows.<sup>44</sup> This ideology of finding it important to live with nature and experience the planting, growing and harvesting of your own food is the main motivation for Alina to have set up this initiative. Along the way many like-minded people have hitched on, most of them were already interested in nature or food forests beforehand.

Jeroen, who set up an energy cooperative, articulated it in his own way: *"We do everything voluntarily. We are all gekke Henkies"*<sup>45</sup>. *It's not about the money; it's about why we do it.*"<sup>46</sup> These initiatives, which are based on certain ideals, attract people with the same ideals, thus forming a community around a theme, rather than for instance a place, although a place might be an important source from which people can be attracted. This kind of grouping together can be explained by the concept of *Gemeinschaft of mind*, which entails a community of mental life (Tönnies and Loomis 2002, 42). Supporting a garden because of its biological production methods, or supporting an energy cooperative because it uses solar energy thus creates a *Gemeinschaft of mind*.

*Because there is a need*

In the case of two small villages in the North of Friesland there was a certain need for an initiative. In 2014 several housing associations decided to withdraw from the smaller villages in the Frisian countryside. This decision was made because fewer people live in these smaller villages, and thus the market for social housing decreases: the focus for the housing

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<sup>44</sup> Field notes, 30-03-2016.

<sup>45</sup> Gekke Henkies is literally translated as 'crazy Henkies': we are all mad.

<sup>46</sup> Jeroen, initiator of an energy cooperative, 04-03-2016.

associations shifted from smaller villages to bigger villages and cities in Friesland. Hans, who was involved in the solution of this issue, explained to me what happened next:

*The question was whether they could put a spin on this problem. The question then was: How can you make a village like this an attractive place to live? Would it be a possibility for others to take over the houses themselves? So a group of professionals set out to provide support to communities who wanted themselves to make their own plans. After designing a model plan suitable for such small villages they thereafter went looking for a suitable village. The call went out: "Community regeneration experiment seeks a village." It took almost two years before there were villages who said that they would like to participate in the experiment. First of all only the people from the village interest group voiced this sentiment, but eventually the whole village supported the project. It needs a sense of urgency.<sup>47</sup>*

This sense of urgency is part of the core of the motivation for these villages to participate in the project dubbed '*It Nije Doarp*' ('The New Village').<sup>48</sup> Because the housing associations withdrew from their villages, they experienced this as a loss. To fill this gap they set up this initiative (or more accurately: they trusted in the model plan that was set up by the professionals). An issue that is present in this village is shrinkage: decline in population. Especially the North of Friesland has trouble with this phenomenon, and there are some negative consequences for these areas. Because fewer people live in a village, services disappear; services like shops, GP's, public transport, religious centres, community halls and so forth. Through the project '*It Nije Doarp*' these consequences could maybe be prevented. Here the importance of responsibility of citizens is especially felt, because these kinds of initiatives fill up a gap in social services that used to be the responsibility of the state or organisations (Tonkens 2011, 56).

#### *Because the possibility presents itself*

Another motivation for setting up initiatives is because the possibility presents itself. This is of course the case with all initiatives, and as with the two other motivations this one does

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<sup>47</sup> Hans, advisor at a research center in Friesland, 23-03-2016.

<sup>48</sup> '*It Nije Doarp*' has as a purpose to secure 'livability' in the two villages. They have started a small housing cooperation, 'buy' energy as a community and formalised care for each other in the villages.

not exclude the other. With 'possibility' I mean that there is a structure which allows people to develop initiatives and facilitates this development as well. An example of a structure that enables initiatives to be set up is the existence of funding organisations, which provide money and expertise for people who want to set up anything ranging from a playground to an 'area vision'. A very clear example is the program of Cultural Capital 2018. Leeuwarden will be Cultural Capital of Europe in 2018 and the organisation of Cultural Capital 2018 is organising and facilitating loads of initiatives and projects to celebrate this and to work on certain challenges that Leeuwarden, and Friesland as a whole, faces. To involve citizens of Friesland in this project, a certain structure has been set up:

*We have set up a program based on suggestions from the [Frisian] community. But within this program we also have an Open Program, where we still welcome suggestions from the community. Already 815 ideas have been presented at the moment. And we have a structure within which every proposal gets its own place. We have made a sort of car wash [a kind of flow chart], to put it bluntly, through which every project has to go. Firstly we have made a website, which is a kind of toolbox: a toolbox to help people develop their project formally, so helping with the production side, with the budget, with fundraising etcetera. Secondly there are some projects that need help with their content or their concepts. For these projects we have the Greidesessies [literally translated: meadow sessions]. These are workshops to develop your concepts and your content: very much 'kill your darlings'. And the third branch is De Reis [the Journey], which is more about methods, where we offer an artist [which could be anything from a painter to a politician] to a community to help with issues.<sup>49</sup>*

Because people got to know the organisation of Cultural Capital, they got to know these possibilities. Where some people already had an idea about setting up an initiative, it was only when they became acquainted with the support that Cultural Capital was able to offer that people actually carried out their ideas. When talking to one of the employees of Cultural Capital about the different initiatives that knock on their door, she showed me a small crochet coaster in blue and yellow; the colours of Leeuwarden. "An elderly woman approached us with this coaster; she had been crocheting loads of coasters. She is the reason why we have set up the program two-fold: on the one hand the main program and, on the

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<sup>49</sup> Sietse, program manager at Cultural Capital 2018, 13-04-2016.



*other hand, the open program where people can bring their own initiatives to the table: the participation side.*<sup>50</sup> So instead of people approaching funding and supporting organisations *after* they have set up their project, these kinds of organisations can spark new initiatives as well.

These different and interlinking motivations for starting an initiatives, ‘the power of the citizens’ as some government officials dub it, are not always linked to policies from government. So where I first thought that a certain need for initiatives was felt by citizens because of government policies (which could lead to a negative atmosphere), these initiatives developed bottom-up without regard to government policies, giving them a very positive atmosphere/feel. This positive atmosphere flows from the goals of different initiatives: to make their living space and world a better or more beautiful place based on the ideals of the initiators. This positivity, however, is not sustainable without the influence and help of other participants, which brings us to the question: who are the other participants and why do they hitch on?

### ***Characterising the participant***

The motivations for individuals who participate in citizen initiatives are often the above mentioned reasons as well, but a distinction can be made as well in the personal reasons why people are involved in initiatives. The reasons why people participate in initiatives depends also on the kind of initiative: how many people can be involved, what is the goal of the initiative, what are the values of the initiative, what kind of work has to be done or can be done, where is the initiative situated and so on. However, (often) a few main characteristics of these volunteers can be distinguished. Gerben, of the vegetable garden, broke it down for me: *“I myself always distinguish between three groups of volunteers”*<sup>51</sup>:

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<sup>50</sup> Thea, working at the organisation of Cultural Capital, 13-04-2018.

<sup>51</sup> Gerben, initiator of a vegetable garden, 12-04-2016.

### Age

*"In the first place you have the 'normal' volunteers. They are often elderly people who have a lot of time on their hands; they like it here. They want to be outside; it is a kind of way to get through the day."*<sup>52</sup>

Time and age are thus the first characteristics for the volunteers in the garden. These characteristics extend to other initiatives outside the vegetable garden as well. Hans explained, when talking about the participants in the housing initiative in the small Northern Frisian villages, that indeed there were less young people active in the initiative: *"There are younger people in the workgroups. But they are busier during the week. There is a limit to volunteering."*<sup>53</sup> This limit is due to the limited amount of time (younger) working people have on their hands. Being out of work then is a reason for some people to start volunteering as well. Eveline, who had been working for a couple of years at the vegetable garden, finds herself in such a situation. She used to be a graphic designer, but she saw her job disappear as a result of computer technology and competition from a younger generation. Because of her age - she is almost fifty - finding a job gets harder and harder. Fortunately she is able to make ends meet, but in the mean time she volunteers at the vegetable garden for a few mornings a week.<sup>54</sup>

A whole discussion was dedicated to the issue of age during the meeting on village houses organised by the interest group of Frisian villages and village associations. We were sitting in small groups of five around several tables in a large community hall. The people present on this evening were mostly around their fifties or older, me being the youngest participant of the evening. The question we were supposed to be discussing was 'What skills are important for members of the board of the community hall?' One of the first things that was raised was: being young. *"We need a rejuvenation of the boards"*, said one of my discussion partners. I asked why rejuvenation had to take place. *"Because our community hall has to be a place for everyone."*<sup>55</sup> The issue of age was thus not only a given, but also a burden or a problem for some initiatives.

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<sup>52</sup> Gerben, initiator of a vegetable garden, 12-04-2016.

<sup>53</sup> Hans, advisor at a research center in Friesland, 23-03-2016.

<sup>54</sup> Field notes vegetable garden, 29-03-2016.

<sup>55</sup> Field notes, 14-04-2016.

### *Ideals*

Gerben continued his analysis with: *“Secondly you have the idealists. I think the garden attracts these kinds of people, the garden then becomes a societal place. They are occupied with ‘thinking green’ and everything attached to that. Often these people are highly educated, they attach importance to their food, and there are many vegetarians as well. Partly this is a challenging group because they already have a vision of the work they can or will do here.”*<sup>56</sup>

This group can overlap the group above, and it is possibly a motivation for volunteering more than a characteristic. This again is the group of people who have the same *Gemeinschaft* of minds (Tönnies and Loomis 2002).

### *Welfare dependants*

Gerben concluded his enumeration with: *“The final group is the group that has been placed here by the municipality. These people often have a lower education, they have gone through a lot in their life, they attach less importance to their food and many of them smoke.”*<sup>57</sup>

In the case of the vegetable garden, these are people who do voluntary work to keep their benefits. This is according to the ‘Participation Law’, which has been introduced in January 2015, and this states that people who are able to work but need support to find work<sup>58</sup> are supposed to do voluntary work in the mean time to keep their benefits. Technically this group falls under ‘labour participation’, but they do the same kind of work as people doing ‘social participation’. Municipalities go and look for initiatives where beneficiaries can do their voluntary work, or initiatives can indicate that beneficiaries are welcome to do voluntary work at their initiative. Some initiatives are not huge supporters of this set-up, and consequently do not accept every volunteer who comes via this way. This is because some volunteers are not intrinsically motivated to do the voluntary work within the initiative, which can be seen in how they perform their work.<sup>59</sup> In chapter 3 I will discuss the issue of money and motivation more extensively.

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<sup>56</sup> Gerben, initiator of a vegetable garden, 12-04-2016.

<sup>57</sup> Gerben, initiator of a vegetable garden, 12-04-2016.

<sup>58</sup> Rijksoverheid, “Participatiewet”, accessed on August 05, 2016, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/participatiewet>.

<sup>59</sup> Bram and Wesley, volunteers at a neighbourhood association in Leeuwarden, 02-03-2016.

To wrap up his three ‘types’ of volunteers Gerben ended on the note: *“All in all there should be a balance between these groups. They should all feel at home here, and we spend quite a bit of time on this issue.”*<sup>60</sup>

The reason why Gerben, and other coordinators at the vegetable garden, spend so much time on the proper collaboration of these groups is because, like other initiatives as well, the garden is dependent on support; which for the greater part is made up by the volunteers.

### ***Importance of support***

Support, or *draagvlak* in Dutch, is what seems to be a holy grail in social participation. This is attached to the communitarian idea of citizenship, where citizens are responsible for civil society *together*. A way of steering this communitarian citizenship is to make support a prerequisite for funding or expertise, which organisations and governmental institutions alike do. In chapter 3 I will elaborate further on these structures, but the question remains: why is support so important? This question can be answered in two different ways: on the one hand support is needed for an initiative to continue existing; on the other hand support harbours impact: the larger the reach, the more impact an initiative can have.

These two are connected, because if there is not enough support, the initiative will not have much impact, which will lead to less publicity and importance, leading to less support. Emma, who works at an art organisation and specialising in community art, explained the importance of (creating) support:

*With our project ‘The Journey’ it works like this: there is a community. This can be a village or a neighbourhood, but also a group of police officers, you name it. And this group has something, there is something going on; there is a problem or an interesting situation anyway. And what we do is, we inject an artist into this community and he will start a conversation with this community. The artist will go to the community with an open view; he will not have a preconceived plan, because he will develop something together with the community. The intention is that if you involve them from the start with the project, that it becomes their own project, so to say. They will feel responsible for the project this way. And this is a difficult thing to do, community art is not easy. Sometimes I think: Wait a minute,*

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<sup>60</sup> Gerben, initiator of a vegetable garden, 12-04-2016.

*you are skipping the first phase, you know. The first phase is very important, because in that phase you have to create support and attract people and develop the concept with them. If you skip that stage, you will find yourself in the phase of concept development and at that stage you will drop something. And then it won't work anymore. And you notice it right now. Projects that have skipped that first stage, they encounter these problems: 'I haven't got enough people and it will already be in three weeks.' Yes, well, haha.*<sup>61</sup>

This quote shows, besides the fact that the organisation is trying to create ownership of citizens over the initiative via techniques of responsabilisation, that to make an initiative work, to ensure continuation, support is needed. The question then remains: how do you get support? And what is important to secure support? To answer this question we have to return to the key figures within initiatives.

Anne Peter, who specialises in 'initiator science', explains why these initiators are so important: *"Initiators are often entrepreneurs as well. Not always, but it certainly is a characteristic you can distinguish, as someone who stands out from society as a whole. So you have a kind of society or a municipality and it doesn't do anything by itself. So in the end a few individuals take those steps: they have an idea and organise it."*<sup>62</sup>

The statement that 'a society or a municipality does not do anything by itself' has implications for the issue of support: is it reasonable of a government to ask for support from a community as a criterion to subsequently support the initiative? Anne Peter thinks it is not reasonable to ask this from a society, because not all people will be able to have the capacities that initiators or entrepreneurs have. These capacities are for a great deal made up by (Bourdieu's) social capital, which can ensure support in the end.

Often these key figures have a lot of social capital, because they know people, and they are known by people. Koster (2014) takes on the concept of Brink et al. (2012) of 'connectors' or 'best persons', who he characterises as having *"courage, the capacity to think and act 'out of the box', entrepreneurship, a certain quirkiness in handling rules, informal leadership, commitment, empathy, and the ability to establish connections"* (Brink et al. 2012). Especially the ability to establish connections is inherent to social capital, which entails networks, norms, trust and cooperation (Bourdieu 1986, 243). With these networks,

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<sup>61</sup> Emma, art organisation in Friesland, 08-04-2016.

<sup>62</sup> Anne Peter, advisor of a CSO on villages in Friesland 10-03-2016.

these 'connectors' can form a base of trust for the initiatives. An example of such a connector and the use of networks is Jeroen, who started an energy cooperative in a municipality in Friesland. He explained to me how he created support for his cooperative: *"We have been visiting the interest groups of the different villages; they can spread the word afterwards. [...] Soft words like social cohesion do not attract people: it is not sexy or cool. It does not excite people enough. So that is why we focus on sport now. The goal is to get people together, and to introduce sustainable energy."*<sup>63</sup> He is using his networking skills and the appeal to sport to establish support for his initiative, with the goal of establishing more social cohesion within the region. These networks do not only run within the local community he is trying to reach, but they flow between the system world of government and the life world of citizens as well, which is another characteristic that can be attributed to these key persons (Brink et al. 2012). Boukje is another example of a key person who connects the system world with the life world. She is the chairman of an interest group of neighbourhood associations in Leeuwarden, and this organisation symbolises this link between two worlds. Whenever a neighbourhood association needs help with sorting out what (new) policy means for their association, Boukje is there to help them out with her knowledge on both worlds.

#### *Social capital, Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft*

These people, who are easily identified and known inside their community, have a lot of social capital. The question remains how this social capital is organised or what the basis is for a certain social cohesion. This depends on the kind of initiative. A rough divide that can be made here is the difference between location-based and theme-based initiatives. This distinction can be connected to the concepts of respectively Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft (Tönnies and Loomis 2002). Gemeinschaft is broadly speaking a community that is based on trust and social connections, like a village. Gesellschaft is considered a more modern type of community with economic connections. They have a different motivation for being a community: Gemeinschaft exists because there is the desire to be a group, a community. Gesellschaft exists because there is a need or common goals to form a group. Initiatives can be Gemeinschaft-based or Gesellschaft-based, but these are not exclusionary. In a society where citizens have to be more proactive and organised to keep or set up social services,

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<sup>63</sup> Jeroen, initiator of an energy cooperative, 04-03-2016.

there could be on the one hand a *Gemeinschaft* because it is a village or neighbourhood for instance, on the other hand it could be called a *Gesellschaft*, because a common (economic) goal is to keep intact social services. Within *Gemeinschaft* another nuance can be made: between *Gemeinschaft* of blood, which is based on a common habitat and *Gemeinschaft* of mind, which is based on a common goal. *“Gemeinschaft of locally may be conceived as a community of physical life, just as Gemeinschaft of mind expresses the community of mental life”* (Tönnies and Loomies, 2002, 42). This *Gemeinschaft* of blood is the case with citizen initiatives that are location-based, whereas *Gemeinschaft* of mind is the case with citizen initiatives that are more theme-based. Both lead to communities and social cohesion, but for the former based on a place, for the latter based on a subject or theme.

It can be said that *Gemeinschaft* of blood is stronger in smaller communities, because there is more social cohesion and more social capital within the community.<sup>64</sup> Jeroen notices these differences when setting up his energy cooperative: *“We thought: sport is good for you, because you become fitter, and it is a place to get together. It has a social connection function. The advantage: more members [of the energy cooperation] for us, and more visibility.”*<sup>65</sup> But when he approached different sports clubs across the municipality, he noticed a difference: *“I notice that when the village is smaller, the success is bigger. Smaller villages also have a lot of these kinds of initiatives, unlike cities. And these initiatives thrive on the Frisian Islands as well. I am now also working in Groningen. I supervise seven villages there. In the city of Groningen there is less social cohesion. Sustainable energy does have an impact, the technique is present, but the goal is different. Here I noticed: in the village over there with 300 inhabitants, a lot of people attended the village interest meeting. In this village, where there are 4000 inhabitants, it was the opposite.”*<sup>66</sup>

Anne Peter on the other hand does not think this distinction between *Gemeinschaft* of blood and *Gemeinschaft* of mind is relevant anymore, because the *Gemeinschaft* of mind prevails. *“You have to give credit to the Cultural Capital because they contribute to the ‘new togetherness’. This ‘new togetherness’ will be based on a connection between the older generation of associations and the younger generation of flexible workers. You will always*

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<sup>64</sup> See research FSP:

[http://www.friessociaalplanbureau.nl/sites/default/files/field\\_dldbl\\_file/20160121\\_fbp\\_over\\_samen\\_leven.pdf](http://www.friessociaalplanbureau.nl/sites/default/files/field_dldbl_file/20160121_fbp_over_samen_leven.pdf).

<sup>65</sup> Jeroen, initiator of an energy cooperative, 04-03-2016.

<sup>66</sup> Jeroen, initiator of an energy cooperative, 04-03-2016.

*see that the 'new togetherness' is based on ideas. For instance the community around sustainability, or the community around care or the community around, you know? Because that is what all people get. The common interest of a village or a province is the world nowadays. And that is hard to comprehend for a lot of people.*"<sup>67</sup>

I argue that the *Gemeinschaft* of blood can still be relevant, but mainly in smaller villages where people know each other; in bigger villages or cities *Gemeinschaft* of mind or *Gesellschaft* will prevail. However, in the end *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are merely types to understand the different foundations of social cohesion better, and they do not represent a strict division in practice or exist in pure form (Tönnies and Loomis 2002, 6-7). However, as Chamley-Wright and Storr note: *"It is still beneficial to use these distinctions to mark different modes of social engagement and human cooperation"* (2014, 158).

In the end the basis of the initiatives is very important, be this the people, the reason why the initiative started, the outcomes of the initiative or the way it functions in a village or city (or both). The basis of an initiative needs to stay strong to guarantee continuation. Is this basis fuelled by *mienskip* or based on a *Gemeinschaft* of Frisian blood, which policy discourse on social participation seems to suggest?

### ***Mienskipsgesfeel***

In all these stories few references were made to Friesland, Frisian identity or *mienskip*. When I asked about these three things, people responded that they did not think it was connected to social participation or their initiative that much. However, you could argue that *mienskip* or Frisian identity could be seen more indirectly in these initiatives on the ground; not such much labelling it as such, but present anyhow. The Frisian Centre for Social Research<sup>68</sup> has been monitoring *iepen mienskip*<sup>69</sup>, the theme of Cultural Capital, together with the province of Friesland and the organisation of Cultural Capital. How to define *mienskip* was one of the harder tasks, and the (yet undefined) definition will encapsulate the concepts of social capital, participation, inclusion and exclusion and social infrastructure.

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<sup>67</sup> Anne Peter, advisor of a CSO on villages in Friesland 10-03-2016.

<sup>68</sup> Fries Sociaal Planbureau.

<sup>69</sup> *'iepen'*, meaning 'open', to contrast the negative associations of *mienskip* being inward looking and exclusionary.



These concepts *can* be seen within these initiatives and thus you could say *mienskip* is present in these initiatives.

When I asked Emma if she saw anything ‘Frisian’ back in the art projects she was dealing with, her first reaction was: “*Haha, oh help!*”<sup>70</sup> But then she explained that in the content of artworks you would not directly see something ‘Frisian’, although theatre productions were sometimes in Frisian, but that “*it would be about how people are in Friesland. So how you can use that. It is another kind of mentality. I have family living in the province of Utrecht and they are completely different people.*”<sup>71</sup> Sietse agreed with this more slippery aspect of mentality:

*Mienskip is about an implicit, natural cooperation with each other. Without needing to ask for it you work together. I notice that it is still like that in many cases. I notice... I also organise a festival in Leeuwarden, and I notice that it is very easy for me to enter into many partnerships and that no-one does that to better themselves if the other person doesn't get better from it either. A kind of: ‘Yes, of course we will work together. What are we going to do? Do you need anything?’ I don't know, I just notice it a lot. It is rooted here. I am not a Frisian myself, so I also look at things a bit as an outsider.*<sup>72</sup>

This mentality could be translated as *mienskip*, like Sietse does. Jeroen for instance uses social cohesion of sport to promote his energy cooperative, which will lead to more social cohesion. This can create a *mienskip* within the villages that participate in his energy cooperation.

However, even if you *can* recognise social cohesion, inclusion and social capital working within citizen initiatives, this does not mean that it is dubbed as *mienskip* or attached to a Frisian characteristic within these initiatives or by the people participating in these initiatives. This leaves the use of *mienskip* or *Frisian mentality* still as an instrument of cultural politics of organisations and government.

Whether these signs of social cohesion, social capital and social infrastructure are unique for Friesland, and thus if Friesland is a unique factor in these initiatives is less clear.

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<sup>70</sup> Emma, art organisation in Friesland, 08-04-2016.

<sup>71</sup> Emma, art organisation in Friesland, 08-04-2016.

<sup>72</sup> Sietse, program manager at Cultural Capital 2018, 13-04-2016.

Many informants emphasised that, although in Friesland strong social cohesion in certain areas can be observed, this can be seen with other small communities as well.<sup>73</sup> To translate this reality into a cultural policy for social participation is not something that is actively done on the ground, but something that is shaped from a governmental and organisational perspective. Citizens thus do not exercise governmentality over social participation via cultural politics.

This is the same with the outcome of the initiatives: citizens do not actively present their initiatives as falling under social participation, but this is something that is framed 'from above'.

### ***Concluding thoughts***

Like I pointed out in the introduction of this chapter, governmentality can be seen as a continuum with at one end the techniques of political government and at the other end the governing of the self. It is this governing of the self that is reflected in this chapter. The participants in the different initiatives introduced in this chapter are shaping their own identities as active citizens in order to attain a certain state of happiness or to attain certain goals (ideals). This renders them, in governmental language, as active citizens, thereby shaping social participation, because the practice of their initiatives (their social participation) influences the understanding of social participation and therefore the policy on social participation. This is because governing is about acting upon action, and the citizen initiatives are the embodiment of this action.

Governing the self is about shaping into an identity of active citizens, but it is often already present in people, they are natural initiators. They already have these characteristics instead of gaining them through government policies. The other part of the identity of citizens is that they are expected to act communally; so be part of a group, a community, the basis and the support of an initiative. This group is dubbed as *mienskip* by cultural politics on social participation, whereas this is not acknowledged directly by citizens.

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<sup>73</sup> Sietse, program manager at Cultural Capital 2018, 13-04-2016; Jurjen, civil servant at the province of Friesland, 19-02-2016; Adriaan, social geographer, 03-03-2016; Remi, researcher of civil society in Friesland, 17-02-2016; Hanne, civil servant at the municipality of Leeuwarden, 19-02-2016;

Taking care of society  
Ruby Laws

Tensions arise between the techniques of political government and governing the self within the discourse on social participation. Referring to citizenship identities or cultures is one of these tensions. But where are these tensions most present and who in the end has most power in the discourse on social participation and the cultural discourse within Friesland?

### Chapter 3: What is up and what is down?

*‘Good news! We are being given this patch of land behind us!’, Gerben says before he exchanges his neat shoes for plastic clogs. Earlier that morning Gerben had talked with the municipality: the patch of land can be leased by the garden starting the first of May. It is a huge gain for the garden. ‘Even more work?’, Ron and Lützen jokingly ask, ‘a few more volunteers would be welcome then!’. The extra patch of land will generate a lot of work, especially since a lot of refurbishing has to be done. An old greenhouse is situated on the land, it is an old monument. The greenhouse has to be restored into its previous style before it can be taken into use. The greenhouse looks like a fairy-tale jungle: it has broken windows and a rusted skeleton, but inside different plants are in full bloom. Not planned, but planted a while ago. Here there is a bunch of parsley; there are the remains of different vegetables. Several old, still alive, grape branches creep along the top of the greenhouse and multiple strings run from top to bottom, meant as ties for tomato plants.<sup>74</sup>*

I had been volunteering for a few weeks at the vegetable garden now and this news was an interesting topic to talk about with the volunteers and the initiator of the garden, Gerben. A week after the news I sat down to interview Gerben about the development of the garden and everything associated with it. He told me he was very happy with the new patch of land, but that the positive news comes with challenges as well: they will get some money from the municipality to restore the old greenhouse, but it will not cover all the costs. They will have to find alternative ways to finance the rest of the refurbishing.

One option for financing is to write to funding foundations to ask for money. They have done this several times, for instance to build a new canteen. For this they received €10.000 from the *Mienskipfonds* from the municipality of Leeuwarden, provided that they finance the rest themselves. To be able to finance the rest, they are selling certificates worth €50 to customers, volunteers and anyone who wants to support the garden. These certificates are warranties that they will get the money back when the garden can afford it. How the garden will finance the restoration of the greenhouse is unknown yet, but they will probably be dependent on volunteers, customers and other funding sources.

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<sup>74</sup> Field notes vegetable garden, 05-04-2016.

The garden may have an extra patch of land, but this positive prospect brings new friction with regards to topics like financial and social support. Dealing with more finance, volunteers and regulations increases the pressure and dependency on outside needed for continuing this initiative.

### ***Tensions***

I had encountered this tension right away in my first interview with a civil servant working at the municipality of Leeuwarden. He was connected with policy on citizen participation and specifically on the subject of care and neighbourhoods. We were sitting in a small meeting room in the building of the municipality, a large grey building with loads of small corridors and musty rooms. I entered the field with the idea that I would encounter angry and frustrated citizens with their stories about the helplessness they felt within a neoliberal system of so-called citizen participation. The interview on the other hand started with positive vibes about bottom-up initiatives and how government and citizens are trying to work together as best as possible. So I had to ask the question:

*R: And if you encounter residents who are frustrated, because they see this policy as a ‘we are only being asked to give more’?*

*C: According to us we can be very honest: that is the case. Because.. look, ideally you don’t start your story with money, but in the end it is money-driven. Because if you have less money, you have to be more critical about what you can and can’t do.<sup>75</sup>*

Directly in my first interview I had identified a certain difficulty, a certain tension within the field of social participation: on the one hand positive stories about initiatives, citizen power and democracy development could be found in abundance, on the other hand there still were underlying issues of money, support, in- and exclusion and strenuous relationships with government. These issues reveal where power lies as well: who has the final say in these issues?

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<sup>75</sup> Christiaan, civil servant at the municipality of Leeuwarden, 09-02-2016.

### ***Hidden power***

In the previous chapters it has become apparent that both state and citizens exercise power on the concept of social participation: both shape the meaning and the outcome of social participation. A shift away from a hierarchical relationship between state and citizens can be recognised. Having said this can we still talk about a strict difference between the state and society, and with this in mind will the state have much more power than citizens? Koster (2014, 60) already noted that the concept of governmentality neglects to acknowledge that citizens have the capability to harbour transformative power. However, some power tensions, for instance on the topics of money, support, ownership and in- and exclusion shed light on the exercise of power and power inequalities that still pervade the field of social participation.

Instead of promoting that a neoliberal state leaves citizens with more opportunity and more freedom to shape their own lives, as well as their own shaping of social participation, it is exactly this neoliberalism which can be attributed with the fact that there are still power differences, albeit more disguised and more implicit than before. With neoliberal forms of government intervention into society does not only occur via traditional state apparatuses, but also via indirect techniques for shaping citizens without taking the responsibility for their lives (De Koning et al. 2015, 122). This works via making citizens responsible for their own lives, rendering social risks as problems of 'self-care'. The citizen here is treated as a rational and moral individual which makes its decisions based on a cost and benefit analysis, taking responsibility for its life. Lemke concludes this analysis with: *"By means of the notion of governmentality the neo-liberal agenda for the 'withdrawal of the state' can be deciphered as a technique for government"* (2001, 201). These indirect techniques function to make the regulatory power of the state more diffuse and less visible (Shore and Wright 1997, 28). These techniques, translated into policies or citizenship agendas, if the word 'policy' is not used, are deemed neutral and rational, and thus the shaping forces behind the constructing of these ideas are hidden away (Wedel et al. 2005, 37).

The key in governing, or 'acting upon action' as Rose (1999, 4) defines it, is to presuppose the freedom of the governed: *"To govern humans is not to crush their capacity to act, but to acknowledge it and to utilize it for one's own objectives"* (Rose 1999, 4). Presupposing 'freedom' of citizens renders citizens not as passive receivers of state policies,

but as *“users, choosers and as active agents in the setting of priorities and pursuit of policy”* (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000, 110). An active citizen is the ideal citizen, the sustainable citizen within a participation society, which is the goal of governmentality within this context. On the other hand models of possible actions are constrained and by government and other sources of power, which diminishes the freedom of acting (Burchell, Gordon and Miller 1991, 119).

### ***Shaping citizens***

Organisations and government have the ability to set the frameworks that citizen initiatives have to adhere to: in order to get subsidies or comply with policies on social participation; this way governmental institutions have power in shaping citizens towards their definition of social participation. The consequence of government creating structures to participate for citizens is that citizens have to adapt to this system world to incorporate their own bottom-up plans. Shore and Wright (1997) focus on these structures which see these policies as inherently anthropological phenomena, because they codify social norms and values, articulate fundamental organising principles of society and contain implicit (and sometimes) explicit models of society (1997, 7). I will review three areas where these structures are more or less visible: on the topic of financing, on the topic of legal frameworks and on the topic of incorporating citizen's agency.

### ***Financing***

Money is a sensitive subject when talking about citizen initiatives and citizen participation. Money may not always be the central issue to initiatives, but to ensure continuation or even execution it is an important aspect. Money is related to compensation of volunteers and to financing the initiative.

With regards to the compensation of volunteers, volunteers are often not paid, which characterises volunteering in the first place. However, some research participants explained that people wanted to know up-front if they would get money when they volunteered. Some explained this as a generational difference, where before people would do voluntary work to benefit the community, younger generations would volunteer for their own benefit. Extending this issue there is a general issue with attracting volunteers and responding to their motivations. Some volunteers are forced to volunteer, making their motivation money-

related anyway. At different neighbourhood associations and at the vegetable garden several people were volunteering there via the Participation Law.

With regards to financing the initiative, to ensure continuation or execution, a way of getting money is via applying for subsidies by foundations or organisations. Applying for subsidies is a skill on its own. Nearing the end of my fieldwork I had a conversation with my supervisor at the Frisian Centre for Social Research, and I was telling him how people are quite focussed on funding organisations and how to get funding for their initiative. He remarked: *“So initiators do need a certain level of knowledge, then, to be able to write for those grants. Are all of these people well educated?”*<sup>76</sup>

This knowledge consist of knowing which funding organisations are there, how to apply for a grant, which includes the ability to write convincingly, the ability to set up a budget and so forth. There are quite a few organisations who offer their expertise as well, like the Cultural Capital and the KNHM<sup>77</sup>, but to be eligible to use this expertise you have to write to them as well. Initiatives or associations, or the persons that run them, that do not have these skills, can be excluded in the process of getting money or help.

An important prerequisite for receiving (or applying for) funding is to have support for the initiative, which consequently becomes an area over which power can be exercised as well. Christiaan explained the prerequisites for applying to the *Mienskipsfonds*, which funds initiatives within the municipality of Leeuwarden. *“We have set up a regulation written of one single page, and there are four prerequisites in there, of which three are: it has to have support in the neighbourhood or in the village, people have to contribute to it themselves in carrying out the initiative and finally it has to contribute to liveability and social cohesion.”*<sup>78</sup> The *Mienskipsfonds* has a clear area, i.e. the municipality of Leeuwarden, which it is focussing on, but also funds which focus less on a specific region support the idea of support. I interviewed José, who works at a funding organisation which funds citizen initiatives. One of the programs of the organisation is called ‘Core with a heart’ (*Kern met Pit*), to which communities situated in one location can apply for. On their website the prerequisites are listed; the first two say: *“Participation in Kern met Pit is only possible with a group. For instance people who live in one neighbourhood or village or who in other ways are*

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<sup>76</sup> Henk, researcher at the Frisian Centre for Social Research, 20-04-2016.

<sup>77</sup> Koninklijke Nederlandse Heidemij.

<sup>78</sup> Christiaan, civil servant at the municipality of Leeuwarden, 09-02-2016.



*connected as a group, like parents of children from one school or members of a sport club etcetera. Secondly the group cannot be too small, because support of the initiative in the own surroundings has to be secured.*"<sup>79</sup> What support consists however, is debatable. A neighbourhood interest organisation was frustrated that their application to the *Mienskipfonds* was turned down, because they supposedly did not have enough support in a particular area, or did not represent a specific area, whilst an initiative to set up a house for teen mums was granted funding. The frustration was over the issue of whether the house did represent a certain area. The decision making process however was not up to the organisation which applied, and they did not get extensive explanations on the decision making process of the *Mienskipfonds*, especially because the regulations were so few. Koster (2014:50) argues that this kind of deregulation can be seen as a technique of governmentality, *"part of the subtle workings of governance through which citizens are disciplined to look after themselves (Foucault 1978)"*.

Frustration over the fact that a shift of responsibility does not necessarily come with a flow of money is common. Gerben noted: *"The municipality embraces all kinds of initiatives, but does not supply much money, at least never structurally."*<sup>80</sup> This shows that cost reduction is an important impetus for government to shift responsibilities and exercise deregulation, leaving merely an amount of money to be distributed among those who need it or apply for it, without clear promises (Tonkens 2011, 56). The Dutch King also touched upon the issue of cost reduction in his speech on the participation society. Contrasting Gerben's dissatisfaction with the fact that structural money is rarely available for citizen initiatives, Wytse, a civil servant at the municipality of Leeuwarden, explained the difficulty of money issues for governmental institutions as well: *"One of the biggest pitfalls of citizen initiatives is that they want to do everything by themselves, but they do want money from us. Well, then you don't do everything by yourself, do you?"*<sup>81</sup>

### *Legal frameworks*

Even outside money issues government and organisations have some power over initiatives, because legal frameworks have been set which can have consequences for initiatives. As for

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<sup>79</sup> Kern met Pit, "Inschrijving en Selectie", accessed on July 05, 2016, <http://www.kernmetpit.nl/Wat+is+Kern+met+Pit/Inschrijving+en+selectie/default.aspx>.

<sup>80</sup> Gerben, initiator of a vegetable garden, 12-04-2016.

<sup>81</sup> Field notes, 30-03-2016.

the vegetable garden, when they got bigger and bigger they encountered more obstacles from both residents of the small village they were situated in, and from the municipality:

*Right now we have run up against the limits of the mienskip. We had gotten permission from the municipality to build a theatre over there, but there were protests in the neighbourhood. So right now the pioneering has ended, and everything has been included into written policy. Right now we have been incorporated into the laws of the municipality. Our pioneering continues in our cultural activities.*<sup>82</sup>

In this case the boundaries of what the garden could and could not do were eventually set by the government. Before, when the garden just started, it was more uncharted territory, and thus most activities were not set and some were even illegal. But the bigger they got, the more incorporated the running of garden got into the framework of the municipality. So while originally the garden started as a project that was completely independent of the state, it now has been steered into areas of governance that are determined by state parameters (Koster 2014, 55-6).

#### *Incorporating citizens' agency*

Agency of citizens is however still relevant and something which government take notice of as well, as part of 'acting upon action' as well (Rose 1999, 4). The shaping of social participation and making decisions about what initiatives look like and turn out is certainly not one way traffic. The *Mienskipfonds*, for instance, has installed a citizen's board who decides on which initiatives are approved and how much money is given. This shows a certain amount of trust, although it was not easy to set this up: *"In the end it took quite a long time to make the final decision on the way it is set up now, because you can imagine telling the Board that a small group of people will handle four hundred thousand euro's",*<sup>83</sup> Christiaan, who is involved in the *Mienskipfonds* tells me. Relinquishing decisions to citizens is for some government officials counter-intuitive, but this does not mean that the decisions are out of their hands. This has to do with the informal politics of decision making, which Koster (2014, 59) dubs *"the nexus of new techniques of governmentality and*

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<sup>82</sup> Gerben, initiator of a vegetable garden, 12-04-2016.

<sup>83</sup> Christiaan, civil servant at the municipality of Leeuwarden, 09-02-2016.

*possibilities of creative agency*". These informal politics for instance consist of citizens boards like the *Mienskipsfonds* has, where citizens are encouraged to organise themselves to make decisions about other citizens organising themselves. There are, however, civil servants appointed to coach these citizens and to guide them through the procedure of appointing funding. The citizens' decision thus becomes encapsulated within governmental structures.

Another example is the organisation of Cultural Capital, which has developed an open programme, where citizens can latch on to with their own initiatives. Cultural Capital then provides several ways for how citizens can develop their own initiatives or get access to funding. Sietse at Cultural Capital explained: *"It's not about us writing a framework for funds, and saying: you can apply to these funds, and we will appoint points to you. It's much more about the involvement of experts and the making and developing of your plans."*<sup>84</sup> Although the power of the organisation of Cultural Capital is relinquished as an all-pervading decision maker of the continuation of initiatives, power is shifted to the coaching of initiatives, making it more informal.

### ***Shaping government***

Although new spaces of governance pop up that are determined by state parameters (Koster 2014, 55-6), this does not mean that citizens' organisations and initiatives are not able to shape government. Citizens still exercise governmentality over the shaping of social participation and consequently the shaping of a specific suitable citizenship. In the end governmentality focusses on the productive dimensions of power (Ferguson and Gupta 2002, 989), not necessarily the negative part.

Sietse of Cultural Capital was explaining to me how they are trying to shape social participation by facilitating an open programme for citizens to send in their initiatives:

*S: This is our sort of attempt to shape cultural citizen participation in a new way. The Province of Friesland is important here, because this is the policy of the Province as well. They put money into the Iepen Mienskipsfûns, the IMF, to guarantee this. So it is important that all these little islands [the different ways citizens can be helped with their initiatives] and the IMF integrate. What are we good at? We are good at thinking ahead; thinking of new*

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<sup>84</sup> Sietse, program manager at Cultural Capital 2018, 13-04-2016.

*strategic systems and it is our job to make sure this will turn into policy along the way. So that is what we are going to invest in.*

*R: So you are very much in line with the policy of the Province on culture, then?*

*S: No, we are trying to define the policy of the Province. So then they will adapt their policy with what we do, and when the moment comes we step out of the line, we can say: see, this is what we are annoyed with.*

*R: And what would be the core of this policy?*

*S: That a province, a beautiful and honest province, is made by people themselves. And if you want to make a place more beautiful, you have to look at all the positive initiatives taking place in that province, to strengthen them, instead of just defining policy and asking: how are we going to do that? So in the end it's about identifying all the things that take place on a citizen level.<sup>85</sup>*

This is exactly the bottom-up influence of citizens that Christiaan was talking about in my first interview, where the government adapts to what is desired by citizens, instead of the other way round.

Gerben from the vegetable garden explained a same kind of influence, where he saw the gaps that the municipality was dealing with, and came forward with his idea to fill that gap. This gap consisted of the reintegration of unemployed people onto the job market. From 2006 to 2007 there were a lot of 'reintegration companies' in Leeuwarden whose job it was to make sure the unemployed would get work again. In the same year the garden had a volunteer shortage, and so Gerben approached the reintegration companies if maybe some unemployed people could come and work at the garden. This idea is now widespread as a more successful and cheaper way of making sure unemployed people have work to do.

This shows an opposite force to being only restricted within a framework of government: frameworks can be extended by making use of initiatives or initiators as well, like with the garden as well. In the case of Jeroen, the initiator of an energy cooperative in Friesland, his activities did not go unnoticed. *"The province of Friesland saw my activities with this cooperative, and said: you're doing a good job. Could you do the same for other villages? So right now I am supervising eleven other villages, like Huizum."*<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Sietse, program manager at Cultural Capital 2018, 13-04-2016.

<sup>86</sup> Jeroen, initiator of an energy cooperative, 04-03-2016.

The 'use' of Jeroen reflects the statement of a Rotterdam professor who gave a talk on the opportunities for 'community halls'<sup>87</sup>. He talked about how important and interesting the social infrastructure of villages was; you had to know the right people to know what was going on in a village. Trying to connect with the Frisian crowd, he made a comparison with the *Elfstedentocht*<sup>88</sup>. For this famous Frisian skating tour there are twenty two *rayonhoofden*, which are Frisian citizens who are responsible for judging the quality of the ice, judging if the tour can take place and responsible for the safe course of the tour. The comparison he made was: "*We need social rayonhoofden, initiated informants.*"<sup>89</sup> These people have good and thorough knowledge and abilities of a situation, of an initiative or association. Jeroen would be a good example of a 'social *rayonhoofd*', because of his entrepreneurial qualities and because of his knowledge of social structures within villages. The embracing of individuals like Jeroen, are thereby extending the framework of the state, is still based on rewarding citizens which are able to handle this new role of responsible, economic-rational actors. This excludes or disadvantages citizens who are less able to meet the expectations of organisations and government to take on this role, this identity of the 'active citizens' (Koster 2014, 50).

### ***Volksmennerij***

How is this image of the 'active citizen' promoted then? All the positivity in the field would probably not be there if the 'active citizen' was promoted as 'the new responsible, economic-rational citizen'. A more (e)motional idea was needed to encapsulate this positivity and the freedom that comes with this new responsibility. This is where the identity of the active citizen is connected to the identity of the communal citizen and the Frisian citizens, all gathered under the word *mienskip*. Kees, a social geographer who has written about the meaning attached to places, explained the use of *mienskip* to me:

*Mienskip is a buzzword. The board/management of the Province of Friesland cannot get enough of emphasising how important mienskip is. It is a flag for activities. In Twente and Friesland this feeling is especially alive and kicking with the increase of uncertainty of society*

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<sup>87</sup> Translated in Dutch as 'dorpshuizen'.

<sup>88</sup> The Eleven Cities Tour, a famous Frisian skating tour.

<sup>89</sup> Field notes 14-04-2016.

*in these political times. It strengthens regional identities, and identity is a campaigning concept.*<sup>90</sup>

*Mienskip* as a campaigning concept has been picked up by more actors than the Province of Friesland, as the rapport *Minsken meitsje de Mienskip* of a research center in Friesland, the *Mienskipsfonds* of the municipality of Leeuwarden and the slogan ‘*Iepen Mienskip*’ of the Cultural Capital signify.

By connecting the identity of the active citizen in the participation society to the communal citizen in Friesland, culture is used to make policy seem naturalised and ahistorical, because *mienskip* has presumably always been present in Friesland. Erik Betten, in his book “De Fries: Op zoek naar de Friese identiteit” (2013) interviewed a linguistics professor, who explained her view on identity and language:

*A stubborn idea, which has existed since there was Frisian movement, is that Frisian [the language] is in danger of dying off. That is not the case, but still this idea about extinction keeps returning. It is a form of framing, a campaigning idea which provides an active stance for people who want to prevent that. [...] I am a constructivist. I look at the way people who have an interest in sustaining a certain point of view, construct that view, and who do not. It is a continuous process. The real culture is not about a certain soul which has to be saved, the culture is the action (Betten 2013, 55).*

The culture being the action here is the emphasising of a certain active and communal identity that is supposed to be present in Friesland. The framing of participation as naturally floating from a community, like Love (2013) outlined, could be connected to cultural and social capital. The practice of referring to a strong sense of identity and community can be seen as using culture as a power resource, thus using cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986, 75).

Promoting a communal identity within the participation society fits well with the discourse on the tilting of democracy, like I touched upon in the first chapter. This is a discourse which is shaped from both the citizen side and the governmental side that the relationship between both should shift from a vertical to a horizontal relationship. This means the state and citizens have equal responsibility and equal power in deciding what

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<sup>90</sup> Kees, social geographer, 03-03-2016.

Dutch or Frisian society looks like. From a governmentality perspective this looks like power flowing from both sides in shaping social participation, but from a neoliberal governmentality perspective it becomes clear that new techniques of government render citizens responsible, defining thereby what citizenship should look like: like active citizenship deciding rationally over their own lives. The discourse on tilting could thus be another step towards this neoliberal governmentality with its less visible ways of exercising power of discourses.

### ***Concluding thoughts***

Foucault introduced a continuum of governance, with at one end the techniques of political government, at the other end of governing the self. In the first two chapters both these sides were highlighted, to be scrutinised in this last chapter. What becomes clear is that although both sides have power over the shaping of social participation, and that citizens do indeed have agency, some actors have more influence over the shaping than others. In this case government do have more power over the discourse on social participation, but this can be hidden because of neoliberal new techniques of governance. Liberty that is presupposed with neoliberalism turns out to be a product of 'government', as it is a way to shape citizens into the ratio-economic actors that are fit for a participation society. Isin (1999, 144) articulates this interplay between the different powers: *"An incessant tension between impulses for liberty and order, between technologies of power and technologies of the self, and governmentality as a constant incitement to govern in the sense of dealing with this tension."* Lister et al. (2008) term this 'the Janus face of active citizenship', which can be applied to participation as well: *"It can operate as a force for inclusion and exclusion, and can be simultaneously emancipatory and disciplinary."*

## Conclusions

Over the course of the past three chapters I have attempted to discuss and develop concepts and ideas on social participation based on current theory and my own observations. During my research my own ideas and opinions about this subject have also undergone their own development. The discussion of these theoretical, observational and personal issues is developed over the course of the past chapter. In the first place a development of how social participation can be viewed and which different actors shape the concept and the content of social participation. Secondly a theoretical development in the concept of governmentality: from reviewing governmentality as flowing mainly from government, to reviewing the different powers that exercise governmentality. The final development has been of me as an anthropologist and researcher, from going into the field with certain ideas to stepping back from the field with a whole new vision on the subjects. I will now discuss each development separately in-depth.

### ***The development of social participation***

My objective has been to research how social participation is shaped and how it is connected to Frisian identity. My main question therefore was: *How do governmental institutions, civil society organisations and citizens shape social participation and what role does the context of Friesland play in this shaping?*

This question was placed in the context of the idea of the participation society in the Netherlands, a concept that has received revived media attention since the King used it in his yearly speech in 2013. Governmental institutions in the Netherlands have had the task to develop policy on (social) participation, with a tendency to focus on communal responsibility. Within the Frisian context this seemed to connect to notions of social cohesion inherent to the Frisian context, coined by the term *mienskip*. Over the chapters a development took place on which shaped this idea of social participation, what this entails and how Friesland features in this shaping.

In the first chapter a governmental perspective on social participation was outlined. What did social participation entail according to policy documents and policy makers within government? Social participation entailed notions of the 'active citizen', where citizens are



responsible for the creation of civil society. When talking about this 'active citizen' the assumption is made that citizens are already 'active' and that this leaves the task for government to 'move towards' citizens. This is visualised in a shift from a vertical, hierarchal relationship between government and citizens to a horizontal, equal relationship, an imaginative process through which government render themselves equally powerful to citizens (Ferguson and Gupta 2002, 983), both giving equal voice to the shaping of the (social) participation society.

In the second chapter the view on social participation from the government perspective was counterbalanced by the citizen perspective on social participation. From this perspective social participation starts from bottom-up, without a direct link to government policy, and from there influences policy on social participation. Citizens here are the main framers of the concept of social participation. Citizens shape the participation society by carrying out their initiatives and in their ways of organising. These initiatives are consequently the inspiration for government to adapt their policy to these already existing initiatives. The second chapter also gave an overview of what these initiatives looked like: who participates, why are initiatives set up and what are important factors for the continuation of initiatives? The most important factors for the initiatives are the key figures – often initiators or volunteers who are very often present - in the initiatives and the support that the initiatives have. These two factors strongly determine what a social participation society looks like.

In the final chapter these two perspectives on social participation were brought together to examine how social participation is shaped from a top-down and bottom-up perspective, assuming that we can still talk about top-down and bottom-up. It became apparent that this dichotomy is not sustainable within a discourse on social participation. Discourse on social participation is presented, by both governmental institutions and citizens as a field where both government and citizens have equal influence, or otherwise that citizens have more power in the shaping of social participation. This image is strengthened by the spatial image of working towards a horizontal relationship. However, since in the end government create structures wherein social participation is acknowledged, citizens have to conform to these structures, rendering citizens still dependent on this power of government. This way citizens fit the bill of the 'good citizen', created by government, which is the prerequisite to get access to money, expertise and acknowledgement from government.

Discourse on social participation on the government side can however hide these processes, by presenting social participation as a positive something, as the next step in the evolution of 'participation' and assuming responsibility and agency is already with citizens. In practice these assumptions only apply to some citizens, mostly key figures in initiatives, which disadvantage citizens who do not fit the bill of the 'active, responsible' citizen. To answer the main question: both citizen and government shape discourse on social participation in different ways and from different viewpoints, but because government supply state parameters for social participation, the power lies mostly with government.

How the development of social participation is connected to the Frisian context is also dealt with through the chapters. Within policy texts references to Frisian identity, Frisian language or a sense of Frisian social cohesion could be discovered. These were used as a vehicle for emphasising the already existing basis of social participation in Friesland. Culture (to capture all three kinds of references) is politicised into become a source of power in winning citizens over to the world of social participation. However, during my fieldwork it became clear that the connection between social participation and Frisian culture was not initially made by policy makers, organisations or citizens, which contrasted with the connection made in policy documents. Only when I asked people if and how a connection could be made, they would acknowledge that Friesland may have stronger social cohesion than the rest of the Netherlands, or that Frisian language or a mentality was important. Still this was not seen as unique for Friesland, as it could be seen in other regions where regional identity was strong. This shows the added value of anthropological research, because without the interviewing and participant observation, the assumption can be made that Frisian identity is the main vehicle for the workings of social participation. This could still be the case, albeit it being more hidden, or it indeed is not connected, and the connection is part of a technique of government.

This shaping of social participation cannot be seen apart from the second development, the development of the concept of governmentality.

### ***The development of governmentality***

The concept of governmentality is a useful of analysing the concept of social participation within a wider context of a participation society. It shows how individuals, and groups, are shaped into 'ideal' (sustainable) citizens who fit the description of an active citizen participating in social participation.

The development of the concept of governmentality exists within a broader debate on power and governing. Governmentality is about the conduct of conduct, and how shaping of citizens takes place: how desirable behaviour and identity are accomplished. This is related to debates around citizenship, what citizenship entails and how 'ideal' citizenship is crafted via working of power: governmentality.

Through the chapters it became clearer what the workings of governmentality were, where different sources of power were and how they shaped the idea of social participation and expectations of citizens. Responsibilisation is important here: by allocating responsibility over parts of life, citizenship is shaped, because rights and duties are defined by this. I will retrace these developments of governmentality on the basis of Thomas Lemkes study of Foucault's governmentality (Lemke 2001).

In the first chapter a more classical definition of governmentality could be distinguished. An ideal definition of citizenship was crafted from top-down, from institutions and government via policy. This entailed that citizenship relates to social participation: ideal citizens 'participate' and are active shapers of their own life. Even if government talk about adjusting to citizens, instead of the other way round, this could be seen as an act of governmentality, because government still sets the discourse.

In the second chapter the perspective on governmentality in the first chapter, as techniques of government, was counterbalanced by the other side of governmentality: techniques of the self. Techniques of the self are ways in which individuals shape their own identity (as citizens in the participation society in this case) within a state. Techniques of the self can be seen in the actions of citizens and their interpretation of social participation. Because government adjust their policy and their views of social participation on the actions of citizens ("governing is about acting upon action"), citizens have power in their own actions. Thomas Lemke, on explaining Foucault's notion of governmentality remarks: *"All in*

*all, in his history of governmentality Foucault endeavours to show how the modern sovereign state and the modern autonomous individual co-determine each other's emergence"* (Lemke 2001, 191). Therefore the shaping of social participation by government cannot be seen as being separate from the interpretation of social participation of citizens. This way the concept of governmentality is broadened from mainly belonging to the sphere of government to pervading everywhere where power goes, especially power which has influence on the shaping of citizenship.

In the final chapter this view was nuanced to define where tensions exist between these different power-sources. Government can be seen as a continuum, ranging from political government to technologies of the self (Lemke 2001, 201). And indeed governmentality can be seen in the light of 'power is everywhere', but this does not mean that all power is equal, so not all influence is equal either. Some actors have more power over the discourse on social participation, over the shaping of citizenship, on the conducting of conduct. In this case, as has been illustrated in the final chapter, government in the end have more power in the shaping of citizenship, because in the end they define the framework for social participation. This, however, is not as clear as it sounds, because with neoliberal governmentality, techniques of government are more hidden than the explicit exercising of power via policy. Indirect techniques for shaping and leading individuals are developed by (neoliberal) government, which are hidden because they are not defined as techniques of government.

In an understanding of neoliberal society the influence of government seems diminished, but on the other hand, the influence of government may stay the same, but take on new tasks and functions; responsabilisation takes place (Lemke 2001, 201). This is a strategy of rendering citizens responsible for social risks and attached concepts, like social participation. If social services are reduced, this is coated in a discourse on responsibility: it is the responsibility of citizens, their duty, to take care of the gaps that appear because of these neoliberal policies. This responsabilisation is connected to neoliberalism, because with neoliberalism individuals are encouraged to give their lives a specific entrepreneurial form (Lemke 2001, 202), and to take responsibility in deciding over matters of their lives which had before been within the domain of the state. The hiding of the responsibility of government for this responsabilisation shows the strength of the concept of governmentality, or as Lemke articulates it: *"In other words, the theoretical strength of the*

*concept of governmentality consists of the fact that it construes neo-liberalism not just as ideological rhetoric or as a political-economic reality, but above all as a political project that endeavours to create a social reality that it suggests already exists. Neo-liberalism is a political rationality that tries to render the social domain economic and to link a reduction in (welfare) state services and security systems to the increasing call for 'personal responsibility' and 'self-care'. In this way, we can decipher the neoliberal harmony in which not only the individual body, but also collective bodies and institutions (public administrations, universities, etc.), corporations and states have to be 'lean', 'fit', 'flexible' and 'autonomous': it is a technique of power"* (Lemke 2001, 2013). What becomes apparent when following the developments described above, is that individuals are shaped by social participation that is shaped by both political government *and* by citizens. Foucault stated on this point: *"Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word, is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself"* (Foucault 1993: 203–4 in Lemke 2001: 203-204).

Besides shaping towards a citizen who is suitable for social participation within a participation society, shaping towards a certain identity or culture could be done as well. Especially if this identity (connected to a culture) is deemed suitable for reaching social participation. The Frisian case can be seen in this light as well, as social cohesion based on Frisian identity, in the word *mienskip*, is mobilised as a basis for (communal) solidarity, which can pave the way for social participation. In the end support is needed to provide a basis for initiatives and to make sure an initiative can succeed. This is why the rhetoric of *mienskip* is adopted into policy on social participation, even if in practice this link is not made or deemed relevant by either policy makers or citizens.

### ***The development of the anthropologist***

The final development that has taken place over the course of this thesis is my own development as an anthropologist. I started my fieldwork feeling indignation towards the idea of the participation society, dismissing social participation as a translation of neoliberal policies of government that hit the most vulnerable the hardest. Social participation was, in my view, shaped mainly from above, with citizens being the passive receivers of the

outcomes of this new participation society. Frisian identity or the appeal to social cohesion in Friesland (whether on the basis of Frisian identity or not) was used to promote and to hide these neoliberal policies, in my view. This view was illustrated but also contested in the first chapter, by illustrating that (interpretation of) policy documents could differ from interviews and informal conversations with the governmental shapers of the (social) participation society.

In the second chapter my view was contested by researching what happened 'on the ground' and what influence citizens had on social participation. Positivity prevailed when talking to 'active citizens', active as well in the sense that they too shaped social participation by doing what they were good at from their different motivations. As a researcher and anthropologist I found out that again the methods of anthropology, being present somewhere for a longer period of time, participating and observing, were the key to changing my view. Social participation seemed to be shaped mainly from the bottom-up. Frisian identity, which I thought would be present 'on the ground', as the binding factor of citizens as a basis for social participation, turned out not to be the subject of discussion at all, or at all relevant.

In the final chapter I intertwined these two chapters: matching my former opinions as an (indignant) anthropologist on the subject of social participation with my new opinions which applaud the development of the participation society with its focus on positivity, strength and possibilities. The third chapter is my attempt to step back and review both 'extremes', and to link them to theory as well. Stepping out of the field and writing this thesis in effect is the process that forms the third chapter: forming a nuanced opinion on the mismatching findings in the field. Was the Frisian context not important at all? Or is it more hidden? Where are the power differences? To write this thesis is to look again at these questions. I ended up somewhere between indignation and appreciation of the participation society: seeing its positive outcomes and the room that is being created for citizens to form their own lives, on the other hand intrigued and frustrated by the neoliberal hiding techniques of rendering citizens responsible for their own lives, even if this is not the goal for (individual) policy makers.

Anthropological research has been very important also for my development as an anthropologist, because my views have been contested by doing fieldwork: discovering the nuances between reading a policy document and interviewing a civil servant, between

visiting a vegetable garden for once and being there for several weeks. These methods enable you discover what is hidden. Even more so in modern societies I think anthropological research is very important. Whereas it may be difficult to do participant observation, for instance with 'the more powerful', it is important to go past the presented and prepared words of the well-spoken citizens (powerful or powerless) and see beyond and beneath. Besides, talking to different actors, time and again, shows the interactions between different layers clearly. During my fieldwork several people spoke about other people, who I had spoken to as well, revealing the connections and the connected opinions between them.

Looking back on my research and specifically on my fieldwork I have been able to see some interesting snapshots of a 'social participation society' in Friesland, but because the field was very broad (encapsulating almost the whole of Friesland), it would be very interesting to explore the field even more.

### ***Looking ahead***

Content-wise it would be interesting to delve deeper into all three layers of this research: government, CSOs and citizens. For the first group it would be interesting to do more participant observation with this group and to do more policy research on social participation. For the second group it would be interesting to research what role different organisations have in the field of social participation. Because there are so many organisations, and because many function as brokers between the first and last layer, to dissect their power would be interesting. The last group especially needs more research, to see the nuances in all different types of initiatives. Some initiatives or some themes will have less friction with government, and differences may exist as well between initiatives in cities and in villages. Also, I have not focussed on the non-active citizens, but they certainly will have an influence on social participation. Assumptions about this group can form the basis of policy as well, which will be interesting to dissect.

From a theoretical perspective it will be interesting to do more research on the connection between cultural politics and the creating and shaping of (ideal) citizens: the effect of governmentality via cultural politics. As I have provided an example of the link between the two in the domain of governmentality, a further understanding of the relationship can still be deepened. This thesis covered (a part of) the case of Friesland, but

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other policies in the Netherlands and beyond of social participation may or may not make use of (local) culture in appealing to citizens. Whether this is done and why this is done is food for further research.



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