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More participation, more support?

A qualitative study on the relationship between citizen participation
and public support for the *Merwedekanaalzone* in Utrecht

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Abstract

This qualitative, single-case study examines the relationship between citizen participation and public support for a policy containing a negative externality for said citizens. To that end, I posed the following research question, namely *Does citizen participation increase public support for a policy that contains a negative externality for said citizenry?* The objective of this research project is to further clarify the relationship between said variables, while creating practical research outcomes of value to actors involved in the participation process for a policy. To that end, I conducted a single-case study, examining citizen participation and public support in the event of the *Merwedekanaalzone* in Utrecht, an urban construction policy aiming to combine sustainability with high-density, green, urban living. Empirical data was collected by conducting a document analysis, digital ethnography and 12 semi-structured interviews with participating citizens, local businesses, elected and unelected members of the municipality of Utrecht and the Council and a local researcher. Collected data was combined into four participation narratives providing different perspectives on the examined relationship. My field research finds that citizen participation does not increase public support for a policy containing a negative externality but rather has a negative effect on overall public support. The presence of a negative externality serves as a trigger point and motivator for citizen participation. Furthermore, this master thesis highlights the importance of a good working relationship between citizens and administration and a participation trajectory that is perceived favourably by participating citizens and other actors. Based on my field research I recommend municipalities to understand and design citizen participation (trajectories) as more than a tool to create legitimacy and public support for policies and to treat participating citizens with respect by openly and honestly managing expectations tied to the policy process and outcome. Participating citizens can learn from this field research that pursuing the greater good versus considering the interest of individual citizen groups represents a heavy dilemma for elected and unelected officials when participating together with citizens for the realization of a policy.

Key words: Citizen participation, public support, participatory policy-making, urban construction policy

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1. Introduction

‘A lot of citizens feel responsible for their neighbourhood or environment and contribute to that voluntarily. They are doing voluntary work. Or they organize a cleaning schedule to keep their street clean to improve its quality. They collectively buy solar panels. They create a local care cooperation. Or they participate in the discussion about the municipal budget. This is called citizen participation’

(Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2019)

‘The idea of citizen participation is a little bit like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you. Participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy – a revered idea that is vigorously applauded by everyone. The applause is reduced to polit handclaps, however, when this principle is advocated by the have nots...(..). And when the have nots define participation as redistribution of power...’

(Arnstein, 1969)

In a time where voter turnout throughout most of the Western democracies is declining (De Graaf, 2007) governing bodies and their officials need alternative ways to declare their policies legitimate and uphold their own public accountability. Considering citizen absenteeism from the polls, alternative forms of citizen participation have gained popularity over the past decades. A growth that can be observed across multiple governance levels, addressing issues spanning from societal and technical to social questions (Fung, 2015).

But what exactly constitutes citizen participation? Following Arnstein’s (1969) defining piece *A Ladder of Citizen Participation* citizen participation is not only the fundamental cornerstone of every democracy, it is also a categorical term to citizen power. By redistributing power to the powerless, socially disadvantaged groups become included into mainstream society (Arnstein, 1969). In doing so, citizen participation also functions as a tool to share information, set policy goals and ultimately develop policies that bare the needs of the economically less prosperous in mind, making said policies more legitimate (Arnstein, 1969).

Ever since Arnstein (1969) the normative assertion of a positive relationship between citizen participation and legitimacy of public policies has prevailed as the most dominant argument

for enhanced citizen participation (Irvin & Stansbury 2004, De Graaf, 2007, Fung, 2015). Other supportive arguments are formulated along the lines of policies being better grounded in citizen preferences, with the citizenry being more supportive of such policies, an increase of public trust into governing bodies and their officials and the production of better decisions which result in more and better benefits to all of society (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). Furthermore, it is argued that not pursuing a collaborative approach leads to unsustainable outcomes (Meyer & Bromley, 2013) and to a lower sense of citizen ownership but also decrease legitimacy of the created policy (Schroepfer & Hee, 2008). Legitimacy is especially threatened when the policy, or parts of it, encounters low public support or even open resistance by the local citizenry. Hereby, enhanced citizenship participation might have a positive effect on process legitimacy, even if the outcome is still not deemed desirable by the participating citizens (De Graaf, 2007).

However, scholars also see disadvantages to the injection of participatory innovations and tools into any policy field or governance issue. Thus, Rowe and Fewer (2000) argue that human inadequacies like a lack of in-depth knowledge or expertise in a certain field can limit the public's capacity to be effectively involved in the creation of complex policies or decision-making processes. From a citizen point of view, participation can also come at great costs regarding time and effort, especially when delivered input is not recognized at later policy stages (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). A lack of (perceived) recognition of citizen participation could then result in a backfire effect, creating more dissatisfaction or even general distrust towards governing authorities (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). From a normative point of view, it is often argued that public officials are simply qualified the best to make decisions for the greater community, as they are professionally trained experts (Stewart, 2007).

As can be seen from the paragraphs above, the field of public administration is not yet able to provide theoretical clarity regarding the exact relationship between citizen participation and public support for a policy. To address this research gap, further empirical research should be conducted to better define potential relationships between the variables and to shed some light on the exact nature of potential external factors influencing the effect of citizen participation on public support for a policy.

Consequently, the goal of this master thesis is twofold. First, I want to further clarify the exact relationship between citizen participation and public support for a policy. To that end, empirical evidence has been collected by conducting a single case study on the *Merwedekanaalzone* in the city of Utrecht, the Netherlands. The *Merwedekanaalzone*, which will be introduced in detail in Chapter 3. Methodology below, stands example for an urban construction policy, aiming to combine sustainability with high-density, green, urban living. Hereby, the city of Utrecht tries to respond both to the consequences of its rapid populational growth and the upcoming challenges of climate change. However, Utrecht is not alone in choosing a sustainable, urban construction policy to address two problems at once. Similar cases can be found all over Europe, for example *Hammarby Sjöstad* in Stockholm, *Quartier Vauban* in Freiburg, *SolarCity* in Linz or Amsterdam's *Buiksloterham* (Kasioumi, 2011, Schroepfer & Hee, 2008, Gemeente Amsterdam, 2007). All these policies combine the principles of sustainability, i.e. environmentally friendly forms of mobility with high-density construction and the creation of a mixed-purpose area that combines living, working and leisure.

While the construction of a new residential neighbourhood in one of Utrecht's former industrial areas is met with general support, citizens living in the surrounding areas fear that this new district, with its high-density construction and environmentally friendly mobility concept, will decrease the quality of life within their own neighbourhoods. Consequently, I also aim to generate new theoretical insights into policy support under the presence of what could be called a negative externality to some citizens. Second, I want to address this relationship between citizen participation and public support for a policy containing a negative externality in a practical manner, hereby creating research outcomes valuable to citizens, the municipality of Utrecht and other actors involved in the participation process.

The explicit focus of my master thesis lies on capturing the view point of participating citizens, trying to establish their narrative on participation and support for a sustainable, urban construction policy such as the *Merwedekanaalzone*. However, I also aim to include the perceptions of other participating groups. This is done with the purpose of arriving at diverse 'participation narratives' looking at citizen participation, public support and the relationship between the two of them through different lenses. Hereby, the selected groups are academics, elected and non-elected officials of the municipality of Utrecht and the Council as well as

local businesses related to or located in the *Merwedekanaalzone*. To that end, I pose the following overarching research question:

Does citizen participation increase public support for a policy that contains a negative externality for said citizenry?

The research question can be placed within the literature of public administration as it addresses the effect of citizen participation for the creation of public support for an urban construction policy that might result in a negative externality, i.e. to a perceived negative effect on the quality of life of certain citizens. Hereby, it was of special interest to me to discover if the presence of this negative perception has a real negative effect on public support for the overall policy and if so, if this effect can be mitigated through citizenship participation.

The unit(s) of analysis of this exploratory research question are individuals as their level of support regarding a (urban construction) policy considering the presence of a negative externality is analysed. The independent variable is (levels of) citizen participation, with the dependent variable being (levels of) public support for a (urban construction) policy which is perceived to contain a negative externality for said citizenry. The setting of this research question is a to be constructed and currently planned sustainable, urban neighbourhood, i.e. the *Merwedekanaalzone* in Utrecht and the surrounding neighbourhoods. The general population of this research are citizens (of the city of Utrecht). To the end of formulating a substantive, well-supported answer to the overarching research question I formulate the following empirical sub-questions:

Sub-question 1: *What type of citizens participation is observed by participating groups?*

Sub-question 2: *Where in the policy cycle do participating groups place citizen participation?*

Sub-Question 3: *Which type of public support is observed by participating groups?*

Sub-Question 4: *What is the relationship between citizen participation and public support as observed by participating groups?*

In this chapter I introduced the reader to the research puzzle under investigation in this master thesis. I presented my research question and its sub-questions, putting said research question and its potential answers into the context of the field of public administration. Finally, I discussed the aim and relevance of this master thesis project, giving a short introduction to the case study under address. In the following chapter, Chapter 2 Literature Review and Conceptual Framework, I will present and elaborate on relevant theoretical concepts by providing a cohesive summary of the current body of literature on citizen participation and public support.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

In this chapter I present a cohesive synthesis of the current literature on citizen participation and public support. Based on the reviewed literature, introducing the most important theoretical concepts of this master thesis, I developed a conceptual framework. This framework also presents theoretical expectations regarding the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable. Before presenting the conceptual framework of this master thesis I want to give a short description of the literature search process.

2.1 Literature Search

Based on the search process and selection criteria as presented by De Vries et al. (2016) I began this literature review with an electronic search in both databases such as Scopus, JSTOR and Web of Science as well as search engines such as Google Scholar and by looking at website of prominent journals in the field of public administration, for example *Public Administration Review*. Search terms such as citizen participation, participatory governance, (public) support, legitimacy, public policy, public acceptance or active citizenship generated a wide array of literature, spanning from public acceptance for educational policies to citizen activism for the creation of sustainable policies. I identified potentially eligible literature by reading both the title (and if that title sounded promising) the abstract of the piece of literature. When the abstract addressed either one or both variables (and related concepts) as presented in the research questions I checked whether I had access to the piece of literature, if so, the literature was downloaded and put in a folder for further assessment.

Eligibility criteria

Based on De Vries et al. (2016) I selected literature based on the following six selection criteria, namely field, topic, study design, year of publication, language and publication status.

Field – literature should address citizen participation and public support in the field of public administration and political science. Political science was included as many articles discussed citizen participation considering declining voter turnout in Western democracies or public decision-making dynamics between politicians and citizens. Therefore, I made the decision to include literature from the field of political science even though the research puzzle under address is situated within the field of public administration.

Topic – literature should contain one or more of the utilized search terms in their title and/or abstract to make sure that they address the concepts (or related concepts) under address. While much of the literature on citizen participation contained said term in the title or abstract (or both) finding literature that explicitly contained the term public support was difficult. Terms such as legitimacy or simply support were much more common.

Study design – While all research designs were eligible, I only selected empirical studies. This was done because I was interested in empirical insights regarding the relationship between citizen participation and public support, trying to formulate cohesive theoretical expectation for the relationship(s) between said variables.

Year of publication – I did not place a limit on the year of publication of literature as some of the most relevant pieces of literature such as Arnstein's (1969) *A Ladder of Citizen Participation* or Easton's (1975) article on diffuse support was published some time ago. Furthermore, including literature published over the past couple decades allowed me to observe the theoretical development of the concepts under address.

Language – only literature published in English and Dutch was eligible for selection. First, I am familiar enough with both languages to read respective scientific literature. Furthermore, as the case of this master thesis is in the city of Utrecht, Netherlands, it was of an advantage to include scientific articles discussing citizen participation and public support within the context of the Netherlands. Naturally, a lot of the respective literature is published in Dutch.

Publication status – only international, peer-reviewed articles published in a scientific journal and academic books published in the fields of public administration and political sciences were eligible for selection. This was done to generate a high-quality literature review and

theoretical framework built upon current scientific knowledge on the concepts of citizen participation, public support and the relationship between both concepts.

Having applied the discussed eligibility criteria, I selected a total of 22 scientific articles and one thesis book (upon recommendation through one of the thesis supervisors) for review. Hereby, 11 articles were published in scientific journals in the field of public administration while seven articles were published in political science journals. Three articles were published in journals from other fields but were included due to addressing the right topic. A total of 18 articles were published in English, while four articles and the thesis book were published in Dutch.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Theoretically, the proposed research question and puzzle contain two important concepts, namely citizen participation and public support. In this chapter of this master thesis I want to unpack and discuss both concepts further. Furthermore, this chapter presents a formulation of the expected relationships between citizen participation and public support.

Conceptualizing citizen participation

From an instrumental point of view, citizen participation is perceived as a crucial tool to close the gap between private action and public value (Dosterij & Peeters, 2011). In the smart city, citizen participation can be paternalistic, as technical solutions to societal problems are directly delivered to the citizens, with the governing authorities deciding when and how citizens can participate and in which role (i.e. consumer, product tester etc.) (Cardullo & Kitchin, 2017). Adhering to the point of instrumentalism, Michels (2007) states, that while citizen participation is an important element of the quality of democracy participation is not a value but a means to a better process. Participation on a massive scale is undesirable or even dangerous to a democracy (Michels, 2007). However, Kweit and Kweit (2007) postulate that citizens value the ability to present their views and participate more than they value specific policy outcomes. A notion that ties in with De Graaf (2007) who discusses the differences between process and outcome legitimacy.

When looking at who is participating, it becomes apparent that citizen participation seems to be primarily for members of the top socio-economic levels that are highly educated (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004 and Bartoletti & Faccioli, 2016). This finding ties in with arguments regarding constraints for citizen participation. Thus, the most important obstacles to citizen

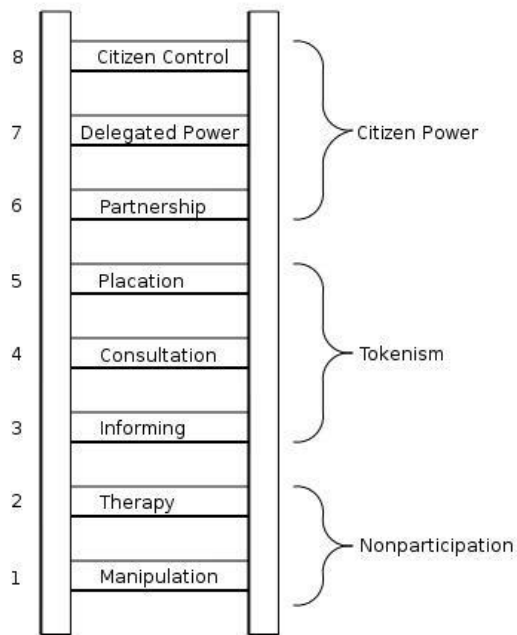
participation are a lack of time, financial means and personal motivation (Broekhuizen & Michels, 2017). Reasons to participate on the other hand can be found in altruistic motives, initiative, especially when seen with peers and the presence of a specific problem that poses a clear goal and contains a sense of personal urgency (Broekhuizen & Michels, 2017).

From the governing institutions potential constraints to citizen participation can come in form of a lack of explicit commitment by said institutions to take citizen input into account when making public policies (Bartoletti & Faccioli, 2016). Furthermore, in trying to create inclusive developments governing bodies need to understand the complexity of people's social networks and institutions under whose conditions they participate (Cornwall, 2008, Yang & Pandey, 2011). Finally, governing bodies should respect citizen's independence, understanding that participation is not a civic duty as such (Dosterij & Peeters, 2011).

When discussing typologies of citizen participation, it becomes apparent that there is a normative assumption implicitly suggesting a progression towards a more genuine form of participation (Cornwall, 2008). This normative assumption is also underlying the most famous typology of citizen participation, namely Sherry Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation, which has shaped much of the research conducted in this field (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, Fung, 2015, Rowe & Frewer, 2000, Stewart, 2007, De Graaf, 2007)

Criticising misleading rhetoric and empty slogans surrounding citizen participation Arnstein (1969) conceptualizes citizen participation as citizen power, a tool to redistribute said power and enable the have-not citizens presently excluded from the political and economic process to be deliberately included into creating the future of society. Hereby, the goal lies in inducing significant social reform which in the long run allows these groups to enjoy the benefits of an economically prosperous society (Arnstein, 1969). When looking at this conceptualization, it becomes clear that Arnstein (1969) makes the normative assumption that these disadvantaged groups have the right to participate and build their civic power.

Graphic 1 - Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969)



The first two levels, (1) manipulation and (2) therapy describe non-participation. They have been designed as a substitute to genuine participation, meaning that the real objective is not to let citizens participate but to allow power holders to educate or ‘cure’ participants (Arnstein, 1969).

Rungs three and four, namely (3) information and (4) consultation are degrees of tokenism, that allow citizens to be heard by power holders and to have a voice. However, under these conditions citizens still lack the power to change the status quo (Arnstein, 1969). (5) placation is a higher level of tokenism as the ground rules allow citizens to advise but retain the power holder’s right to decide (Arnstein, 1969).

Further up Arnstein’s (1969) ladder are levels of citizen participation with increasing degree of decision-making clout. Thus, citizens can enter into a (6) partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders. Rung (7) delegated power and rung (8) citizen control present degrees of majority or full-managerial citizen power in governing bodies (Arnstein, 1969).

While Arnstein (1969) is aware that her ladder is a simplification and that it contains several limitations such as presenting both have-not citizens and power holders as homogenous groups, not including significant roadblocks to participation and presenting its different levels

as completely several and disconnected this typology shows clearly that there is a significant gradation of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969). Knowing these gradations makes it possible to better analyse presented modes of citizen participation and their corresponding degrees of citizen power.

Therefore, using Arnstein's (1969) work as theoretical basis it can be stated that citizen participation is the redistribution of power from governing authorities to (all) its citizens. As Arnstein (1969) shows this redistribution can result in different levels of participation. While some levels are a mere pretence of participation other levels present citizens with sincere opportunities to participate in the policy-making process. Having conceptualized the term citizen participation, I want to discuss the second theoretical lens, namely public support.

Conceptualizing public support

In ordinary language support is a concept that refers more frequently to behaviour than to attitudes. In social science it has been as useful for its reference to attitude as for action (Easton, 1975). Within the Dutch context of public administration public support still lacks a clear conceptualization and is often mentioned together with other (sub)concepts such as support and legitimacy (De Graaf, 2007).

In line with Easton (1975) De Graaf (2007) perceives support as predominantly positively connotated (De Graaf, 2007). Support can have multiple objects i.e. support for authorities, the ruling elite or for the regime in the general sense (De Graaf, 2007). However, even though support can be part of the concept of public support, public support goes further and acknowledges negative attitudes towards its objects (De Graaf, 2007). Schmittner (2001) defines legitimacy as a 'mechanism to convert power into authority and thereby, establishing simultaneously an obligation to obey and a right to rule'. Similarly, to support this concept also entails an individual's or group's attitude towards a certain object but it also contains elements of behaviour or action (De Graaf, 2007). Fung (2015) touches upon the instrumental relationship between citizen participation and legitimacy, stating that the latter is supposed to be enhanced by the former. Michels & De Graaf (2010) adhere to Fung (2015) by noting that citizen participation does not only enhance legitimacy of the resulting outcome but also of the democratic process. Finally, Teisman & Klijn (2002) draw upon legitimacy because of new partnerships between government, private partners and citizens. Hereby, legitimacy is

supposed to be the result of the efficiency of the private sector being injected into civil society.

Having elaborated on concepts closely related to public support, namely support and legitimacy the question how these concepts are related to each other remains. Following De Graaf (2007) legitimacy and support presuppose the existence of an attitude towards and a judgement of a subject or towards an object. These attitudes and judgements are linked to a certain type of behaviour (De Graaf, 2007). Consequently, De Graaf (2007) perceives attitude, judgement and behaviour as elements of public support. Considering these elements and extending the positively connotated conceptualisation of support, public support can thus be conceptualized as (active and passive) support on the one hand and the presence of resistance towards a certain policy on the other hand (De Graaf, 2007).

Given the presence of negative externality, negative public support is also included into the theoretical conceptualisation of the term. Furthermore, one can distinguish between two types of public support, namely public support for the process and for the outcome (De Graaf, 2007). The first refers to the outcome being perceived as legitimate or favourable by the public, the latter concerns the process of policy-making being perceived as positive by the citizenry (De Graaf, 2007). Whether or not a process or an outcome is perceived as legitimate and is thus supported strongly depends on the extent to which citizens are satisfied with said process or outcome (De Graaf, 2007). Finally, it is important to note that public support can change during the policy cycle and depends on momentary public perceptions and opinions (De Graaf, 2007).

The Relationship between citizen participation and public support – what do we know now and what could be the potential effect of a negative externality?

Having shortly discussed some general notions regarding the relationship between citizen participation and public support, I can make three assumptions about said relationships, under the presence of a negative externality. What is meant by negative externality in case of this research? As discussed in Chapter 1. Introduction citizens living in the surrounding neighbourhoods of the new *Merwedekanaalzone* fear for an abatement of their own quality of life, perceiving the low-car mobility concept of the *Merwedekanaalzone* and its potential consequences i.e. more traffic, building of additional bridges and more cars parked in the area as very problematic (Gemeente Utrecht, 2018). Thus, what is the perceived presence of a

negative externality mean for the relationship between citizen participation and public support?

Overall, the presence of this negative externality could lead to an increase in citizen participation. This theoretical expectation is grounded in the notion that citizens are more likely to participate in the policy making process when there is a clear reason to do so (Broekhuizen & Michels, 2017). Thus, the individual faces a specific problem which triggers a sense of direct, personal urgency that results in the formulation of a clear participation goal (Broekhuizen & Michels, 2017).

When citizens decide to participate, three potential theoretical relationships are postulated by the literature. First, citizen participation is expected to have a positive effect on public support (Teisman, 2000 & Irvin & Stansbury, 2004 & Kweit & Kweit, 2007). Second, contrary to expectation one, there is a negative effect of (a higher level of) citizen participation and public support (Van der Bol & Van der Arend, 2007 & Michels & De Graaf, 2010). Third, it is assumed that citizen participation has no effect on public support but that instead this relationship depends on external factors like trust, reputation or benefits actors hope to gain (Fung, 2006). Going more into depth of these three theoretical assumptions, De Graaf (2007) elaborates on said three possible relationships between the independent variable citizen participation and the dependent variable public support. Each of them will be discussed separately.

Expectation one - Levels of citizenship participation and levels of public support are expected to have a proportional relation.

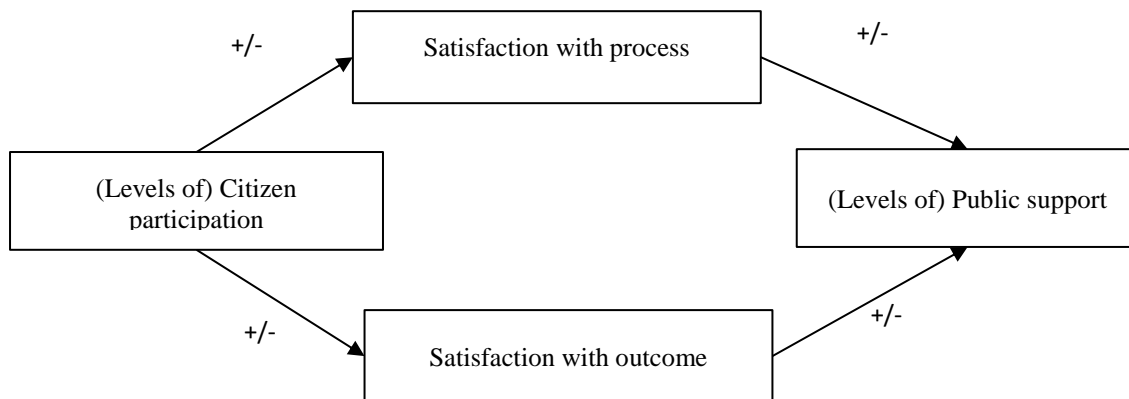
Graphic 2 - Proportional relation between levels of citizenship participation and levels of public support based on De Graaf (2007)



Graphic 2 above shows a proportional relationship between levels of citizen participation as described by Arnstein (1969) and levels of public support. Thus, a higher level of citizen participation is expected to lead to a higher level of public support for the policy under address, even if said policy contains a negative externality. This theoretical expectation is grounded in the notion that citizen participation generally improves public support for a policy and decreases potential resistance towards said policy among the citizenry (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, De Graaf, 2009). Even if policy outcomes are not perceived completely favourably, citizens value the ability to present their views and participate more than they value specific policy outcomes (Kweit & Kweit, 2007). Graphic 2 also makes a distinction between citizen satisfaction with either process or outcome. A higher perception of either of them is expected to result in higher levels of public support.

Expectation two - Levels of citizenship participation and levels of public support have an inversely proportional relation

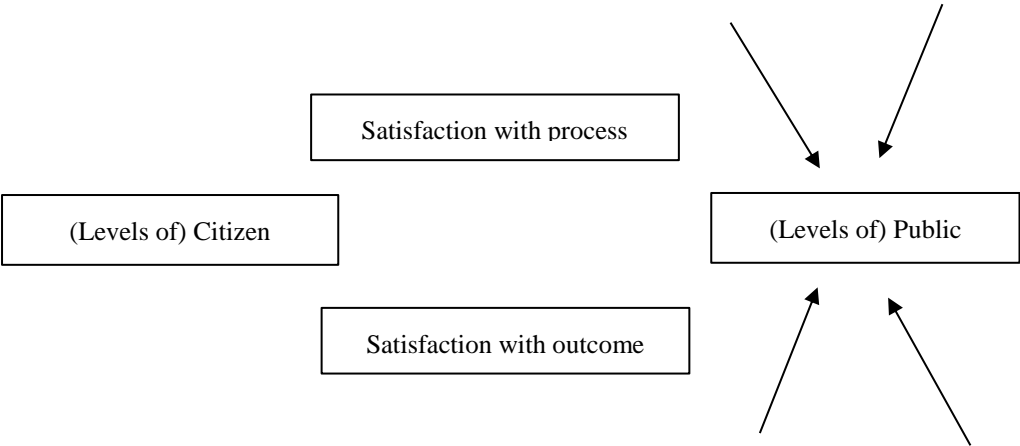
Graphic 3 - Inversely proportional relationship between levels of citizen participation and levels of public support based on De Graaf (2007)



Graphic 3 above shows an inversely proportional relationship between levels of citizen participation and levels of public support. Thus, a higher level of citizenship participation is expected to lead to a lower level of public support and vice versa (De Graaf, 2007). This expected relationship is grounded in two assumptions. First, higher levels of citizen participation might lead to lower levels of public support for a policy as the process of participating might lead to slower consensus building, additional work for the governing body or to conflicts between the different citizen groups and/or the governing body that are hard to control (De Graaf, 2007). Second, a higher level of citizen participation might lead to a lower satisfaction with the outcome due to a mismatch between citizen’s expectations regarding the effort they put into participating and the shape of the resulting policy. This is the case when citizens are under the impression that the administration does not take their participation efforts and their input seriously (De Graaf, 2007). This is called participation fatigue (Cornwall, 2008, Michels & De Graaf, 2010). In the presence of a negative externality citizens’ expectations regarding potential outcomes might be even higher, given the sense of direct, personal urgency that is attached to a clear participation goal (Broekhuizen & Michels, 2017).

Expectation three – There is no relationship between levels of citizen participation and levels of public support due to third variables determining the level of public support

Graphic 4 - No relationship between levels of citizen participation and levels of public support due to third variables determining the level of public support based on De Graaf (2007)



Graphic 4 above shows the absence of a direct relationship between the levels of citizenship participation and levels of public support due to third hidden variables that ultimately determine the levels of public support for a policy. De Graaf (2007) mentions four relevant factors determining the level of public support among the citizenry, namely the presence of people and reputations within the policy-making process, political or societal incidents taking place during the policy-making process, macroeconomic factors and finally decisions made by other, higher ranking governing bodies.

Having elaborated on three different theoretical expectations regarding the relationship(s) between citizen participation and public support it can be said that the effect of citizen participation on public support can vary essentially. While researchers can expect to find a positive relationship, meaning that a higher level of citizen participation leads to a higher level of public support this relationship can also be inversely proportional or not exist at all as other factors significantly influence the level of public support for or against a policy. Furthermore, it becomes clear that the theoretical relationship between citizen participation and public support under the condition of a policy containing a negative externality for the participating citizenry is yet underdeveloped. While the general academic literature on citizen participation and public support might provide some hunches on what this relationship could look like, this master thesis’s contribution lies in further clarifying said relationship.

3. Methodology

In this chapter of this master thesis I want to elaborate on the steps I took to research the relationship between citizen participation and public support for a policy under the condition of a negative externality. First, I provide arguments as to why it is fruitful to examine this relationship in the context of a single case study, i.e. the *Merwedekanaalzone* in the city of Utrecht, the Netherlands. Second, I will elaborate on the research design I utilized to set up and conduct this research project. This section also contains a short discussion on validity, reliability as well as how I collected and analysed my data. Third, I operationalize the independent and the dependent variable as to provide a basis for my empirical research.

3.1 Arguments for the *Merwedekanaalzone* as a suitable single case study.

Case study research can be best defined as an intensive study of a single unit for understanding a larger class of (similar) units (Gerring, 2004). Another definition of the case study is delivered by Zainal (2007) stating that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between this phenomenon and its context are not clear and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Considering this master thesis project is the *Merwedekanaalzone* in Utrecht a suitable case for a single case study as described by Gerring (2004) and Zainal (2007)? To answer this question, the *Merwedekanaalzone* will shortly be introduced to the audience.

Being the Netherlands' fourth biggest city, currently home to a population of 340.000 inhabitants, Utrecht expects to reach a population of 410.000 people by 2030 (Gemeente Utrecht, 2018). Aiming to respond to both the populational growth and addressing future environmental challenges the city of Utrecht has launched a construction project that combines building a healthier, urban environment with combating the city's immense population growth. This project entails the creation and transformation of an entire inner-city district into a sustainable, urban neighbourhood, the so-called *Merwedekanaalzone* (Gemeente Utrecht, 2018). The project is undertaken as a public-private partnership and aims to build up to 10.000 new flats located in multi-purpose buildings within a time-frame of 15 years (Gemeente Utrecht, 2018). A visualization for the to be constructed neighbourhood can be found below (Gemeente Utrecht, 2017)

Map 1 – Visualization *Omgevingsvisie Merwedekanaalzone*



het raamwerk van de Merwedekanaalzone uit de Omgevingsvisie Gemeente Utrecht (nov 2017)

However, with the ambitious goal of creating up to 10.000 new living units many questions and concerns remain on the site of the local Utrecht citizens regarding this sizable construction project. To hear and address these questions the municipality of Utrecht provided the citizens with opportunities to comment on the construction plans and to directly voice their concerns to local authorities (Gemeente Utrecht, 2017). Thus, in January, March and April of 2017 the municipality of Utrecht organized three *stadsgesprekken* (city talks) which were well attended by inhabitants, land owners, citizen initiatives and other stakeholders (Gemeente Utrecht, 2017). The outcomes of these talks were then included into the development of the *Omgevingsvisie Ruimtelijke Agenda Merwedekanaalzone* (area or environment vision/plan) by the municipality of Utrecht (Gemeente Utrecht, 2017).

To find out what is important to the inhabitants of the surrounding *Rivierenwijk* and *Transwijk* the municipality of Utrecht organized two *buurtgesprekken* (neighbourhood talks) in September 2018. These talks had the purpose of both informing citizens how the

Merwedekanaalzone will change their living and working environment as well as giving citizens a platform to name their fears and wishes surrounding the project and its impact on their own neighbourhoods. Once again, citizen feedback was included into the *Omgevingsvisie Merwedekanaalzone* and recognized by the municipal council in their decision-making process (Gemeente Utrecht, 2018)

During these talks several themes were addressed, however, locals were especially critical about the municipality's mobility concept which entails to make the *Merwedekanaalzone* a sustainable, low-car neighbourhood by severely limiting the number of parking spaces (0.7) per apartment unit (Mobiliteit Merwedekanaalzone, 2018), incentivizing inhabitants to use public transport, bike and other sustainable forms of mobility. Consequently, citizens fear that additional cars will be 'outsourced' to their neighbourhoods, blocking roads and taking up limited parking spaces and ultimately leading to an abatement of the overall quality of life within their neighbourhood (Gemeente Utrecht, 2018).

Considering these fears local citizens declared that they want to be better informed and consulted by the municipality. To keep in conversation with the citizens the municipality of Utrecht has additional *buurtgesprekken* planned for 2019 (Gemeente Utrecht, 2019). While the municipality of Utrecht has offered these *buurtgesprekken* as platform for citizen engagement with the planning for the *Merwedekanaalzone*, stating that citizen feedback, concerns and wishes will be recognized in creating the *Omgevingsvisie Merwedekanaalzone* it remains unclear to which extent this level of citizenship participation will increase public support for the *Merwedekanaalzone* considering a potentially perceived decrease of quality of life of the surrounding citizenry.

However, the city of Utrecht is not unique in her response to the challenges of rapid populational growth and climate change by trying to build dense, but sustainable urban neighbourhoods. Similar projects can be found in cities all over Europe such as *Hammarby Sjöstad* in Stockholm, *Quartier Vauban* in Freiburg, *SolarCity* in Linz or Amsterdam's *Buiksloterham* (Kasioumi, 2011, Schroepfer & Hee, 2008, Gemeente Amsterdam, 2007).

Consequently, I perceive the *Merwedekanaalzone* in Utrecht as a suitable single unit for understanding the phenomenon of citizen participation and public support in the context (a larger class) of the construction of a high density, urban neighbourhood. These

neighbourhoods can be found in cities all over Europe (Gerring, 2004). This field research allows for the examination of data in its local, Dutch context (Zainal, 2007). Furthermore, the case of the *Merwedekanaalzone* allows for the investigation into a complex phenomenon containing multiple actors with different needs, values and perspectives such as the case of the *Merwedekanaalzone*.

The chosen methodology allowed me to collect a plethora of data from multiple sources while staying close to the phenomenon of citizen participation and public support for a policy under the condition of a negative externality. Results are grounded in a real-life scenario respecting the influence and power of contextual factors. While some concerns regarding the generalizability of these results remain, it is wise to remember that achieving a high internal validity is the methodological priority of this single case study design.

3.2 Research Design

As mentioned in the title on the front page my master thesis project falls in the realm of qualitative research. Following Boeije (2010) and Jackson et al. (2007) the choice of the type of research conducted tells something about what research in social science should look like. Qualitative research generally starts with the assumption that individuals have an active role in the construction of social reality and that research methods that can capture this process of social construction are required (Boeije, 2010). The ‘human as an instrument’ approach pertains that qualitative research focuses on the understanding of human being’s richly textured experiences and reflections about those experiences (Jackson et al., 2007).

Ontologically, this assumption follows the notion of constructivism – social entities are not pre-given but human beings attach meaning to their social reality. As a result, human action should be considered meaningful (Boeije, 2010). Other intellectual roots are hermeneutics and phenomenology (Jackson et al., 2007). But how can qualitative research be defined?

Qualitative research contains three important components, namely the examination of meaning, the use of flexible research methods enabling contact and the provision of qualitative findings which can come in any non-numerical form (Boeije, 2010, Jackson et al., 2007, Chenail, 2011)

Examining meaning refers to the process of discovering the connotation that people award to their social worlds and to understanding the meaning of their thereof resulting social behaviour. Since participants’ perspective is not entirely known before the inquiry, fieldwork

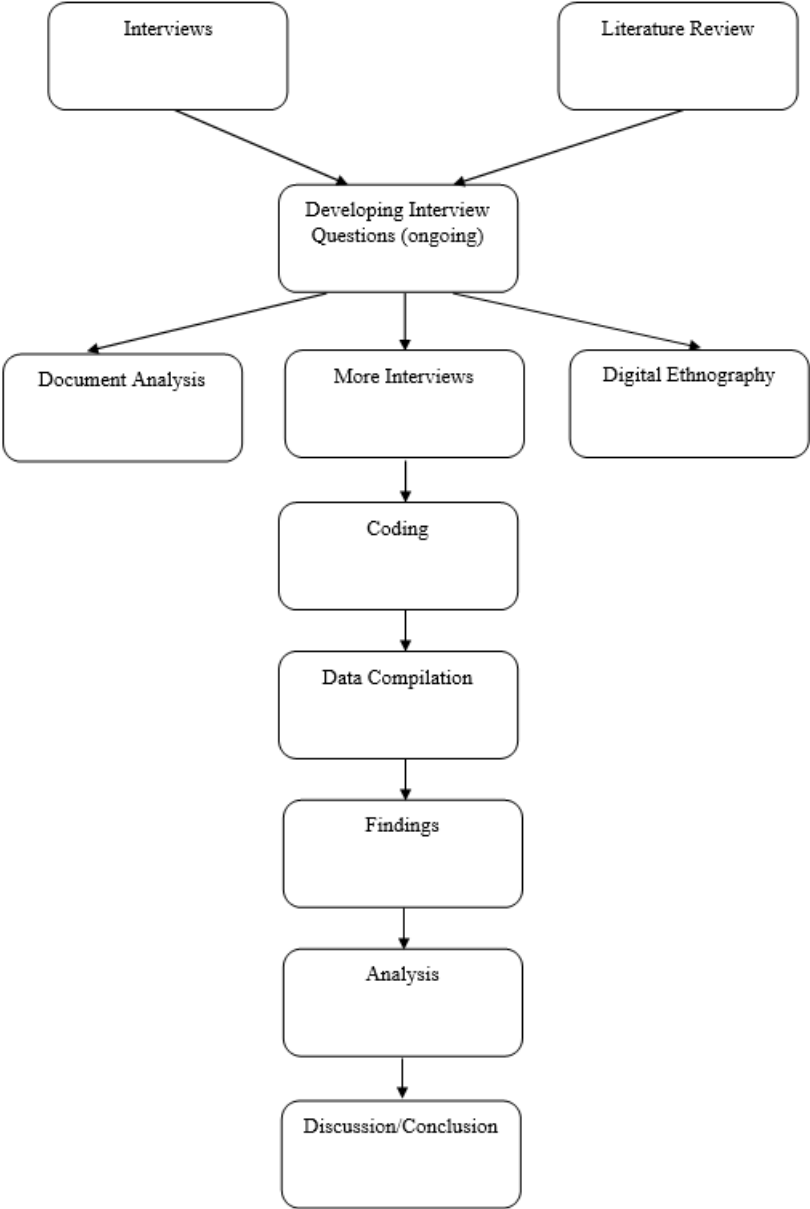
thus requires constant redefinition of what is problematic (Boeije, 2010). Consequently, the researcher needs to remain open-minded and flexible, as both results and focus of analysis of the research project will slowly develop and emerge during the research process (Boeije, 2010). Thus, rather than relying on a set of finite questions to elicit categorized, forced-choice responses with little room for open-ended replies to questions as quantitative research does, the qualitative researcher relies on the participants to offer in-depth responses regarding how they have understood and constructed their experience (Jackson et al., 2007).

The provision of qualitative findings concerns not only the description of what the research setting looks like but also what keeps people busy within this setting. Hereby, the researcher must reduce, select, interpret and decide what they will use to convey their message to the reader (Boeije, 2010). In the absence of rigid evaluation criteria qualitative research tests trustworthiness of findings by assessing their credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Jackson et al., 2007).

Steps in a qualitative research design

Roughly following Boeije (2010), Jackson et al., (2007) and Chenail (2011) my qualitative research design utilized for this master thesis project contains eight steps. A visualization of this eight-step research process can be found in Graphic 5 below.

Graphic 5– Visualization of an eight-step research process



During the literature review the researcher takes notice of the accumulated knowledge on a certain topic. In case of this master thesis project I reviewed a total of 22 scientific pieces, 21 scientific articles and one PhD thesis book (see chapter 2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework above). Conducting a literature review had three main purposes, namely describing the researched problem area in much more detail, assessing what has been done in that area already and to help build a sound theoretical framework to formulate theoretical expectations regarding the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable (Chenail, 2011)

An overarching research question lays out the main purpose of the conducted research and guides the direction of the research, including the data analysis (Boeijs, 2010 & Chenail, 2011)). Hereby, sub-questions help to provide a well-rounded answer to the overarching research question (Boeijs, 2010). In case of this master thesis project I formulated four sub-questions. It is important that sub-questions clearly fall under the umbrella of the overarching research question, follow logically from that question and match each other (Boeijs, 2010). Furthermore, they need to be answerable within the proposed project (Chenail, 2011 & Jackson et al., 2007). Here, I answered all sub-questions using empirical data.

Before thinking about how to find, recruit and access potential respondents or interviewees the researcher must decide for a fitting setting to conduct his research (Boeijs, 2010). I choose the *Merwedekanaalzone* in the city of Utrecht because I wished to conduct research into a local case. Furthermore, I considered practical issues such as travelling time and travelling costs to meet my interviewees.

I contacted potential respondents via multiple channels. Respondents working at the municipality of Utrecht I approached using personal contacts of fellow researchers. All other respondents stemming from the University of Utrecht, the Council, local businesses, *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* and the *SUWO (Stedelijk Utrechts Woonschepen Overleg)* I contacted via email. Some of the respondents suggested further potentially interesting respondents to me, some I followed up via WhatsApp or email.

Interviewees selected themselves, with their participation being strictly voluntary. This approach to accessing participants does knowingly not follow the properties of (random) sampling, as doing so would defy the purpose of this research project, which is to establish to which extent citizen participation affects public support for a policy. Thus, I needed to talk to citizens and other actors that are indeed actively participating for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone*.

Research ethics concern the trade-off between the (hoped for) benefits of the conducted research and its potential risks for both the researcher and his participants (Boeijs, 2010). To prevent and mitigate these potential risks I undertook a couple of measurements to ensure a high ethical standard of my master thesis project. Thus, interviewees were provided with a university official informed consent form prior to agreeing to be interviewed (Boeijs, 2010,

Jackson et al., 2007, Chenail, 2011). In this form they were told about how data was collected, stored and what would happen with their data after this research was finished. Furthermore, I made clear that participation in this master thesis project was strictly voluntary and that they could exit and retrieve their data at any point in time. Interviewee's private data was treated confidentially, meaning that all participant characteristics were either not collected or anonymized.

I collected data using three methods, namely document analysis, digital ethnography and semi-structured interviews.

I conducted document analysis on two documents containing precise minutes from the *buurtgesprekken* hosted by the municipality of Utrecht in September 2018. Hereby, the municipality invited inhabitants of the neighbourhoods of *Rivierenwijk* and *Transwijk* to discuss the plans for the construction of the *Merwedekanaalzone* and to receive citizen feedback and input on said plans. I analysed these documents with the purpose of finding out what the citizens of said neighbourhoods were thinking about the project at that point and time and thus to infer the level of public support for the policy at that moment. Furthermore, analysing as what type of citizen participation the *buurtgesprekken* can be categorized helped me to get a first insight into what type of citizen participation can be observed in the case of the *Merwedekanaalzone*.

I used the qualitative data analysis computer software package NVIVO to code both documents. The coding process itself contained three steps, namely open, axial and selective coding, and thus followed Boeije (2010). Coding itself refers to the process of segmenting and reassembling the data with the aim of transforming them into findings (Boeije, 2010). When coding the researcher distinguishes themes or categories and labels them with a code, hereby looking for descriptions that go beyond the concrete observations in the specific sample (Boeije, 2010).

12 semi-structured, qualitative interviews were conducted with the members of the citizen group *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* and other participants (see above). Interviews were the most suitable tool for trying to investigate citizen's perspectives on their (self-perceived) role as participating citizens, their expectations regarding the municipality of Utrecht in the participation process and their general attitude towards the *Merwedekanaalzone*. This gave

me the opportunity to collect multiple, diverse perspectives, looking at the research puzzle from as many angles as possible. Furthermore, I was able to further develop and refine interview questions as new insights and questions were revealed during interviews. All interviews were conducted in Dutch to ensure that interviewees were at ease and could express themselves in their own language.

I engaged in digital ethnography to collect additional secondary, verbal data. Digital ethnography as such does not differ significantly from traditional ethnography (Hsu, 2014) in as that it is a holistic approach to conduct research into societies and cultures (Varis, 2014). Methodologically the internet has been understood both as a field site and as a research tool in ethnography (Ardévol & Gomez-Cruz, 2014). The internet has become the context of participant observation, a locus of the social interaction between communities and the researcher as well as a means of data collection (Ardévol & Gomez-Cruz, 2014). Social network sites such as Facebook or Twitter can be used by ethnographers as virtual gatekeepers with ‘chains of friends’ that can be potential research respondents, as vast stores of multimedia materials and as a tool to indivisibly observe social interactions on said platforms (Murthy, 2008). However, with the internet having become a big part of our everyday lives it has become difficult to make clear-cut distinctions between what is online and what is offline (Varis, 2014).

I applied this approach for multiple reasons. First, I wanted to find out what has been communicated about the *Merwedekanaalzone* to the citizens (by the municipality of Utrecht) and how citizen groups, for example *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* communicated their stance towards the *Merwedekanaalzone* and the work of the municipality of Utrecht to their environment. Second, I aimed to find indications on the level of public support or non-support and if or how this changed over time. To that end, the researcher conducted an online search using search to find suitable outlets of communication and ultimately selected two local newspapers or news platforms, namely *StadsPodium Utrecht*, *Algemeen Dagblad* (See Chapter 8. Appendix, Section 8.1, Table 4) and five websites, i.e. the *Gemeente Utrecht*, *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar*, *SUWO*, *Vechtclub XL* and the website of the *location marketing organization* (See Chapter 8. Appendix, Section 8.1, Table 5) Furthermore, I started to follow the *Gemeente Utrecht* and *StadsPodium Utrecht* on the microblog platform *Twitter*. Hereby, I discovered the hashtags #merwedekanaalzone and #MWK that directly lead to content

regarding the *Merwedekanaalzone* which was posted by official outlets of the municipality of Utrecht as well as by private individuals.

A fourth source of data was supposed to stem from conducting an observation. To that end, I wanted attended the latest *buurtgesprekken* hosted by the municipality of Utrecht in May. During this event the municipality of Utrecht plans to launch and present the *Omgevingsvisie deel 2* which also contains the latest version of the mobility concept (in terms of exact numbers) for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. The goal of this *buurtgesprek* was to inform citizens about the latest developments and collect their feedback on the new plans. However, this launch was pushed back to September 2019, which lies outside the timeframe of my thesis project. Thus, I cannot use this opportunity to capture opinions about the new plans and see if and how public support for *Merwedekanaalzone* changed since the last presentations in September 2018. However, I made use of this incident by including it into citizen interviews and asking respondents how they feel about the next *buurtgesprek* and presentation of the new *Omgevingsvisie deel 2* being pushed back, as this could potentially influence their level of support.

Before analysing I had to prepare the respective data. Thus, interview recordings were transcribed, and documents were coded following Boeije (2010). Consequently, a three-partite coding sequence, namely open, axial and selective coding. Here, I found it more useful to print transcripts and code by hand using different colours instead of using NVIVO again. This allowed me to physically put documents next to each other and compare sections.

As Boeije (2010) states, data constitutes something different from results or findings. Data is viewed as the empirical material on which scientific findings are based (Boeije, 2010). These empirical materials, in this case qualitative, verbal data stemming from document analysis, digital ethnography and interviews, need to be interpreted to draw conclusions and make inferences (Boeije, 2010). In between data and results comes analysis, meaning the transformation of data to facilitate discoveries and general findings (Boeije, 2010). Here, the chosen vehicle of transformation was coding. Having coded all documents, websites, newspaper articles and interview transcript I used thick description to convert the interviewees' perceptions and experiences into narratives on citizen participation and public support for the *Merwedekanaalzone* (Creswell, 2003). I used quotes to present the respondent's meaning of reality to the reader, using their own words and expressions.

The discussion and conclusion are the place to reflect on the quality of the conducted research. Here, quality refers to objectivity, pertaining to the correspondence between the social scientists' findings and the phenomenon as it is experienced by the people in the field (Boeije, 2010). Hereby, it is important to remember that all research findings are shaped by the theoretical perspective that was used. Thus, the gained knowledge is partial and never a one hundred percent accurate representation of social reality (Boeije, 2010). Judging the quality of research means looking at the reliability and validity of its findings, acknowledging potential limitations to the conducted research. Reliability can be defined as the consistency of measures used in social research. Repeatedly measuring the same phenomenon using the same instruments should lead to the same outcomes, if the phenomenon itself did not change in the meantime (Boeije, 2010). However, there lies a fundamental crux of conducting research into social phenomena, they are far from being static. Thus, reliability of qualitative research is often compromised by the changing nature of the social phenomenon under address.

The validity of findings is related to the researcher being as specific as possible about what he or she set out to assess. This depends on the use of the 'correct' measure (Boeije, 2010). Thus, measurement validity refers to whether the measure that is formulated for a concept really does reflect the concept that it is supposed to measure. Internal validity on the other hand is concerned with the confidence that the measured relationship between the concepts is correct (Boeije, 2010).

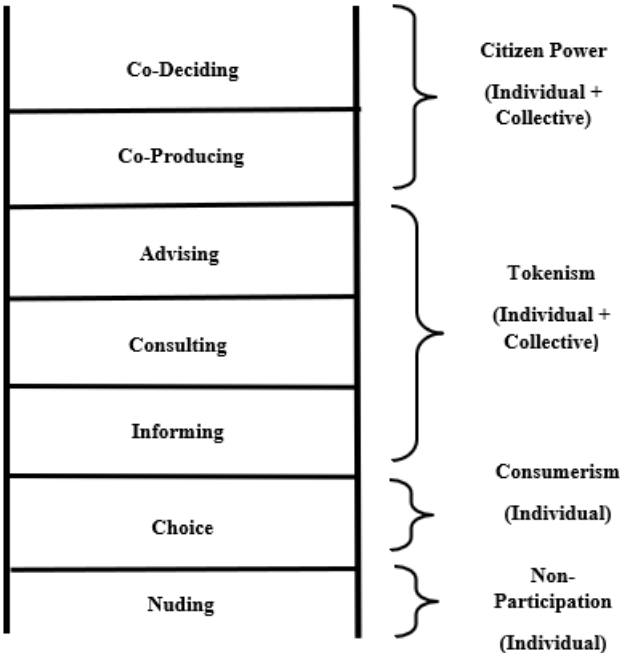
Having introduced the reader to the research design of my master thesis project I use the following section to discuss the operationalization of the independent and dependent variable upon which I analysed my empirical data.

3.3 Operationalization - Citizenship participation

In conceptualizing the independent variable citizen participation, I draw upon the work of Arnstein (1969) and De Graaf (2007), who has conducted research into policymaking in three cases in the city of Utrecht. Hereby, De Graaf (2007) presents an abridged version of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation in the theoretical chapter of his PhD thesis book. Said ladder is based on the work of Edelenbos and Monnikhof (2001) and explicitly recognises the Dutch context and history of citizen participation. However, for the sake of contemporality contextual references that include insights on internet-based and digital forms

of participation and that recognize the presence of multiple, diverse actors in the policy-making process have been included into the conceptualization of the independent variable citizen participation.

Graphic 6 - Participation Ladder (De Graaf, 2007 & Cardullo and Kitchen, 2017, Ekman & Amna, 2012)



Graphic 6 shows a combined participation ladder containing insights from De Graaf (2007), who based his ladder on Edelenbos and Monnikhof (2001), Cardullo & Kitchin, 2017 and Ekman & Amna, 2012. Similarly, to Arnstein’s (1969) participation ladder this typology contains seven rungs or levels of citizen participation, namely (1) nudging, (2) consumer choice, (3) informing, (4) consulting, (5) advising, (6) co-producing and (7) co-deciding.

The first two rungs, i.e. (1) nudging and (2) choice are inspired by Cardullo and Kitchin (2017) who have conducted research into citizen participation in the context of the smart city. In their research article the authors discuss how smart city technologies, that are being rolled out in cities throughout the world, are often critiqued for being overly top-down and technocratic (Cardullo & Kitchin, 2017). They produce governance mechanisms that control and discipline citizens, reinforce neoliberal logics of urban management and consequently often serve the interests of state and corporation instead of empowering the citizen (Cardullo & Kitchin, 2017). Thereupon, the researchers argue for an expansion of Arnstein’s (1969)

ladder of citizen participation to account for roles, functions, political discourses and modalities of 'smart' citizen participation (Cardullo & Kitchin, 2017).

Rungs three to seven i.e. (3) informing (4) consulting (5) advising (6) co-producing and (7) co-deciding are elements of De Graaf (2007) 's ladder of participation (based on Edelenbos & Monnikhof, 2001). I decided to include these elements in this ladder of citizen participation as the researchers have conducted research on multiple levels of participatory policy making within the Dutch context. Furthermore, the authors assume that different participatory policy making processes also result in different degrees of influence of participating actors on both the process and the outcome.

Finally, it should be noted that rungs three and four, i.e. (3) informing and (4) consulting show the governing body in a more powerful position, as citizens and other participating groups are informed or consulted by the respective authorities regarding policy plans or decisions and thus represent degrees of tokenism (De Graaf, 2007). From rung (5) advising onwards, citizens become more equal participators (De Graaf, 2007).

I also based Graphic 6 above on the work of Ekman and Amna (2012) who developed a typology of citizen participation that compares formal, informal, individual and collective forms of citizen participation with each other. Thus, the first two rungs of the ladder, i.e. (1) nudging and (2) consumer choice represent individual forms of non-participation, as the citizen is nudged and/or makes choices as a single, individual consumer (Ekman & Amna, 2012). Further up, forms of citizen participation can be executed both by individuals and by collective citizens (Ekman & Amna, 2012). Thus, when thinking about rung (4) consulting, a municipality or city council might consult with single individuals as well as with citizen groups or unions. Following De Graaf (2007), Cardullo and Kitchin (2017) and Ekman and Amna (2012) Table 1 below gives an overview of how the different levels of citizenship participation can be operationalized.

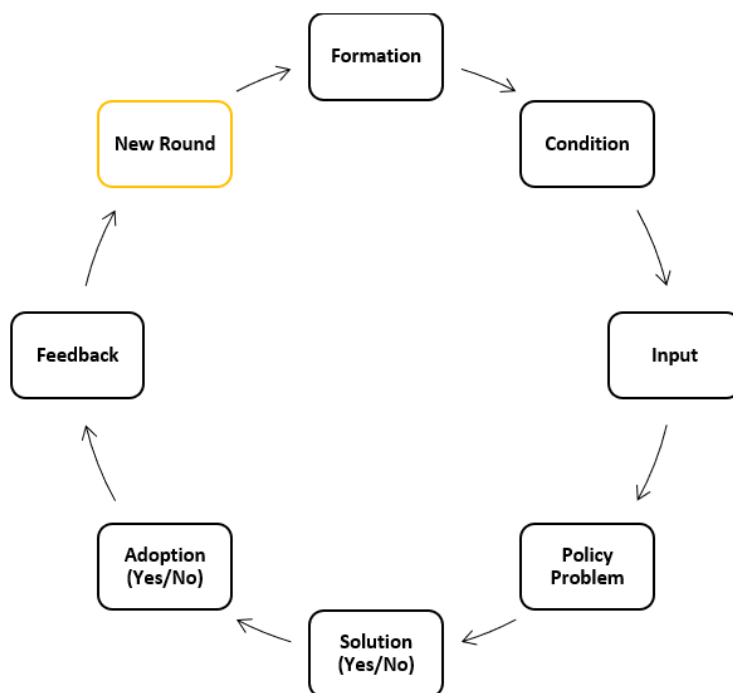
Table 1 - Operationalization of levels of citizenship participation based on De Graaf (2007), Cardullo and Kitchin (2017) and Ekman and Amna (2012)

Co-deciding	Citizens have more leeway in the policy process than the administration. Citizens organize themselves, have great influence and the administration acts from a relative distance
Co-producing	Administration and citizens work together, where the administration is a partner among many. There is equality and citizens have a relatively great influence over the policy process.
Advising	Like with consulting advising assumes an interplay between citizens and administration but goes a bit further. Citizens give advice or are asked to give advice and the administration is expected to take this advice seriously and react to it
Consulting	The administration asks citizens about their opinion regarding a pre-decided policy. There is an interplay between administration and citizens, with the administration asking the citizens for their opinion. However, it is up to the administration to consider this opinion or not when making the policy
Informing	(Un)solicited communication of facts, regulations and other messages from the administration to citizens. The administration perceives it as important to inform about a policy, but the relationship between both entities is one-sided. Citizens have little room within policy-making through the administration
Choice	As an individual consumer the citizen selects services from a marketplace of providers. These services are designed by companies under limited citizen involvement. By using these services, the citizen swaps user data that can be mined for micro-marketing or data brokering. Another role of the citizen as consumer is the resident, who can afford to rent or buy a smart home in which he, again, becomes a data product. The roles of the citizens as consumer are rooted in neoliberal capitalism

Nudging	The citizen is an individual patient, learner or user and thereby functions as data-point. He is steered towards the use of selected, smart services. Services are controlled by the state, that acts in a paternalistic, technocratic manner towards his citizens, gently persuading him to lead a life contained within optimal or ideal targets
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Having operationalized the different levels of citizen participation following De Graaf (2007), Cardullo and Kitchin (2017) and Ekman and Amna (2012) I need to define indicators to be able to identify the different types of citizen participation within the policy-making process. To that end, I draw upon insights presented by Teisman (2000) and De Graaf (2007) which I combined in Graphic 7 below.

Graphic 7 – Round(s) of Policy-Making based upon Teisman (2000) and De Graaf (2007)



The policy-making cycle depicted in Graphic 7 above starts with an initial formation process in which the parties or actors participating in the policy-making process link their ambitions or goals to the means available to them. These can be means of power such as political, legal or financial resources but it can also be the ability to influence and steer public opinion and support for both the policy-making process, its actors and the policy itself (Teisman, 2000).

Having linked ambitions to means actors set the conditions under which participation in the policy-making process is taking place. In rungs three and four (informing and consulting) the conditions of participation are laid out by the administration (De Graaf, 2007). When citizens act as advisors their needs are taken into consideration when determining the conditions for participation (De Graaf, 2007). In co-production (rung six) conditions for participation are decided by all parties and mostly created and adapted during the participation process. In rung seven, co-deciding, conditions for participation are not decided by the administration anymore (De Graaf, 2007).

Once all parties have accepted or decided upon the conditions under which participation takes place actors begin to deliver input (Teisman, 2000). While during informing citizens and other actors have no opportunity to deliver input the administration asks for input during consulting (De Graaf, 2007). A more balanced relationship can be observed during advising when citizens and other actors can deliver input themselves additionally to being asked to do so by the municipality (De Graaf, 2007). During co-production and co-deciding actors deliver input with minimal or no input from the administration itself (De Graaf, 2007).

Having delivered input, actors then proceed to define the policy problem (Teisman, 2000 & De Graaf, 2007). Hereby, it is important to note that policy problems (and assigned solutions) are not fixed to a single actor and are therefore also not fixed when the new policy is adopted (Teisman, 2000). Herewith, the underlying assumption is that policy problems and potential solutions are relevant to the policy process insofar as that they are presented by an actor during the policy-making process (Teisman, 2000). During informing and consulting the nature and size of the policy problem are completely or mostly determined by the administrative body (De Graaf, 2007). When actors have an advisory role their perception of the policy problem at hand play a proper role, albeit the final definition of said problem remains with the administration (De Graaf, 2007). When co-producing or co-deciding actors such as citizens either decide together with the administration or completely on their own about the characteristics of the policy problem (De Graaf, 2007).

With the policy problem being decided (for now) the actors then proceed to match solutions to said problem (Teisman, 2007). Here, the actors have the underlying assumption that the other actors share their definition of reality and proceed to interact on this basis (Teisman, 2007).

Consequently, complications might arise, as one solution to one party might constitute a new problem to another (Teisman, 2007). If that is the case, actors will try to assess their own dependency on other actors and then interact accordingly (Teisman, 2007). During informing and consulting solutions to policy problems are determined or mostly determined by the administration with little say from other actors such as citizens (De Graaf, 2007). When citizens act as advisors their ideas play a proper role in the formation of potential solutions, however, it is on the administration to decide on which solution will be implemented (De Graaf, 2007). During co-production and co-decision solutions are decided either equally between the administration and actors such as citizens or are completely decided by the citizens (De Graaf, 2007). Nevertheless, it is important to note that a solution to the policy problem might not be achieved now. This can happen for multiple reasons. It might be that actors left or newly entered the policy-making arena, that actors are simply unable to find a common ground, that the policy problem has shifted in the meantime or because of an unforeseen event (Teisman, 2007). In case of a non-solution actors might go back to assessing and defining the policy problem, change the conditions under which the policy is made (if possible) or stop the process to possibly take it up at a later, more favourable point in time (Teisman, 2007).

If the actors made progress, and that is the provision of a solution which deals with sets of problems and the ambitions of several of the actors involved, the resulting outcome can be adopted (Teisman, 2007). Hereby, adoption refers to the consolidation of a problem-solution combination over a longer period of several policy-making rounds (Teisman, 2007).

Depending on the type of participation, the adopted outcome is binding or not (De Graaf, 2007). During informing and consulting outcomes are mostly determined by the administration that does not bind itself to the outcomes of the policy-making process (De Graaf, 2007). When looking at the rung of advising, outcomes might be binding to the administration but do not necessarily have to be, depending on the conditions under which participation took place. When looking at the higher levels of citizen participation, namely co-production and co-decisions outcomes become binding to the administration and to politics (De Graaf, 2007). Having operationalized the independent variable citizenship participation, I display an operationalization for the dependent variable, i.e. public support in the following section.

3.4 Operationalization - Public support

As discussed earlier in this chapter public support has multiple dimensions. It can be positive as well as negative, active as well as passive (De Graaf, 2007). Furthermore, it has been established that public support contains the elements of judgement, attitude and behaviour (De Graaf, 2007). Based upon these insights, the following indicators for operationalizing public support can be found in Table 2 below (De Graaf, 2007).

Table 2 - Indicators for public support based on De Graaf (2007)

Public Support	Negative	Positive
Judgement/attitude <i>What do citizens think? What is their judgement? What is their attitude?</i>	Dissatisfied <i>Dissatisfied with (aspects of) the outcome?</i> <i>Dissatisfied with aspects of the process?</i>	Satisfied <i>Satisfied with (aspects of) the outcome?</i> <i>Satisfied with (aspects of) the process?</i>
Behaviour <i>How do citizens act?</i>	Acts of protest <i>Attend buurtgesprekken (and similar events)</i> <i>Become active in a citizen group</i> <i>Write email to council member</i> <i>Write email to civil servant</i>	Acts of support <i>Attend buurtgesprekken (and similar events)</i> <i>Become active in a citizen group</i> <i>Write email to council member</i> <i>Write email to civil servant</i>

Table 2 shows a direct relationship between judgement, attitude and behaviour. Citizens having a negative judgement over a policy might engage in acts of protest against said policy, while citizens having a positive attitude towards a policy might engage in acts of support for said policy (De Graaf, 2007). Hereby, it must be again noted that in this research project I make a differentiation between dissatisfaction with the policy process and/or outcome and satisfaction with the policy process and/or outcome (De Graaf, 2007).

During one of the interviews with members of *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* the following actions taken by members of the group were mentioned when discussing how they become active for participating in the creation of the second part of the *omgevingsvisie* for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. Thus, the interviewees named attending the *buurtgesprekken* (and similar events), becoming an active member of said citizen group, writing an email to members of the council and writing an email to respective civil servants as acts of their activism. These acts have been included into the operationalization of the dependent variable

public support (see Table 2). They constituted one aspect of public support, namely actions undertaken by citizens. As can be seen in Table 2 I included these acts have been included into the operationalization of positive and negative public support. I did this as these acts could be both undertaken to show support or to show protest i.e. attending the *buurtgesprekken* to voice support for the *omgevingsvisie* of the *Merwedekanaalzone* or to voice protest/critique considering the current *omgevingsvisie*. During interviews I asked questions regarding opinions, actions, goals of participation and public support. Hereby, I paid special attention to how interviewees described their level of support for both the outcome and the policy process in relation to their actions taken.

In this methodological chapter I presented the research design utilized to conduct qualitative research and collect data for my master thesis project. Furthermore, I presented an operationalization for the independent variable citizen participation and the dependent variable public support. Finally, I introduced the readers to the case of the *Merwedekanaalzone*. The following chapter, Chapter 4. Findings and Analysis presents an analysis of the collected data.

4. Findings and Analysis

This chapter has two purposes. First, I want to present the most important findings based on the collection of empirical data stemming from document analysis, digital ethnography and 12 semi-structured interviews. Second, I aim to shed light on the different perceptions of the relationship between citizen participation and public support in the case of the *Merwedekanaalzone* in Utrecht.

Consequently, the first section of this chapter delivers said findings in form of four participation narratives, highlighting how each participating group perceives citizen participation and public support for the *Merwedekanaalzone* and communicates this narrative to its members and the outside world. The second section provides the reader with an analysis of the presented data. This is done by reflecting upon my findings, considering the literature synthesized for this master thesis (see Chapter 2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework).

4.1 Findings

The four participation narratives presented below are the result of a total of 12 semi-structured interviews. Each narrative presents the perspective of a specific group on the relationship between citizen participation and public support in the case of the *Merwedekanaalzone* in Utrecht. I termed these groups academics, elected/unelected officials of the Council and the municipality of Utrecht, participating citizens and participating businesses. In each narrative both variables are discussed as well as the general perspective of the group on the *Merwedekanaalzone* as a whole. To highlight the most important, most interesting insights, I used interviewee quotes which are presented in blue (for further information on quotes and interviewee codes see Chapter 8. Appendix, sections 8.2 and 8.3) Considering respondent confidentiality and privacy I do not report interviewee descriptives or specific job descriptions.

Participation Narrative One: The instrumentalization of technology for citizen participation

This first of the four presented narratives is the result of an interview I conducted with a researcher at the Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance of the University of Utrecht. It is an exemplary account of the role of technology in the facilitation of citizen participation and how technology can become politicised to create support among citizens for a pre-determined vision of a policy.

The researcher was part of an interdisciplinary project team consisting of various people, including members of the municipality of Utrecht, the Ministry of Infrastructure and local, social entrepreneurs. The task of this project team, which was given by the municipality of Utrecht, was to develop a technological demonstrator tool facilitating the communication with and inclusion of local Utrecht citizens in the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone*.

Before starting to develop the demonstrator, the project team received the specification that the tool should resemble a 3D scenario planning tool which could be used on any laptop or big screen, allowing citizens to virtually walk through the new neighbourhood. Having developed the demonstrator tool for a period of four months the researcher attended one of the *buurtgesprekken* in late 2018, being curious about how the municipality, to be more precise the head urban architect of the *Merwedekanaalzone*, would show the current plan for the new neighbourhood through the 3D demonstrator tool. Furthermore, she was interested in finding

out how the municipality generally made use of this technology during these evenings with local citizens.

While attending citizens showed enthusiasm for both the presented plan and the 3D tool the researcher noted that the used tool was not the demonstrator model developed by her and the other project members. Upon being asked why that was the case, the municipality of Utrecht replied that the demonstrator tool was not technologically advanced enough to be utilized during these events and would need further development to be 'marketable'. Instead, the municipality had decided to make use of a professionally developed tool by a design company from The Hague.

While the professionally developed 3D, tool looked somewhat like the demonstrator tool designed by the project group the researcher noted that the former's primary purpose seemed to lie in informing and illustrating, showing the future scenario of a beautifully designed, green, urban neighborhood to the citizens present at the event.

Furthermore, so the researcher, by using this type of technology, the municipality of Utrecht could claim the presence of participatory measurements in the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone*. In this case, the role of technology was not to facilitate participation but to manipulate and sell an idea, hereby creating legitimacy for said idea through the pretense of participation:

'But at least of course you cannot say that they don't talk to people because this is the Netherlands, it is a must. But concerning the technology, technology is for sure not used as co-decision, co-creation tool to think together. It is more, maybe for manipulation or to sell the idea and just get it ready as soon as possible.'

(Researcher UU/USBO, 2019)

This quote nicely illustrates the notion of citizen participation as being instrumental, a crucial tool to close the gap between policy and public value or support (Dosterij & Peeters, 2011). Thus, while authorities might perceive citizen participation as an important element of democracy, participation as such contains no value in itself, but is a means to a better policy-making process (Michels, 2007).

The participatory narrative based on the account of the researcher shows how 3D models, as discussed above, can be politicized to serve sell a certain, pre-determined idea or version of a policy to citizens. Hereby, technology serves the creation of a participation narrative in which citizens were provided with the latest technology to co-create together with the governing body. This pretense of citizen participation then serves the creation of a legitimacy argument, stating that the adopted policy, in this case the final construction plans for the *Merwedekanaalzone*, are grounded in the ideas, needs and wishes of the local citizens.

Participation Narrative Two: The greater good versus individual concerns – Expectation management is key

This second participation narrative combines the results of four interviews, digital ethnography on respective communication channels and document analysis. Of the four interviews, I conducted two with elected officials of the *Gemeenteraad* or the Council of Utrecht. The first Council member to be interviewed is a member of an opposition party while the second one is a member of a party forming the current coalition in Utrecht's city parliament. The third interviewee is a policy officer employed with the municipality of *Utrecht*. As policy officer interviewee three's work is related to the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone*'s mobility concept. The fourth interviewee is a project manager at the municipality of Utrecht, concerned with the *Merwedekanaalzone*.

Communicating with their citizens – the Merwedekanaalzone in facts and Tweets

The municipality of Utrecht uses several channels of communication with his citizens, namely the municipal website on the *Merwedekanaalzone*, the *Merwedekanaalzone* newsletter, the *buurtgesprekken* and the digital summaries of these events (see Chapter 8. Appendix, Section 8.1, Table 5 and Section 8.3). The overarching goals of these communications is to inform citizens about the latest developments and upcoming events in and around the *Merwedekanaalzone*, to provide them with access to public data as presented in the environmental reports or development plans and to make the outcome of the *buurtgesprekken* transparent and accessible to everyone. Hereby, the municipality strikes a relatively neutral, matter-of-fact tone, however, the *Merwedekanaalzone* is clearly presented as the environmentally-friendly, green, urban neighbourhood of the future which will offer a perfect combination of living, working and recreation. To that end the municipality of Utrecht utilizes videos showing a computer simulation of the 'future *Merwedekanaalzone*', making use of

beautiful visuals, creating a pre-defined picture of the new neighbourhood in the mind of the audience.

In case of the Council, some Council members use the Twitter hashtag *#merwedekanaalzone* to tweet about events they attended in their function as Council member such as the *buurtgesprekken* or an excursion to Amsterdam visiting a neighbourhood standing model for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. Here, Twitter is clearly used to show the Council's constituency that they are actively engaging with each other or with their citizens in the creation of the new neighbourhood, hereby fulfilling their duties as Council members. The overall tone is more informal but less neutral, as some of the council members combine both informing and representing the position of their party on the *Merwedekanaalzone* in their tweets.

When describing the role of the citizen in participating for the *Merwedekanaalzone* all interviewees agree that this role is complex and difficult to define due to the scope and size of the project. Participation takes place from two sides, being organized and coordinated by the municipality of Utrecht and the Council and in the shape of bottom-up initiatives coming from citizen interest groups such as *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* or the *SUWO*.

Citizen participation as lead by the municipality of Utrecht mainly takes place in form of the *buurtgesprekken* (neighbourhood talks), *stadsgesprekken* (city talks), in the creation of a *buurtaanpak* (neighbourhood groups) for *Rivierenwijk* and *Transwijk* and in the contact and exchange between citizens and Council members via email or personal meetings. As stated in the minutes of the *buurtgesprekken*, hosted in September 2018, these events have three goals, namely to inform citizens about the plans for the *Merwedekanaalzone*, to answer questions coming from and third, to collect comments from citizens. According to the municipality of Utrecht comments will be summed up and translated into an appendix to the *omgevingsvisie*. Hereby, the goal is to let the Council know what citizens find important so that it can be taken into consideration when deciding on the final plans for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. During interviews with both Council members and representatives of the two citizen initiative groups it became clear that the Council functions as the main bridge between the municipality of Utrecht and participating citizens.

By organizing participation event such as the *buurtgesprekken* the municipality of Utrecht follows Dutch law that requires municipalities and other levels of government to provide

stakeholders with the opportunity to give an opinion on proposed plans. While the municipality of Utrecht is obliged to react to this feedback it is not mandatory to include citizen input into the final development plans.

Both interviewed Council members state that they find citizen participation extremely important for creating a vision for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. This importance is both derived from perceiving citizen feedback as valuable, but also from understanding participation trajectories as channels for the creation of public support (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, Michels & De Graaf, 2010 & Dosterij & Peeters, 2011, Arnstein, 1969). Talking about limits to participation the Council members mention two main obstacles. First, the complex processes surrounding the creation of an overall vision and the development of plans for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. Being able to understand the project and all its implications as well as the processes going on in the Council and the municipality of Utrecht are extremely difficult for citizens and other laymen. This limitation to citizen participation has not been discussed in the literature synthesized for this master thesis project.

A second limitation discussed by interviewees is that participation efforts are normally undertaken by the same type of people, namely highly educated, older citizens that have the intellectual capacity and financial security to invest time and energy into participating for the development of the *Merwedekanaalzone* (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, Bartoletti & Faccioli, 2016).

Furthermore, active and vocal participation is a result of feeling directly affected by something new or something that is changing. In the case of the *Merwedekanaalzone* both Council members note that citizens who are very critical or maybe even fearful of the consequences that the construction of the new neighbourhood might have on theirs are the most present and most vocal during participation efforts (Broekhuizen & Michels, 2017). This highlights the strength of the emotional element within citizen participation and ties in with the results of document analysis.

Finally, both Council members discuss what is (in their eyes) the most elemental crux when it comes to citizen participation and their role as Council members in it, namely the dilemma of the greater, common good versus individual concerns and interests. As one Council members notes:

‘As representatives it is on us to decide what is more important in the end. The individual interest of one houseboat owner or being able to build an additional couple of hundred apartments because we can build a new bridge? This is the classical drama of (the interest of) one versus the interest of many. ‘

(Council member/coalition, 2019)

Playing into this dilemma is the question if citizens have a fundamental right to participate and have influence on decisions made by their governments or not. Hereby, Council members also need to consider the different power positions of those who participate (highly educated, already living in Utrecht) and that of future inhabitants, people who are not yet able to rent or buy property in Utrecht but would like to live and work in the city too. As one Council member interestingly points out:

‘The inhabitants around the new Merwedekanaalzone think they have a right to co-decide and I find that very problematic because per definition you are then not looking at the greater good or interest anymore but at the interest of individual people. And that is difficult. We need to be really careful and make sure that we do not let the insiders, the people who already have a house in Utrecht, the ones who lively nicely within the city...(.)... that not they alone do profit from everything that makes this city so beautiful, but that we also look at the people who cannot do that yet. ‘

(Council member/coalition, 2019)

Both quotes nicely illustrate the presence of conflicting underlying assumptions regarding citizen’s right to participate in policy-making, a debate that is also reflected in the literature (Arnstein, 1969, Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, Michels & De Graaf, 2010, Dosterij & Peeters, 2011). In case of the *Merwedekanaalzone* Council members question the protest of citizens who are comfortably living in a permanent home in Utrecht and who are mostly highly educated and economically well off.

When discussing the notion of public support for the *Merwedekanaalzone* with elected and non-elected officials two things become clear, namely that a project of scope and timeline of the *Merwedekanaalzone* naturally causes questions, concerns and maybe even fears among the citizens in the surrounding areas. Furthermore, trying to make an estimation about the size and distribution of public support for the *Merwedekanaalzone* is extremely difficult, as

participation is undertaken predominantly by citizens who are very critical of the project anyways and who fear experiencing negative consequences for themselves and their neighbourhoods. When being directly asked to make a statement regarding presence, size and distribution of public support for the *Merwedekanaalzone* based on their experience with participating citizens one Council member made the following statement:

‘I have been to the last neighbourhood talk myself and what I can really say about it is that it is very diverse. I find it very difficult to make estimations about how support for the Merwedekanaalzone is distributed across the city. I always hear different opinions and I think it is a little bit 50/50. ’

(Council member/opposition, 2019)

Discussing the presentence and voice of predominantly critical citizens in the participation trajectory the other Council member finds that:

‘It is difficult for us to arrive at a realistic picture of how many people are against the Merwedekanaalzone or not’

(Council member/coalition, 2019)

Based on these statements it can be inferred that making assumptions about the presence, size and distribution of positive or negative support is very difficult for both Council members and non-elected officials of the municipality of Utrecht as those that participate are predominantly citizens reacting with concerns towards the development of the *Merwedekanaalzone*, experiencing fears regarding the consequences the new neighbourhood could have on theirs in the future. The voices of those that are content or maybe even supportive of the plans for the *Merwedekanaalzone* often refrain from participating as there is no real motivation for them to do so.

Again, these quotes nicely depict the importance a personal, direct sense of urgency surrounding a policy for citizens to actively participate in the policy-making process (Broekhuizen & Michels, 2017). Furthermore, these comments question the literature in two further ways. First, they challenge the notion that (the level of) public support is homogenous among participating citizens and that all active citizens have the same or similar goals for both the participation process and outcome (De Graaf, 2007, Arnstein, 1969). Second, they give

rise to the question whether the relationship between citizen participation and public support can be properly measured given that public support is dispersed (De Graaf, 2007).

Overall, this citizen participation in this second narrative is perceived as a goal to the end of developing a 'sound' development plan for the new *Merwedekanaalzone*. While all interviewees believe citizen input and feedback is valuable the question remains whether citizens actually have the right to participate, especially for a project that is as complex as the *Merwedekanaalzone*. The biggest dilemma when it comes to citizen participation (for the Council members) lies in weighing the general interest against individual interest. What weighs heavier? Building a new residential area in a city that experiences a huge housing shortage or respecting individual fears regarding potential negative consequences of this new area for surrounding neighbourhoods? When it comes to public support considering citizen participation interviewees find it difficult, if being able at all, to assume what support looks like and how it is distributed across the city.

Participation Narrative Three: Instrumental participation or honesty is the best policy

Participation narrative three is the result of five interviews, digital ethnography on respective communication channels and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with four members of the citizen initiative *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* and one member of the *Stedelijk Utrechts Woonschepen Overleg (SUWO)*. As the name of the first implies, this group consists of inhabitants of *Rivierenwijk* and aims to preserve the social cohesion and quality of life of their neighbourhood considering the potential implications that the construction and the characteristics of the new *Merwedekanaalzone* might have for them. The latter is an organization officially representing the interest of houseboat owners in Utrecht. This group has been founded in 1981 and thus not in direct response to the plans for the *Merwedekanaalzone* like *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar (Stedelijk Utrechts Woonschepen Overleg, 2019)*. However, considering the potential construction of new bridges over the *Merwedekanaal* the *SUWO* has started to actively participate in the creation of the plans for the *Merwedekanaalzone*, hoping to prevent the construction of new bridges. Across both organizations' interviewees have been actively participating in their groups for a while, with some of them having a long history of volunteering and civil engagement. Furthermore, all interviewees are highly educated and of Dutch descent, which ties in with findings in the literature regarding the characteristics of participating citizens (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, Michels & De Graaf, 2010).

Communication – Raising awareness by making your voice heard

Both the *SUWO* and *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* use multiple channels to communicate with their own members but also with other citizens of Utrecht potentially willing to support their cause. Thus, members of both groups have laid out their group's interests and opinions in interviews with news outlets such as the *Algemeen Dagblad* (Dutch daily newspaper) or *StadsPodium* (platform of an Utrecht-wide citizen-run initiative aiming to facilitate dialogue between Utrechters). However, the main channel of communication for both groups are their official websites where they share updates and present their general interest and goals. Furthermore, some group members use Twitter to release personal, short statements or comment on new developments in the *Merwedekanaalzone*. However, no group pursues a unified 'twitter strategy' or a single, specific hashtag to draw attention to their mission.

Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar has an extensive website, introducing the group and their overall mission and goals, their most relevant issues or problems with the new *Merwedekanaalzone* and providing the reader with updates on the latest developments. The title of the website, namely '*Houd Rivierenwijk en de omgeving van de buitenproportionele nieuwbouwijk Merwede LEEFBAAR!!*' (Keep Rivierenwijk and the surroundings of the disproportionate new neighbourhood Merwede liveable) directly presents the reader with the main mission the group wants to achieve, namely to maintain the quality of life within their neighbourhood Rivierenwijk, assuming that the construction and characteristics of the new *Merwedekanaalzone* pose a threat to this liveability. Furthermore, the project is called 'disproportionate', indicating that the size of the proposed plans is causing concern among the inhabitants of *Rivierenwijk*.

However, in their main statement the group makes clear that they are in favour of the general development of the area into a residential neighbourhood, acknowledging the Utrecht housing crisis. Nevertheless, the group believes that the municipality is losing itself in a development plan that is too big and too ambitious, thereby neglecting the potential consequences of the construction project for the surrounding areas such as *Rivierenwijk*. To prevent that from happening the group asks their fellow citizens to support their cause by either sending an email or a letter to the Council or by joining their group.

Consequently, the group communicates a very critical picture of the new *Merwedekanaalzone*, shining a light on the expected, potential negative consequences that this construction project might have on their neighbourhood. Hereby, they use informal language and while trying to strike a somewhat balanced tone the group works with several negative assumptions, painting an adverse future for both the *Merwedekanaalzone* and the surrounding areas.

Similarly, to *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* the website of the *Stedelijk Utrechts Woonschepen Overleg* has multiple sections, mostly subjects such as houseboats, houseboat laws and regulations in Utrecht, the history of the *SUWO* and organizational events. However, under the category 'Home' the organization informs its members about the latest developments regarding the *Merwedekanaalzone*, asking members to attend *buurtgesprekken* or to react to a newsletter (by sending an email to the Council or by voting for certain parties in the municipal elections) that is published and distributed by inhabitants of *Rivierenwijk* and the *Merwedekanaal*.

Again, it becomes clear that the members of the *SUWO* and their fellow houseboat owners are welcoming the construction of a new residential area considering Utrecht's tight housing market, however, they also fear the size of the project and judge the amount of 10.000 apartment units as disproportionate given the small size of the to be developed area. Furthermore, they are vehemently against the construction of three additional bridges, as that would mean the relocation of some houseboats, additional obstacles to rowers and increased traffic and parking across the *Merwedekanaal* and *Rivierenwijk*. Finally, they criticise the plan of the municipality of Utrecht to develop high-rise apartment buildings, as that would result in less sunlight on the other side of the canal.

All things considered the *SUWO* draws an urgent picture of the to be developed *Merwedekanaalzone*, highlighting the expected negative consequences of this construction project to both the houseboat owners and the rowers. To that end they use informal, often passionate language, emphasizing the great changes that are about to come for the *Merwedekanaal* and its inhabitants and users. Similarly, to *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* the group works with certain negative assumptions about the future of the new neighbourhood, such as people parking their cars on the other side of the canal in *Rivierenwijk*. Overall, the *SUWO* as well as *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* clearly communicate their general fear, the

abatement of the quality of life within their neighbourhoods, to their members and the outside world (See Chapter 8. Appendix, Section 8.1, Table 5)

When discussing citizen participation for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* the interviewees of the citizen initiative *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* stated that they began to participate about two years ago when they first were informed about the development plans during one information evening hosted by the municipality of Utrecht. Feeling shocked by the scope of the plan interviewees felt the need to raise awareness among their neighbours as this quote illustrates:

‘There were two points that triggered things and that was the high number of flats they wanted to build and the number of additional bridges to be constructed, because they have direct consequences for the houseboat owners. If there is a bridge coming you need to leave. Consequently, we drummed up the houseboat owners and asked them if they knew what was happening. The houseboat owners are organized in the SUWO, but we thought there are so many more people that are affected by this. Thus, we organized an event...(..)... to inform more inhabitants and we also invited Council members to this meeting’.

(Member 2, 2019)

Arguing that the project will have a huge effect on *Rivierenwijk* interviewees of *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* feel that they have a right to be informed about what will happen. However, the complexity and size of the plans make it difficult for laymen to understand the true meaning and impact of the project. Thus, the citizen initiative also aims to achieve a better understanding and more clarity regarding the development plans. Participation serves a clear purpose, namely exerting influence over the development plans so that the (perceived) quality of life within *Rivierenwijk*, *Transwijk* and the *Merwedekanaal* is maintained. Here, a strong sense of personal urgency helps to develop clear participation goals (Broekhuizen & Michels, 2017). A similar sentiment can be found back in the minutes of one of the *buurtgesprekken* hosted in September 2018. Here it can be seen that citizens fear that the new *Merwedekanaalzone* will not fit into Utrecht’s existing fabric:

‘Do the needs of (house) owners come first? Or does making profit come first? Who provides a counter weight to that? Creating a sort of Manhattan while Utrecht is so beloved for its village character? We do not want to become a Manhattan at the Merwede’

(Buurtgesprek Rivierenwijk, 2018)

However, active participation for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* requires a lot of motivation and stamina. All five interviewees noted that over the course of time many of their fellow group members have dropped out or stopped being actively engaged. Hereby, the most important obstacles to continuous participation are a lack of time, being busy with work and/or and most importantly the lack of measurable, positive results. This finding ties in with the notion of 'participation fatigue' as described by Cornwall (2008).

Upon being asked what participating together with the municipality of Utrecht and the Council looks like, interviewees elaborated that they are predominantly lobbying the Council, arguing that the Council can exert some influence on the plans through delivering notions and arguments. To that end, there is frequent contact between all five interviewees, their organizations and the Council members. This contact takes place in the form of email exchanges, telephone calls, visits of the Council members to the neighbourhood or conversation during one of the information evenings hosted by the municipality. However, as can be inferred from the minutes of the September 2018 *buurtgesprekken*, citizens are not content with how they have been involved by the municipality of Utrecht so far, as this quote below nicely illustrates:

'It is important that the municipality says that we are partners in a dialogue, we want to be heard, but we are not yet on the first step of the participation ladder, we try to get on it, but every time we try we are pushed away'

(Buurtgesprek Rivierenwijk, 2018)

Here it can be seen, the citizens desire to become a 'real' partner who is taken seriously and whose input can be found back in the *omgevingsvisie* for the *Merwedekanaalzone* (Bartoletti & Faccioli, 2016, De Graaf, 2007). When further discussing the nature and characteristics of citizen participation for the *Merwedekanaalzone* interviewees, independent from which group they are, elaborate on four important notions, namely (the lack of) clarity regarding the processes surrounding the development of the plans for the new neighbourhood, (the lack of) direct and honest communication of limitations to participation, trust in government and the feeling of not being taken seriously in their arguments and efforts.

When conversing about the notion of (the lack of) clarity all five interviewees criticise the complexity of the processes behind the creation of the development plans for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. As one interviewee of *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* states,

‘Sometimes I find it very difficult to understand what is happening and I am considering myself to be highly educated. It is very complex’

(Member 3, 2019)

Thus, even though most of the members of both the *SUWO* and *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* are highly educated they have problems understanding the processes and mechanisms that are followed by the municipality of Utrecht and the Council to develop the plans for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. One interviewee even goes so far as to state that making processes complicated and complex is a tactic of the municipality of Utrecht to cause confusion among citizens, hoping that would disseminate participation efforts.

‘Sure, they want to be a little unclear about their processes and in their formulations, so they can hide behind it. But we are not to be send away.’

(Member 4, 2019)

When discussing the second notion, namely the (lack of) direct and honest communication regarding the limitations to participation interviewees draw upon the same concept as the interviewed Council members, namely expectation management. Thus, as one of the interviewees elaborates:

‘Yes, there needs to be expectation management coming from the government. That is essential. The municipality permanently creates expectations, including adopted motions in the Council together with an assignment. As a citizen you are then also expecting that the administration is acting upon that.’

(Member SUWO, 2019)

Here, two points are notable. First, both citizens and Council members perceive expectation management as essential when it comes to citizen participation. Second, both sides see the need for better expectation management by the municipality of Utrecht. Another example of poor expectation management is given by one of the interviewees of *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* who elaborates on the unclear participation goal of the municipality of Utrecht and

how the lack of feedback provided by the municipality makes it difficult for citizens to estimate the true impact their participation effort is having (or not). Furthermore, interviewees state that they rather knew their suggestions will not be considered than knowing nothing at all regarding possible outcomes, as this quote nicely illustrates:

‘Just say it. Yes, then you know what you are up against. Then you can be angry about it but then you simply know.’

(Member 1, 2019)

Again, these quotes elaborate on the idea of ‘participation fatigue’ because of a lack of clarity regarding the (potential) outcome of citizen’s participation efforts (Cornwall, 2008).

The described lack of open and honest communication of limitations to citizen participation also ties in with the third discussed notion, namely trust in the government. Not communicating if and how citizen input will be included into the development plan for the *Merwedekanaalzone* leaves many citizens of *Rivierenwijk* and the *Merwedekanaal* with an unclear and uncertain picture for their future. Elaborating about the houseboat owners, the interviewed member of the *SUWO* describes the lack of trust that many citizens now have in the municipality of Utrecht. Thus, the interviewee expresses discontent with the absence of action following the announcements of the municipality of Utrecht regarding the future of the *Merwedekanaal*:

‘When push comes to shove nothing is happening. Absolutely nothing. Nada. And I really don’t get that. Well, that is an example of a government that is not trustworthy. If people must leave in the end, they (the municipality) know that the number (of houseboats) must not go down. They say they are working on a solution, but they don’t’

(Member SUWO, 2019)

Following up on that comment the interviewee also states that the houseboat owners’ trust in the municipality of Utrecht has also been rattled by the fact that they were not included into the first environmental vision of the area, albeit being present on the *Merwedekanaal* for multiple decades in a row. Here, the selected quotes reflect upon the theoretical proposition that citizen participation does not influence (the level of) public support, but that third, external factors such as trust, reputation of the administration and its actors as well as

expected benefits for participating actors influence the (level of) public support among participating citizens (Fung, 2006, De Graaf, 2007).

The fourth and final notion that could be found again in conversation with all five interviewees is the feeling of not being taken seriously in their arguments and participation efforts. This notion is grounded in the sense of paternalism that participating citizens seem to experience when trying to work together with the municipality for the development of the plans for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. Thus, citizens feel that the municipality of Utrecht acts top-down and does not take the presented concerns seriously. Furthermore, citizens are under the impression that the project developers are very much aware of the potentially negative consequences that the construction of the *Merwedekanaalzone* might have for the surrounding areas but chooses not to communicate that awareness to the citizens. The same holds true for decisions that have supposedly not been taking yet, for example on the number and location of additional bridges. One interviewee nicely illustrated this point by sharing the following example:

‘They do not take us seriously. We have been asking for a baseline measurement on how the new neighbourhood will affect the quality of life in our neighbourhood for two years now. For research on already existing bridges and if they couldn’t be extended instead of building new ones. And if they really took us seriously, they would have done that by now. Look, it is not nice to see that they are buying people out, and then they still pretend they wouldn’t know yet if and where new bridges will be built. ‘

(Member 4, 2019)

Another notion that is tied to being taken seriously when participating is that of citizen participation simply being of instrumental value to the government. That the participation trajectory as set up by the municipality of Utrecht is much more about creating legitimacy for the project and less about outcome that is in the interest of the citizens. Upon being asked directly about where on the participation ladder (as almost all the interviewees were aware of Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation) participating citizens see themselves the interviewee of the *SUWO* replied:

‘And also this participation trajectory. My first question was, because we have this participation ladder, where do we sit there? In my opinion on the lowest rung. I may talk to you (the municipality). Thus, the municipality’s expectation management is really a drama.’
(Member SUWO, 2019)

This quote shows that participating citizens also reflect upon their position in the ‘participating game’ from a theoretical perspective and arrive at the conclusion that their position is far from being an equal or serious partner to the municipality of Utrecht when it comes to the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone*.

Overall, this paragraph illustrates the general dilemma of participating citizens when trying to engage with governing authorities for the creation of a project or policy. Citizens need to invest time, energy and motivation into a participation process that is often complex and difficult to understand while not knowing if their efforts will result in (any sort of) outcome favourable to them. Thereby, they need to overcome or at least cope with information and communication deficits that make it hard to estimate what possible next steps to undertake. In case of the *Merwedekanaalzone* citizens have lost a considerable amount of trust in the municipality of Utrecht while participating. They perceive the set-up participation trajectory as a pretence to create legitimacy for the overall project by stating that citizens were able to participate in its development. Even though they are not sure if their efforts will result in any outcome favourable to them, they deem their participation necessary to achieve their goal, which is the preservation of the quality of life within their neighbourhoods as they are now.

When looking at public support for the *Merwedekanaalzone* from the perspective of the participating citizens it becomes very much clear that while all the five interviewed citizens are strongly in favour of the construction of a new residential area considering Utrecht’s tense housing market the central crux lies in the difference of perspectives between the citizens and the municipality. While citizens think from the point of their already existing neighbourhoods and what makes these neighbourhoods so precious to them, the municipality of Utrecht thinks from the perspective of the *Merwedekanaalzone*. This root problem is nicely illustrated in the following quotes:

‘It is like that the whole time. We propose something, and the municipality takes notice, but then nothing happens with that idea...(.)...They really think from the perspective of the new neighbourhood and not from the perspective of ours and that is the problem. That is the crux.

(Member 10, 2019)

This quote nicely shows how there is general and inter-group positive support of participating citizens for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* as a residential area. However, support becomes negative when it comes to what this residential area will look like (high-rise apartment blocks), how it will be connected to the surrounding areas and the city centre (new bridges) and the way in which the municipality perceives the arguments of the participating citizens (take us seriously/ do not change our neighbourhood).

Further examining citizen’s expressions about the participation trajectory as set up by the municipality of Utrecht it becomes clear that perceiving it as purely instrumental has a negative effect on public support for this trajectory (Van der Bol & Van der Arend, 2007, Michels & De Graaf, 2010). Thus, all interviewees stated that the municipality of Utrecht might adhere to the law by setting up the participation trajectory as it is, but that the effort of gathering and utilizing citizen input does not go beyond this minimal effort.

Finally, a third notable source of negative support among participating citizens is the way the municipality communicates about the *Merwedekanaalzone*, its progress and how the new neighbourhood is supposed to be included into existing fabric of the surrounding areas. Citizens feel that the municipality of Utrecht selectively communicates only the advantages of the new neighbourhood but neglects to inform the wider citizenry about the potentially negative consequences the construction of the *Merwedekanaalzone* could have for areas such as *Rivierenwijk* and the *Merwedekanaal*.

Overall, this narrative shows that public support for both the *Merwedekanaalzone* as a project and the participation trajectory as set up by the municipality of Utrecht is difficult to measure. While citizens clearly show positive support for the construction of a new residential area they exhibit negative support for both the effects they expect to experience for their own neighbourhoods and for the participation trajectory as such. Hereby, negative support for certain characteristics of the *Merwedekanaalzone* such as high-rise apartment buildings or

additional bridges are based on the fear that the quality of life within their neighbourhoods will severely decrease. Citizens of *Rivierenwijk* and the *Merwedekanaal* identify with their neighbourhoods and are naturally worried that the character of these areas will change beyond recognition. Negative support for the participation trajectory as set up by the municipality of Utrecht primarily stems from two sources, namely that participation is perceived as purely instrumental, that citizen feedback and suggestions are not taken seriously, and by the difference of perspectives. In the eyes of participating citizens, the municipality acts as the advocate of the future neighbourhood and neglects the needs of the already existing ones, which feels wrong and unfair to the citizens of *Rivierenwijk* and the *Merwedekanaal*.

Participation Narrative Four: Deciding together to get the neighbourhood that citizens and local businesses really want

Participation narrative four is the product of digital ethnography conducted on the respective communication channels (see Chapter 8. Appendix, Section 8.1, Tables 4 & 5) and two interviews, conducted with representatives of two different organizations. Organization one is called *Vechtclub XL* and is a co-working space for creative entrepreneurs. It was founded in 2012 and is located close to the *Merwedekanaal* in what will be the new *Merwedekanaalzone*. Next to co-working spaces and work studios *Vechtclub XL* is also home to a range of small businesses such as a brew pub, a coffee and espresso bar and a restaurant. Consequently, *Vechtclub XL* does not only offer work spaces but also recreational activities to the *Merwedekanaalzone* and its surrounding neighbourhoods. Currently, *Vechtclub XL* is renting its space from the municipality of Utrecht, with the rental contract ending in 2020. However, the organization wants to buy its space and become a fixed part of the new *Merwedekanaalzone*. The interview was held with one of the employees of *Vechtclub XL*. This employee holds a leadership position in the organization.

The second interview was conducted with someone who is self-employed, running a small, Utrecht-based *location marketing organization* (for the sake of privacy the name of the organization is not disclosed). Between 2012 and 2017 the interviewee together with two colleagues was busy creating a development perspective of the new *Merwedekanaalzone* together with several stakeholders such as existing businesses, developers and citizens from and around the area. This development perspective ultimately became a basis for the environmental vision of the municipality of Utrecht and for the urban construction plan of the *Merwedekanaalzone*. Again, both interviewees were highly educated and of Dutch descent.

Communication – The Merwedekanaalzone as an incubator for creative working, co-creation and bottom-up initiatives

Both *Vechtclub XL* and the *location marketing organization* have their own business websites on which they communicate both on their products/services and on their work in and for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. Thus, *Vechtclub XL*'s website has a category called 'Vision for the Future' where the organization clearly states that they want to remain in the area and become a fixed institution in the new neighbourhood. Hereby, they emphasize how they have changed their current location for the better by providing co-working spaces as well as leisure and entertainment facilities. Within the new *Merwedekanaalzone* *Vechtclub XL* sees an important role for itself by providing a place of connection for the new inhabitants of the area. Furthermore, they clearly state that they aim to work together with the municipality of Utrecht in the creation of the new *Merwedekanaalzone* and emphasize the importance of green, public spaces within sustainable urban neighbourhoods. *Vechtclub XL* is also willing to take care of these public spaces being created in and around the organization.

Overall, *Vechtclub XL* is presenting the construction of the *Merwedekanaalzone* as a chance for the development of the physical area itself into a green, sustainable, urban neighbourhood of the future and as a chance for the extension and creation of public spaces as a meeting point for new and old neighbours. To that end, *Vechtclub XL* wants to support the municipality of Utrecht in the creation of this area by participating in its creation and by becoming a permanent actor in it. Consequently, the organization uses, short, informal sentences to paint a positive picture of the plans for the *Merwedekanaalzone*, highlighting its potential for the city, people and businesses on its website.

The website of the *location marketing organization* contains a category called 'Projects' on which current and old projects are described. In describing the project which resulted in input for both the environmental vision and the urban construction plan for the *Merwedekanaalzone* the organization emphasise the importance of working from the perspective of citizens, local businesses and other relevant 'grass-root stakeholders'. In creating a vision for this new area together with multiple parties the organization organized several events such as small festivals in the area as well as information and brain storm evenings. Under the label of 'creating our city together' the organization teased out a potential future vision for the area, based on existing images, structures, organizations and the needs and wishes of local citizens.

Overall, the organization is presenting its work for the new *Merwedekanaalzone* as bottom-up stakeholder initiative, creating a vision for this new neighbourhood based on what is already existing and on what might be needed in the future. Hereby, the organization emphasises the great potential of this area as a new, urban residential area that combines living, working and leisure. Furthermore, the organization highlights the great fruitfulness of its bottom-up approach for the developments of areas such as this. Overall, the *location marketing organization* makes use of informal language, describing in short sentences what its role in the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* has been. Even though the project has been finished in 2017 it becomes clear that the organization is in strong favour of letting citizens and other stakeholders participate in the development of this high-potential area. Thus, the organization makes a clear statement in favour of bottom-up, citizen-lead development strategies for areas such as the *Merwedekanaalzone* (See Chapter 8. Appendix, Section 8.1, Table 5)

When discussing citizen participation, it became clear that both respondents and their organizations were or are involved in developing ideas for the *omgevingsvisie* of the new *Merwedekanaalzone* early on, which stands in contrast to the inclusion of other groups later in the policy-making process. Thus, both organizations have been participating from 2012 onwards. Hereby, respondents had or have different reasons for participating for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* together with the municipality of Utrecht. While the leader of the *location marketing organization* wanted to arrive at an overall vision for this new neighbourhood together with all relevant stakeholders located in and around the area, *Vechtclub XL*'s participation goals are somewhat more pragmatic. Thus, the business wants to remain in its current location within the new neighbourhood, gain additional space as some of its facilities will need to be deconstructed in favour of new buildings and ultimately to become owners instead of tenants. However, *Vechtclub XL* also sees itself as a valuable institution within the current and future neighbourhood, adding to the character of the area. Thus, their participation in the creation for the new *Merwedekanaalzone* is also grounded in the more altruistic motives. The presence of clearly formulated participation goals is in line with Broekhuizen and Michels (2017) who postulate that citizens are much more likely to participate when they have a clear motivation to do so. In case of *Vechtclub XL*, participating for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* is both directly related to the urgent wish to maintain its current location and to be able to shape its environment in a valuable way (Broekhuizen & Michels, 2017).

Similarly, to other interviewees the employee of *Vechtclub XL* and the owner of the *location marketing organization* experience certain limitations to citizen participation. Thus, they both refer to issues of time investment considering an unsure outcome of participation efforts and the complicated participation process containing many actors but offering no single contact person responsible for an organization's or group's interest. However, the owner of the *location marketing organization* also draws upon the notion of citizen participation and social inclusion. Hereby, she contradicts the idea that citizens participation should be pushed for the sake of societal inclusion and the vitality of democracy (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, Michels & De Graaf, 2010) and emphasizes that participation is tied to much more pragmatic motives such as personal interest, as this quote nicely illustrates:

'Sometimes I find it difficult. Often it is said that the people (of Kanaleneiland) are not really part of society and that they do not feel included and that you need to include them much better. But I also think, if it is not interesting for them, they don't need to participate'.

(Business owner LMO, 2019)

Furthermore, she elaborates that while she personally perceives citizen participation as important, she understands that not everybody, especially those outside the top socio-economic groups has the capacity and willingness to do so (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, Bartoletti & Faccioli, 2016). A final limitation to participation can also be placed by the municipality itself. Thus, during the interview with *Vechtclub XL* it was discovered that while the municipality of Utrecht wants the company's input regarding their own role in the new *Merwedekanaalzone* they are not interested in initiatives that go further than the subjects of tenants and creativity, as the following quote emphasizes:

'We have been sitting at the table from the start. From 2012 onwards, we were looking at what we could add to this place. Since then we have been in a conversation with the municipality and that is what we will keep on doing. I think since 2014 or 2015 we have been making plans regarding what we can add to this area in general and we also wrote an extensive vision which we gave to the municipality. But that one is off the table again.

Because there are the developers who want to do things their way'.

(Employee Vechtclub XL, 2019)

This finding adheres to Dosterij and Peeter's (2011) and De Graaf's (2007) reflection on instrumental participation, meaning that governing bodies often perceive citizen participation as a mere tool in closing the gap between public action and legitimacy. Thus, while the municipality of Utrecht wants to consult businesses such as *Vechtclub XL* to legitimize decisions affecting these businesses, additional input transcending the boundaries of these businesses is not wanted.

Additionally, this quote also shows how citizen participation and participation efforts of other stakeholders are limited by the presence of more powerful actors such as project and land developers. Discussing this notion further, *Vechtclub XL* states that project developers have a lot to say in the creation of the *omgevingsvisie* due to their financial means, which often comes at the expense of other participating groups with additional ideas such as smaller businesses or citizens, as this quote shows:

'We thought that (the construction of houses for creative people) was very interesting, but the municipality was a bit scared by that (our ideas). It really must be how the project developers want it to be because they have invested a lot of money and they know how to build. Thus, that was taken a little bit away from us'.

(Employee Vechtclub XL, 2019)

This quote draws upon the notion of power imbalance in citizen participation, showing that even if participating groups have further ideas and input they want to deliver, the presence and interests of a more affluent actor weights heavier. This finding is a direct contradiction to Arnstein's (1969) fundamental argument for citizen participation, namely that it transfers power from the powerful to the 'have nots' which are thus included into economically affluent society.

Discussing the nature of the participation process for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* itself three important notions come up, which mirror the characteristics discussed in participation narratives two and three, namely communication, transparency and honesty and most importantly, expectation management. Thus, the owner of the *location marketing organization* describes how participating citizens had high expectations regarding the timely and adequate communication of relevant information from the municipality of Utrecht to

them. This need was especially strong when it came to how, when and where citizens could participate, as this quote shows:

‘I think the biggest problem is that people do not know where and where they cannot participate. If people knew what was possible and what not there would be way less anger and offense’

(Business owner LMO, 2019)

Furthermore, this quote nicely illustrates how a lack of communication of information can cause unnecessary anger and frustration within participating citizens, which then also find it hard to trust the authorities they are interacting with. The importance of appropriate communication is also emphasized by the *Vechtclub XL* which is experiencing uncertainties regarding its future as tenants and potential buyers of their current location, as the following quote nicely illustrates:

‘We were supposed to receive a (rental) agreement a couple months ago, in 2018. But that is not how the municipality works. Everything takes a little longer. We don’t know if rent will be more expensive than what we are able to pay. That is where it becomes insecure’.

(Employee Vechtclub XL, 2019)

This quote also draws upon the notions of honesty and transparency, honesty regarding the duration of the participation process and transparency regarding the outcome participating actors can expect from the municipality of Utrecht. This is also emphasized by the owner of the *location marketing organization*, stating that there must be honesty when continuing the conversation with citizens, especially when the municipality repeatedly asks citizens for their input. Finally, the notion of expectation management, which also has been greatly addressed in participation narratives two and three above, is nicely illustrated by the following quote:

‘You really need to be honest regarding expectations and we really have troubles with that sometimes. There must be a differentiation between what has been decided and what is still open for decision and participation’.

(Business owner LMO, 2019)

Here two things can be observed, first, that the expectation management as executed by the municipality of Utrecht is perceived as inadequate and second, the necessity for participating

citizens to know what they can expect in terms of outcome in exchange for their participation efforts. This finding contradicts Kweit and Kweit (2007) who state that citizens value the ability to present their views and participate more than they value specific policy outcomes. It is also not in line with the notion that citizen participation generally improves public support for a policy and decreases resistance (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004 & De Graaf, 2009). Finally, both interviewees perceive citizen participation as important and see great chances in it, however, it is also emphasized that listening to citizens and taking them and their ideas seriously is even more meaningful.

Overall, this paragraph once again emphasizes the importance of communication, transparency and honesty and expectation management when it comes to facilitating citizen participation as a municipality. These findings reflect results as presented earlier in participation narratives two and three and supports the statement that these three notions are indeed very meaningful to citizen participation. Furthermore, this paragraph shows the gravity of power imbalances when it comes to citizen participation. Even small businesses that have been on location for a while and that have been included in the participation process early onwards suffer from the presence of a financially more affluent actor which has its own participation goals. Thus, additional participation efforts are restricted by a hierarchy of actors in the participation game which is based on money.

When discussing the notion of public support for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* as such and for the policy-making process it becomes clear that, similarly to interviewed citizens and elected/non-elected officials of the municipality of Utrecht, the overall policy outcome in shape of a new residential area is met with positive support. However, while citizens and Council members are predominantly supportive of the creation of new homes considering Utrecht's housing shortage, *Vechtclub XL* expects the new *Merwedekanaalzone* to have a positive effect on its business, as new neighbours could mean new clients for the co-working space and new visitors for their tenants, namely the café, restaurant and the brew pub. This feeling is nicely illustrated by the quote below and falls in line with De Graaf (2007), who postulated that public support for a policy (outcome) might also be related to third, external factors such as personal benefit and not to citizen participation:

‘There are not that many people living in this area. Thus, for us it is great that construction is coming’

(Employee Vechtclub XL, 2019)

As mentioned above, *Vechtclub XL* also pursues the altruistic motive of creating and adding value to the neighbourhood, a sentiment that is highlighted by the following quote below:

‘We really like to be a part of what is supposed to come here. We think that we can really think along for the vision of the future area and we think that it is valuable if we stay here’

(Employee Vechtclub XL, 2019)

Thus, as the employee states during the interview, there is hope that the *Vechtclub XL* will become a meeting and interaction point of new neighbours and creative people. When being asked how *Vechtclub XL* perceives public support among citizens living in the neighbouring areas of *Rivierenwijk*, *Transwijk* and the *Merwedekanaal* the interviewee, similarly to interviewed Council members, finds it difficult to make a statement, calling the overall notion of public support complicated.

Correspondingly to interviewed citizens and Council members, the policy-making process and participation trajectory as set up by the municipality of Utrecht are less favourably perceived. This is due to two arguments. First, as can be observed with participating citizens and Council members, the participation process as such is complex, containing multiple actors and an unclear timeline. Furthermore, unclear expectations regarding (to be expected) participation outcomes results in what is called ‘participation fatigue’, which has already been described above in participation narrative three (Cornwall, 2008). The concept of ‘participation fatigue’ is nicely illustrated by a quote taken from the employee of *Vechtclub XL*:

‘I am (job title) and my predecessor also discussed a lot together with the municipality and every time plans were made, and people said ‘Oh we like this a lot’ but in the end none of that (input) can be found back and it simply costs time. He sat in a lot of project groups, was very invested in it. (.). And the result for now is that we are still included into the development plans. If you do it as the municipality does, things take a lot of time’.

(Employee Vechtclub XL, 2012)

This quote shows how the participation process as such can result in frustrations and disappointed expectations as business and citizens alike invest time and effort into delivering input which is ultimately (from their point of view) not included into the development plans, which is in line with Cornwall (2008) and Michels and De Graaf (2010).

Another source of negative support for the policy-making process and how participation is facilitated by the municipality of Utrecht is its adverse effect business as such, as nicely expressed by the employee of *Vechtclub XL* who is waiting on the announced new rental contract form their building:

‘I also know that this is a lot of stress for our tenants. Every time I say yes, the new rental contract is coming soon, and it is really annoying to do that. People are also leaving because of that. What we want from them is to be taken seriously and that they say okay, a new rental contract for one year is coming now. But then they say ‘Oh we still need to do this or that’.
(Employee Vechtclub XL, 2019)

This quote nicely highlights how a lengthy participation process with uncertain outcomes does not only have a negative effect on public support for the policy-making process in general but also indirectly affects businesses’ own clients and commercial interests in a negative manor. Consequently, this can cause additional negative support among participating parties.

Overall, this participation narrative shows that for businesses, as for participating citizens, participation for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* comes at the price of investing time and effort during a lengthy, complicated policy-making process containing multiple actors and no clear outcome. While both *Vechtclub XL* and the head of the *location marketing organization* clearly exhibit positive support for the construction of a new residential area, especially considering new clients and customers coming from the new neighbourhood, they express negative support for the policy-making process and for the participation trajectory as such. Like participating citizens, interviewees reflect on the notions of clear and direct communication of information, transparency and honesty regarding what has been decided already and what is still open for debate and the management of expectations regarding potential policy outcome. Furthermore, this narrative shines a light on how participating companies and their own business cases suffer from losing clients due to uncertain outcomes,

which makes these actors perceive both the policy-making process and the participation trajectory less favourable. Another aspect highlighted in this participation narrative is the imbalance of power between participating actors. Thus, even though *Vechtclub XL* is a well-going business and a local institution in the area, purposefully striving to add value to its neighbourhood, interests and ideas of more financially affluent stakeholder seem to weigh heavier when it comes to the creation of the *omgevingsvisie* for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. This gives rise to the question where in the ‘hierarchy of power’ ordinary citizens such as those who have been interviewed for this master thesis can be located? How does the absence of money influence their chances on achieving the outcome they desire? Finally, it is yet again stated how difficult it is to make assumptions about public support for the *Merwedekanaalzone*, both for the new neighbourhood as such and for the way in which it is currently created.

4.2 Analysis

In this second section of Chapter 4. Findings and Analysis, I provide the reader with an analysis of my findings presented in form of four participation narratives. In analysing the four participation narratives I went back to my synthesized literature and the thereof resulting conceptual framework (see Chapter 2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework) Table 3 below presents a concise summary of this analysis, which will be further discussed in the upcoming pages.

Table 3 – Summary Analysis of Findings

	Participation Narrative 1 - Academia	Participation Narrative 2 – Elected/Non-elected Officials	Participation Narrative 3 - Citizens	Participation Narrative 4 - Businesses
Communicating the <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i>	No communication	Informing, neutral, matter-of-fact tone, positive, selling a vision	Raising awareness, informal, passionate language, emphasis on concerns & changes to come	Highlighting great potential of area & fruitfulness of bottom-up development approaches, Emphasis on important role of local businesses, Direct, informal, easy-to-understand language
Observed type of Citizen Participation	Informing	Consulting	Informing/Consulting	Consulting
Position in Policy Cycle	Solution	Input	Input	Input
Observed type of Public Support (outcome/process)	Positive for (expected) outcome Positive for process	Dispersed for both (expected) outcome & process, but very difficult to establish	Negative for process & dispersed for (expected) outcome	Negative for process & positive for (expected) outcome
Observed Relationship between Citizen Participation/Public Support	Proportional for (expected) outcome Proportional for process	Inversely proportional for (expected) outcome Inversely proportional for process	Inversely proportional for (expected) outcome Inversely proportional for process	Proportional for (expected) outcome, but could also not exist Inversely proportional for process

Citizen participation is tokenism

As row three of Table 3 shows the independent variable *citizen participation* is perceived differently within separate participation narratives, ranging from informing to consulting. Looking back at Chapter 2. and Arnstein's (1969) *A Ladder of Citizen Participation* it becomes clear that while perceptions might vary, they always constitute what Arnstein (1969) and other authors (De Graaf, 2007, Cardullo & Kitchin, 2017, Ekman & Amna, 2012) define as tokenism. While informing refers to the (un)solicited communication of facts and information from the administrative authorities to its citizens consulting means that citizens are asked for their opinion and input on a pre-decided policy (De Graaf, 2007, Cardullo & Kitchin, 2017, Ekman & Amna, 2012). However, during both forms of tokenism the administrative authority remains in an advanced power position and is not obliged to include citizen feedback in any form, leaving citizens with little room to influence the policy-making process and its outcome (De Graaf, 2007, Cardullo & Kitchin, 2017, Ekman & Amna, 2012). Thus, even when perceived through different lenses, the participation trajectory as set-up by the municipality constitutes a form of tokenism, which following Arnstein (1969) presents the lowest form of citizen participation.

Delivering input versus being presented with a solution

Row four of Table 3 shows where in the policy cycle (see Chapter 3. Methodology above) citizen participation, in form of either informing or consulting, takes place for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. In three out of four participation narratives citizen participation, as taking place within the participation trajectory designed by the municipality of Utrecht, can be located at the input stage. Remembering Graphic 7 in Chapter 3. delivering input takes place after parties have set the conditions under which participation is happening (Teisman, 2000). While during informing citizens and other actors have no opportunity to deliver input the administration specifically asks for input during consulting (De Graaf, 2007). Examples of citizens delivering input for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* are events such as the *buurt* – or *stadgesprekken* where citizens are asked to give feedback and suggestions on the presented plans. However, as mentioned before, the municipality of Utrecht is under no obligation to include the delivered input into the new *omgevingsvisie* of the *Merwedekanaalzone*.

In the first participation narrative, which is constructed upon the experience of an academic working in an interdisciplinary project team to develop a 3D demonstrator tool to facilitate

citizen participation for the *Merwedekanaalzone*, citizen participation takes place at the solution stage (Teisman, 2000). In tokenism, policy problems and solutions are (mostly) pre-defined by the administration and presented to the participating citizens (De Graaf, 2007). In participation narrative one participating citizens are presented with a 3D simulation of the future *Merwedekanaalzone* during one of the information evenings hosted by the municipality of Utrecht. Thus, they are presented with a solution, a vision of the finished *Merwedekanaalzone* upon which they can comment and pose questions to the presenting administration.

Trying to assess public support

When looking at row five it becomes clear, that in almost all participation narratives the nature of public support is difficult to assess. The same holds true for assessing public support based on document analysis. Looking back at Table 2 of Chapter 3. public support has been operationalized as the combination of citizen's judgment or attitude towards the *Merwedekanaalzone* and their subsequent actions (De Graaf, 2007). Hereby, a distinction is made between support for the (policy-making) process and the policy outcome or result of said process. Consequently, public support can either be positive, exhibited by favourable attitudes and actions towards the *Merwedekanaalzone* or negative, shown through critical statements or acts of protest (De Graaf, 2007).

Examining the participation narratives, it becomes clear that public support for the policy-making process as set-up by the municipality of Utrecht is mostly dispersed, meaning that there is both positive and negative support. However, here it is important to note that said process is perceived negatively by participating citizens themselves, as can be seen in participation narrative three. Here, negative support is likely to be related to the negative perception of the participation trajectory set up by the administration. Looking at public support for the expected outcome, i.e. the *Merwedekanaalzone*, a similar dispersion can be observed. While all interviewees, irrespective from which group, agreed that the construction of a new residential area is a positive development considering Utrecht's housing shortage, support for other measurements such as the exact number of apartment units or the construction of new bridges varied extremely.

However, most notable is the fact that all interviewees found it very difficult, if not impossible to make assumptions about the general distribution and type of support among

Utrecht's citizenry. Thus, interviewed Council members encounter many different attitudes and opinions about both the policy-making process and the *Merwedekanaalzone* as such during their contact with citizens. While the nature of support among members of *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* and the *SUWO* can be more clearly identified interviewees find it hard to make statements about overall public support in their neighbourhood. This is because many people do not seem to be properly informed about the *Merwedekanaalzone* or do not know about the project at all.

The only participation narrative where public support for both the process and the outcome is clearly positive is narrative one. According to the interviewed researcher present citizens were very impressed by the presented vision of the *Merwedekanaalzone* through the 3D simulation tool. They were happy to give feedback to the municipality after the presentation. However, according to the interviewee, this information event had the goal of selling a certain, pre-defined vision of the *Merwedekanaalzone* to the citizens and not to facilitate real citizen participation.

The relationship between citizen participation and public support

The final row of Table 3 shows the relationship between the independent variable citizen participation and the dependent variable public support as inferred from document analysis and four participation narratives. Hereby, the researcher revisited her theoretical expectations for said relationship, which can be found in Chapter 2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework. In literature three theoretical expectations can be found for the relationship between citizen participation and public administration.

First, citizen participation is expected to have a positive effect (proportional relationship) on public support, both for the outcome and for the policy-making process (Teisman, 2000, Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, Kweit & Kweit, 2007). Second, citizen participation is expected to have a negative effect (inversely proportional relationship) on public support. This expectation is grounded in the notion that higher levels of citizen participation not only complicate the policy making process but also lead to dissatisfaction with the resulting outcome, as participating citizens expect to see certain results in return for their participation efforts (Van der Bol & Van der Arend, 2007, Michels & De Graaf, 2010). Third, it is expected that citizen participation has no effect on public support and that other, external factors influence public support for a policy's process and outcome among the local citizenry instead (Fung, 2006).

Row six of Table 3 above shows that most participation narratives (two to four) depict the relationship between citizen participation and public support as inversely proportionate, meaning that (a higher level of) citizen participation has a negative effect upon overall public support. However, this finding needs to be further dissected.

In participation narrative two for example, interviewed Council members discuss the nature of the participation process, containing multiple actors in multiple institutions, making it difficult for citizens to find out whom to address for what and at which point in time. Furthermore, the Council members elaborate on expectation management, stating that while they try to be honest with citizens in which points they agree with them or not, the municipality of Utrecht has missed the chance to clearly communicate to citizens where the limits of their participation efforts are located. Thus, while citizens can participate for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* (in form of delivering input/consulting) public support for the policy-making process overall is negative due to the complexity and longevity of the process and overall poor expectation management. This finding ties in with De Graaf (2007).

Regarding public support for the (expected) outcome Council members note that measuring overall public support for the *Merwedekanaalzone* as currently presented by the municipality of Utrecht is very difficult, if not impossible. Here interviewees elaborate on two arguments. First, when interacting with citizens during events such as the *buurtgesprekken* Council members are confronted with many, sometimes opposing views, feedback and expression of support for the *Merwedekanaalzone* and its plans (or elements of it). That makes it difficult for Council members to develop a general idea of the nature and location of public support. Second, outside of public participation events Council members predominantly interact with citizens that are very critical of the proposed plans for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. As this research shows, public support for both the policy process and the expected outcome tends to be more negative among this group. Again, as described in participation narrative two above, this ties in with the literature (Broekhuizen & Michels, 2007, Michels & De Graaf, 2010, De Graaf, 2007).

In participation narrative three actively participating citizens from two initiative groups elaborate on their motivation to participate for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone*, their perception of the participation process and expectations regarding the *Merwedekanaalzone* as it is presented now by the municipality of Utrecht. Hereby, interviewees clearly state that they

are not content with the participation trajectory as set up by the municipality of Utrecht. This discontent leads to clear expressions of negative support for the overall policy-making process, as citizens feel that they have been included too late, not enough and that their participation efforts and suggestions are not taken seriously. Thus, an inversely proportionate relationship can be observed. When looking at public support for the *Merwedekanaalzone* considering citizen participation it becomes clear that participating citizens exhibit predominantly negative support, that is for elements they have been critically of all along. While all interviewed citizens state that they clearly support the construction of a new residential area, interviewees question that their participation effort will change the proposed plans for the *Merwedekanaalzone* in their interest. Experiencing a difficult working relationship with the municipality of Utrecht participating citizens seem to be somewhat disheartened about the fruitfulness of their labour. Again, these findings tie in with the literature (De Graaf, 2007, Van der Bol & Van der Arend, 2007, Michels & De Graaf, 2010, Cornwall, 2008).

In participation narrative four, constructed from the perspective of two local, participating businesses, the relationship between citizen participation and support for the policy outcome cannot unambiguously be entangled. *Vechtclub XL* for example sees itself as part of the area's character, being established in an historical factory building. From an early point onwards, the company has been consulted by the municipality regarding its role in the current and new neighbourhood. *Vechtclub XL* has the goal to not only become a permanent fixture in the new *Merwedekanaalzone* but also to continue to add value to the area as a meeting point for neighbours and creative thinkers. To that end, the company is participating in the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* and is convinced that its participation effort will be fruitful in the end and that 'something beautiful' can be created together with the municipality of Utrecht. On the other hand, *Vechtclub XL* also expects to directly benefit from the creation of a new residential area around its space, perceiving its new neighbours as potential clients. Thus, the relationship between citizen participation and public support for the *Merwedekanaalzone* could also be non-existent, as *Vechtclub XL* is supportive of the policy due to expected personal benefits in form of increased revenue. Looking at the interview conducted with one of its employees, both factors, personal benefit and the wish to positively shape the new neighbourhood seem to play a role in creating positive support for the policy outcome.

When looking at public support for the policy-making process and for the participation trajectory as set-up by the municipality of Utrecht an inversely proportionate relationship can be observed between citizen participation and said dependent variable. Both the *location marketing organization* and *Vechtclub XL* express negative support for the policy-making process and for the participation trajectory. In case of the *location marketing organization*, that negative support is also expressed on behalf of participating citizens, the interviewee has worked with during her project. For reasons like those discussed in participation narratives two and three, both interviewees declare that they miss clear and open communication of information and the honest management of expectations regarding what is and what is not possible for them in the participation process. Both express frustrations regarding the long and complex participation process in which they often need to wait for important next steps. Furthermore, the notion of not being taken seriously, of participating without seeing the delivered input included into plan-making is causing participation fatigue and overall leads to negative support for the policy-making process.

Standing out from the other participation narratives is participation narrative one, in which a proportional relationship can be observed between citizen participation and public support. In this narrative citizen participation took place in form of an information event during which citizens were presented with a vision of the proposed *Merwedekanaalzone*. To that end, the municipality of Utrecht used a 3D demonstrator tool. As the interviewee remarked, this tool was used with the purpose of 'selling' a pre-defined vision of the new residential area to the citizens and not to facilitate 'proper' citizen participation. According to the interviewee this strategy worked, as participating citizens expressed their approval and excitement about the presented vision and about the 3D tool. Thus, citizen participation as executed in this participation narrative, has a positive effect on overall public support, both for the process and the outcome.

In this chapter, Chapter 4. Findings and Analysis, I presented and analysed the results of my multi-source, multi-method data collection process. In the following chapter, Chapter 5. Discussion, I will provide answers to research questions guiding this master thesis project, based on both the literature and the empirical findings presented here.

5. Discussion

In Chapter 4. above I analysed the findings of my field research, presented in the form of four participation narratives. The purpose of Chapter 5. lies in answering (and critically discussing said answers) the overarching research question and its sub-questions based on both the literature synthesized in Chapter 2. and the empirical data collected during this research project. Furthermore, I will discuss potential contributions of my field research and critically reflect upon my research process.

5.1 Answering the research questions(s)

To provide a cohesive answer to the overarching research question, namely *Does citizen participation increase public support for a policy that contains a negative externality for said citizenry?* four sub-questions have been formulated, each addressing another aspect of the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable. These sub-questions are answered now.

Sub-question one concerns the type of citizen participation that is observed by the participating groups interviewed during this thesis project and reads as follows, *What type of citizen participation is observed by participating groups?* When looking at Table 3 of Chapter 4. above it becomes apparent that citizen participation in the case of the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* constitutes a form of tokenism, which constitutes the lowest form of citizen participation. (Arnstein, 1969, De Graaf 2007, Cardullo & Kitchin, 2017, Ekman & Amna, 2012). Interestingly, the participation narratives presented in Chapter 4. above show, that all participating groups agree on citizen participation in case of the *Merwedekanaalzone* constitutes a form of tokenism even though they evaluate that fact differently.

Sub-question two asked about where in the policy cycle citizen participation for the *Merwedekanaalzone* can be placed and was formulated as follows, *Where in the policy cycle do participating groups place citizen participation?* Based on Table 3 in Chapter 4. above, it can be stated that citizen participation in form of tokenism can be located at the input stage (see Graphic 7. In Chapter 3 above) of the policy cycle (Teisman, 2000, De Graaf, 2007). Given the fact that the municipality of Utrecht is currently developing the *omgevingsvisie* for the *Merwedekanaalzone* it is not surprising that citizen feedback is collected at the input stage, after parties have set the conditions under which participation is taking place (Teisman, 2000). Participation narrative three presents an interesting ‘outlier’ as citizens were presented with a ‘finished’ vision of the future *Merwedekanaalzone* during this participation event,

causing the researcher to locate it at the 'solution stage' of the policy cycle (Teisman, 2000, De Graaf, 2007). This gives rise to the question if the location of citizen participation in the policy cycle depends more on the participation event than on the overall time line of the policy-making process?

Sub-question three elaborates on the dependent variable public support by asking *Which type of public support is observed by participating groups?* When looking at public support for the policy-outcome the participation narratives show that while all participating groups express positive support for the construction of a new residential area in Utrecht support becomes very dispersed when it comes to other elements of this complex policy. This gives cause to the question if overall public support for a policy outcome can be measured when the policy itself is very complex and contains many elements for which participating citizens can express positive or negative support?

Regarding public support for the policy-making process it is even more difficult to arrive at one general statement. However, based on Table 3 presented above in Chapter 4., public support for the policy-making process as observed by participating groups is mostly negative. Overall, it can be stated, that public support for both the policy-making process and the (expected) outcome seems to be dispersed, tending towards being negative among participating citizens and businesses. Measuring public support coherently seems to be impossible given the complexity of both the policy under address and the policy-making process. Assessing public support among the silent majority of non-participating citizens is impossible due to a lack of access.

Sub-question four was posed with the goal of shedding some light on the relationship between citizen participation and public support, asking *What is the relationship between citizen participation and public support as observed by participating groups?* Based on the collected data and the thereof resulting participation narratives there seems to be an inversely proportional relationship between citizen participation and public support for both the policy outcome and the policy-making process. This finding is in line with theoretical expectation two formulated in Chapter 2. above (De Graaf, 2007) Albeit exceptions can be found in participation narratives one (proportional for both process and outcome) and four (proportional for outcome). The presence of a negative externality, in this case citizens' fear that the quality of life within their own neighbourhood will decrease, serves as a trigger point to active citizen participation. It keeps citizens motivated during the participation process and

helps to define a clear participation goal (Broekhuizen & Michels, 2007). Thus, in case of the *Merwedekanaalzone* in Utrecht citizen participation seems to have a negative effect on overall public support.

Having provided detailed responses to the four sub-questions an answer to the overarching research question, namely *Does citizen participation increase public support for a policy that contains a negative externality for said citizenry?* can now be granted. In the case of the *Merwedekanaalzone* citizen participation, as currently taking place within the participation trajectory set up by the municipality of Utrecht, does not increase public support but has a negative effect on both public support for the policy-making process and for the expected outcome. The presence of a negative externality, here the fear that the construction of the *Merwedekanaalzone* could lead to an abatement of the quality of life within the surrounding neighbourhoods, serves as a trigger point for citizen participation, supports the formulation of a clear participation goal and is a constant motivator (Broekhuizen & Michels, 2007). Thus, citizen participation does not seem to increase public support a policy that contains a negative externality for said citizenry.

5.2 Contributions

In this section of Chapter 5. Discussion I elaborate on what this research project contributes to the field of public administration, theoretically, empirically and practically.

A theoretical contribution can be defined as the extent to which the conducted research contributes to overall scientific knowledge (Presthus & Munkvold, 2016). In case of this qualitative, single-case study the conceptual framework provides a description of three possible relationship(s) between citizen participation and public support (see Chapter 2. Conceptual Framework). This research has tested all and ultimately confirmed one of the postulated theoretical relationships between both variables, namely that there is (in case of the *Merwedekanaalzone*) an inversely proportional relationship between citizen participation and public support. However, this master thesis challenges one of the underlying assumptions made by Arnstein (1969) (see Chapter 2. above) stating that citizen participation, especially in its higher forms is delegating power from the authorities to 'have-nots', meaning citizens of lower socio-economic groups. Furthermore, it implies that the citizens having the opportunity to participate for the creation of policies such as the *Merwedekanaalzone* are far from being 'have-nots'. Thus, the theoretical contribution of this master thesis lies in challenging the overall assumption that citizen participation relocates power to those who really have none, hereby improving democracy.

An empirical contribution constitutes a change or challenge to our collective knowledge or our confidence in one or more important causal relationships and processes (Lynn, 2017). This study has shown that, in the case of complex policies containing multiple actors, stakeholders and an equally convoluted policy-making process there seems to be an inversely proportionate and thus negative relationship between citizen participation and public support for both the policy-making process and the expected outcome (see Chapter 4. Findings and Analysis above). However, the most notable empirical contribution lies in uncovering how difficult it is to assess the true size and distribution of public support for such a policy among participating citizens, let alone among the general population that is not participating. The latter might not participate because they perceive the expected policy outcome favourably or because they are unaware of what is happening.

When thinking about the practical contributions of this research project, one should consider its relevance in addressing practical problems. This is often called the ‘rigor versus relevance gap’ or should a researcher base his or her contributions on past research or on practical problems (Nicholson et al., 2018)? By conducting a single case study on the relationship between citizen participation and public support for the local case of the *Merwedekanaalzone* here in Utrecht I clearly opted for the latter. Consequently, the most important practical contribution of this field research lies in showing how the (negative) evaluation of the participation trajectory as set up by the municipality of Utrecht has a negative effect on the perception of the overall policy-making process and decreases positive expectations regarding the policy outcome. Thus, this field research highlights the importance of setting up a participation trajectory that adequately addresses the needs of participating citizens as much as possible (see Chapter 4. Findings and Analysis above).

5.3 Reflections

In this section I want to critically reflect upon my research process. To that end, I will discuss its strengths and limitations, examine its validity and reliability and thoroughly examine my research ethics. Starting with the strengths, it can be stated that the conducted research scores high on practical relevance as it is addressing the relationship between citizen participation and public support for the local case of the *Merwedekanaalzone* here in Utrecht. Created insights are practicable to all groups that participated in the research and to other cities currently developing neighbourhoods like the *Merwedekanaalzone*. It sheds light on the complexity of said relationship and the importance of a participation trajectory that is

perceived favourably by participating citizens and other parties. Furthermore, the findings of this thesis serve as a basis for practical recommendations to all interviewed groups. The practical relevance of this field research was very important to me and I am happy that executing this master thesis was met with positive support by participating interviewees.

Another strength of this research lies in its high measurement and internal validity. Thus, measurement validity was ensured by triangulation, using multiple methods and sources of data collection. Internal validity was achieved by interviewing a total of 12 respondents stemming from different participating groups. Here, I was able to triangulate the accounts I received from each participant, resulting in the construction of four participation narratives that shed light on the relationship between citizen participation and public support through different lenses. Consequently, I was able to check for recurring and odd elements, using thick description to convey my findings. Interviews were conducted in Dutch, allowing the respondents to use their own words and expressions in their native language. This helped me to establish a good rapport between me and my interviewees, reducing interviewer bias. High ethical standards were upheld by providing the interviewees with a consent form, informing them about the privacy and storage of their data. To ensure participant privacy I took care to either not report or enclose participants' names, ages, genders and specific job descriptions or party memberships.

Limitations to this field research can be found in its narrow reliability. As described in Chapter 3. Methodology above, repeatedly measuring a social phenomenon using the same instruments does not necessarily lead to the same outcomes (Boeijs, 2010). That is because these phenomena aren't static but subject to constant change. This research project was conducted over the course of five months in spring/early summer 2019. The *Merwedekanaalzone* will be planned and constructed over the course of 15 years. Naturally, the findings of this research only offer a one-time snapshot of the relationship between citizen participation and public support for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone*. Interviewing the same respondents in a year or two from now, using the same interview questions could easily lead to the construction of different participation narratives, allowing for new conclusions to be drawn.

Another limitation to this field research lies in the number and characteristics of interviewed participants. I conducted a total of 12 interviews with respondents from different participating groups. While this allowed me to construct participation narratives that show the relationship between the intended and dependent variable through different lenses a higher number of interviews or the inclusion of additional groups, for example developers could have revealed additional insights. Adding to that, interviewees presented a very homogenous group. All of them were of Dutch descent, highly educated, employed and (mostly) house owners. A more heterogenous group including respondents with a non-Dutch background or without a university degree could have added a 'less privileged' perspective onto citizen participation and public support for the *Merwedekanaalzone*. This is significant given one of the most fundamental assumptions about citizen participation, namely the transfer of power from power holders to less socio-economically well-off citizens (Arnstein, 1969).

Moreover, I must address potential biases attached to my participation narratives. As this research has shown, citizen participation is triggered by strong, personal motives, in this case citizens being afraid that the construction of the *Merwedekanaalzone* will decrease the quality of life within their own neighbourhoods. Consequently, participating citizens are much more critical towards the policy than non-participating citizens who might be positively supportive of the *Merwedekanaalzone*. Thus, the generated participation narratives probably present a negatively biased relationship between the independent and dependent variable. Due to a lack of access, I was unable to obtain interviews with non-participating citizens, which makes it very hard to estimate what public support looks like among many inactive citizens.

Finally, when writing Chapter 4. Findings and Analysis quotes were taken from the transcribed interviews and translated from Dutch to English. With Dutch being my third language, I might have made small translation mistakes. However, I tried to minimize these mistakes by using a translation software or asking my Dutch friends for advice when in doubt. To increase transparency regarding the translation of the selected quotes, I presented both the original and the translated version in the appendix of this master thesis (see Chapter 8. Appendix, Section 8.2, Table 6).

6. Conclusion

This chapter constitutes the final episode of this master thesis research project on the relationship between citizen participation and public support for a policy constituting a negative externality for said citizenry. To entangle this relationship, I executed a single case study on citizen participation and public support for the development of an urban construction policy. The case under address was the *Merwedekanaalzone* in Utrecht. A sustainable, inner-city, high-density and (almost) car-free neighbourhood, standing exemplary for several similar urban construction policies that try to address the problems of housing shortage and climate change all over Europe.

In Chapter 1. I introduced the reader to my topic, elaborated on my research puzzle and presented my research question. Chapter 2. presented a conceptual framework based on the synthesis of relevant literature, introducing the reader to the concepts of citizen participation and public support and potential relationships between these variables. These variables were conceptualized in Chapter 3. where I informed the reader about my research design and process. Chapter 4. above presented the findings of my three-fold data collection process in shape of four participation narratives. I analysed these narratives using my conceptual framework from Chapter 2. above. The purpose of Chapter 5. was to answer and critically discuss the overarching research question and its sub-questions based on both the literature synthesized in Chapter 2. and the empirical data collected during this research project. Furthermore, I elaborated on the contributions of my field work and its potential strengths and limitations. In this chapter, Chapter 6. Conclusion, I want to present the reader with my most important insights gained from this research project, discuss its practical relevance and give some recommendations for further research.

6.1 Key insights

This field research has shown that a sustainable urban construction policy, such as the *Merwedekanaalzone*, can be an opportunity to re-utilize inner city spaces while addressing the problems of housing shortage and considering the future implications of climate change for cities such as Utrecht. Hereby, the policy's underlying concepts, i.e. sustainability, multi-purpose, green and within city limits are met with general support among citizens.

However, that support is diminishing as soon as people feel, and hereby the emphasize is on feel and not 'know', that life within their own neighbourhood might change adversely.

Feeling disadvantaged by the construction of this new neighbourhood triggers a strong emotional response causing citizens to participate in the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone*, in hopes of influencing the development plans according to their (perceived) needs. Hereby, participating citizens are convinced that they are their neighbourhood's advocate. They know what is best for them and their neighbours. Consequently, my field research challenges one of the most important underlying rationales of citizen participation: That the transfer of decision-making power from the administration to participating citizens improves democracy, includes disadvantaged citizens into greater, more affluent society and in the end leads to 'better policies' that are supported by the general population. As my field research has shown, participating citizens do not democratically represent their neighbourhood (let alone the greater population) as they select themselves and have never been chosen by their fellow citizens to speak for their community, they are certainly not disadvantaged members of society and while support among participating citizens and businesses decreased it certainly cannot be measured among the greater population of a city.

Finally, my field research reveals the greater dilemma behind citizen participation, considering the greater good versus the interest of a (group of) individual people. In the case of the *Merwedekanaalzone* the greater good constitutes the provision of much needed housing in the fastest growing city of the Netherlands. The interest of neighbourhood communities such as *Rivierenwijk* or the *Merwedekanaal*, to maintain the high quality of life within their neighbourhood, is valid and should be taken seriously by the municipality of Utrecht when developing the *Merwedekanaalzone*. However, the question remains to which extent this dilemma can be solved and more importantly, if setting up a citizen participation trajectory is the proper tool to solve it? In case of my field research on the *Merwedekanaalzone*, I doubt that citizen participation is the most suitable tool in finding a balance between the greater good and providing citizens with the opportunity to realize their own interests.

6.2 Practical relevance of this field research

Discussing the practical relevance of my field work leads me back to the question, to which extent my research questions addresses problems found, or potentially founded in practice. Furthermore, I need to debate what my findings mean in practice. How can they be useful outside of academia and in case of this master thesis, how are they relevant for the municipality of Utrecht and other stakeholders participating for the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone*? Taking on a wider perspective, I must also ask myself how my findings

could be useful for projects like that of the *Merwedekanaalzone*, or to cities facing the same problems as Utrecht?

For the elected and un-elected officials of the municipality of Utrecht who are concerned with the creation of the *Merwedekanaalzone* the practical relevance of my field research lies in the recognition of the crucial role of the participation trajectory in creating public support for both the project and the policy-making process. Instead of perceiving the participation trajectory as a tool to create legitimacy for the actions undertaken for the *Merwedekanaalzone* it should be understood as valuable. Officials are advised to enhance the value of the current participation trajectory by more carefully managing the expectations of citizens and other participating actors and by practicing open, direct and timely communication of relevant information. Furthermore, it is important to report back to citizens if their input and feedback has been considered and if not, why so. This would help citizens to feel taken seriously and build a more trusting relationship to the municipality of Utrecht and the Council.

Participating citizens and businesses could find my field research interesting because it shows citizen participation and public support in case of the *Merwedekanaalzone* from multiple perspectives, giving them an insight on how for example Council members perceive their actions, arguments and working relationship. Practical conclusion could be drawn in the direction of recognizing the privilege that many participating citizens are already experiencing, having lived in Utrecht for many years with most of them owning their house or apartment. Hereby, my field research could help them to 'see the bigger picture', understanding the needs of those who cannot yet share this privilege. Finally, my research shows that their voices are heard and that the needs of their community are recognized by both elected and un-elected officials of the municipality of Utrecht. However, a gap between recognition and resulting action remains.

Other cities that are facing similar problems and/or that are currently planning neighbourhoods alike to the *Merwedekanaalzone* could benefit from my field research by designing and setting up a more valuable participation trajectory together with citizens and other actors they want to participate with. It could help them to recognize the meaning and impact of the participation trajectory when it comes to public support. Furthermore, these cities could think of alternative forms to classical participation events as this research project has shown that this is not the most ideal platform. Hereby, digital forms of participation could

be considered to reach a wider spectrum of citizens, for example including younger citizens, citizens that do not have the time to be physically present or who do not feel comfortable interacting in front of an audience. These measurements could help to arrive at a more diverse group of participating citizens, reflecting the opinions, needs and wishes of the overall population more accurately.

6.3 Recommendations for further research

Based on the findings of my field research I want to give three recommendations for further research. First, public administration scholars are advised to revisit and closely examine the assumptions underlying citizen participation. As my research has shown, citizen participation, even in the shape of tokenism, does provide citizens with a platform to deliver input and, to a small extent, shape the policy-making process and outcome. However, the assumption that citizen participation facilitates the transfer of power or influence from powerholders to 'have-nots', or social-economically disadvantaged citizens seems to be questionable. Participating citizens and other actors in this research are far from being 'have-nots'. Second, my research has shown the great complexity of the relationship between citizen participation and public support, especially when a policy, such as the *Merwedekanaalzone*, contains multiple elements upon which citizens and other actors can express positive or negative support. Consequently, examining how the characteristics of the policy affect citizen's perception of the policy-making process and its outcome could help to further entangle and pinpoint this relationship. Finally, conducting research into the application and effect of digital forms of participation could help to find out whether these new platforms are useful in reaching a wider, more heterogeneous group of citizens. This research could help to facilitate the inclusion of a wider spectrum of society into participation trajectories, hopefully arriving at more nuanced policy outcomes.

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8. Appendix

The purpose of this chapter is to present a collection of supplementary materials that I used to develop my written work, and which therefore could be of interest to the reader. This appendix is divided into six sections. The first section presents additional tables containing information related to my participation narratives in Chapter 4. Findings and Analysis. The second section contains an extensive table with the quotes that can be found in Chapter 4. above and their Dutch original from the interview transcripts. Section three provides the reader with a table about interview descriptives i.e. the date of the interview, the interviewed organization, some information about the interviewee and the code that I developed per interviewee to link him or her to their quotes in Chapter 4. Findings and Analysis. Section four shows the reader my basic interview guide, upon which I developed more specific interview questions for each interview. Section five contains one of my interview transcripts, providing the reader with an example of how my interviews unfolded. Finally, the reader can find the original minutes of the *buurtgesprekken* hosted by the municipality of Utrecht in 2018 in the sixth section. These minutes were used for my document analysis and were sent to me by the municipality of Utrecht via email.

8.1 Additional tables

This section of Chapter 8. Appendix contains two tables presenting the results of digital ethnography. Links to the analysed websites and newspaper articles can be found in Chapter 7. References above. Hereby, Table 4 shows the results of digital ethnography conducted on newspaper articles containing information about the *Merwedekanaalzone*. Table 5 presents the reader with information that was retrieved from respective organization's websites.

Table 4 – Results Digital Ethnography Newspaper Articles on the *Merwedekanaalzone*

	Algemeen Dagblad	StadsPodium
What	Article 'The Merwedekanaalzone, will all ambitions be realized?' (published online 14.4.18)	Article 'Update on the Merwedekanaalzone: Good neighbours or additional worries?' (published online 19.01.19)
Most important claims	Questions realism of current development plans for the <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i> Critical towards relationship between investors and municipality of Utrecht, suspected 'imbalance of power' Summarises fears of citizens in <i>Rivierenwijk</i>	There are still a lot of subjects that worry citizens, i.e. number of bridges and apartment units, impact on surrounding areas Summary of fears and wishes of citizens of <i>Rivierenwijk</i> , Interview with a member of <i>Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar</i>
Communication goal	Citizens are wise to remain critical towards the <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i> Danger that the new neighbourhood could fall prey to investors and become 'for profit' instead of 'for the people of Utrecht'	Citizens remain critical and active for the development of the <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i> The municipality of Utrecht has not yet declared how and to which extent citizen input will be included into the development of the <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i>
Positive/negative support	Rather negative	Rather negative
Language	Not quite neutral, critical	Not neutral, basically mirroring the opinion of <i>Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar</i>

Table 5 – Results Digital Ethnography Organization’s Websites

	Gemeente Utrecht	Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar	SUWO	Vechtclub XL	Location Marketing Organization
What	Official website <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i> and official newsletter (nr.10-12)	Official website citizen initiative group	SUWO members publish blog posts about the <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i> on their official website	Official company website	Official company website
Most important claims	<i>Merwedekanaalzone</i> as urban neighbourhood of the future – green, sustainable, human-centred and car free. Neighbourhood for everyone, combining living, working and leisure Answer to housing shortage	Group is in favour of the construction of a residential area but fears for a decline of the quality of life within <i>Rivierenwijk</i> and the <i>Merwedekanaal</i>	Group is in favour of construction of new residential area, but new bridges will break up the <i>Merwedekanaal</i> and force some houseboat owners to leave Decline of quality of life No proof that additional bridges are needed	<i>Vechtclub XL</i> plays an important, role in the area and wants to provide a meeting point for creative people, businesses and old and new neighbours	Creating a vision for the <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i> based on already existing potential of the area and the ideas and needs of its people ‘Together you get the neighbourhood people really want’
Communication goal	Keep citizens of Utrecht updated and informed about the <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i> and its latest developments Links to official reports and the newsletter	Informing other citizens about the (expected) negative consequences of the <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i> Trigger activism – i.e. send email to the Council or become group member	Keep houseboat owners updated regarding the development plans for new bridges	<i>Vechtclub XL</i> wants to actively participate in the creation of the <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i> together with the municipality of Utrecht Wants to become permanent fixture and buy building	Fruitfulness of bottom-up, grass-root initiatives for the development of such areas Citizens/businesses should play a bigger role, take their input as seriously as experts’ numbers and models
Positive/negative support	Positive support	Negative support for the <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i> as it is currently planned by the municipality of Utrecht	Negative support for mobility concept/construction of additional bridges	Positive support	Positive support, but let citizens play and local business play a bigger role in the development of the area
Language	Neutral, informative, matter-of-fact	Emotional language in describing the new neighbourhood Works with several negative assumptions about the impact of the new neighbourhood	Relatively neutral language using rational arguments, i.e. asking for independent assessment of the need for additional bridges	Direct, informal but not emotional	Informal simple, short sentences,

8.2 Original quotes and English translation

Table 6 below presents the quotes that I used in my participation narratives in Chapter 4. Findings and Analysis. As most of the interviews were conducted and transcribed in Dutch I had to translate the original quotes into English. With Dutch being my third and English my second language I have addressed potential translation or misinterpretation errors in Chapter 5. Discussion above. With the goal of being transparent I have decided to present the original quotes together with their translated counterparts in this section of Chapter 8. Appendix.

Table 6 – Original Quotes and English Translation

Interview Nr. / Interviewee Code	Dutch Translation	English Translation
Nr. 9, Council member/coalition	En dan is het aan ons als vertegenwoordigers ook aftewegen wat nu uiteindelijk belangrijker is. Een individueel belang van die eene woonbootbewoner of de belang dat er een paar honderd woningen extra bijkunnen doordat er een brug komt. Dat is echt het klassikale dilemma van een versus een grote belang	As representatives it is on us to decide what is more important in the end. The individual interest of one houseboat owner or being able to build an additional couple of hundred apartments because we can build a new bridge? This is the classical dilemma of (the interest of) one versus the interest of many
Nr. 9, Council member/coalition	De buurtbewoners rond om de nieuwe Merwedekanaalzone vinden vaak dat ze het recht hebben om mee te beslissen en dat vind ik wel problematisch omdat je dan per definitie niet meer het algemeen belang voorop maar die belangen van individuele mensen. En dat is bestwel lastig. Daar moeten wij heel erg oppassen dat wij niet de insiders, dus die mensen die al een huis hebben, die al fijn in de stad wonen, die al Utrechters zijn, die al profiteren van alles wat er zo mooi is in de stad, dat wij die bevoordeelen bijopzicht van mensen die dat nog niet hebben	The inhabitants around the new Merwedekanaalzone think they have a right to co-decide and I find that very problematic because per definition you are then not looking at the greater good or interest anymore but at the interest of individual people. And that is difficult. We need to be really careful and make sure that we do not let the insiders, the people who already have a house in Utrecht, the one who live nicely within the city..(..)..that not they alone do profit from everything that makes this city to beautiful, but that we also look at the people who cannot do that yet

<p>Nr. 7, Council member/opposition</p>	<p>Ik ben zelf bij het laatste buurtgesprek geweest en wat ik echt over kun zeggen is dat het verdeelt ligt. Ik vind het heel moeilijk inteschatten hoe die steun ligt in de stad. Ik hoor altijd heel veel verschillende meningen en ja, ik denk dat dat een beetje 50/50 ligt</p>	<p>I have been to the last neighbourhood talk myself and what I can really say about it is that it is very diverse. I find it very difficult to make estimations about how support for the Merwedekanaalzone is distributed across the city. I always hear different opinions and I think it is a little bit 50/50</p>
<p>Nr. 9, Council member/coalition</p>	<p>Het is heel moeilijk voor ons om een beeld te krijgen hoe veel mensen er nu precies tegen zijn</p>	<p>It is difficult for us to arrive at a realistic picture of how many people are against the Merwedekanaalzone or not</p>
<p>Nr. 6, Member 2</p>	<p>En er waren twee dingetjes die er nu uitsprongen en dat was het enorme aantal woningen die ze willen bouwen en het aantal bruggen die ze daar willen aankoppelen want die hebben voor de woonbootbewoners direct gevolgen. Als er een brug komt waar je woont moet je weg. Dus daar hebben wij de woonbootbewoners opgetrommelt vanwaar weten jullie wat aan de overkant gaat gebeuren? De woonbootbewoners zijn georganiseerd in het SUWO. Maar er zijn veel meer mensen die het er met te maken krijgen. Dus wij hebben met een aantal mensen een bijeenkomst georganiseerd om meer bewoners te betrekken en daar hebben wij ook raadsleden uitgenodigd.</p>	<p>There were two points that triggered things and that was the high number of flats they wanted to build and the number of additional bridges to be constructed, because they have direct consequences for the houseboat owners. If there is a bridge coming you need to leave. Consequently, we drummed up the houseboat owners and asked them if they knew what was happening. The houseboat owners are organized in the SUWO, but we thought there are so many more people that are affected by this. Thus, we organized an event ..(..).. to inform more inhabitants and we also invited Council members to this meeting</p>
<p>Minutes <i>Buurtgesprek</i> Rivierenwijk</p>	<p>Staan belangen eigenaren voorop? Winst maken gronden, wie legt tegenwicht in de schaal? Soort Manhattan terwijl Utrecht juist geliefd om dorps karakter. We willen geen Manhattan aan de Merwede worden</p>	<p>Do the needs of the (house) owners come first? Creating a sort of Manhattan while Utrecht is so beloved for its village character? We do not want to become a Manhattan at the Merwede</p>

Minutes <i>Buurgesprek</i> Rivierenwijk	Belangrijk dat vanuit gemeente wordt gezegd dat wij gesprekspartner zijn; wij willen gehoord worden, staan nog niet eens op de eerste tree van de participatieladder, probereen erop te komen, maar worden iedere keer eraf geschopt	It is important that the municipality says that we are partners in a dialogue, we want to be heard, but we are not yet on the first step of the participation ladder, we try to get on it, but every time we try we are pushed away
Nr. 10, Member 3	Ja, ik vind het soms ook lastig te begrijpen en ik vind ik ben bestwel hoogopgeleid	Sometimes I find it very difficult to understand what is happening and I am considering myself to be highly educated. It is very complex.
Nr. 11, Member 4	Klaar, zij willen een beetje onduidelijk zijn, want daarachter kunnen ze dan een beetje doen waar ze zelf zin in hebben. Maar het is wel heel zichtbaar toch dat we ons niet laten weg sturen. Dat wij behoorlijk zichtbaar zijn en dat zal een beetje de kracht worden en dat zal ook lange adem zijn	Sure, they want to be a little unclear about their processes and in their formulations, so they can hide behind it. But we are not to be sent away
Nr. 8, Member SUWO	Er moet verwachtingsmanagement vanuit de overheid bestaan. Dat is essentiële. En de gemeente weckt er permanent verwachtingen, inclusief aangenomen moeties in de gemeenteraad met een opdracht, he, en dan verwacht je als burger ook dat het bestuur dat uitvoert.	Yes, there needs to be expectation management coming from the government. That is essential. The municipality permanently creates expectations, including adopted motions in the Council together with an assignment. As a citizen you are then also expecting that the administration is acting upon that
Nr. 5, Member 1	Ja zeg het maar gewoon. Ja, dan weet je waar je naartoe bent. Dan kun je boos over worden maar dan weet je het wel	Just say it. Yes, then you know what you are up against. Then you can be angry about it but then you simply know´
Nr. 8, Members SUWO	Puntje bij paaltje, het gebeurt helemaal niets, nada. En dat snap ik echt niet. Als er mensen weg moeten, jullie weten het aantala mag niet naar beneden. Ze zeggen	When push comes to shove nothing is happening. Absolutely nothing. Nada. And I really don´t get that. Well, that is an example of a government that is not trustworthy. If people must

	het word opgelost maar ze doen het gewoon niet	leave in the end, they (the municipality) know that the number (of houseboats) must not go down. They say they are working on a solution, but they don't.
Nr. 11, Member 4	Ze nemen ons niet serieus. Wij vraagen nu sinds twee jaren voor een nulmeting en een leefbaarheidseffectreportage. Vanwegen hoe zit het met die bestaande bruggen, kunnen die niet uitgebreid worden. En ja, als ze ons echt serieus namen dan hadden ze dat twee jaar geleden onderzoekt. Kijk, het is ook niet mooi te zien dat ze mensen aan het uitkopen zijn maar ze zeggen nog steds `oh wij weten niet of en waar bruggen zullen komen´	They do not take us seriously. We have been asking for a baseline measurement on how the new neighbourhood will affect the quality of life in our neighbourhood for two years now. For research on already existing bridge and if they couldn't be extended instead of building new ones. And if they really took us seriously, they would have done that by now. Look, it is not nice to see that they are buying people out, and then they still pretend they wouldn't know yet if and where the new bridges will be build
Nr. 8, Member SUWO	En ook van die participatietraject, mijn eerste vraag was ook, want jij hebt zo'n participatieladder, waar zitten wij, op de onderste volgens mij. Ik mag tegen jullie aanpraaten. Dus het verwachtingsmanagement van de gemeente is ook echt dramatisch	And also this participation trajectory. My first question was, because we have this participation ladder, where do we sit there? In my opinion on the lowest rung. I may talk to you (the municipality). Thus, the municipality's expectation management is really a drama
Nr. 10, Member 3	En ja, het gaat altijd zo, wij draagen iets aan en de gemeente wandelt vroelijk met weg en het gebeurt niets. Jullie denken nog heel erg vanuit deze wijk (Merwedekanaalzone) en niet vanuit onze wijk en daar ligt precies het problem. Dat is de crux	It is like that the whole time. We propose something and the municipality takes notice, but then nothing happens with that idea..(..).They really think from the perspective of the new neighbourhood and not from the perspective of ours and that is the problem. That is the crux
Nr. 4 Business owner LMO	Soms vind ik het lastig. Het word vaak gezegd `oh die zijn niet mee in de	Sometimes I find it difficult. Often it is said that the people (of Kanaleneiland)

	samenleving en voelen zich op afstand en je moet ze beter betrekken. Maar ik denk ook, als het niet interessant voor hun is moeten ze ook niet mee doen	are not really part of society and that they do not feel included and that you need to include them much better. But I also think, if it is not interesting for them, they don't need to participate
Nr. 12, Employee Vechtclub XL	Eigenlijk zatten wij van begin af aan de tafel. Vanaf 2012 hebben wij begonnen om even te kijken wat wij aan toevoegen kunnen. En ja, sinds dit moment zijn wij in het gesprek met de gemeente en wij blijven ook met de gemeente in het gesprek daarover. Ik denk sinds 2014 of 2015 zijn er plannen gemaakt over wat wij kunnen toevoegen aan het gebied en wij hadden ook een heel lange en uitgebreide visie geschreven en die hadden wij ook meegegeven maar ja, dat is nu weer van de baan. Omdat er projectontwikkelaars zijn die dat zo willen doen als zij dat hadden bedacht	We have been sitting at the table from the start. From 2012 onwards, we were looking at what we could add to this place. Since then we have been in a conversation with the municipality and that is what we will keep on doing. I think since 2014 or 2015 we have been making plans regarding what we can add to this area in general and we also wrote an extensive vision which we gave to the municipality. But that one is off the table again. Because there are the developers who want to do things their way
Nr. 12, Employee Vechtclub XL	Eigenlijk hadden wij wel meegedacht, ook wel over huisenbouwen omdat wij dachten daar willen wij echt een poging doen voor creatief mensen. Wij dachten dat vinden wij best wel interessant. Maar dat vind de gemeente heel eng. Het moet wel iets zijn wat de projectontwikkelaars willen. Omdat die heel veel geld investeerden hebben en omdat die weten hoe het werkt met het bouwen. Dus dat is wel een beetje van ons weggehaald worden	We thought that (the construction of houses for creative people) was very interesting, but the municipality was a bit scared by that (our ideas). It really must be how the project developers want it to be because they have invested a lot of money and they know how to build. Thus, that was taken a little bit away from us
Nr. 4, Business owner LMO	Ik denk dat dat de grootste gebrek is en dat is ook waar of je wel of niet mee mag beslissen. Als de mensen weten wat er wel of niet	I think the biggest problem is that people do not know where and where they cannot participate. If people knew what was possible and

	kann en waarom is er veel minder woede en overtreding.	what not there would be way less anger and offense
Nr. 12, Employee Vechtclub XL	Wij zouden enkele maanden geleden, eigenlijk in 2018, zouden wij alle zo'n akkoord krijgen. Maar zo werkt de gemeente niet. Dat duurt even een beetje langer. Maar wij weten niet of het duurder word dan wat betaalbaar is. Daar ligt de onzekerheid	We were supposed to receive a (rental) agreement a couple months ago, in 2018. But that is not how the municipality works. Everything takes a little longer. We don't know if rent will be more expensive than what we are able to pay. That is where it becomes insecure
Nr. 4, Business owner LMO	Je moet echt even eerlijk en openbaar zijn qua verwachtingen en daar hebben wij soms echt probleme. Er moet een soort van splitsing zijn gemaakt worden of zo. Vanwegen he dit staat vast en dit staat nog open voor beslissen en participeren	You really need to be honest regarding expectations and we really have troubles with that sometimes. There must be a differentiation between what has been decided and what is still open for decision and participation
Nr. 12, Employee Vechtclub XL	Er wonen heel weinig mensen in dit gebied. Dus voor ons is het heel goed dat het word verbouwt	There are not that many people living in this area. Thus, for us it is great that construction is coming
Nr. 12, Employee Vechtclub XL	Wij vinden het heel leuk om deel te zijn van wat er komt. En wij denken dat wij goed mee kunnen denken over de visie voor het toekomstige gebied en dat er meerwaarde is als wij blijven	We really like to be a part of what is supposed to come here. We think that we can really think along for the vision of the future area and we think that it is valuable if we stay here
Nr. 12, Employee Vechtclub XL	Ik ben (functietitel) en mijn voorganger die had ook wel mee gepraten, samen met de gemeente. En elke keer worden weer plannen mee genomen en `wij vinden dat hartsdikke leuk´ maar eigenlijk krijg ik er niets voor terug en het kost alleen maar tijd. En hij zat ook echt in de projectgroepjes, echt super veel geïnvesteerd erin. Eigenlijk is het resultaat dat wij nog steeds worden genoemd. Maar als je het	I am (job title) and my predecessor also discussed a lot together with the municipality and every time plans were made, and people said `Oh we like this a lot´ but in the end none of that (input) can be found back and it simply costs time. He sat in a lot of project groups, was very invested in it..(..)..And the result for now is that we are still included into the development plans. If you do

	zo doet als de gemeente kostet het veel tijd	it as the municipality does, things take a lot of time
Nr. 12, Employee Vechtclub XL	Ik merk dat nu ook wel, dat er veel stress is voor onze huurders. En iedere keer zeg ik ja, de huurcontract komt, maar dat is ook echt heel irrietand om te doen. Daar gaan ook mensen weg en dat is eigenlijk dat wat wij zoueden willen, dat ze ons zo serieus nehmen dat ze zeggen okay, er is een huurcontract voor een jaar. Maar daar zeggen ze `we moeten nog dit of wij moeten nog dat´	I also know that this is a lot of stress for our tenants. Every time I say yes, the new rental contract is coming soon, and it is really annoying to do that. People are also leaving because of that. What we want from them is to be taken seriously and that they say okay, a new rental contract for one year is now coming. But then they say `Oh we still need to do this or that´

8.3 Interview descriptives

Table 7 below presents the reader with a summary of the most important interview descriptives, namely number and date of interviews, the interviewee's profession or position within his or her organization, the name of the organization or group and the code that I assigned to each interviewee. Due to privacy reasons I was unable to use the interviewee's actual name or specific job description. Therefore, I decided to develop a code for each interviewee to link him or her to their quotes in the participation narratives of Chapter 4. Findings and Analysis. As can be seen, this code contains information about the interviewee's job/position and his or her organization.

Table 7 – Overview Interview Descriptives

Interview Nr.	Interviewee	Interviewee Code	Organization	Date
1	Project manager for the <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i>	Project manager MWKZ	Municipality of Utrecht	08.01.19
2	Researcher at the USBO	Researcher UU/USBO	University of Utrecht/USBO	07.02.19
3	Policy officer assigned to develop the mobility concept for the <i>Merwedekanaalzone</i>	Policy officer MWKZ	Municipality of Utrecht	21.02.19
4	Business owner, running her own location marketing organization	Business owner LMO	Location Marketing Organization	21.03.19
5	Member	Member 1	Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar	25.03.19
6	Member	Member 2	Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar	25.03.19
7	Council member of opposition party	Council member/opposition	Council	08.05.19
8	Member	Member SUWO	SUWO	15.05.19
9	Council member of coalition party	Council member/coalition	Council	20.05.19
10	Member	Member 3	Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar	24.05.19
11	Member	Member 4	Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar	24.05.19
12	Employee	Employee Vechtclub XL	Vechtclub XL	17.06.19

8.4 Exemplary interview guide

This section presents the reader with my initial interview guide. I developed this interview guide in English first, translated it to Dutch and then had its spelling and grammar controlled by a Dutch friend of mine. I slightly adjusted the questions for each interview based on the organization and interviewee's position or job. Furthermore, I added, dropped and adjusted interview questions as I learned new insights during my field research.

Interview Nr.:

Datum:

Deel 1 - Wie ben jij en waarom ben jij actief?

1. Hoe en waarom ben jij actief geworden?
2. Wat hoop je te bereiken voor de omgevingsvisie van de *Merwedekanaalzone* en voor de toekomst van jouw buurt?

3. Wat weerhoudt andere burgers (bijvoorbeeld jouw buren) om net zoals jij actief betrokken te zijn bij de ontwikkelingen van de omgevingsvisie van de *Merwedekanaalzone*?

Part 2 – Welke rol neem jij in als jij interacteert met de gemeente Utrecht en wat verwacht jij van de gemeente Utrecht als het gaat om de omgevingsvisie voor de *Merwedekanaalzone*?

1. Hoe zou jij jouw rol beschrijven in het creëren/ontwikkelen van de omgevingsvisie voor de *Merwedekanaalzone*?
2. Hoe zou jij de interactie tussen de gemeente Utrecht en jij (of jouw groep) in het creëren/ontwikkelen van de omgevingsvisie voor de *Merwedekanaalzone* beschrijven?
3. Doet de gemeente Utrecht volgens jou genoeg om de burgers bij de creatie van de omgevingsvisie voor de *Merwedekanaalzone* te betrekken?
4. Wat zou jij gezien jouw actieve participatie verwachten van de gemeente Utrecht? Wat zou vanuit jouw perspectief met jouw input moeten gebeuren?
5. Gebaseerd op eerdere interacties tussen jou (of jouw groep) en de gemeente Utrecht, ben jij het eens met de huidige omgevingsvisie voor de *Merwedekanaalzone*? Kun jij jouw mening uitleggen?

Bedankt voor het mooie gesprek en jouw tijd!

8.5 Exemplary interview transcript

This section contains one of my interview transcripts and is supposed to provide the reader with an example on how my interviews usually unfolded. This was one of the very first interviews that I conducted and served as an entry point to *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar*. Later, in my field research my interviewees provided me with contacts to further members of *Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar* and the *SUWO*.

Transcript Interview 5/6 - Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar

Date: 25.03.19

H=Helene,

M1 = Member 1

M2 = Member 2

H: Mijn eerste vraag is waaneer was Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar opgezet, omdat ik dat niet gezien heb op de website. Dus wie heeft begonnen met de groep, dat is interessant voor mij om even te weten.

M2: Ja, ik denk, zal ik even beginnen...

M1: Ja..

M2: Ja, ik denk dat wij een kleine bijna twee jaar geleden begonnen zijn met ons überhaupt laten te informeren wat er in de Merwedekanaalzone zal gebeuren. En dat was met aanleiding van de gemeente, dat ze in de Stadstuin die is in de Merwedekanaalzone...

H: Ja daar ben ik een keertje geweest

M2: Ja, precies, zouden ze een voorlichtingsavond organiseren en dus zijn wij in eerste instantie daar heen om te luisteren en om te kijken en ja wij hebben ons best wel kapot geschrokken. Vanwegen hey wat gebeurt er nu. En er waren twee dinge die er nu uitsprongen en dat was het enorme aantal woningen die ze willen aanbouwen en het aantal bruggen die ze da aanwillen gaan aankoppelen want die hebben voor woonbootbewoners direct gevolgen. Als er een brugge komt waar je woont moet je weg. Dus daar hebben wij naar aanleiding van de eerste overeenkomst, in eerste instantie de woonbootbewoners opgetrommelt vanwaar wete jullie wat aan de overkant gaat gebeuren en ja daar waaren wij meteen rond 25/30 mensen of zo om de tafel, vanwegen ohje, wat nu. En ja, de woonbootbewoners hadden zich ook organiseert in het SUWO, Stichting Utrechtse Woonbootoverleg. Maar ja dit kwam echt uit de bewoners hervor. Nau ze zijn een aantal keer bij elkaar geweest en hebben een aantal breven naar de gemeente gestuurt. Daar was dan ook een inspraakronde en ja..dan konde je daar ook insprekken, en ook tijdens de raadsinformatie beijnkomst. En van daar uit zullen wij ook gaan denken okay, wij hebben de woonbootbewoners maar er zijn veel meer mensen die het er met te maaken gaan krijgen. De roerverenigingen maar ook de bewoners van Rivierenwijk want als er bruggen komen dan komt dat verkeer over die bruggen naar Rivierenwijk en dus hebben wij met een aantal mensen een overeenkomst georganiseerd en die was nu een jaar geleden in het buurthuis in Rivierenwijk en ja om meer bewoners bij te betrekken en daar hebben wij ook raadsleden uitgenodigt

M1: Ja en dat was de eerste keer dat ik erbij kwam

M2: Ja

M1: Toen dat was voor mij een interessante avond en toen heb ik besloten om mij aansluiten bij de werkgroep omdat ik net ook als Marij bij het eerste horen over die plannen zo schrok over wat er zou gebeuren. En ja ze hadden het ook over de consequenties van de plannen en over de woonbootbewoners en dan was er een vraag, okay ben jij voor of tegen en echt bijna iedereen stond aan het kant van het nee. Dus sindsdien ben ik bij betrokken

M2: Toen zo zacht ik ook de werkgroep Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar ontstaan. Ten eerste was het alleen de Woonbootbewoners en dan werd het breder, ook mensen uit de Rivierenwijk en nu zijn wij met elkaar een club van een aantal mensen.

H: En zo is de groep ook gegroeid

M1: Ja

H: En hoe is dit organiseerd. Jullie zijn een aantal van mensen. Hebben jullie dan een voorzitter of een secretarissen..misschien niet zo professioneel. Is er iemand die de leiding heeft of hoe werkt dit dan?

M2: Nee, niet echt.

M1: Wij hebben iemand die zich secretaresse noemt. Die is nu een tijdje weg en die opereert vanuit het buitenland, nauwelijks, dat betekent dat zij veel praktische dingen doet maar verder is het denk ik even gelijkmatig verdeeld

H: En ja, jullie zeggen jullie hebben begonnen mee te doen omdat jullie zo geschrokken zijn van de plannen maar zijn jullie misschien ook eerder soort van actief geweest in het samenleving of in het maatschappij of ja wat is de soort van rede om mee te doen?

M2: Naar nu was er direct aanleiding omdat dat ons woonbootbewoners bedreigt. En ja, het woord zo groot dat je helemaal niet meer kunt overzien wat het allemaal betekent. Dus da wil je dan duidelijk krijgen en zo mogelijk ook nog inspraak op hebben. Dat kun heel direct omdat wij er wonen zeg maar. Maar goed als het alleen om mijn woning, ik woon op een woonboot, had ik het bij de woonboten kunnen houden maar er zijn meer mensen die mee te maken krijgen normaal dus ja het moet groter worden want andere mensen hebben ook een recht op informatie over wat de wachters staat

M1: En ik ben in ...ook wel actief geweest maar dit is nu voor het eerste zo een directe..ja..

H: Ja ik denk dat is ook als jullie direct of als je direct betrokken bent is het ook een beetje anders. Dat is echt iets dat gebeurt voor jouw eigen deur.

M2: Klopt

H: Dan is dat een beetje een andere verhaal. Misschien maakt dat ook mensen actief die soms niet actief zijn in..

M2: Dat is wel zo

M1: Ja ik denk in ons werkgroep jij (Marij) bent vroeger actief geweest, ik ben vroeger actief geweest met zo dinge en voor mij was de rede van ik weet niet of wij invloed kunnen hebben maar ik wil wel in die geval echt gebruik van maaken en ik probeere het. Ik woon in de Waalstraat dus een van de straten waar en brug op uit komt en ja ik dacht ik wil wel probeeren iets aan te doen. Er is iemand wel van in de 80 die vroeger actief is geweest in de wijk dus bijna iederen heeft wel uit gemeenschappelijke deele gedacht. En je ziet dat de wijk aan het haart gaat. En ik denk dat dat heel belangrijk is bij deze wijk, die vrij multi-cultureel is denk ik en nau het functioneert goed. Wij willen dat dat blijft bestaan.

H: Dus jullie woonen ook enkele jaaren in de wijk denk ik

M1: Ik 18,5 jaaren

M2: En ik 30 jaaren denk ik

H: Oh wow, ik denk ook als jij eer zo lang woont dan is het echt jouw thuis je misschien een huis gekocht of zo en je hebt echt een belang in. Misschien is het iets anders als jij alleen maar huurt en je kunt vertrekken als je het niet meer mooi vind

M1: Ik huur en er is nog iemand anders in ons groepje die huurd en wij zijn allebij uit Wittevrouwen vertrokken omdat we te rust van de Rivierenwijk zo mooi vonden en nu woord dat gestoord.

H: Dat snap ik wel

M2: Dus wij hebben inderdaad mensen die eer op korte termijn woonen of huuren en die ook

actief gewoorden zijn omdat die denken ik heb er nu een mooi plek en ik kun ook niet zo snel weg.

H: Ja in Utrecht helemaal niet. Het is echt een beetje een uitdaging er een huis, of kamer of wat weet ik te vinden. Het is zwaar

M2: Ja

H: Maar wat doet jullie groep op een soort van dagelijks of misschien wekelijkse basis om jullie werk te doen of missie te bereiken. Want ik heb zelf nog nooit mee gedaan bij deze soort van initiatief en ik vraag mij altijd af wat doen jullie dan op een soort van regelmatige basis?

M2: Wij hebben veel vaste afspraken, wij doen het gewoon een keer in de week of een keer in twee weken en aan de hand van dingen die gebeuren. Stukjes die wij lezen, dingen die in de krant staan of zeker natuurlijk ook als weer bepaalde echt planrijpe te gebeuren staan ja dan komen wij bij elkaar ok te bekijken okay wat gaan wij doen. Zoals Birgit het noemde, diejenige die zich secretaresse noemde die had vaak stukjes uitgepland en als je dan meteen komt van oh ja dat is wel handig om dit of dat uit te zoeken ja dan kan je dat met weer aan de slag. En dan probeert je dat wel de taken te delen, die wij niet standaard hebben maar die wij wel doen..dus wie doet dit, wie gaat dat doen en wie doet het contact met SUWO

H: Dus wie heeft tijd voor wat en zo, okay

M1: Het is ook wel veel mail contact loss van de werkgroep. Dus wij houden veel via mail contact.

M2: Kijk als je dat wat wij doen echt goed wil doen dan heb je er een dagtaak van. Maar goed wij hebben allemaal ook zo onze anderen werkzaamheden en ook die dame die da 80 is is nog heel actief in het lezingen geven ja. Dus, jij hebt eigenlijk te weinig tijd om het goed te doen en dat is ook een naardeel over ambtenaren die hun werk doen. Die krijgen in het werktijd om dat te doen en wij moeten het in ons vrije tijd doen

H: Dus een soort van vrijwilligerswerk

M2 & I1: Ja

H: Dus ik denk jullie krijgen dan ook geen financiële steun of zo? Dat is dan alles van jullie?

M2: Nee

M1: Wij hebben het wel probeert om bij de gemeente aan te vraagen en te zeggen dat wij een betaalde..willen hebben om ons te ondersteunen. Maar dat ding niet door

H: Ik vind het altijd interessant als mensen so actief worden. En ze hebben nog een baan en een familie maar ze doen het nog steeds. Vind het echt super mooi

M2: Maar het is ook lastig inderdaad. Want dit is een project voor een lange tijd. Wij praatte over jaaren. Dit is eigenlijk dan veel eerder begonnen. En je moet echt een heele lange aadem hebben en soms zijn dinge heel frustrerend en dan heb je ook de neiging te denken weet je wat het helpt toch alles niets. Laat het maar zitte.

M1: Het zijn ook wel mensen uitgestappt. Iemand die echt murrend was.

H: Ik denk in de Merwedekanaalzone bouwen ze tot 2030 of zo en dat is echt super lang.

M2: Die ersten beslissingen zijn in 2005 of zo genomen..

I1: En dat is wat ik beteken. Daar hadden wij maar eerder in kunnen stappen. Dus als jullie wel instappten (naar Marij) was heel veel al vastgelegd. Eigenlijk hadden ze de mensen vanaf 2005 bij moeten betrekken. En wel nu zijn er veel voldoende fijten. Maar je niets meer kunt doen

H: Waar je niets meer kunt veranderen.

M2: Ja

H: Ja want ik heb ook gehoord dat het in Nederland zo is als er een omgevingsvisie is dat mensen nog inspraak hebben maar als er een plan is is dat rechtens. Dan kun je niet meer zo veel veranderen

M2 & M1: Ja dat klopt. Daar is er geen ruimte meer voor inspraak

M1: Ja dat zijn dan die soort van resultaate. Vanwege ja je hebt ingesproken op naar de omgevingsvisie en zo..maar het resultaat is toch heel weinig denk ik. Heel klein

M2: Ja. En daar gaat het dan ook over. Het is een formaliteit. Dit zijn de proceduuren dus je

moet ernaar een omgevingsvisie bewoners ruimte geven om in te spreken en de gemeenteraads leden om zich te laten informeren. Maar wat ze uiteindelijk mee doen dat is een andere punt.

H: Ja, precies.

M1: Om een voorbeeld te noemen. Er was sprake van 6000 woningen toen is de coalitie, die nieuwe coalitie gekomen en dan vragen wij of over de 6000 woningen nog gestemd wordt, want dat moet eigenlijk, en toen in de coalitie was nu afgesproken dat het 10000 woningen zullen worden. Dus zo zie je dat het in de praktijk heel anders werkt dan op papier

H: Ja ik denk dat is ook dan moeilijk om te zien dat je een soort van politieke achtergrond hebt en je hebt er echt geen inzicht, was er gebeurt dan bij de gemeente en dan word je geconfronteerd met okay van 6000 tot 10000 woningen. Dat is echt zo veel, 6000 zijn veel, ja da heb je echt weinig inzicht

M2: En ja in Utrecht zijn natuurlijk D66 en GroenLinks heel groot en die hebben samen al een soort van meerderheid. Dus ja, als zij plannen maken of zij geven ambtenaren de opdracht om plannen te maken en zo veel als mogelijk te bouwen, ook als de rest van de gemeenteraad bijvoorbeeld tegen dan kunnen zij zich met hun meerderheid gewoon doorzetten

H: Ja precies, dat is echt interessant om te zien. Maar ik gezien op jullie website staan enkele zorgpunten of belangrijkste zorgpunten van de groep en ik denk dat zijn de bruggen en de verkeer met de auto's en waar gaan mensen parkeren en zo.

M2: Klopt.

H: En ik denk jullie hebben misschien een aantal van punten die jullie willen aankarten bij de gemeente. Maar waarom hebben jullie deze punten gekozen en niet andere? Want ik denk het zicht echt heel veel in in deze plannen voor de Merwedekanaalzone. Maar je moet een soort van prioriteit hebben, waavoor jullie willen werken

M2: Ik denk dat dat het resultaat is van onze motivatie om er mee te doen. Als je een soort van idealistisch motief hebt dan ga je misschien voor andere punten maar deze zaken raaken

echt direct aan ons woonplezier. Want ja als je extra bruggen gaat anbrengen dan komen er fietsers over die bruggen Rivierenwijk in en niet alleen een paar maar echt duizende.

Zoveel mensen komen naar binnen

H: Ja en als ze binnen geen auto hebben, hebben ze een fiets

M1: Of een bromfiets

H: Of een e-bike of zo

M2: En ze wilden in de Merwedekanaalzone weinig parkeerplekken realiseren. Een van de drie huizen kan een auto hebben. Maar ja, nu is de realiteit dat veel meer mensen nog een auto hebben. Dus waar blijven al die auto's dan? Die gaan ze dan toch weer in de omtrek neerzetten, denken wij dan, op dat dat gemakkelijk is. Dan heb je wel een auto en dan loop je over de bruggetje aan de overkant en dan ga je weer thuis.

H: Ja

M1: Ja en in het begin was het thema dan ook van verdichting van de wijk en da hebben wij ons ook met bezig gehouden. Slagschaduw dus dat heeft te maaken met die hoge toren. Maar ja, het is steeds meer verengd en dan gaat de nieuwe coalitie van 6000 naar 10000 woningen. Dat zijn dinge waar je bijna helemaal niets tegen kunt doen. Dus de thema's zijn wel breed geweest. Inderdaad.

M2: Wij hadden het ook gehad over het sociaale cohesie in zo'n nieuwe wijk. Wat doet het met mensen als je met zoveel mensen..

H: Als het zo druk is...

M2: Ja, ken je elkaar nog, of hoe anonym word het, en ja. En dat is heel erg wat wat misschien in die wijk zal gebeuren. Maar ja, wij moeten ons op focuseren wat dit voor ons betekend.

M1: En ja een belangrijk thema wat je niet noemd is de Merwedeplatsoen. Dat is voor ons ook heel belangrijk. Dat heeft toch echt de functie en er zijn allerlei mensen die een bank hebben aangevragt bij de gemeente. Daar word gegeten, daar woord gespelt, daar word samen

gezetten en nau als daar bruggen komen verandert dat de karakter van de platsoen ook en waar die woonboote weg moeten da verandert het sowieso en voor de mensen omheen ook. En daar is iemand die laatste keer bij ons was en die zich realiseerde dat de mensen op de brug direct langs zijn huis komen. Die woond dan aan de andere kant van de Merwedeplatsoen. Dus ze hebben ons in het begin ook even bezig gehouden met woonbooten die zomar moeten verdwijnen. Dat zijn mensen die dan ook anderthalf of twee jaaren in onzekerheid verkeerren.

H: Ja omdat ze niet weten waarnaar toe of heeft de gemeente een soort van plan? Dat ze zeggen okay als jullie gaan verhuizen dan kunnen jullie misschien daar en daar de boot neerzetten

M2: Dat wordt wel in het begin zo gezegt. Dat er een plan komt, een nieuwe ligplan. Maar die hebben ze niet. Dus elke keer als je vraagt waar gat dat dan heen en waar moet..en dan zeggen ze `ja die hebben wij wel´ of dat zegte de oude wethouder en nu is er een nieuwe wethouder. Maar het is nog steeds niet duidelijk en het lijkt als of ze gewoon helemaal al verdwijnen en dat ze de mensen gaan uitkoopen

H: Want hoe werkt dit als je een woonboot hebt? Je bent de eigenaar van de woonboot maar niet van plek op de kanaal?

M2: Nee die huuren wij. Nu nog van Rijkswaterstaat dus dat is nog provinciaal zeg maar en niet van de gemeente

H: Okay

M1: En dat is misschien ook nog interessant om te vertellen. Een avond was er zo ´n avond in Transwijk, dat is ook aan der overkant, en nau er was een jonge man die in Kanaleneiland woont en die zegt ik ben voor de bruggen want dat verschilled een paar minuten om in de stad te komen. Toen vertelden wij hem dat dat betekend dat er woonboote voor moeten verdwijnen, dat er boomen voor moeten verdwijnen en die schrokk zich kapot. Dus die gemeente brengt dat soort van informatie ook helemaal niet naar buiten. Dat zijn dinge die wij naar buiten moeten brengen. Dat het heel veel konsekwenzies heeft.

H: Ja, wat zijn de gevolgen voor de leefomgeving

M1: Ja.

M2: Precies. Een de gemeente denkt heel erg op, of de ambtenaaren, de gemeente is echt een heel groot word. Die gemeente is in in dit geval dan die ambtenaaren die die planen maaken. Die denken dan alleen an die nieuw te bouwende wijk. Wat zijn de voordelen en leuk dit en leuk dat, mooi plaatjes en leuk groen en spelende kinderen maar de heele omgeving..daar..hebben ze het niet over eigenlijk. Alleen bij de bruggen

M1: Wij hadden ook die idee dat de bestaande bruggen eventueel uitgebreid kunnen worden want er zijn drie bruggen geplant waarvan twee vrij dicht bij de bestaande bruggen zijn en voor ons is het compleet onlogisch dat daar extra bruggen komen. Via de bestaande bruggen komt je prima naar de station en naar de station Vaartsche Rijn en dat onderzoek heeft getoned dat dat heele nog steeds niet plaats gevonden hebt. Wij hebben nu een idee dat er een bureau met bezig is. Dus dat onderzoek komt gewoon niet of er is geen openheid over

H: Ja jullie weeten niet echt wat gebeurt met de soort van suggesties of ideeën die jullie hebben. Word er met gewerkt of helemaal niet. Maar als jullie met de gemeente in contact zijn hebben jullie regelmatig contact of een soort van persoon die een beetje bezig is met de gemeente contact te houden of misschien ook een mens bij de gemeente die met jullie praat of in het gesprek is

M2: Nau de gemeente werkt zo dat ze graag in groepjes mensen willen horen. Dus, daar ze hebben ze een klantenboardgroep, een opdrachtgeversgroep, da hebben ze een bewonersgroep en een woonbootbewonersgroep en wat daar tot nu eigenlijk bijna standaard gebeurt is dat de gemeente verteld wat de planen zijn en dat de mensen die deelnemen in zo'n groep een beetje mogen vertellen hoe ze daarover denken en dat dan wat wij erg kritisch zien heel weinig van terug komt en dat de dinge die toch al een beetje passen in de plan maar die willen ze dan meenemen. Waar, ja...naar zo'n twee kleine jaaren die wij daar bezig zijn heb ik niet nu heel weinig vertrouwen dat ik met die ambtenaaren verde kom want wat ze ons eigenlijk vertellen komt grootstedeels ook weer in de nieuwsbrieven en ja dat moet voorall gedeelt worden en misschien dat er ook enkele dinge zijn waar wij dan als bewonersgroep nog mogen meedenken maar ik wil niet meedenken over de kleur van een brug ik wil die brug er niet hebben. Dus, da pas ik voor. En ik heb nu begonnen om meer direct naar de gemeenteraad te gaan omdat de gemeenteraad vanuit zijn positie wat invloed kunt uitoefnen op de planen door

moties op argumenten in te dienen of zo iets

H: Maar hoeveel invloed heeft de gemeenteraad dan over deze plannen? Want ik ben niet zo bekend met hoe dit werkt in Nederland

M2: Dus wij hebben wethouders en die geven opdracht om zo'n Merwedekanaalzone te bouwen en daar gaan ambtenaren dus weer aan de slag samen met het projectbureau van de gemeente en dat moet uiteindelijk door de gemeenteraad goedgekeurd worden. Door een meerderheid in de gemeenteraad.

H: Ah okay. Dus proberen jullie nu een beetje invloed te nemen op deze gemeenteraad

M1: Ja, wij hebben wel regelmatig contact mee. Ja, hadden bijvoorbeeld laatst een gesprek met en van de wethouders gehad en dan hebben wij daarnaar een brief aan de gemeenteraad gestuurd waarin wij over het gesprek praten en hoe dat ging en dan zijn verschillende partijen bij ons uitgelopen om te bespreken waarom wij ons zorgen. Maar steeds, D66 en GroenLinks zijn de meerderheid, dus wat de invloed echt van de gemeenteraadsleden is ..dat is maar de vraag. Of de Christen Unie hebben wij het laatste gesproken die zien een aantal van onze zorgen wel als heel ernstig of zij dat weer ook in stemming dan of achter de coalitie of achter ons gaan staan dat blijft te blijken

M2: Even terug te komen op jouw vraag. Ja, wij hadden veel contact gehad met de ambtenaren die die plannen maken omdat wij daar dachten wij zij maakten de plannen en da moeten wij invloed uitoefenen maar da hebben wij dat gevoel dat wij da echt niet verder komen, echt nul. Dus da denk je dan dit werkt niet of je houd ermee op of je probeert het via een andere weg. Die ambtenaren zelf ontwerpen dan een aantal mensen en namen waar wij contact mee hebben. Die proberen dan ons steeds nog meer bij te betrekken want zij kunnen zich dan ook naar buiten weer profileeren. Van wij hebben een goed gesprek met alle bewoners en...

H: Ja..een beetje voor de legitimatie. Vanwegen wij hebben gepraat met de mensen

M2: Ja precies

M1: Aan de wet hebben ze voldaan dan..daar gaat het over.

M2: Ja, het is altijd formeel. En dat is wat ons als bewoners vooral frustrereert. Je denkt dan okay. Omdat je gisteren om een tafel hebt gezeten terwijl wij daar helemaal niet tevreden over

zijn kunnen jij dan wel zeggen 'Kijkens hoe goed bezig wij zijn, wij praatte met de bewoners'. En daar willen wij ons niet aan voor dienen.

H: Dus jullie zeggen, praatte met de bewoners is het eene maar jij moet dan ook iets over doen als je echt wilt zeggen okay mensen kunnen meedoen, moeten er dan ook een sort van resultate zichtbaar zijn

M2 & M1: Ja

M1: In iedere geval interactie. Ik zeg wat en dat moet terug te vind en zijn. Dus de omgevingsvisie 2 komt en wij hoopen dat er iets te zien is.

H: Snap ik wel. Maar ja, dat gaat ook een beetje over mijn volgende vraag. Want ik wil graag vragen: Doet de gemeente dan genoeg om de burgers met de creatie van de Merwedekanaalzone te betrekken? Maar als ik dat zo hoor is die antwoord misschien nee

M2: Betrekken dus wel. Maar voor ons idee gebeurt ervan heel veel achter de scherm waar je geen invloed op hebt en wat wij ook niet hooren en wat op een bepaalde moment dan ook besloten is.

M1: Kritische opmerkingen worden dus ook wegelaaten.

M2: Dus de formaliteiten, daar voldoen ze aan maar inhoudelijk niet.

H: Dus, de process aan zich gezien is goed maar de inhoud is niet echt wat jullie voor hoopen of verwachten als jullie zeggen okay wij doen er mee en wij probeeren een stem te hebben..

M1: Dat is misschien ook wel een leuke voorbeeld. De eerste groep waar ik deel naam, dat was een stadsgesprek en daar was participatie thema van. En tijdens deze gesprek vormden ze groepen of onderdelen en ik was bij de participatie groep. En er zatten vijf wijken aan een tafel en er zatten mensen die jaaren geïnvesteerd hadden in een wijk en die erg frusteed waren omdat de gemeente streek was. Overvecht, Oog in Al, Tuinwijk en Tolsteeg. Dus ik had een idee over hoe het zal werken maar ja..als je als gemeente iets wil dan moet je ook echt naar mensen luisteren niet alleen luisteren en denken ik heb aan de wet voldaan. Dus er waren vijf wijken die...

M2: En dat blijft gewoon frustreerend. Als ze gewoon zeggen wij hebben iets gekozen en zo

zullen wij het doen dan weet je waar je als burger staat. Maar nu lijkt het zo als of je inspraak hebt maar je hebt het niet. En dat is zo frustrerend.

M1: Wij hebben ook letterlijk gevraagd. Zeg het ons dan. Zeg het ons.

H: Dus jullie vinden dan ook als het niet kan, als de gemeente zegt okay dat zijn de feiten en wij kunnen..of..wij moeten het zo en zo doen en wij kunnen jullie stem niet of jullie input niet mee nemen dan moet je even eerlijk zijn en transparent zijn.

M2: Ja, precies. En er is nu ook wel wantrouwen omdat mensen zeggen dat wij inspraak hebben en ondertussen gebeuren allemaal dingen waar wij er denken wat doe ik er in vertrouwen mee

H: Want het is ook jullie tijd die jullie investeren in deze werk en dan wil je ook weten okay is er ook een kans of niet. En als er geen kans is dan zeg het gewoon.

M2: Ja, zeg het maar gewoon. Ja, dan weet je waar je naartoe bent. Dan kun je boos over worden maar dan weet je het wel.

H: Precies, dan weet je wat je te verwachten hebt.

M1: Ja een laatste ..er zijn veel overeenkomsten geweest waar het heel duidelijk was dat dat 200, 300 mensen uit de wijk waren die tegen extra bruggen waren, tegen die verdichting en ja, dat is wel triest om dat te horen. Er komen nu ook een aantal bureaus die er onderzoek gaan doen en bij een bureau las ik weer 'Wensen ophaalen'. Nou ik heb echt gedacht okay wij hebben onze wensen al bekend gemaakt maar doe je dan weer mee? Dus dat lijkt een thema te zijn. Wensen ophaalen maar daarnaar zien ze dan de wensen zijn ook negatief. Die vertegenwoordigen wij niet. In twijfel zijn er ook heel veel mensen die best wel positief zijn. En dan kun je niet vragen wie zijn dat dan

H: Ja precies, dus volgens jullie is het niet alleen voldoende als de gemeente zegt, okay wij informeren jullie en jullie kunnen iets zeggen maar dan gebeurt er niets en dat is niet echt participatie dan.

M2: Dat zit wel leuk in jouw vragenlijst dat je dat noemde als vraag van alleen informeren of niet?

H: Als je zegt okay dat is wat er gebeurt en jullie kunnen zeggen ja of nee maar als jullie nee zeggen maakt dat ook geen verschil voor ons. Dan is dat echt iets anders. Maar een andere vraag: Ik heb van enkele mensen die bij de laatste buurtgesprekken aanwezig zijn geweest gehoord dat er heel veele mensen zo als jullie zijn. Die zich betrokken voelen, die actief zijn en die hoog opgeleid zijn en ik vind het altijd interessant te zien welke soort van mensen naar deze gesprekken komen. Want de literatuur zegt dat participatie ook oft iets is voor mensen die hoog opgeleid zijn en niet voor mensen die strijden met dagelijkse problemen.

M2: Tijdens dat buurtgesprek waren heel veel verschillende mensen aanwezig. Maar wat je kunt zien is dat mensen niet altijd het zelfde taal spreken als die ambtenaars dan begrijp je elkaar meteen ook niet zo goed. En je ziet soms dat mensen die op een andere manier geweest zijn te communiceren ook bijvoorbeeld heel boos worden tijdens zo een overeenkomst of ook heel emotioneel worden en dan worden die niet meer serieus genomen. Of een beetje dat gevoel heb ik dan. Dus ze zijn er wel maar zij spreken bijnaar soms een andere taal waardoor je dan geen gevoelige contact hebt. Dus het is best ingewikkeld om te begrijpen hoe het werkt met zo'n gemeente.

H: Ja, alleen de plannen te lezen en te verstaan okay wat gebeurt er..

M1: Ja dat vind ik al

M2: Ja dat vind ik ook al zwaar

M1: Wij hebben gelukkig die secretaresse die dat heel interessant vind..

M2: Want op die manier is het ook niet toegankelijk voor andere mensen vooral voor mensen die de taal niet zo goed spreken of mensen die minder hoog opgeleid zijn en ja dan kun je al bijnaar niet mee doen in dit voorme process.

H: Dus er is een soort van basis kennis nodig of misschien een soort van achtergrond om die documente te kunnen lezen en te snappen wat er aan de hand is en wat dit betekend en hoe de processen zijn.

M2: En op de rechte manier te kunnen communiceren, dat je..ja.

M1: Ja en ik denk wel dat is dus een beijnkomst geweest die je top vond. Daar was een

enorme overeenkomst door de gemeente georganiseerd en het..en da was ook een hoge diversiteit denk ik en wat de gemeente geweigert heeft daar is om te zaal te laten praten. Daar hebben wij nog een verzoek voor ingedient omdat ze zeggen dat dan de nee-zeggere te veel te overhand krijgen en ik denk dat ze daarmee ook een kans gemist hebben want daar waren reacties ook van wat je dan noemt Utrechtse mensen die zo iets zeiden van `wij willen niet´ of `jullie hebben het over verandering maar hebben jullie aan de Rivierenwijk gevraagd of wij verandering willen?´ Nee, wij willen helemaal geen verandering. Maar die dinget worden ja..weg gestoppt eigenlijk. Er is geen mogelijkheid om de heele zaal te laten spreken en dan krijg je dat je daarnaar bij allerlei ambtenaren lijstet op mag hangen van de geele plakken met dinget die er op staan waar niemand meer van weet. Dus een ..ik denk ook Stef (tegen Marij) vertelde dat zijn burenen humeurig zijn. Die hebben gewoon geen zin meer om te participeeren.

M2: Ja ook als je in zo´n zaal zit waar iederen zijn sprekje zal doen...dat doet ook niet iederen gemakkelijk. Dat is ook heel spannend...

H: Ja dat is niet de soort van platform voor iederen.

M2: Nee. En dat begint ook al met hoe je als gemeente mensen informeert dat er überhaupt een beijnkomst is. Als je dat per mail bijvoorbeeld doet..Rivierenwijk heeft ook veel mensen waar mail contact niet zo gangbaar is.

H: Ik heb ook gehoord dat die wijk van Kanaleneiland gehoord want daar heb ik met een social entrepreneur gepraaten en die zeggte tegen mij dat er heel veel mensen zijn die geen internetaansluiting hebben en of geen email account en die krijgen de newsletter van de gemeente niet. Maar er zijn ook veel mensen die die gemeente niet informeeren over wat er gebeurt of wat gebeuren gaat. En ik denk Kanaleneiland is echt heel dicht bij, ook een wijk in de buurt van de Merwedekanaalzone. Maar het is interessant dat die niet echt includeert worden in deze soort van processen. Dan vraag ik mij af of je misschien een andere toegang moet vinden naar de mensen. Niet alleen maar via email of de newsletter.

M2: Precies.

M1: Maar daar is ook de vraag wat jouw doel is. Of je doel echt is dat mensen echt geïnformeerd worden of dat ze alleen bij wets geïnformeerd zijn. Dat je dan even kijkt. En dat vond ik bij die avond heel tekend, daar wilden ze de mensen niet echt hooren. Het was echt

alleemaal heel gereguleerd. Het moet echt op een bepaalde manier gebeuren, daar zijn ze vrij star in. Het is elke keer hetzelfde opzet. De gemeente verteld iets, en als groep kun jij plakketjes opzetten bij die banners, wat je ervan vind, ze gaan ook even in het gesprek maar het komt geen terugkoppeling van wat er eigenlijk mee gaat gebeuren of gebeurt is..

H: Met de input van de burgers

M1: Ja en dat is ook wel een voorbeeld; iemand van ons groepje praat dan met een van die ambtenaaren en die zei nau voor Transwijk zullen gevolgen niet zo sterk zijn maar wel in de Rivierenwijk en zij kwam uit de Rivierenwijk en zij schrok heel erg. Dus het is wel bekend dat er gevolgen voor ons zijn maar...ja dat zeggen ze zo niet.

H: Ik heb nog een laatste vrage; In het algemeen denken jullie dat burgers in Utrecht genoeg mogelijkheden hebben te beïnvloeden? En als er misschien mensen zijn die minder stem hebben, wie is dit dan volgens jullie?

M1: Dat verschilt een beetje volgens mij. Een deel van de bewoners in Rivierenwijk die geen email hebben of ja, gewoon ook veel buitenlanders ..of die zo op de hoogte zijn is de vrage?

M2: En het is echt een initiatieve of idee van hoe dit anders kan. Het is niet zo dat wij helemaal niets willen. Wij vinden het prima als er een mooi nieuwe woonwijk er komt maar wij kijken echt naar het geheel en niet alleen maar naar de nieuwe wijk en dat is wat ze in de theorie ook wel beleiden. Dat ze zeggen vanwaar wij willen echt de omgeving goed bij betrekken en initiatieve goed waarderen en zo maar de praktijk komt nog niet van de grond dus ze zijn er heel onkundig in vind ik om dat op een goede manier te doen en dat zie je in al die wijken eigenlijk terug. Zoals in Tolsteeg, daar zijn ze ook heel druk bezig geweest dus echt de initiatieve vanuit de wijk, want mensen die daar wonen kennen hun wijk gewoon heel goed dus die kunnen heel goed meedenken in hoe dat zou kunnen combineren met iets nieuws. Want het is niet alleen dat we zelf vasthouden aan wat er is maar wel de goede dinge probeeren te bewaaren.

H: Ja, want ik denk als je dan er woont en je weet bijvoorbeeld met de zonnestand of zo, en je weet okay, als er een hoge toren komt dan is er geen zon meer en dan gaat niemand meer op een bankje zitten of zo. Dat is iets dat weet je niet als je er niet woont

M2: Nee, precies. En neem dat als planmaaker ook serieus. Dat je een beetje een gehoor hebt voor jouw burgers, want anders is dat heel paternalistisch. Echt top-down. En dat is toch wel wat mijn ervaring is met wat er gebeurt.

H: Dus jullie zeggen dan okay, misschien meer luisteren naar lokale kennis en niet alleen naar modellen en cijfers

M2: Ja, en vertel ook als het niet kan. Mensen zijn best begrijpbaar. Als je denkt okay dat kan helemaal niet, natuurlijk is dat niet handig, maar ben da echt open in. En ze durven ook niet alles uit de handen geven, de echte deele, maar..

H:Ja ik denk ook, soms moet je als gemeente zeggen, okay wij gaan het zo en zo doen. Want mensen hebben ook niet over alles de nodige expertise. Maar dan moet je zeggen okay dit gebeurt zo. Maar als je dan zegt jullie kunnen inspraak hebben dan moet je ook echt inspraak geven en een platform om mee te doen.

M1 & M2: Ja

M1: Ja, nog een voorbeeld; er stond drie kwartier jaren geleden iets in de krant over ...in Den Haag. Dat is een wijk die hebben een bureau ingehuurd om leefbaarheid te onderzoeken. En ja, ik heb contact gezocht met dat bureau en die waren geïnteresseerd maar die gemeente heeft besloten niet met deze bureau verder te gaan. Dus die initiatieven van onze kant zijn bijnaar alle gebarrikadeerd. En ik wil nog zeggen, ik denk dat dat heel belangrijk is, dat je mensen veel en veel eerder bereikt. Dan moet je ook en heele lange adem hebben maar dan kun je in eerste instantie mee denken. Dan konden wij in eerste instantie al kunnen zeggen wij zijn helemaal niet tegen een nieuwe wijk maar wij zijn wel tegen de manier waarop jullie het vorm geven. 6000 mensen tegenover die dan met brom(fiets) en fiets verkeer tegen onz wijk komen en er niets te zoeken hebben.

H: Dus, jullie wilden wel vroeg betrokken worden door de gemeente. Of zo vroeg als mogelijk als er iets aan de hand is. Als die dingen nog in de ideefase zitten

M1 & M2: Ja

M2: Wel formeel doen ze het wel. Want ze zijn verplicht om bepaalde dingen te publiceren

maar dan moet je ook rekening houden wat de gevolgen van 6000 nieuwe woningen voor de mensen er zijn.

End of Transcript

8.6 Minutes buurtgesprekken September 2018

This section contains the minutes of the *Buurtgesprekken* hosted by the municipality of Utrecht for the neighbourhoods of *Rivierenwijk* and *Transwijk* in September 2018. These minutes were used for document analysis and can be obtained from the municipality of Utrecht by sending an email to merwedekanaalzone@utrecht.nl . For formatting reasons, I decided to take snapshots of each document page (in PDF format) and insert them as pictures into this word document.

Merwedekanaalzone: Terugblik buurtgesprek Transwijk



Terugblik op
het buurtgesprek
3 september 2018



Gemeente Utrecht

⏪ ◀ 1 / 16 ▶ ⏩

Samenvatting

Op 3 september 2018 was het buurtgesprek Merwedekanaalzone in Transwijk in Woonzorgcentrum Transwijk. Er waren ongeveer 80 buurtbewoners aanwezig, uit zowel het gebied tussen Koningin Wilhelminalaan en Park Transwijk als uit Max, Pax & Lux en flats aan de overkant van de Beneluxlaan. Hieronder de samenvatting van de reacties die tijdens de avond zijn opgehaald.

Hoogbouw/ uitzicht

Over het algemeen reageren de aanwezigen positief op wat hun nieuwe uitzicht gaat worden, maar er zijn zeker ook mensen die de hoogbouw massief vinden. De meesten vinden hoogbouw minder erg achter hoge bomen of tegenover Park Transwijk.

Twijfels haalbaarheid lage parkeernorm

De meeste kritiek en vragen zijn er tijdens de avond bij nieuwe mobiliteitsoplossingen, met name de lage parkeernorm. Aanwezigen vragen zich af of dit haalbaar is. Ook zijn er veel zorgen over het toenemen van de parkeerdruk in de eigen buurt. Anderzijds geven sommige bewoners uit Pax en Lux aan dat daar de parkeergarage soms leegstaat en dat zij niet willen betalen voor een parkeerplek als ze geen auto hebben. Verder wordt aandacht gevraagd voor aanleg van het openbaar vervoer, voordat de nieuwe woningen er zijn. En ook goede fietsparkeerplaatsen wordt als aandachtspunt meegeven.

Europalaan

Veel aanwezigen vragen zich af hoeveel autoverkeer er nog bij kan, omdat de Europalaan nu al heel druk is. En ook vragen mensen zich af hoe het Anne Frankplein er straks uit gaat zien met de nieuwe busbaan uit Leidsche Rijn en dan in de verdere toekomst nog meer openbaar vervoer over de Europalaan en ook over het plein. Ook zijn er veel vragen over de oversteekbaarheid van de Europalaan. Die moet goed geregeld worden.

Park Transwijk

Aanwezige buurtbewoners zijn over het algemeen blij met Park Transwijk. Aandachtspunten in de huidige situatie zijn het beheer en de hekken. Er wordt meerdere keren gevraagd of de hekken weg kunnen.

Zorgen zijn er over het toevoegen van fietspaden en extra waterverbindingen. Mensen willen niet dat het park teveel doorkruist wordt of dat er bomen weg moeten. En vooral brommers zijn een aandachtspunt. Ook vragen bewoners van de Westdijklaan specifiek aandacht voor het eventuele fietspad voor hun huizen langs. Ze willen dit liever meer op afstand. Aan extra activiteiten in het park is niet veel behoefte. Af en toe een festival, zoals het nu is, vinden de meeste mensen prima.

Fietsverbindingen

Over het algemeen zijn de mensen blij met extra bruggen en fietsverbindingen naar Rivierenwijk en verder, zodat zij kortere fietsroutes krijgen.

Kans op nieuwe woning of nieuwe voorzieningen

De meeste aanwezigen zien de toevoeging van nieuwe voorzieningen, zoals scholen en leuke horeca als een kans. Ook wordt gevraagd om behoud van de huidige voorzieningen zoals de bolderhal en het skatepark.



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1 Inleiding

Op 3 september 2018 was het buurtgesprek in Transwijk over de Merwedekanaalzone in Woonzorgcentrum Transwijk. Er waren ongeveer 80 mensen aanwezig. Met deze terugblik informeren wij u over wat er is besproken en wat er is opgehaald tijdens het buurtgesprek.

In het gezamenlijke deel komen achtereenvolgens wethouder Kees Diepeveen, ruimtelijk regisseur bij de gemeente Marcel Janssen en architect Marco Broekman (voor Merwede, deelgebied 5) aan het woord. Zie de bijlagen voor de presentaties. In het tweede deel van de avond konden mensen langs panelen lopen, in gesprek gaan met professionals en opmerkingen achter laten.

1.1 Doel van de avond

De avond diende om mensen te informeren over de plannen, vragen te beantwoorden en opmerkingen op te halen.

1.2 Wat doen we met uw opmerkingen?

De samenvatting van dit verslag wordt een bijlage bij de omgevingsvisie, zodat ook de gemeenteraad straks kan lezen wat u belangrijk vindt en dat in de besluitvorming kan meewegen. Er waren ook verschillende raadsleden aanwezig tijdens de avond die de opmerkingen uit eerste hand hebben gehoord. In de bijlage bij de Omgevingsvisie zullen we ook aangeven wat we met de opmerkingen hebben gedaan.

2 Inhoudelijke thema's

We hebben alle opmerkingen zoveel mogelijk ingedeeld in thema's. In de bijlage is de inhoud van de panelen nog een keer terug te lezen.

2.1 Merwede

In de hoek over Merwede (Deelgebied 5 van de Merwedekanaalzone), waren twee panelen te zien over Merwede en konden mensen vragen stellen bij het 3D-model van Merwede. Dit model is nog niet de echte werkelijkheid van de toekomst, maar gemaakt om meer gevoel te krijgen bij bouwhoogtes, straatprofielen, binnentuinen, schaduwwerking, uitzicht e.d. Bezoekers van het buurtgesprek konden vragen om vanuit een bepaald gezichtspunt door het gebied te 'bewegen/vliegen'. Zo kon ieder zich een betere voorstelling maken van de impact van de plannen.

Over de hoogbouw en het uitzicht:

- "Hier is het net een soort Manhattan, haha."
- "Die hoge bomenstrook daar, staat nu lagere bebouwing. Als je hier bouwt heeft niemand er last van." (hoogbouw concentreren tegenover Park Transwijk).
- "Het is zo massief (...) kijk dit is al wat vriendelijker bij dat parkje." Over de bebouwing aan de Europalaan.
- "Op zich wel mooi hoog-laag, lang-kort, niet allemaal dezelfde straatjes. Heel groen, dat vind ik ook mooi."
- "Dit is het uitzicht, ik vind het wel mooi." Een bewoner over het nieuwe uitzicht.
- "Dat wordt wennen voor mij, ik zie de dom niet meer, haha." Een bewoner van een van de drie appartementengebouwen aan de Beneluxlaan.

Overige

- "Het wordt wel levendig dat is zeker, ja mooi."
- Zorgen over ondernemers en bedrijven die niet zonder bevoorrading met auto kunnen
- Zorg of er wel een gewone prullenbak komt of enkel ondergronds vanuit woningen
- Zorg over geluid scholen en kinderen bij zon hoge dichtheid (met advies meer gevelbeplanting binnenterreinen om geluid te dempen)

2.2 Mobiliteit

Het thema Mobiliteit is uitgesplitst in 2 delen: het algemene mobiliteitsverhaal dat is afgebeeld op de panelen:

- Utrecht Groeit
- Mobiliteit: auto, OV en langzaam verkeer
- Mobiliteitshubs en parkeren.

Daarnaast waren er panelen over de langzaamverkeerbruggen en de nut en noodzaak ervan:

- Fietsverbindingen (zie paragraaf bruggen)
- Fiets- en wandelbruggen (zie paragraaf bruggen)

Fietsparkeren

- Fietsparkeren: op slimme plekken waar je snel bent (niet eerst door 5 deuren!).
- Goede inpandige fietsenstalling (bv. niet te steile hellingen).
- Er zijn veel te weinig fatsoenlijke fietsparkeerplekken. Gemeente hoe kan dat? Nu worden de auto's in de omliggende wijk geparkeerd. Politie durft niet op te treden tegen foutparkeerders.
- Zorg voor hogere parkeernormen voor fietsers.
- Maak veel flexibeler gebruik van de bestaande inpandige parkeerruimte.
- Zorg dat er niet teveel vergunningen worden uitgegeven.

Auto (zie ook opmerkingen Europalaan)

- Denk aan aansluiting busbaan Europalaan op Anne Frankplein. Er is geen aansluiting op de bustunnel voor de bussen vanuit Nieuwegein. Hoe kunnen die straks goed doorstromen?
- Toegang tot de wijk. Hier 1 route, maak deze fout niet bij de MWKZ!

2.3 Bruggen voor fietsen en wandelen

Op het buurtgesprek waren zes varianten voor bruggen te zien. Aanwezigen konden hier hun opmerkingen bijschrijven. De detailopmerkingen over de bruggenvarianten worden in de bruggenstudie meegenomen. Hieronder de samenvatting.

In Transwijk wordt veel waarde gehecht aan de fietsroutes naar Transwijk en Kanaleneiland en de daarbij behorende bruggen die worden voorgesteld door de gemeente richting Rivierenwijk. Mensen stellen het op prijs als ze -straks- minder hoeven om te fietsen. Wel wordt er aandacht gevraagd voor een goede inpassing van de fietspaden die naar de bruggen gaan leiden. Vooral de fietspaden door het park en voor de appartementen langs.

Verder kwamen de volgende opmerkingen:

- Zoveel mogelijk bruggen (liefst 3). Reduceert reistijd voor fietsers/scootmobielen etc. Ontmoe-digt gebruik van ander vervoer
- Verbindt de stad wat zorgt voor een inclusief gevoel
- Verdeling van de drukte wat voor minder overlast zorgt
- 'Fietspad verder van de huizen (over de appartementen aan de noordkant van Park Transwijk)
- De bruggen veranderen wel heel veel in rivierenbuurt



In de bijlage zijn de panelen terug te vinden. In onderstaande tekst zijn steeds de belangrijkste opmerkingen uit het buurtgesprek weergegeven.

Gedragsverandering

- Utrecht wil veranderen van autostad naar fietsstad. Het is wel belangrijk om de stad mee te krijgen.
- Er is een gedragsverandering nodig. Een grote vraag is: hoe gaan we de fietsers opvoeden. Zoals ze zich nu gedragen is levensgevaarlijk.
- Hoe zorgen we dat werkgevers in heel Utrecht zorgen voor minder autobewegingen en parkeernoodzaak. Flexibele werktijden, OV-kaarten, geen lease-auto's etc.
- Met nieuwe vervoermiddelen (inclusief deelauto) wordt het eigen autobezit minder noodzakelijk. Je moet vanaf het begin van de bouw al zorgen dat er goede voorzieningen zijn (OV, deelauto's) die functioneren.
- Er is onvoldoende zekerheid dat bewoners niet toch voor de auto kiezen. Wat gebeurt er als het gewenste lage autobezit niet gehaald wordt?
- In het begin kan er mogelijk nog wel gestuurd worden op 0,3 per woning, maar houd je dat vol? Welke oplossingen (terugvalopties) worden er achter de hand gehouden (Contra-expertise op inschatting lage parkeernorm, Minder woningen, P+R parkeren op afstand?)

Hoge kwaliteit OV

- Mensen benadrukken dat als wordt gekozen voor zo'n lage parkeernorm, het enorm belangrijk is te kiezen voor hoogwaardig openbaar vervoer. Zij zagen vanuit dat perspectief de tram ook wel zitten. "En begin dan niet met de bouw van de tram als de wijk al helemaal af is, want dan heeft iedereen al een auto gekocht".

Lage parkeernorm Merwede

- Aanwezigen zien het niet allemaal gebeuren dat mensen daadwerkelijk geen auto hebben: "Je hebt toch gewoon een auto nodig om boodschappen te doen!".
- Tegelijkertijd zien veel jonge mensen wel dat zij zelf bijna geen auto gebruiken: "Ik kan me best voorstellen dat zo'n deelauto nodig kan zijn. Als het goedkoop genoeg is, doe ik het".
- Mensen maken zich wel zorgen om de parkeerdruk en zien deels hun eigen parkeerplaats verdwijnen. Ook willen ze (nog) niet betalen voor hun parkeerplaats, ook al zien ze wel dat in de toekomst misschien nodig is.
- Ook werd opgemerkt dat Max, Pax en Lux zijn nog maar net opgeleverd, maar een groot deel van de parkeerplaatsen leeg staat. Huurders betalen voor P-ruimte die zij niet betalen.

Mobiliteitshub

- Mensen waren overwegend positief over dit concept van Mobiliteitshubs (knooppunten waar je vervoermiddelen kunt delen). Ze zagen bijvoorbeeld ook een toegevoegde waarde in zelfrijdende voertuigen voor met name ouderen en gehandicapten.
- Hoewel ze niet allemaal positief waren over het beperkte aantal parkeerplaatsen, dachten ze wel dat dit concept kon werken om met het openbaar vervoer te gaan of voor een deelauto te kiezen.
- Met name jongeren zagen die deelauto zitten.

Betaald parkeren in Transwijk

- Veel mensen willen geen betaald parkeren in de wijk. Na uitleg waarom dat mogelijk wel gaat komen bij de c... egrepen. Maar de algemene tendens was toch wel 'Waar... leuwe wijk?'

Onderwijs

Eén buurtbewoner maakte zich zorgen over de nieuwbouw van de school voor speciaal onderwijs 'Rafael' aan de Lanslaan in Transwijk. De busjes naar de school komen bij de nieuwbouw anders aangevaren. Daar gaat hij bij zijn woning last van krijgen. Hij vroeg zich af of de Rafael in Merwede gebouwd zou kunnen worden.

Vragen/thema's:

- Geef scholen een groen schoolplein met de mogelijkheid voor natuur- en milieulessen.
- Wat voor bevolkingsopbouw verwachten jullie voor de school.
- Wat voor type VO-school komt er
- Mogen straks leerlingen vanuit Transwijk ook in Merwede naar de basisschool?

Over Gezondheid en Welzijn waren geen specifieke opmerkingen.

Voorzieningen en werklocaties:

- "Ik heb belangstelling omdat ik heb gehoord dat er 55+ woningen komen. dat zou ik mooi vinden want ik woon nu in Transwijk "
- "Ik woon nu in Kanaleneiland is een vrij saaie wijk dus hoop dat merwede meer leuke voorzieningen krijgt"
- "Voorzieningen voor Merwede niet in park transwijk plaatsen want dat park moet groen blijven"
- "Ik ben benieuwd hoe de detailhandel zelf denkt over een autoluwe wijk"



2.6 Park Transwijk

Bij het paneel over Park Transwijk zijn de volgende opmerkingen gemaakt:

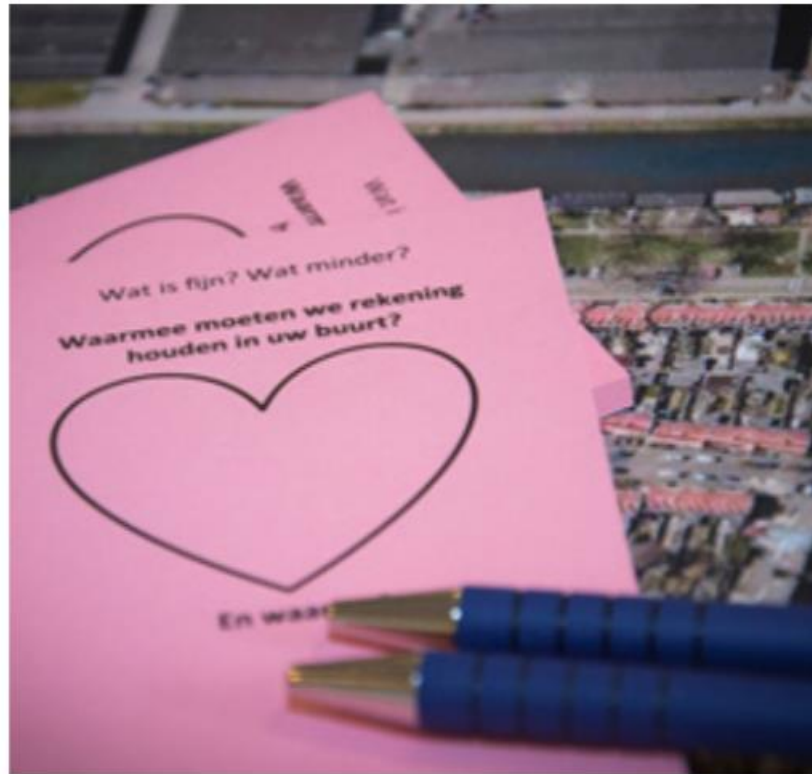
- Fietspaden door het park (en scooters en brommers)
 - Fietspad Westdijklaan stuit op veel weerstand van omwonenden, vooral op huidige plek i.v.m. vooral overlast door scooters/brommers. Te dicht op appartementencomplexen. Aandachtspunt is ook dat voor verbreding van pad er prachtige bomen moeten worden gekapt en dat wil men niet. Bomen zijn belangrijk voor het park. Mensen sowieso beducht voor scooters en brommers in het park.
 - Geen fietspad (Westdijklaan) langs de appartementencomplexen (voetpad well!). Mensen vrezen overlast door brommers/scooters en als pad wordt verbreed, wat betekent dat voor de huidige prachtige eiken en platanen en kinderen en fietsen is geen goede combinatie (in een park moet je juist veilig kunnen bewegen, lastig als er ook fietsers zijn).
 - Verleg het fietspad meer in zuidelijke richting, meer tegen de bosrand aan (richting de heuvel). Huidige route te dicht op de woningen.
 - Is de fietsverbinding door het park meer zuidelijk (in verlengde van parkeren) niet voldoende? Waarom ook nog ter hoogte van de appartementen?
 - Geen gemotoriseerd verkeer in het park (brommers en scooters)
 - Waarom zijn er fietspaden door het park nodig? Kan er toch ook omheen?
- Houd het park vooral groen (inclusief de bossen) met niet te veel programma, hoewel er ook mensen zijn die wel ideeën hebben over toevoegingen:
 - Terras van restaurant is leuk.
 - Vooral op zondag kan het druk zijn in het park. Veel mensen van Kanaleneiland dan in het park. Nadeel is wel de rommel die er dan achterblijft. Kan er geen opzichter in het park lopen op dergelijke dagen?
 - Leuk dat er af en toe een festival is, vooral het bevrijdingsfestival wordt gewaardeerd. Dit niet afschaffen! Verder wel vervelend als voor een festival een groot deel van het park wordt afgesloten en daarmee niet meer toegankelijk is voor de bewoners voor dagelijkse ommetje.
 - Er is besef dat de druk op het park zal toenemen.
- Het toevoegen van een open waterverbinding door het park wordt niet per se gezien als een extra kwaliteit voor het park. Vooral zorgen over wat dit betekent voor het bestaande groen (bomen). Eigenlijk nog geen goed beeld welke impact dit zal hebben op het huidige park.
- De meeste bewoners waarderen het park zeer. Op vraag wat ze zouden veranderen is vooral het hekwerk weghalen genoemd. Ook het (groen)onderhoud kan beter.

Verder zeiden mensen uit de buurt over Park Transwijk:

- "Ik woon hier alsof ik in het bos woon, zo groen is mijn uitzicht."
- "Het bos is het mooist onderdeel van het park"
- "Het is elke dag vakantie." (context: doordat je zo in het groen van het park woont)
- "Het is ieder weekend vakantie." (context: doordat je zo in het groen van het park woont)
- "Qua structuur kun je er weinig aan veranderen."
- "Wil je al die mensen straks naar Park Transwijk sturen? Dan wordt het misschien te klein, het park."
- "Als er een oversteek is naar Park Transwijk, dat zou wel mooi zijn."
- "Ik ben benieuwd hoe de oversteek eruitziet, hoe vloeiend dat is."
- "Moet je voorstellen, wij wonen in dat gebouw. Het rijwielpad ligt zo dicht bij het appartementencomplex, maak dat een stuk naar achteren." (Bewoners Westdijklaan maken zich zorgen over het fietspad voor hun deur.)
- "Nu gaat om 1 de prostituees." (Over het hek tussen Park Transwijk en d
- "Het wordt eer... t park toe. Nu al gaan mensen in het

2.7 Overige opmerkingen

In een van de hoeken in de zaal kunnen mensen op rozehartjesstickers aangeven wat ze fijn vinden aan de huidige wijk, en wat minder. En waarmee we rekening moeten houden in de plannen.



Kansen en wensen:

- Iemand doet hier de suggestie om een leuk feest te organiseren voor omwonenden na afloop van een aantal jaar om de overlast een beetje goed te maken.
- "Spannende nieuwe wijk! Lijkt me leuk om te gaan wonen".
- "Ik wil graag in de buurt blijven wonen: MWKZ biedt kansen."
- In Lux veel lege parkeerplaatsen. Nu al veel leegstand, waar je wel voor betaalt in VVE-kosten/huur.

Het ging ook over het (woningbouw)programma:

- "Graag nieuwe woningen in Transparkwijk, zoals de Lomanlaan (2-etage woningen)."
- "Niet te klein bouwen!"
- Maat houden t... ? Nog meer auto's etc. Dure huizen, 2-verdiene... dus 2

◀ ◀ 15 / 16 ▶ ▶

Merwedekanaalzone: Terugblik buurtgesprek Rivierenwijk



Terugblik op
het buurtgesprek
12 september 2018



Samenvatting

Op 12 september 2018 was het buurtgesprek Merwedekanaalzone in Rivierenwijk in de ROC op de Vondellaan. Er waren ongeveer 200 buurtbewoners en andere betrokkenen uit de buurt. Hieronder de samenvatting van de reacties van de bezoekers die tijdens de avond zijn opgehaald.

Fiets- en wandelbruggen

Een veel gehoorde opmerking tijdens het buurtgesprek is dat mensen uit Rivierenwijk de bruggen voor langzaam verkeer niet wenselijk vinden. Een deel van deze mensen geeft aan dat zij geen behoefte hebben om naar de nieuwe wijk Merwede te gaan, of dat de bestaande bruggen voldoen. Aan de andere kant zijn er ook mensen die het juist fijn vinden om directer verbonden te worden met Park Transwijk en nieuwe voorzieningen. Ook is er de vrees bij een grote groep aanwezigen dat de bruggen zorgen voor veel extra fietsers, scooters en wandelaars en dat daarmee de rust in Rivierenwijk wordt verstoord. Er zijn mensen die aangeven dat je met meer bruggen de drukte beter spreidt. Wat betreft de inpassing van de bruggen vragen mensen aandacht voor het Merwedeplantsoen, de nieuwe fietsroutes, verkeersveiligheid bij bijvoorbeeld de scholen en aandacht voor de woonbootbewoners.

Groen

In de huidige situatie is er weinig groen in Rivierenwijk. Het groen dat er wel is, zoals het Merwedeplantsoen, zien veel aanwezigen als heel waardevol. Als er dan bruggen komen, dan wordt aandacht gevraagd voor een zorgvuldige inpassing en eventueel meer groen elders in de wijk. Het nieuwe Merwedepark aan de overkant zien de meeste mensen niet direct als toevoeging voor de Rivierenwijk. Door de eventuele bruggen komt Park Transwijk wel 'dichterbij'.

Hoogbouw

De aanwezige Rivierenwijkers benadrukken het rustige dorpse karakter van hun buurt. Dat zien zij in schril contrast met de overkant waar de stadswijk Merwede komt. Veel mensen, met name aan het Merwedeplantsoen vragen aandacht voor de bouwhoogtes en willen het liefst dat de hoogtes aan het kanaal zoveel mogelijk aansluiten bij hun wijk.

Drukker worden en effect op leefbaarheid

Over de hoeveelheid woningen zijn de meeste mensen op het buurtgesprek erg kritisch; zij zien Rivierenwijk drukker worden, zeker in combinatie met de bruggen. Veel aanwezigen zetten vraagtekens bij de haalbaarheid van de mobiliteitsoplossingen met OV, fiets- en wandelbruggen, deelauto's en een lage parkeernorm. Ze vrezen dat ze meer overlast gaan ervaren op de autowegen en (nieuwe) fietspaden en nieuwe bewoners die in hun buurt willen parkeren. Ook zien mensen een verandering van de buurt, doordat er meer mensen van buiten de wijk in de Rivierenwijk komen en de beslotenheid of huidige mix van mensen verloren gaat. Verder vrezen sommige mensen voor meer criminaliteit en hangjongeren.

Voorzieningen

De meeste aanwezigen zien kansen in de nieuwe voorzieningen die aan het gebied worden toegevoegd. Mensen noemen bijvoorbeeld de toevoeging van scholen, of zien graag bijzondere horeca of winkels, een beter hardloopprondje of leuke speeltuinen. Aan de andere kant bestaat er ook de zorg dat de nieuwe wijk te veel voor hoger opgeleiden zal zijn.

Bewoners betrekken

Verschillende Rivierenwijkers geven aan dat zij nog meer willen weten en beter betrokken willen zijn. De werkgroep Houd Rivierenwijk Leefbaar pleit specifiek voor een nulmeting op leefbaarheid. De gemeente heeft toegezegd dat hier een vervolg aan wordt gegeven.



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1 Inleiding

Op 12 september 2018 was het buurtgesprek in Rivierenwijk over de Merwedekanaalzone in de ROC op de Vondellaan. Er waren ruim 200 mensen aanwezig. Met deze terugblik informeren wij u over wat er is besproken en wat er is opgehaald tijdens het buurtgesprek.

1.1 Doel van de avond

De avond diende om mensen te informeren over de plannen voor de Merwedekanaalzone, vragen te beantwoorden en opmerkingen op te halen.

1.2 Wat doen we met uw opmerkingen?

De samenvatting van dit verslag wordt een bijlage bij de omgevingsvisie, zodat ook de gemeenteraad straks kan lezen wat u belangrijk vindt en dat in de besluitvorming kan meewegen. Er waren ook verschillende raadsleden aanwezig tijdens de avond die de opmerkingen uit eerste hand hebben gehoord. In de bijlage bij de Omgevingsvisie zullen we ook aangeven wat we met de opmerkingen hebben gedaan.

2 Algemeen deel

In het algemene deel komen achtereenvolgens wethouder Kees Diepeveen, ruimtelijk regisseur bij de gemeente Marcel Janssen en architect Marco Broekman (voor Merwede, deelgebied 5) aan het woord. Zie ook de inleiding van dit verslag en de bijlagen voor de presentaties. Daarna zijn er korte interviews met enkele bewoners.

Interview met Houdt Rivierenwijk Leefbaar:

- We horen veel verontruste berichten sinds september vorig jaar; enorme plannen, hoge aantallen, in dg 5 moeten er daarom bruggen komen;
- 4000 fietsers per etmaal is heel veel, die hebben eigenlijk niets te zoeken bij ons;
- Balijebrug en Socratesbrug leiden al naar voorzieningen;
- Reserveer een potje om problemen op te lossen. Ga een nulmeting doen.

Interview met SUWO (Stichting Utrechtse Woonboten Overleg):

- Een streep door ons huis, dan voel je je klote..
- Wat gebeurt er met onze leden, de burens... als er een brug komt?
- Waarom wil je 1-2-3 bruggen, laat zien wat er met onze input gebeurt!

Interview met lid klankbordgroep Merwede:

- Heel erg vanuit Merwedekanaalzone gedacht, wij willen als omwonenden ook onze invloed uitoefenen;
- Grote zorgen: o.a de bruggen;
- Bezorgd om nieuwe probleemwijk, vgl. Kanaleneiland.

Tenslotte was er ook nog aandacht voor drie kernpunten die een van de bewoners graag plenair besproken wilde hebben. Een lid van de werkgroep Houdt Rivierenwijk Leefbaar somt op:

1. Bruggen: belangrijk dat vanuit gemeente wordt gezegd dat wij gesprekspartner zijn; wij willen gehoord worden, staan nog niet eens op de eerste tree van participatieladder, proberen erop te komen, maar worden iedere keer eraf geschopt.
2. Nulmeting op kernpunten leefbaarheid: kader mee geven, zodat we kunnen meedenken en ideeën spuien.
3. Groen: jullie hebben het over park, maar ons Merwedeplantsoen wordt niet genoemd. Hou eens op met de overkant!

3. Inhoudelijke thema's

We hebben alle opmerkingen zoveel mogelijk ingedeeld in thema's. In de bijlage is de inhoud van de panelen nog een keer terug te lezen.



3.1 Merwede

In de hoek over Merwede (deelgebied 5 van de Merwedekanaalzone) waren twee panelen te zien over Merwede en konden mensen vragen stellen bij het 3D-model van Merwede. Dit model is nog niet de echte werkelijkheid van de toekomst, maar gemaakt om meer gevoel te krijgen bij bouwhoogtes, straatprofielen, binnentuinen, schaduwwerking, uitzicht e.d. Bezoekers van het buurtgesprek konden vragen om vanuit een bepaald gezichtspunt door het gebied te 'bewegen/vliegen'. Zo kon ieder zich een betere voorstelling maken van de impact van de plannen.

Hieronder een overzicht van de opmerkingen die gemaakt zijn over de inrichting van openbare ruimte en effecten van hoogbouw:

- "Ik heb zonnepanelen en het is al geen ideale hoek" (over bezonning van de Rivierenwijk, blijkt nauwelijks invloed);
- "Als ik hoogbouw wil ga ik wel in Rotterdam wonen";
- "Als je langs de Rabobank fietst, waai je bijna van je fiets";
- "De oude wijken zijn allemaal redelijk laag" (in vergelijking met de nieuwe overkant);
- "Wat is de behoefte van Rivierenwijk, dat is meer groen";
- "Het is nu een beetje laag, maar de Vechtclub is leuk, de pluktuin ...";
- "De luifel is een beetje laag, maar bijna letterlijk verstaan", over de luifel van het fietsdekkend dak;
- "Ik ben redelijk positief dat het laag blijft bij het kanaal" over de hoogteopbouw;

Verder kwamen er opmerkingen over het (woningbouw)programma:

- "Dan hoef ik maar vijf minuten lopen naar de Albert Hein";
- "Ik snap ook wel de keuze van de gemeente om een duurzame wijk te maken";
- "Ik ben er niet van overtuigd dat ik in 2030 geen auto meer zou willen";
- Door de samenstelling van het woningbouwprogramma (veel kleine woningen) is men bang voor een grote verhuigeneidheid uit het gebied Merwede. "Mensen zullen toch uiteindelijk een grotere woning willen hebben. Hierdoor zorgen om leefbaarheid van het gebied; weinig sociale samenhang";
- Er wordt ook aandacht gevraagd voor de portemonnee: " Middenhuur!";
- "Liefst 40% sociale huur en 25 middenhuur".

En over leefbaarheid:

- "Oppassen dat de dure woningen niet achter hekken verdwijnen ('gated community') en de woonblokken naar binnen zijn gericht.";
- "Nieuwe buurt: Sociale cohesie, geen duiventil. Niet te kleine woningen zodat mensen weer snel weggaan.";
- "Sociale cohesie omdat mensen elkaar kunnen ontmoeten op straat!! Geen anonimiteit!".

3.2 Mobiliteit

Het thema Mobiliteit is uitgesplitst in 2 delen: het algemene mobiliteitsverhaal dat is afgebeeld op de panelen:

- Utrecht Groeit;
- Mobiliteit: auto, OV en langzaam verkeer;
- Mobiliteitshubs en parkeren.

Daarnaast waren er panelen over langzaam verkeerbruggen en de nut-en noodzaak ervan:

- Fietsverbindingen (zie paragraaf bruggen);
- Fiets- en wandelbruggen (zie paragraaf bruggen).

Belangrijkste opmerkingen per paneel

Paneel Utrecht Groeit (over de groei van de stad en het effect op mobiliteit):

Geen vragen over groei van de stad! Wel veel over mobiliteit:

- OV zat nu helemaal niet in de presentaties. Werd door aantal mensen gemist. Inzicht in HOV plus haltes aan Europalaan graag toevoegen in volgende presentaties. Helpt ook in beeld weghalen dat iedereen toch nog met de auto komt;
- Auto: zorgen over effect op Goylaan en vragen over vormgeving Europaplein.

Paneel Mobiliteit: auto, ov en langzaam verkeer:

- Noodzaak om te leren van min of meer vergelijkbare autoluwe voorbeelden zoals het CWL-terrein in Amsterdam, zorg over de omvang van het programma;
- Aandacht voor fietsen/bruggen: zorg over drukte in omliggende wijken door bijv. bezorgdiensten, scooters, maar ook de noodzaak van hoogwaardige fietsvoorzieningen omdat het door de drukte in de stad niet vanzelfsprekend is om lekker te fietsen;
- Noodzaak van tijdige en goede oplossingen voor het openbaar vervoer. Station Vaartsche Rijn wordt bijvoorbeeld nu al als een goed alternatief voor de auto gezien;
- De haalbaarheid van de mobiliteitsoplossingen, o.a. voor autoverkeer. Zorg over drukte

Paneel Mobility hubs en parkeren:

Realiteitsgehalte parkeernorm.

Veel mensen geven aan dat ze een parkeernorm van 0,3 te ambitieus vinden. Ze zien graag een betere onderbouwing dat dit kan werken, en vragen of we nadenken over een plan B. Termen die gebruikt werden:

- "Is 0,3 realistisch?";
- "Zijn er voorbeelden wat dit is gerealiseerd? Binnen en buiten Nederland?";
- "Wat als het niet lukt? Wat doe je om afwenteling op andere gebieden te voorkomen?";
- "Kun je niet een model ontwikkelen waarin je stap voor stap uitprobeert of het werkt?";
- "Prachtig, mobiliteitshub, maar ik ben niet overtuigd dat dit voldoende de automobilititeit omlaag brengt. Graag meer argumenten hoe jullie dit ambitieniveau denken te gaan halen;
- Als het niet werkt moet je minder huizen bouwen";
- "Gaat 0,3 norm ook voor Rivierenwijk gelden?";
- "Zorg eerst voor goed OV, daarna pas woningbouw!".

Waar laat je alle auto's?

- "Hoeveel mensen willen hiervan een auto? Men zegt zeker de helft of meer. dat is 3000 auto's. Bij 0,3 heb je 1800 plaatsen in het gebied. Waar laat je de andere 1200?";
- "Heb je hier wel plaatsen voor buiten het gebied? Heb je dit wel onderzocht?";
- "De parkeerdruk wordt waarschijnlijk naar Rivierenwijk verplaatst. Door de bruggen kunnen de bewoners makkelijker hun auto in Rivierenwijk parkeren.".

Zijn er wel genoeg mensen die voldoen aan gewenst profiel?

- "Hoe selecteer je mensen, die volgens achterliggende visie willen leven?";
- "Zoek/bedenk zaken die mensen trekken die dit willen.";
- "Wordt er met de bewoners een contract gesloten om te zorgen dat de 0,3 norm niet overschreden wordt?";
- "Opvoeden van de mensen kost ook veel tijd.";
- "Zorg dat ontwikkelaars en makelaars het eerlijke verhaal over de auto vertellen.".

Betaald parken in Rivierenwijk

- Enkele personen waren fel tegen. Anderen wilden het ook liever niet, maar keken er positiever tegenaan afhankelijk van de voorwaarden:
 - "Wat voor parkeervergunningen zijn er?"
 - "Hoe duur zijn ze?"
 - "Welke variaties in venstertijden zijn er?"
 - "Wat zijn de effecten voor de openbare ruimte?"
- Er waren ook sterke voorstanders van betaald parkeren: uiteindelijk moet je in de hele stad naar veel minder auto's toe;
- In Rivierenwijk is een groep ouderen, zeker in de sociale woningen, die heel erg afhankelijk zijn van mantelzorgers die met de auto komen. Deze blijven weg als ze betaald moeten parkeren. Het gereduceerde tarief is ook te veel;
- Bewoners Rivierenwijk worden gestraft door betaald parkeren in te voeren. Laat onze wijk zoals het is.

Hub en taalgebruik

- "Praat en schrijf graag in gewoon Nederlands: dus niet: Rent a ride, HUB, drop off, stop en go.";
- "Waarom overtuigen mensen het niet zelf even halen?";
- "Kunnen bewoners de voorzieningen als deelauto's, HUB's? Ik wil ook graag

3.3 Bruggen voor fietsen en wandelen

Op het buurtgesprek waren zes varianten voor bruggen te zien. Mensen konden hier hun opmerkingen bijschrijven. De detailopmerkingen over de bruggenvarianten worden in de bruggenstudie meegenomen. Hieronder de samenvatting van veel voorkomende opmerkingen.

Bewoners van Rivierenwijk, hoeven niet naar de overkant

Veel bewoners van Rivierenwijk hebben helemaal niet de behoefte naar Merwede te gaan in de toekomst: "Ik heb daar niets te zoeken". Zij zien voor hen geen enkele toegevoegde waarde in de functies in Merwede zoals de mobiliteitshub, parkeren, winkels of scholen. Zij hebben hun voorzieningen nu al elders.

Aan de andere kant zijn er ook mensen die het juist logisch vinden dat bij een hoog stedelijke wijk loop- en fietsbruggen horen en het bijvoorbeeld fijn vinden om direct verbonden te worden met Park Transwijk en nieuwe voorzieningen.

Verstoring van de rust

Veel bewoners vrezen het extra fiets- en wandelverkeer in hun nu zo rustige wijk. Ze willen nut en noodzaak zien en willen dat graag met cijfers onderbouwd zien.

Enkele bewoners noemen ook dat ze niet zitten te wachten op scooters uit Kanaleneiland.

Ook zijn er mensen die denken dat je met meer bruggen de drukte beter spreidt.

Met de aanleg van twee bruggen ben je er nog niet – kijk naar de rest van het netwerk

Enkele bewoners maken de opmerking dat bij de aanleg van twee bruggen je er nog niet bent.

Je creëert dan weer nieuwe knelpunten, met name richting centraal station (bij de AH Vondellaan) of de Jutfaseweg.

Inpassing van de bruggen

Veel mensen vragen aandacht voor de inpassing van de bruggen in het Merwedeparksoen. Zij vinden het frustrerend dat gesproken wordt over het Merwedepark, terwijl het Merwedeparksoen volgens hen wordt aangetast

Ook voor de inpassing bij de Gertrudisschool wordt aandacht gevraagd. Bij het halen en brengen is het er nu al een chaos, wordt er gezegd.

Een andere zorg is de inpassing van de fietsroute in de Waalstraat: "Waalstraat geen snelweg laten worden tussen Merwede en Smaragdplein".

En er zijn grote zorgen over de inpassing of compensatie of verplaatsing van woonboten: "Bewoners wachten nu al een jaar op antwoord op de vraag wat er nu gaat gebeuren."

3.4 Voorzieningen

Het thema voorzieningen is uitgesplitst in vier delen:

- Sporten en bewegen;
- Onderwijs;
- Gezondheid en welzijn;
- Voorzieningen en werklocaties.

Opmerkingen per paneel

Bij het paneel over Sporten en bewegen werden de volgende opmerkingen gemaakt:

- Roeibelang water en coachpad Merwedekanaal benadrukken, schep ruimte om naar deze topsport te kijken;
- Zorg over veiligheid zwemmers, is gevaarlijk met roeiers, optie zwemwater achter Muntbrug bespreekbaar;
- Maak zwemmen in het deel waar geroeid wordt onmogelijk;
- Positief plan om bij schoollocaties een gymzaal te realiseren;
- Op zoek naar hardlooppadjes zonder dat je hoeft te stoppen bij verkeerslichten. Hardlooppad Kanaalweg open houden, ook tijdens bouw.

Bij het paneel over Onderwijs kwamen de volgende punten naar voren:

- Iedereen is voorstander van extra scholen;
- Idee: Gertrudisschool (locatie Waalstraat) wordt à-là de Daphne Schippersbrug. Met brug die start op de Waatstraat en school die staat aan de overkant in de Merwedekanaalzone;
- Scholen in de periferie van de Merwedekanaalzone zullen effect gaan ondervinden van de nieuwbouw. Goed nadenken over de positie van de schoolgebouwen dus;
- Voorzieningen bij elkaar: Denk aan kinderopvang en gymzalen bij de scholen;
- Basisscholen niet onder één bouwblok, maar juist als voorziening met speelplein, groen, kinderopvang en gymnastiek.

Over Gezondheid en welzijn werden de volgende punten meegegeven:

- Leuke speelplekken: uitdagend voor kinderen;
- Combi speeltuin met terras.

Bij Voorzieningen en werklocaties gaven mensen mee:

- Vrees dat er geen interessante voorzieningen komen;
- Geen behoefte aan "saai" of te dure ketens of alleen maar duurzaam;
- Geen subsidie voor feestjes voor hoogopgeleiden;
- Plekken waar iets leuks gebeurt (leuker dan Rijnlaan), bijvoorbeeld bijzondere horeca of winkels;
- De Vechtclub XL wil heel graag weten wanneer er definitief duidelijkheid komt over of zij kunnen blijven in het gebied of niet en onder welke voorwaarden.

3.5 Groen

Bij het thema groen waren er twee panelen: over Merwedepark en over Park Transwijk.

De belangrijkste opmerkingen over het groen in Rivierenwijk zijn:

- Leven in onzekerheid over wat er nu echt gaat komen en wat dat voor hen betekent is een belangrijk punt;
- (Te kort aan) groen is belangrijk aandachtspunt in Rivierenwijk en dan helpt het niet als je een deel van het groen aan de Merwedekade opoffert voor het maken van fiets- en voetverbindingen.

- Schoolplein van de Gertrudes ook toegankelijk maken na schooltijd, staat nu een hoog hek omheen;
- Merwedepantsen behouden;
- Groentje aan de Waalstraat is niet toegankelijk. Waarom niet?;
- Meer bomen in de wijk, vergroenen van de straten zodat je het gevoel hebt dat je in het groen woont;
- Compensatie voor verlies: als er toch wordt gekozen voor bruggen, wat levert dit de bewoners van de Merwedekade dan op? Is het mogelijk om dan een kwaliteitsslag te doen in het plantsoen. Delen van de kade worden goed gebruikt om te spelen en picknicken. Echter, dit kan niet overal vanwege hondenpoep. Niet overal een prettige plek. Dus investering in dat overal kan worden gespeeld (bewoner met jonge kinderen, woont precies op een plek waar het groen eigenlijk niet gebruikt kan worden vanwege honden);
- Als er toch verbindingen komen, maak ze dan groen (ook ecologisch);
- Bouwwerkzaamheden:
 - Door de bouwlogistiek zullen de bewoners de komende 10 jaar geen profijt hebben van het Merwedepark;
 - Bij de bouwwerkzaamheden graag rekening houden met functie van het water als roeibaan; oever voor coaches toegankelijk houden. Recent konden ze er niet langs vanwege complete afsluiten van de Kanaalweg.



Opmerkingen bij de panelen:

Over het Merwedepark kwamen de volgende opmerkingen:

- Oost-westroutes moeten groen en ecologisch worden vormgegeven;
- Enkele bewoners vroegen zich af of het Merwedepark wel groot genoeg is om al die mensen een recreatieplek te geven. De Ingetekende parkjes langs de route lijken niet erg groot;
- Neem het Merwedepark op in de hoofdgroenstructuur van de gepresenteerde plannen. Groen niet opofferen voor het groen aan de overkant van het water. Probleem is dat oudere bewoners groen dicht bij huis nodig hebben, de overkant is te ver;
- Positief om het kanaal en het groen te verbinden. Hierbij wel opletten op;
- Doorgaand fietsverkeer in combinatie met wandelaars en spelende kinderen;
- Maak "zwemmen" onmogelijk, maak iets met water aan wal en laat het water vaarwater blijven;
- Toegankelijkheid van de Kanaalweg tijdens bouwactiviteiten. Roeiers: houd de Kanaalweg geschikt voor de coaches en let er bij werkzaamheden straks op dat de Kanaalweg wel toegankelijk blijft.

Over Park Transwijk werd het volgende gezegd:

- Park Transwijk is de afgelopen 20 jaar kleiner geworden door het toevoegen van allerlei functies zoals de dierenweide, speeltuin, restaurant. Ook is rond de jaren '80 door het toevoegen van de verzorgingsflats het park verkleind. Er zijn zorgen dat dit nu ook gaat gebeuren. Let hierop gemeente!;
- Vrees voor alleen kijkgroen;
- Echte verbetering park transwijk: niet alleen extra groen maar ook meer horeca, terras en speeltuin met terras;
- Bruggen zorgen voor snelle verbinding met Park Transwijk (Rivierenwijk heeft nauwelijks groen);
- Let erop bij ingrepen in het park dat Park Transwijk een park blijft en de ruimte niet wordt ingevuld met allerlei functies (achtergrond: afgelopen jaren is park al kleiner geworden door het toevoegen van programma).

3.6 Waarden van de Rivierenwijk

In een van de hoeken in de zaal kunnen mensen op rozehartjesstickers aangeven wat ze fijn vinden aan de huidige wijk, en wat minder. En waarmee we rekening moeten houden in de plannen.



Rustige karakter van Rivierenwijk

Veel mensen geven aan dat ze het rustige en gemoedelijke karakter van de wijk nu heel erg waarderen:

- "Wij wonen nu prettig en rustig!";
- "Volkse buurt, lieve mensen, ruimte elkaar te helpen.";
- "Het is zo lekker om in de stad dorps te wonen.";
- "Het karakter van de wijk verandert, ik ben hier gaan wonen omdat het dorps aanvoelt." Een bewoonster van Rivierenwijk. "Je vraagt best veel van mensen.";
- Op mijn vraag wat ze los van Merwedekanaalzone graag in Rivierenwijk anders willen antwoorden ze: niets, het is gewoon een goede wijk;
- "Ik slaap nu met mijn hond op de bank. Ik wil geen x- duizend fietsers en scooters";
- "Qua verkeer v
- "Groen, rust, dorps karakter, kleine schaal, kleinschalig, geen bruggen Merwedekanaalzone, liefst een laagbouwwoonwijk, veel minder woningen Merwedekanaalzone.";

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Er zijn zorgen, al in de huidige situatie:

- "Let op Socratesbrug/t Goylaan die dagelijks verstopt staan";
- "Rivierenwijk is erg verstedelijkt, praktisch geen groen.";
- "Te weinig groen en als groen is het een hondentoilet."

En zorgen over de toekomst:

- "20.000 bewoners in Mwkz is meer dan (de rest van) Kanaleneiland! Laat de nieuwe wijk autarkisch zijn (= op zichzelf bestaand);
- "Wij willen die gezelligheid niet; niet afwentelen via bruggen";
- "Staan belangen eigenaren voorop? Winst maken gronden, wie legt tegenwicht in de schaal? Soort Manhattan terwijl Utrecht juist geliefd om dorpse karakter. We willen geen Manhattan aan de Merwede woden."

Mensen waarderen de mix van verschillende groepen:

- "Er is een mix van 3 'groepen': arbeiders, niet-westerse afkomst; opgeleid. Wees trots op een geslaagde integratie van deze 3 groepen."

Er wordt ook gevraagd om een analyse:

- "Is er een analyse van wat er allemaal gaat veranderen?";
- "Onrealistische kerncijfers!";
- "(ik) wil graag meer horen van de effecten op Rivierenwijk. Wat betekent deze ontwikkeling voor ons?"