Who takes care of Amstelpark and Vondelpark?

A comparative analysis of two Amsterdam parks

Colophon

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"What is common to the greatest number gets the least amount of care. Men pay most attention to what is their own; they care less for what is common; or at any rate they care for it only to the extent to which each is individually concerned. Even when there is no other cause for inattention, men are more prone to neglect their duty when they think that another is attending to it."

Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC)

Preface

My Bachelor thesis on the subject of the Vilnius urban public space system may be seen as the beginning of my Master thesis. As the interest in the subject I researched for my Bachelor did no diminished, I decided to research public spaces for my Master's studies as well. However, the focus changed from analysing the Vilnius urban public spaces system, its main features and functioning in my Bachelor thesis to the analysis of the ongoing involvement and participation processes in two Amsterdam parks (Amstelpark and Vondelpark) in my Master thesis.

The accomplishment of this thesis took my almost a year, therefore the thesis could be considered the biggest challenge of my Master's studies. The beginning of my thesis could be considered the month of April, when the Master thesis research object finally settled down thanks to finding an internship. Although writing the thesis was not easy and sometimes even challenging, I enjoyed this process as it gave me the opportunity to get to know many different people, from gardeners to municipal authorities. These people helped me to get different perspectives on how things work in the park planning and management.

The production of this thesis would have been hardly possible without the help of several people who contributed to the writing process with their advice, recommendations and guidance. Firstly, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Sara Macdonald, without whom I would not have been able to produce my Master thesis successfully. Sara was always flexible with time and always gave a quick response to any questions that I had. I am grateful for all the feedback, recommendations and critical notes, which helped me to improve the quality of my thesis. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the lecturers who have also contributed to this paper through the shared knowledge during their lectures.

Secondly, I would like to thank Irene Fortuyn, the artistic director of *KETTER&Co*, for the opportunity given to join the team of *KETTER&Co*. This internship was an interesting and great experience where I had the opportunity to work in an independent working environment. Special thanks to Carine Middeldorp who together with Irene supervised me and gave much useful advice and recommendations during the research. Additionally, I would like to thank Lindy Hengst who helped me with the graphic information and the front page of this thesis, as well as with the interviews which were held in Dutch. I would also like to thank the team of *KETTER&Co*, since without their advice, recommendations and support given during the research this research would not be in the form it is today.

Finally, I would like to thank all respondents who participated in my research. Special thanks to the officials from the municipality of Amsterdam, the representatives of local community groups, the project managers of artistic organizations (foundations), as well as the gardeners of Amstelpark and Vondelpark. The participation and valuable input for the research is appreciated.

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Summary

In the beginning of this research, a literature analysis was conducted to obtain an overview of the main theoretical concepts concerning such topics as commons, community, collaboration, and care. It began with analysis of the concept of commons with more attention on the Tragedy of the Commons. Later on, the concepts of community and sense of community were analyzed, as well as literature on collaboration, citizen (public) participation and its manifestations in planning, community participation, and collaborative governance and planning was reviewed. Finally, public space planning, management and maintenance were analysed briefly. To explore the involvement and mobilization of park communities and more specifically three actor groups (gardeners, local community-based groups and visitors), it was decided to steer this research from the citizen participation perspective. To explore citizen participation, five research variables were chosen and applied to this research: sense of community, collective efficacy, norms for activism, community problems and opportunities for involvement.

A mixed research methodology was used to conduct this research. To gather empirical data, a survey was conducted with more than 200 people in the case study areas: Amstelpark and Vondelpark. Respondents were asked questions on the maintenance and citizen participation topics. To enrich collected surveys, individual and group semi-structured interviews were performed with 20 people who were in one way or another professionally related to one of the parks. They were gardeners, representatives of community groups, project managers of artistic organizations and municipal authorities. These semi-structured interviews were focused on the same topics as the surveys; maintenance and citizen participation processes in the parks. Park planning and management topics were explored in interviews held with the municipal officials. In addition to these research methods, participatory and non-participant observations, as well as document analysis were performed during this research.

This research showed that Amstelpark and Vondelpark are two distinct parks that are valued and managed differently, have diverse qualities and uses, and are experienced in various ways. To begin with, the first difference between the parks is that there is a stronger sense of community in Vondelpark, where people from various parts of the city come to participate in various maintenance and non-maintenance activities quite frequently. In Amstelpark this sense of community is not as strong, as the community there is undeveloped and not very engaged in the park's issues and its ongoing activities. Secondly, there is a lack of representation in management matters related to the maintenance of the park among the gardeners of Amstelpark and to a lesser extent among the gardeners of Vondelpark. However, the community groups of Amstelpark and Vondelpark are satisfied with their representation in management matters of the park, although there ought to be some improvements in communication with the municipality. In result, there would be an interest from gardeners and community groups to participate and be involved in the management processes of the two parks. Thirdly, the most significant challenges for these parks are the recent budget cuts for public spaces and the lack of overall long-term park vision, which often cause other smaller scale problems, such as the lack of educational activities in Amstelpark or the lack of manpower in both parks. Furthermore, Vondelpark's evaluation is mostly positive among visitors, gardeners and community groups, while the maintenance and management of Amstelpark is evaluated negatively by the two actors groups, which look after the park; the gardeners and the community groups. The visitors of Amstelpark are satisfied with how the park is maintained. Lastly, the opportunities for public involvement are uneven between Amstelpark and Vondelpark, as Vondelpark is a park where a variety of maintenance activities are found, starting from litter collecting to pruning roses, while in Amstelpark there is an absence of these maintenance activities.

Overall, this research shows that although Amstelpark and Vondelpark are in some ways similar, the citizen participation practices make them very different. As the ongoing processes and qualities of Amstelpark and Vondelpark are dissimilar, as well as their cultures, the parks should be interpreted individually and treated in their own way. The unique conditions of the parks would benefit from made to measure management and maintenance. Therefore, the current way of managing should change, as it would lead to more democratic and inclusive development of these two and many more parks in the city of Amsterdam. Furthermore, there should be some relational changes in the current top-down park management model towards a more circular model, where gardeners' voice would have more weight and their advices and recommendations based on experience would be taken more seriously, as they are the experts in the field of maintenance.

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1. Introduction

City parks and public spaces improve our physical and psychological health, strengthen our communities, and make our cities and neighbourhoods more attractive places to live, work and relax. Numerous studies have shown the benefits that parks bring to cities. However, due to the growing numbers of tourists, the pressure on parks has been increasing in recent years. Although municipal financing for the design and maintenance of public spaces has shrunk since the 2008 economic crisis, the public interest in green spaces and ecology has only increased (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2017). In this time of change, the maintenance of city parks demands the attention of policymakers directly responsible for the decision-making process around public spaces. While this group is usually well represented in the planning and management of public areas, there is a need for input from the people who spend their time in parks on a daily basis and have a strong relationship to the locality. This latter group is comprised of three sets of people. They are the gardeners or *maintainers*, who contribute to the maintenance and development of these public spaces; the park visitors, who usually come to parks '*to escape from the city*'; and the people from community-based groups who initiate various maintenance activities and events.

This research was performed in collaboration with *KETTER&Co*, a foundation which questions the world, initiates and develops projects contributing to the development of sustainable society. This study has become part of the *TUINABAZEN* project, which seeks to give a voice to gardeners within the policymakers and decision-making chain. One of the ways it can be achieved is the application of a circular and inclusive model, instead of the hierarchical and exclusive model, which currently prevails. Though this may seem a long-term aim, the aspiration may be achieved little by little by the promotion of citizen participation. In addition, the representation of views and opinions of *users* and *maintainers* of the parks could be taken into consideration, as their involvement could lead to more democratic, inclusive and sustainable public space management and maintenance. Following that, the purpose of this research is to define and present the role of park visitors, gardeners and community-based groups in the public space management and maintenance processes. To define the role of different actors in public space management and maintenance, two different parks were compared: Amstelpark and Vondelpark. As *KETTER&Co* has been researching these parks for a while, it was chosen to continue this investigation and to contribute to the *TUINBAZEN* project by investigating these two very different and simultaneously very similar parks of Amsterdam.

One of the main aspirations of this thesis is to investigate collaboration and participation in public space planning, management and maintenance, which could help to attain a real involvement of the different stakeholders (such as visitors, gardeners and community-based groups in this research), identify the main problems and challenges the parks are dealing with, propose solutions and ways how citizen participation could contribute to better development of public spaces. The main hypothesis of this thesis is that there is a lack of participatory processes in the public spaces (parks) of Amsterdam. Some of the parks have more citizen participation activities practiced, while in other places there is less of these practices. Due to the lack of citizen participation and representation, the voices of the people who interact with the places on a daily basis are insufficiently heard.

In spatial planning, most literature about citizen involvement and participation is usually focused on stakeholder involvement in planning and management. This is also prevalent among the spatial planning students and their Master thesis, as, for example, the most recent ones were conducted on the subject of public involvement in planning (D. Geraads *Citizen participation in the Environment & Planning Act* (2019), L. Linde *Quiet Acceptance vs. the 'Polder model'* (2014). Therefore, it was chosen to base this study on the subject of civic engagement in public space (park) maintenance. However, such field as public space (park) planning and management were not left out, as it would have been hardly possible to discuss park maintenance, without covering its planning and

management. Although there is not a lot literature written on citizen participation in park maintenance, where practical examples would be used, it only motivated the author to choose and develop this topic in his thesis. Overall, this thesis aims to contribute to the promotion of citizen involvement and participation, as well as to contribute to the literature gap about public involvement in planning, management and maintenance of public spaces. One of the aims of this study is to provide insights of how citizen participation works in practice and more specifically in park maintenance.

1.1. Research questions

To understand the amount of involvement of park visitors, gardeners and community-based groups of Amstelpark and Vondelpark in the public space planning, management and maintenance, the main question investigated in this research is:

How could citizen participation promotions mobilize the visitors, gardeners and community-based groups, i.e. the park communities of Amstelpark and Vondelpark, to contribute to enhanced participatory maintenance programs?

In order to answer the central research question, the following sub-questions were formulated:

1. *To what extent are the visitors, gardeners and community-based groups of Amstelpark and Vondelpark involved in the management and maintenance practices of these public spaces?*
2. *What are the differences and similarities between these two parks concerning the challenges related to their maintenance?*

1.2. Outline

This thesis is structured as follows. Firstly, in the chapter named *Theoretical perspectives on Commons, Community, Collaboration and Care*, the reader will be introduced with the main theoretical concepts and theories used in this research. This chapter is divided in four sections: *Commons*, *Community*, *Collaboration*, and *Care*. In the first section named *Commons*, *The Tragedy of the Commons* is covered. In the section called *Community*, the concepts of community and sense of community were analyzed. Following that, in the third section, *Collaboration*, citizen and community participation, as well as collaborative governance and planning were analyzed. Lastly, in the section *Care* public space planning, management and maintenance are briefly covered.

Furthermore, the chapter *Conceptual framework* covers the conceptual model, research variables, and hypotheses. Following this chapter, the next is one is the chapter called *Amstelpark, Vondelpark and Amsterdam's green space system*, where green space policies of Amsterdam and the case study areas are presented. *Methodology* chapter was dedicated to cover the research object, comparative case study rationale, methods and techniques, as well as the research limitations and risks. In this chapter, such methods were covered as: non-participant and participatory participation, semi-structured and group interviewing, questionnaire surveying, and policy document analysis.

The main chapter of this thesis, where all of the research results were analysed and presented, is *Research results*. This chapter is divided according to the variables of conceptual model: *Sense of community, Collective efficacy and norms for activism, Community problems,* and *Opportunities for involvement*. In addition to these sections, the final section of this chapter called *Conclusions* is added to emphasize the main findings of this research. Finally, the research questions are answered in the chapter called *Conclusions and Recommendations*, where some recommendations are given for policymakers, as well as for future research. Social and theoretical implications are also covered in this chapter. Lastly, in the chapter *Reflection,* the applied theories and methodology are reflected.

2. Theoretical perspectives on Commons, Community, Collaboration and Care

In this chapter the most relevant concepts and theories for this thesis are reviewed. Firstly, in the section titled *Commons*, *The Tragedy of the Commons* is introduced. Then, in the section *Community*, two concepts are covered: the concept of community and a sense of community. Later on, the third section entitled *Collaboration* is made up of three subsections: *Public (citizen) participation and its manifestations in planning*, *Community participation*, and *Collaborative governance and planning*. Finally, the section called *Care* has only one subsection *Public space: planning, management and maintenance*.

2.1. Commons

2.1.1. The Tragedy of the Commons

The logic of a commons has been understood for a long time. Agriculture or the intervention of private property in real estate can be considered as the beginning of the commons. However, the concept of the commons was covered more in the academic literature in the last centuries (Hardin, 1968). The beginnings of the commons, as a concept, can be seen in an essay, *Two Lectures on the Checks to Population* in 1833 written by the British economist William Forster Lloyd. The author used a hypothetical example of the results of unregulated grazing on a common land to convey how in a shared-resource system individual users spoil and scoop out resources through their collective actions, as their actions reflect their individuality, egoism and the supremacy of their interests (Lloyd, 1833). More than 100 years later, Lloyd's theory was developed and edited as the *Tragedy of the Commons* by the American ecologist Garrett Hardin. In his article, Hardin (1968) used a similar example to Lloyd's, an analogy of shepherds grazing their animals on a common field, where they are locked into a system, which forces them to increase their herd without a limit. However, the commons has a limit and it may be called the Tragedy of the Commons. In brief, it can be stated that the users of a commons are caught in an inevitable process, which leads to destruction of the every resource on which they depend. The "rational" user of a commons makes demands on a resource until the expected benefits of his actions equal the expected costs (Ostrom, 1990; Ostrom et al., 1999).

To find a solution to solve this "tragedy" is not that easy, as it may look from first glance. According to Hardin (1968), private property or something formally like it may be the solution. However, when a common is taken into private ownership or something similar to that, the common would not be considered as a common anymore. Therefore, the Eight principles for managing commons by Elinor Ostrom can be seen as a form of solution that could help to solve "the problem of inescapability of "the Tragedy of the Commons" (Walljasper, 2011). According to Elinor Ostrom (1990), with these Eight principles commons can be governed sustainably and equitably in a community: clearly defined boundaries, congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions, collective choice arrangements, monitoring, graduated sanctions, conflict - resolution mechanisms, minimal recognition of rights to organize, and nested enterprises. These principles were based on the practical activities, as Ostrom in many places in the world documented how communities invent ways to govern the commons to assure its survival for their needs and future generations (Walljasper, 2011). Meanwhile, according to Hardin (1968), there is another way of how to justify the commons: as the human population has increased over time, only the conditions of low-population density today may be taken as justifiable. In the present day, irresponsibility is growing, as no one feels responsible for taking care of a public space as a commons, for example, the abundance of litter in parks today could be seen as a contemporary form of "the Tragedy of the Commons". Therefore, commons needs communities, and not only communities, but strong and steady communities, which would consist of people who would be ready to protect, maintain and create commons (Siefkes, 2009). Not having

such communities could lead to a risk of falling into disorder and disarray or in the end - being privatised (ibid). Public spaces, including parks, are one of the kinds of commons, which together with public transportation, public sanitation systems, public waterways or public schools are also considered as urban commons (Gidwani and Baviskar, 2011).

2.2. Community

2.2.1. The concept of community

As the analysis of Lloyd's (1833) and Hardin's (1968) studies showed, in the context of "the Tragedy of the Commons", a community has one of the most important roles. The concept of community is perceived in many different ways and there is no single definition or view of how to define a community. In the most general terms, community can be defined as a group of people who are connected by a common interest(s). These people within the community share common activities, practices and/or beliefs, and are connected by relations of similar values, common concerns, loyalty, as well as by the participatory practices in discussion and decision making (Bellah et al., 1985; Brint, 2001). Community members are identified by their relationships and roles they have in the group's activities (Riel and Polin, 2004; Li et al., 2009). One of the main aspects which describes community are feelings of belonging, caring and sharing (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), while the most essential elements describing a community are connectedness, interactivity, mutual interdependence among participants, a sense of belonging, spirit, trust, similar expectations, and shared values (Rovai, 2002a; Rovai, 2002b).

One of the most important factors determining how a group of people can become a community is community involvement, which is reflected by such feelings as bondedness, the extent of residential roots, the use of local facilities, and the degree of social interaction with neighbors (Riger, LeBailly and Gordon, 1981). In the community development process, the community membership may change over time. However, with the change of its members, by loosing of some of the old ones, and with the involvement or gaining of new ones, communities do no not stop existing (Riel & Polin, 2004; Li, Grimshaw et al., 2009). In the membership context, the role of the social and physical environment is important (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990), as it stimulates membership and influences other factors within the community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

The term community can have two different ideas: a geographical/ territorial (e.g. neighborhood, town, city) community focus or a relational community notion, which is related to the quality of a character of human relationship with no reference to location (Gusfield, 1975). These two different community types are often found in the literature and usually they form the basis of the community concept. For example, according to Brint (2001), communities are divided into two main types when the basis of relationship ties is considered: geographic and choice-based communities, which reflect the main community types that were mentioned above. According to the primary reason for interaction, these two types are subdivided into activity- and belief-based communities, which are further divided to the following subtypes: small-scale communities of place, neighborhood groups, communes/ collectives, elective communities, virtual communities, "imagined communities", local and dispersed friendship groups (Brint, 2001). However, the word "community" carries more than a meaning of "the people who live in an area", which is usually used in the planning field, as it means more of an integrated place-based social world, the *gemeinschaft* (Healey, 1997).

2.2.2. Sense of community

In the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, with an increased interest in the concept of community (Rovai, 2002a), the concept of a sense of community had received both theoretical and empirical attention (McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Chavis and Wandersman, 1990). Today this concept is still relevant together with such community development concepts as community participation and social capital. Despite its popularity, there is no universally accepted definition of a sense of community (Rovai, 2002b). However, a sense of community can be defined as social and emotional bondings, feelings of membership, belongingness or a feeling that members matter to one another

and to the group (Unger & Wandersman, 1985; McMillan and Chavis, 1986). It can be also described as a relationship between the individual and the social structure (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990).

According to McMillan and Chavis (1986), a sense of community has four elements:

- Membership: the feeling of belonging and sharing a sense of personal relationship;
- Influence: the sense of making a difference to a group;
- Reinforcement, or integration and fulfillment of need: the feeling that members' needs are met by the resources received through their membership in the group;
- Shared emotional connection: the belief and commitment that members have shared history, common places, time, and various similar experiences.

A sense of community can be indicated by two main factors: social bonding and behavioral rootedness (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). The first factor covers such aspects as the ability to identify neighbors or a number of neighborhood children known to the respondent, as well as feeling part of the neighborhood, while behavioral rootedness is related to the years of community residency and the expected length of residency (ibid). In addition, residents' attachments to place can be seen as a reflection of a sense of community, as there is a link between place attachment and a sense of community (Riger and Lavrakas, 1981; McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Pretty et al., 2003). This link exists at both the individual and community scales (Manzo and Perkins, 2006). Place attachment can be strengthened by the residual place of the community, as communities residing near a public space may have an interest in its quality, as it has an impact to the capital value of their houses (Carmona et al., 2008).

As it was argued above, a sense of community can be perceived as a powerful force, which drives people closer together, and as a tool for promoting cooperation and understanding (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). The understanding of a sense of community as a concept provide the basis for policymakers to develop programs that meet their stated goals by strengthening and preserving community (ibid). In addition, a sense of community on its own has a capacity to motivate a community to take part in the planning process and to contribute to local development (Manzo and Perkins, 2006). A sense of community operates as a peculiar catalyst for changes towards participation, which promotes the development of community (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990).

2.3. Collaboration

2.3.1. Citizen (public) participation and its manifestations in planning

People who share common space may know what is best for their living or recreational environment, therefore they should have a right to take part in participation in the planning process, as it is going to have direct consequences on their living environment (Bonilla, 2009). Participation can be defined as direct public (citizen) involvement in the decision-making process, which could have implications on the quality of the living environment (Sanoff, 1999). It is also a synonym to collaboration, which is capable to provide helpful solutions to many of the challenges which arise on a daily basis (Healey, 1997), as well as to stimulate social justice and inclusiveness (Healey, 2003). Local self-reliance can be seen as one of the ways how to provide participation, which fosters social and community development and it is an important sustainable development component (Bonilla, 2009). According to Arnstein (1969), levels of participation may vary from non-participation to citizen control (*Figure 1*). The bottom steps of the ladder - manipulation and therapy, represent levels of non-participation (Arnstein, 1969). Their objective is to enable power-holders to 'cure' or 'educate' the participants (ibid). Above the steps of non-participation further up are the degrees of tokenism: informing, consultation and placation (ibid). Informing and consultation give a voice to economically disadvantaged people, while placation allow the have-nots to advice, although the powerholders still

retain their power to make decisions (ibid). Finally, at the top of the ladder are degrees of citizen power, varying from partnership, which gives an opportunity for citizens to engage with powerholders, to delegated power and citizen power, where economically disadvantaged people have the majority of decision-making seats, or full power (ibid).

Figure 1. Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (based on Arnstein, 1969)
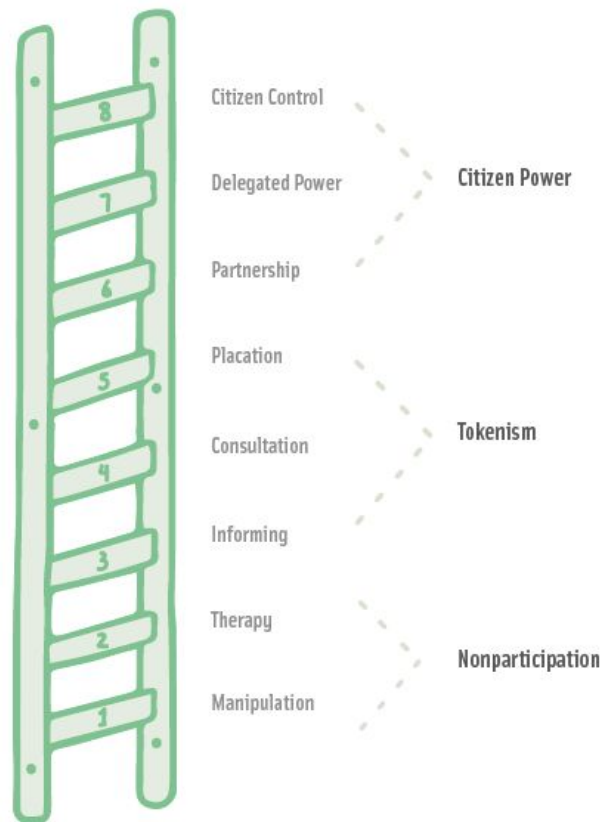
Since the 1990s, participation became an important part of the urban planning process (Monno and Khakee, 2012). Although the democratic practice of participation was never questioned, there were some doubts about the efficacy of participatory practices (ibid). However, nowadays citizen participation in the decision-making process, as well as other forms of participation are considered important (ibid). Participation is valued differently between experts (professionals) and local residents. According to experts, participation is a symbolic action, which is limited to forms designated by law, while for local residents participation creates real benefits, which hopefully have a positive impact on future decisions (ibid).

Through participation in local community development, effective urban governance and planning can be achieved (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990). According to Maginn (2007a), participation may be stimulated by government, which creates a perception that governments taking place in participation to ensure that the concerns of residents and community-based groups would be voiced, but not trying to transform decisions and involve more actors in making them. Therefore, to improve the quality of decision-making and to expand democratic values, participation has become an important measure in the multi-level governance and its complex contexts (Monno and Khakee, 2012). Participation in planning is considered a political act, while citizen participation, which expresses disagreements with planning proposals that contains social, economic or environmental injustice to residents, can be described as politically motivated (Legacy, 2017).

Participatory planning and citizen participation have a relationship, which produces the political formation of participation (Legacy, 2017). As Monno and Khakee (2012) stated *"participation is not only another 'tool' available for the new governance style that characterizes urban policy-making. It is a crucial factor if planning as a state practice is to be maintained and further developed"* (Monno and Khakee, 2012, 99 pp.).

2.3.2. Community participation

Community participation is an obscure term, which usually indicates different degrees of involvement of different groups of people (Carmona et al. 2008). At the simplest meaning, it involves a collaboration of stakeholders pursuing goals that were set by themselves (Sanoff, 2000), and expresses the idea of the involvement of local residents in the social development process. According to Becker (1977), with participatory practices residents are involved not only in the development process in a more active way, but with their participation comes a better maintained physical environment (including such public spaces as parks, squares and etc.). Community participation, as well as citizen participation in general, can be seen as a tool to improve the quality of physical environment (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990), as the surrounding environment works in a better way if the people, who are being affected by its decisions on a daily basis, are involved in its planning, maintenance and management (Sanoff, 2000). These people, mainly residents, as well as recreationalists and other interest groups are familiar with potential problems and opportunities, and they can identify the needs of the place in a more effective and efficient way (WSDCTED, 2005). According to Sanoff (2000), the importance of community participation, and especially the public involvement in the planning process, could be established by such merits as: the growth of confidence in organizations, representativeness and the promotion of bonding within the community.

As residents get involved in the design and decision-making processes, their trust in governmental and non-governmental organizations grows. Therefore, professionals and experts gain support. Nonetheless, the promotion of bonding within the community is important, as it strengthens a sense of community and the community itself. The last quality is promoted by bringing residents together for a common goal. According to Sanoff (2000), the most important goal is achieved with representativeness, as with the representativeness of users they, users, get involved in the planning process. In addition, with the community involvement in the planning process experts are provided with new and relevant information from communities (ibid), which may serve as a facilitator for a dialogue between professionals and the community (Carmona et. al., 2008).

Community participation is not only seen as a positive thing, as sometimes it may be perceived as a barrier. One of the arguments why community participation may not be seen as a necessity is that people are similar in a way that their approaches and insights can have a little difference due to the lack of knowledge or familiarity with a problem. However, it can be opposed with the argument that everyone has different opinions and views, and there can be as many answers as there are people (Sanoff, 2000). Though this argument does not add a point why community participation is important, it can be taken as a positive thing as with different approaches new ideas are born. Another argument is that with community participation in the planning process, the role of experts is threatened and the decision-making process shifts towards users, which means that with the loss of power, instability can arise, which may have consequences in the decision-making process (ibid). However, every people group should have a right to participate in the planning process in their own way that different knowledges would be shared with participants in different stages of the process. To ensure the effectiveness of participation, a community should be involved from the beginning of the planning process and it should participate until the end of the process.

As it was argued before, the involvement of residents means better representation of the local community and its interests in the planning process. However, the people who are chosen to represent a local community and its interests in the planning processes are not usually representing the majority and almost never all of the people (Sanoff, 2000). Furthermore, there is another argument

that users participation in the planning process is time-consuming (ibid), and does not always payback. However, the involvement of a community in the planning process is still important, valuable and enrichening, and additional time spent should not be a barrier preventing residents' contributions. As participation is a power-sharing process, which may help to strengthen a sense of community and gain community support, it is important that community participation would be encouraged and sustained (WSDCTED, 2005; Carmona et al., 2008). One of the tools of how this participation and collaboration could be achieved is collaborative planning (Healey, 2003), which can provide policymakers with more effective community participation (Maginn, 2007b).

2.3.3. Collaborative governance and planning

As a form of urban governance, collaborative governance can be chosen as a measure to achieve comprehensive and versatile collaboration between actors. This model has been developed since the early 2000s (Purbani, 2017), and can be described as a collection of often led by public agencies multiple actors, which seek to come up with a versatile and comprehensive consensus in the decision-making process (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Collaborative governance within itself has two types of infrastructures, which can be used to describe collaborative planning: hard infrastructure of a structure of challenges and soft infrastructure of relation building (Healey, 1997). In the first type of infrastructure, the formal government organizations have a role to restrict and transform dominant power centres, while the second type of infrastructure means that sufficient consensus building and mutual learning may take place where coordination would be promoted, as well as knowledge and various competences would be shared within places (ibid). The designing of these two types of infrastructures have challenges. For example, hard infrastructure has a challenge of inherent endeavors of power relations, which are being consciously transformed, while the design of the second infrastructure has the challenge of being collaborative and specific in the local level (ibid).

Collaborative planning is envisioned and perceived as a 'form' of planning (Healey, 1997). It is also a new planning paradigm, which through consensus-building processes moderates conflicts between different stakeholders (Purbani, 2017). Collaborative planning operates in a longer-term process and is mainly focused on the democratic management, control of urban and rural environments and the design of less overpowering planning techniques (Harris, 2001). One idea that is related to collaborative planning is the importance of urban regions in the context of social, economic and environmental policies and the ways how communities of these regions could improve the quality of their environment (Healey, 1997). Furthermore, this inclusive dialogic planning theory is based on a certain theoretical basis and today serves not only as theory to develop, but also as a form, model of practice, practical action (Healey, 1997; Harris, 2001). Overall, collaborative planning shapes the current social space and works towards the transformation of current professional practices from 'competitive interest bargaining' to 'negotiative consensus building' practices (Harris, 2001; Brand and Gaffikin, 2007).

Collaborative planning requires that every decision would be taken in open and inclusive way by a group of stakeholders, where every stakeholder would be treated equally, rather than a situation where the majority rule or top-down expertise would prevail (Brand & Gaffikin, 2007). The involvement of citizens in decision-making process is perceived positively, as it could not only open the resources of knowledge and understanding within a community, but it would also help to make competent reasoning and the right decisions, where the views of various stakeholders would be represented (Healey, 1997). However, citizen involvement in planning challenges planning as a process, as well as the role of politicians and their responsibility for this task (Healey, 1997). Moreover, consistent mediation and a mature level of civic literacy among actors should be ensured so that collaborative planning practices would be implemented (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007).

According to Healey (1997), there are some attributes, which should be satisfied in the context of pluralistic participation in collaborative planning processes:

1. *"It should recognise the range and variety of stakeholders concerned with changes to local and urban region environments, their social networks, the diversity of their cultural points of reference and their systems of meaning, and the complex power relations which may exist within and between them.*
2. *It should acknowledge that much of the work of governance occurs outside the formal agencies of government and should seek to spread power from government outside the agencies of the state but without creating new bastions of unequal power.*
3. *It should open up opportunities for informal invention and for local initiatives. It should enable and facilitate, encouraging diversity in routines and styles of organising, rather than imposing single ordering principles on the dynamics of social and economic life. It should cultivate a "framing" relation rather than a linear connection between linear policy principles and the flow of action.*
4. *It should foster the inclusion of all members of political communities while acknowledging their cultural diversity, and should recognise that this involves complex issues of power relations, ways of thinking and ways of organising.*
5. *It should be continually and openly accountable, making available to relevant political communities the arguments, the information, the consideration of stakeholders' concerns, the images and metaphors which lie behind decisions, and should include requirements for critical review and challenge* (Healey, 1997, 288 - 289 pp.)."

Inclusionary collaborative planning processes may be most effectively promoted by (Healey, 1997):

- Voice and influence rights, which should be based broadly, as people with an interest should be able to give their opinions and recommendations for failing to represent them and to give corresponding consideration;
- Terms ensuring that all parties would have the possibility to question the decisions that were made by governance, where their stakes were not taken into account respectively;
- A right to receive adequate information, which would be available to all interested parties;
- A right to be able to call any governmental organization to account to report a failure (Healey, 1997).

These rights among all interested parties are able to stimulate care to their concerns, and it would help to achieve a more interactive relationship between experts and all parties with an interest, which are served by experts (ibid). To maximize the effects of collaborative governance and planning such key factors as dialogue, networking and institutional capacity should be considered. Dialogue encourages participants to share information and understand different perspectives, networking encourages participants to get acquainted with the importance of collaborative processes, while institutional capacity would make civil society and network more component (Innes & Booher, 2004).

As collaborative planning within the field of spatial planning attracts more attention and it becomes more acknowledged, the traditional spatial planner status is being transformed into a knowledge mediator, who uses his understanding of the dynamics in the governance and knowledge, experiences and opinions gained from citizens and businesses to make them available to processes of policy development (Healey, 1997). The traditional spatial planner becomes a person, who is responsible for collaboration between three parties: government, business and citizens. Among these diverse parties consensus can be prioritized by an inclusionary democratic government model called collaborative governance (Purbani, 2017).

As it was discussed earlier, it is important to understand the people's emotional connections to place, how they are stimulated and how they may contribute to effective participatory planning (Manzo and Perkins, 2006). These emotional connections were conveyed with a sense of community, together with people's attachment to places, and especially community participation, which creates a basis for a better understanding of how common spaces encourage local residents to act collectively to develop their community and to participate in local planning practices (ibid). It is known that collaborative work is a complex time and energy consuming process, but it is still important that effective participatory planning is achieved and the improvement of the surrounding environment that forms the commons would be attained (ibid).

2.4. Care

2.4.1. Public space: planning, management and maintenance

Any organism has a source of energy. Though a park or any other public space is not considered an organism (biologically), any public space should have a supporting environment (Hardin, 1968), which can be considered a source of energy in the case of a public space. Such supporting environment can be the people responsible for the maintenance of the public space, its financing and in general, the investment of time and energy. According to Hardin (1968), this energy is utilized for two main purposes: maintenance (which may be an equivalent to the maintenance of a public space) and work (which can be perceived as functions of public spaces, for example, an invitation of people to exercise, relax and enjoy).

Figure 2. The idealised three-way partnership of interests (based on Carmona et al., 2008)
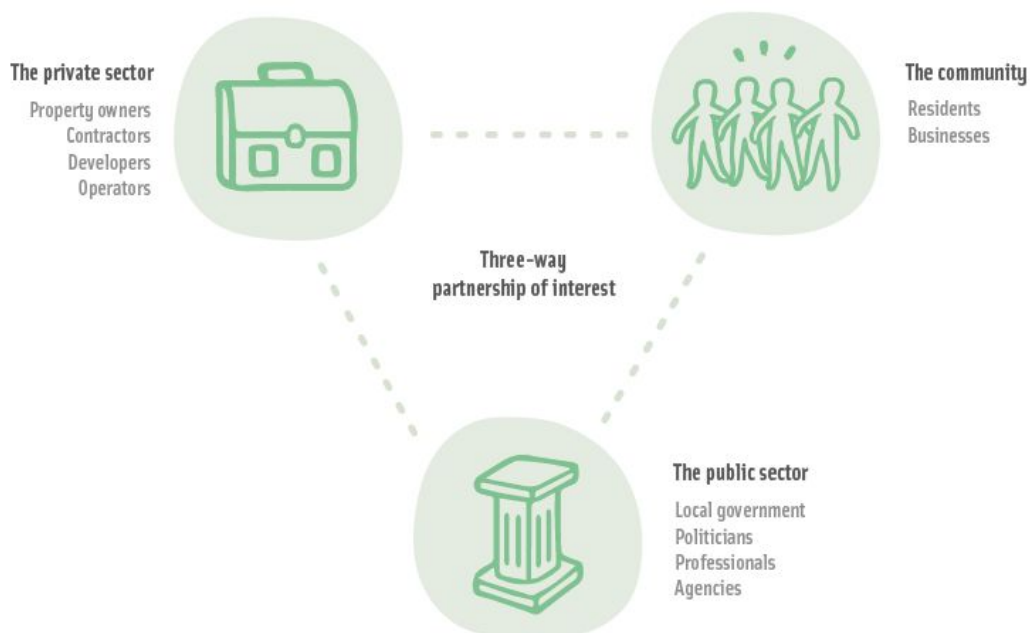
Public space reflects the built and natural environment, which is private and public, urban and rural, internal and external. Public space comprises of such spaces as streets, squares, parks and various other open spaces, as well as such spaces as shopping centres, stations, town halls, libraries, and many more places. However, some of the places and their status are discussionable, for example, some of them are more often considered as public - private, such as town halls or libraries, or private spaces, for instance, shopping malls. Public space would not function and even exist, if it would not

be managed effectively (Carmona et al., 2008). However, before managing a public space, it is crucially important that a public space planning would be integrated with other planning elements (for example, with land-use planning), as it would guarantee planning policies and implementation measures working together towards a fulfillment of community needs (WSDCTED, 2005).

One of the main urban governance spheres, where stakeholders claims and endeavors for public space are taken into account is public space management (Carmona et al. 2008). Public space management can be defined as a complex array of various processes, practices and activities, which attempt to assure that public space would fulfill its roles, while managing the interactions between multiple functions, making them acceptable for its users (Carmona et al. 2008).

In the present day, current public space management regimes are largely based on the local government model (Carmona et al. 2008). However, in reality it is different, as public space management is not necessarily under the direct control of local authorities, as usually the responsibilities of public space management are spread across a wide range of stakeholders, including the private sector (e.g. developers, utility providers, private property owners), public/ private sectors (government agencies and operators), and civil society groups (residents, local groups and special interest groups) (*Figure 2*) (Carmona et al. 2008). Furthermore, public space management can be also performed by specialized agencies, as in many cities public infrastructure and its development is the responsibility of these special purpose agencies.

One of the main delivery processes of public space management is maintenance. Maintenance ensures the functioning of the public space physical components and involves various procedures, techniques, routines and actions (Carmona et al. 2008). In order that these components would function and exist, the infrastructure of public spaces, equipment and various facilities, as well as public spaces in general, need to be managed and maintained effectively so they would continue to provide their functions and values in the future (WSDCTED, 2005; Carmona et al. 2008). To ensure that these functions and values would be continuous and sustained for the future it is important that not only technical or mechanical maintenance is ensured, but that maintenance would enhance such qualities as versatility and comprehensivity (WSDCTED, 2005).

3. Conceptual Framework

In this chapter the research conceptual model, its variables and three main research hypotheses are presented.

3.1. Conceptual model

Figure 3 represents the conceptual model used to provide a structure for the literature review, methods and results. This conceptual model is also a framework for the data collection and analysis of this research. Starting with the top of this model, the issue/ objective is defined: *the involvement and mobilization of park communities (in each park).* Below, three main actor groups (*park visitors (users)*, *local community-based groups* and *gardeners (maintainers)* are identified. These three groups may be characterized as the groups of people who have the strongest connection with a park as a place. In fact, their voices usually have less weight than the voice of policymakers. Later on, citizen participation is identified, as it is the measure, which could help to make park communities more active, inclusionary and democratic. Furthermore, the factors influencing citizen participation defined by Foster - Fishman et al. (2013) were chosen to be applied for this research. These citizen participation variables include *a sense of community*, *collective efficacy*, *norms of activism*, *opportunities for involvement* and *community problems*. Finally, below these community level characteristics the aim of this research is defined: *more democratic, inclusive and sustainable public space (park) planning, management and maintenance*.

Figure 3. Conceptual model (based on Foster - Fishman et al., 2013)

Conceptual model

Involvement and mobilization of park communities

Gardeners *(maintainers)* | Community-based groups | Park visitors *(users)*

Citizen participation | Sense of Community | Norms of Activism

Opportunities for Involvement | Collective Efficacy | Community Problems

More democratic, inclusive and sustainable public space (park) planning, management and maintenance

3.2. Research variables and hypotheses

Sense of community is regarded as one of the most important elements promoting civic engagement (Foster - Fishman et al., 2013). A sense of community, or a sense of interdependence and belongingness with community members, means a higher possibility of resident engagement within a community (McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Perkins et al., 1990; Ziersch et al., 2011). This connection helps to link community members in the way that they can work together towards a common goal (Cantillon et al., 2003; Yoon, 2011). Basically, a sense of community could be described as the level of social connection that residents perceive in their neighborhood or community (Foster - Fishman et al., 2013). For the measurement of a sense of community, two sub-variables were set: *visitation* and *interest*. The first one is an independent sub-variable and describes the frequency of visiting the park, while the second one is a dependent sub-variable, which characterizes the interest in the park problems. For the sense of community variable, the hypothesis was set that:

1. The more often the park is visited by participants, the stronger their interest will be in the park's problems regarding its maintenance and management.

Visitation is not the only one factor which translates into more interest. Other factors, for example, the participant's location also has a role in determining the participant's interest. This factor will be also briefly discussed in the results chapter, although the main regard will be put on the connection between park visitation and the interest in the park's problems.

Collective efficacy is regarded as the perception that a group of people have the capacity to work together and achieve common aims (Badura, 1997). Collective actions tend to result in community change, which is necessary for the engagement of participatory behaviors (Perkins and Long, 2002; Price and Behrens, 2003). Collective efficacy could be described as the extent to which working together with neighbors could lead to positive changes in a neighborhood (Foster - Fishman et al., 2013). Such changes could include physical, social or other kind of neighborhood changes that are going to affect its residents and neighborhood environment. The extent to which residents perceive that their neighbors could be counted on to engage in for such social (or physical) change neighborhood activities, could be described as **norms for activism** (Foster - Fishman et al., 2009). The observation of neighbors' engagement could help citizens to learn the value of participation and motivate themselves to participate (Bandura, 1986). For the measurement of collective efficacy, as well as norms for activism, as these two variables are similar, two sub-variables were indicated (one for one variable, and the other one for another): *perceived representation* and *potential engagement*. The first one is an independent sub-variable and describes the representation in the park management and planning processes, while the second one is a dependent sub-variable and characterizes the potential engagement in the park maintenance activities, if there would more opportunities to be involved in the park planning and management processes. Following that, it was hypothesized that:

2. The stronger the perceived representation of participants in the planning and management matters of the park, the stronger their potential engagement in the park's maintenance activities would be.

Community (neighborhood) problems could become a source of motivation for citizens to become engaged (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Perkins et al., 1990). Every community/ neighborhood has different problems to deal with, including drugs, gangs, crime or littering, and every problem has a different weight, which could lead (or not) to civic engagement in communities/ neighborhoods. In the meantime, parks are dealing with such kind of problems as cleanliness, security, grass cutting, pruning of trees and other fields that should be managed. Community, or neighborhood, problems

could be described as the extent of the possible physical and social disorder possibly existing in a community or neighborhood, according to its residents/ members (Foster - Fishman et al., 2009). For the measurement of community problems, two sub-variables were identified: *satisfaction* and *positivity*. The first one is an independent sub-variable, which could be described as the satisfaction with the possible issues and their prevalence in the park, while the second one is a dependent sub-variable and could be described as the positivity of the value and importance of maintenance activities. To measure community problems, the hypothesis was set that:

3. The participant's level of satisfaction regarding park's issues (e.g. maintenance, cleanliness, park's infrastructure and etc.) translates into a more positive opinion about the park's maintenance.

Civic engagement only could arise when **opportunities for involvement** are provided (Foster - Fishman et al., 2013). Opportunities for involvement could be described as the extent to which there are local opportunities for citizens to be involved in their community/ neighborhood and decision-making processes at the city level or in local organizations (ibid). Multiple settings are capable for providing opportunities for involvement, including school, city organizations, neighborhood or local organizations (ibid). In order to measure this variable, a variety of research methods were used: interviewing, surveying, participation.

Citizen participation as one unit could be measured with the application of the following variables: *the residents level engagement in community/ neighborhood level organizations and initiatives towards changes in their communities/ neighborhoods*. However, in this research the decision was made to measure the main neighborhood/ community level characteristics that were analysed above (sense of community, collective efficacy, norms for activism, community (neighborhood) problems, opportunities for involvement). The individual level characteristics, such as organizing skills, were not evaluated in this research, as they require a different research strategy and methods to be applied in the research, and it would only have complicated this research, which is already complicated on itself.

4. Amstelpark, Vondelpark and Amsterdam's green space system

In this chapter background information is given on the Amsterdam's green space system and its policies, as well as the case study areas and their backgrounds.

4.1. Amsterdam's green space system and its policies

Agenda Groen 2015 - 2018 focuses on the needs of Amsterdam, the challenges now and in the upcoming years (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2015). Political actions, which are described in the *Agenda*, are based on the cooperation with the municipality, companies, schools, sport schools, local residents and other actors which support the idea of green city (ibid). In the *Agenda*, three types of greenery are distinguished:
1. neighborhood greenery such as neighborhood parks (*buurtparken*);
2. city parks (*stadsparken*);
3. landscapes around the city such as outdoor parks (*buitenparken*) (ibid).

The coalition agreement "Amsterdam is for everyone" ("*Amsterdam is van iedereen*") between different political parties at the municipality of Amsterdam states that public space greening makes the city more attractive to live, work and stay (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2015). As the challenges concerning the green space may be different in the built-up city center and the less developed areas located in the periphery of the city, a distinction between five zones in Amsterdam (*Figure 4*) are identified in (ibid):
1. the center area (*het centrumgebied, C*);
2. the ring zone (*de ringzone, R*);
3. the urban lobes (*de stedelijke lobben, L*);
4. the green wedges (*de groene scheggen, S*);
5. the metropolitan landscapes (*het metropolitaan landschap, M*) (ibid).

Amsterdam's policy on green space is described in the *Structural Vision Amsterdam 2040*. The *Main Green Structure*, which comprises of the minimum amount of green space that Amsterdam wants to safeguard (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2011), includes a range of societal benefits, which improve recreation, health and water storage (Paulin et al., 2019). The *Main Green Structure* is playing one of the most important instrument roles, as within *Main Green Structure* Amsterdam protects its green space and fulfills an important function for the environment and recreation (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2015). Key aspects that are promoted in the green space policy are the conservation of cultural heritage and the protection of green space variety (ibid). The most relevant documents concerning the green space policy are *Ecological Vision* and *Waterland Visio*n (ibid).

4.1.1. Green space policies for city parks (stadsparken)

By 2040, according to *Agenda Groen*, city parks should achieve two main goals (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2015). Firstly, the green space across the city of Amsterdam should be more evenly used and visited (ibid). The visiting of less used parks should be increased by making them more attractive (ibid). These changes would create not only more alternatives to the busy parks (ibid), but it would also increase the quality of these parks, as park visitors would be more evenly spread across the city, not pressuring one or two parks. To portray this statement, the example of Vondelpark and Amstelpark could be used, as these two parks correspond the busy park and the less used park respectively. Secondly, to cope with the intensive use of parks, the design of Amsterdam city parks should be improved (ibid). Furthemore, special attention should be paid for wet conditions and the design of places with these conditions (ibid). These wet conditions are prominent and relevant to most of the parks in Amsterdam South (*Amsterdam Zuid*), including the case study areas.

The setting up of a number of city parks, which would handle more intensive use, is one of the focuses that was set up for the period of 2015 - 2018 (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2015). This issue could be solved by redesigning of parks and applying them to more intensive use, which could be

achieved by placing facilities in more suitable places in parks (ibid). In addition, the substantial investments for quality may be also one of the tools to spread the park pressure (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2017). Following that, the balance in use of city parks was the next goal that was set up for the period. Furthermore, intensive, as well as sustainable use of parks (and especially their soil conditions) was also one of the focuses that was taken into consideration in the period of 2015 - 2018 (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2015). However, this focus was mainly applied in the case of major refurbishments (ibid). The last focus was put on exploring possibilities for new city parks in the field studies conducted as part of the *'Space for the City - Development Strategy 2025'* (ibid). Overall, all of them could be summarized in four fields, where city parks qualities are prioritized (ibid):

1. more sustainable and intensive use,
2. balance in use,
3. soil conditions,
4. new or larger city parks.

The issue of the intensity of city parks use remains important and relevant in the Public Space Vision (*Visie Openbare Ruimte 2025*). The document emphasizes that many city parks demand adjustments, witch would be in line with more intensive use (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2017). Until 2025, the focus on city parks is going to be concentrated on management and design to fit diverse and intensive use of city parks (ibid).

Figure 4. Five zones in Amsterdam (based on Agenda Groen 2015 - 2018, Municipality of Amsterdam, 2015)
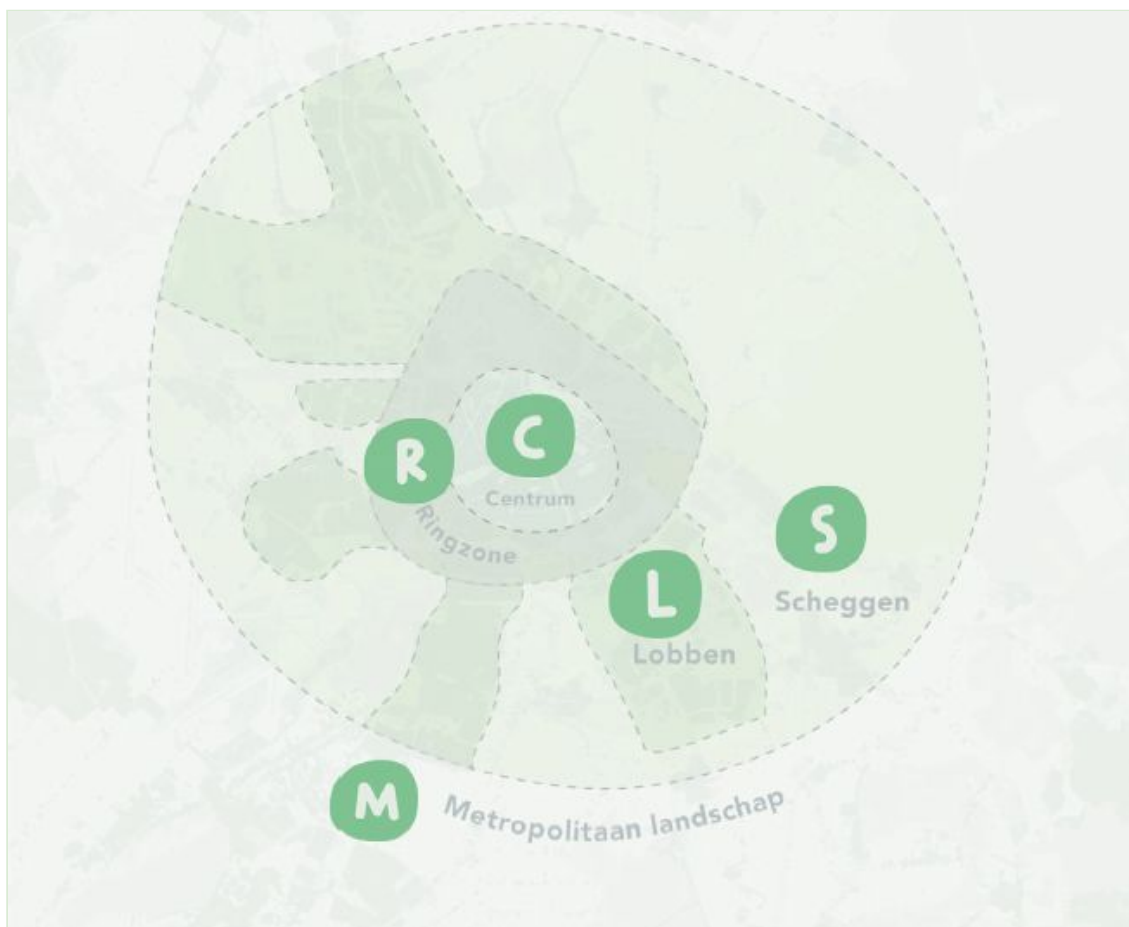
4.1.2. Challenges in Amsterdam's green space system

The challenges concerning the green space in Amsterdam are distinguished into fields according to the five Amsterdam zones. The main challenges of the parks in the center area (*het centrumgebied*) are finding a balance between all the different uses, ensuring the diversity of green spaces, spreading the use and visiting pressures, as well as making it climate proof (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2015). The parks in the center area (including Vondelpark) have very high visitor numbers and various use, which also threat these parks (ibid). Therefore, it is important that the management of these green spaces would match the intensive their use (ibid). As space for new greenery is limited, this more dense part of the city requires a more creative approach (ibid).

In the ring zone (*de ringzone*) the parks (including Amstelpark) also have increasing visitor numbers, although they are lower compared to the numbers of the parks in the city centre (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2015). In this part of Amsterdam, it is important that development and densification would go hand in hand with the investments in the green space, as it may be an impulse for urban development (ibid). However, this area has a potential, as here is located a rapidly developing business centre *Zuidas* (ibid). Therefore, it is important that new development plans are taken up in an integrated way, so that the quality and quantity of greenery, as well as the goals in the climate, biodiversity and health areas would be involved in the early stage of planning (ibid).

Other Amsterdam zones have different challenges. For example, the urban lobes (*de stedelijke lobben*) and the metropolitan landscape (*de metropolitaan landschap*) are challenged by the flooding risk, why one of the main challenges in the green wedges (*de groene scheggen*) is desinfication (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2015).

4.2. Case study areas

Figure 5. Amstelpark and Vondelpark in the Amsterdam's green space system (based on Agenda Groen 2015 - 2018, Municipality of Amsterdam, 2015)

For this comparative case study research two very different and in a way similar parks were chosen to be analysed: Amstelpark and Vondelpark. Both of the parks are situated in the growing business region of Amsterdam South (*Amsterdam Zuid*), the southern district of Amsterdam (*Figure 5*).

Vondelpark (*Figure 6*) is one of the first city parks, which was established in 1864, when a group of private individuals took the initiative to construct a walking and riding park (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2019b). Two years after the park was opened, the park name Vondelpark was given, as before this green space was known as the New Park (ibid). The park has saved its cultural - historical value and today it has a status of a national monument (ibid). Nowadays, Vondelpark is also valued for its design, as it embodies the English landscape style (ibid).

Figure 6. Ponds are one of the many places that attract visitors in Vondelpark to spend their time and enjoy the greenery of the park (author, 2019)

Vondelpark is the largest park in Amsterdam, which covers nearly 47 hectares (Amsterdam Info, 2019; Municipality of Amsterdam, 2019b). This Amsterdam park is considered more than a local neighborhood park, as it could be described as all Amsterdam residents park (Municipality of Amsterdam - Stadsdeel Oud-Zuid, 2009). This park is an attraction for visitors not only from Amsterdam or the Netherlands, but also from all over the world (Amsterdam Info, 2019). Moreover, it is the most visited park in the Netherlands, with approximately 10 million visitors every year (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2015). In addition, Vondelpark is one the main tourists attractions in Amsterdam, which is also known for its diverse visitors, which come to the park for various reasons: to have a walk, to walk a dog, to take part in sport activities, or to enjoy a sunny day in the park. The park is known for many attractions that it has, such as the open-air theatre, where concerts are organized, a variety of places to eat, as well as the playground areas for children to play.

In contrast, Amstelpark (*Figure 7*) is a much newer park comparing to Vondelpark. It was established in 1971, while opened in 1972 for the international horticulture exhibition *Floriade* (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2019a). After the exhibition ended, some of the exhibition details were preserved and saved in the park, for example, the original entries (ibid). Over time some things have changed in Amstelpark, but the variety of flowers, plants and trees, as well as the educational value of the

botanical collections were preserved (ibid). Today Amstelpark stands out with its distinctive design, attractive hiking trails and the variety of pavilions (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2019c).

Figure 7. Rhododendron valley in Amstelpark is one of the most known places in the park where visitors can relax and enjoy various smells of rhododendron bushes (author, 2019)

Amstelpark is a peripheral park situated in a less densely built-up residential area, which is one of the reasons why there are infinitely visitors to this park (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2019c). Today this park mainly attracts visitors from its surrounding areas (Buitenveldert) or other neighborhoods close to Amstepark. Amstelpark is less known and less visited park not only among foreigners, but also among the residents of Amsterdam. The people who usually visit the park are mainly pedestrians, as cycling is forbidden in the park.

It may seem that these two parks are quite different regarding their history and contemporary profiles. However, one of the ways to show how different are these two places is to spend one hour in each of the parks and to count how many people, what types of people come to the park (*Table 1*). While in Amstelpark the dominant visitor group are pedestrians, Vondelpark has two prominent visitor groups: cyclists and pedestrians. Moreover, during the observation, it was captured that there was more than six times more pedestrians coming to Vondelpark than to Amstelpark. Other visitor groups, such as joggers, skateboarders and various types of other cyclists, were also more represented in Vondelpark than in Amstelpark. There may be found more differences between these two parks of Amsterdam, but how these two parks similar?

There are some similarities in these two parks. Firstly, both of the parks are located in the same neighborhood of Amsterdam - Amsterdam South (*Amsterdam Zuid*). Secondly, both of the parks have a similar size (Vondelpark occupies 47 hectares, Amstelpark - 50 hectares, excluding the water surface) (Buurt Amstelpark (Amsterdam), 2019; Municipality of Amsterdam 2019b). In addition, both of the parks can be seen similar, if the variety of activities in the parks would be assessed.

Table 1. Visitors and their variety in Amstelpark and Vondelpark (own data collection, 2019)

	Amstelpark	Vondelpark
Pedestrians	**132**	**858**
Joggers	0	22
Cyclists	3	**992**
Persons walking with their bicycles	4	4
Persons in the wheelchair	2	0
Persons in the electric scootmobiel	1	4
Persons with baby strollers	0	16
Double tandem bicyclists	0	2
Triple tandem bicyclists	0	6
Bakfietsen bicyclists	0	12
Tricycle bicyclists	0	2
Skateboarders	0	8
Persons with roller skates	0	4
Cars (trucks, *Canta*)	3	1

4.2.1. Management and maintenance of Vondelpark and Amstelpark

Amstelpark and Vondelpark are the property of the city of Amsterdam (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2019b). The funding and implementation of the maintenance in these parks is the responsibility of the district committees (ibid). The park management is subdivided per management unit, which are: bushes, trees, grasslands, decorative planting, water management, roads and pavements, park ornaments, furniture, for example, benches, and fences (Municipality of Amsterdam - Stadsdeel Oud-Zuid, 2009).

For the management of the parks, coordination takes place between various parties (Municipality of Amsterdam - Stadsdeel Oud-Zuid, 2009). The area manager (or the director) of the parks is responsible for the current situation in the parks, its management and renovation (ibid). In Vondelpark, the maintenance and cleaning of the park is carried out by the so-called Vondelpark team (*'Vondelparkploeg'*), while in other city parks (including Amstelpark) the maintenance and cleaning are handled by two separate departments (ibid). In the parks, everything is managed by the team leader green (*teamleider groen*), except the management of the playground equipment, fountains and pumps, due to their specialty (ibid). In addition, there are more parties that manage the parks, such as the district (het *stadsdeel*), the central city (*de centrale stad*), the water board (*het waterschap*) and private individuals (ibid).

Both of the parks have several initiatives for co-management by individual residents, although in Vondelpark there is a lot more commitment from parties (such as *Vrienden van het Vondelpark* or *Haart van het Vondelpark*) compared to Amstelpark (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2015). Such parties contribute to the improvement of these places management (ibid).

5. Methodology

In this chapter, the different research methods and techniques are presented, as well as the research object, comparative case study rationale, limitations and risks are introduced.

5.1. Research object

The research object of this research targets park communities of two Amsterdam parks: Amstelpark and Vondelpark. In this thesis, the term community has a much broader meaning than only "the people who live in an area", as the community definition by Healey was used in this paper. According to Healey (1997), the metaphor of community brings the social world, which is integrated and place-based, and it opposes business and government, which is represented by experts, professionals, i.e. policymakers, who are the force which dominates in the planning process. Following that, the main emphasis of this investigation was paid on three groups of the park communities, which often lack representation in the planning and management processes:

1. visitors (*users*), the people who interact with the parks on a daily basis mainly because of recreational purposes;
2. local community-based groups, the people whose activities is not only limited to political activities, but also the people who represent the *"park interests"*;
3. gardeners (*maintainers*), i.e. the people who are responsible for maintaining these places.

It is crucially important that these three groups would be more represented in the development processes of public spaces. As experts and professionals are driving the planning and management processes of parks, the people who interact with the place on a daily basis are usually left out. Therefore, the aim of this research is to define and present the role of park visitors, gardeners and community-based groups in the public space planning, management and maintenance processes. The main research emphasis of this study is put on the promotion of citizen participation in the park planning, management and maintenance. In order to define the role of different actors in the public space management and maintenance, two different parks were chosen to be compared: Amstelpark and Vondelpark.

5.2. Comparative case study rationale

The rationale for the selection of Amstelpark and Vondelpark as case study areas was the different profiles, roles and ongoing processes in these two Amsterdam parks. In the last decades due the increased number of visitors the use of Vondelpark has changed and intensified (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2019b). In the meantime, different processes were present in Amstelpark (ibid). As the increased number of visitors was the direct reason for the management (as well as maintenance) problems to occur In Vondelpark, there were similar problems management and maintenance in Amstelpark, although the park did not experience such increase of visitors as Vondelpark did (ibid). Therefore, it was chosen to analyse these two parks, as they may seem very different parks with different ongoing processes, although with very similar problems existing problems. Furthermore, this analysis may help to explore new ways of how management and maintenance of public spaces could be improved. In order to solve the problems concerning the management and maintenance of the parks, it was chosen to research civic engagement and its capabilities in Amstelpark and Vondelpark

The different roles of the parks, the differences between them and the lack of observed similarities provided the stimulation to analyse these parks and was one of the main sources of motivation. However, the inspiration and primary rationale for the selection of these two parks was the internship organization, *KETTER&Co*, where the author of this thesis performed his internship and conducted a shorter version of this research. In a collaboration with the supervisors at the internship organization, the idea of a comparative study of two parks in Amsterdam was first generated. As *KETTER&Co* has been working in a few parks in Amsterdam for almost three years, I was offered to perform a research in Amstelpark and Vondelpark, as the internship organization had already had some projects in these parks and some contacts of people related to the parks or their matters in one way or another. The

internship organization provided the intern with these contacts, introduced him with the main information about the parks, as well as with their research projects. *KETTER&Co* also involved the intern in the organized activities by the organization, which helped him to get acquainted with the places better from the practical notion. This thesis is expected to become part of the *TUINBAZEN* (https://www.ketterenco.nl/tuinbazen/) project, which seeks to give a voice to gardeners within the policymakers and decision-making chain.

This analysis of two parks (and not one) helped the author to distinguish positive practices of citizen participation in one park (in this case, Vondelpark) and to assess if they could be applicable in another park (Amstelpark). This comparison also helped to see the positive practices, ways of how civic encouragement could be stimulated. In addition, a big stimulus to perform such kind of a study was the fact that a comparative approach gives an opportunity to test hypotheses about causal relationships between different chosen cases, as well as between variables (Pierre, 2005). Following that, as this comparative study had five variables distinguished, the application of a comparative approach played a crucial role in this research. Furthermore, it was chosen to perform this comparative research as a case study, as case studies are often the sites for the employment of both qualitative and quantitative research (Bryman, 2012). This comparative study of two parks and their communities required a wide variety of research methods and techniques to be used, as every actor group required a different research approach and different method to be used.

Though the research strategy of this research was mixed, most of the methods used in this research were qualitative (i.e. non-participant and participatory observation, semi-structured and group interviewing, document analysis), and only one method was quantitative (structured interviewing - questionnaire surveys). Moreover, it can be argued that this research is within the category of a qualitative study, although a deductive approach to theory development was used, which meant that from the hypothesis and ideas inferred from the used theory, the research was guided and conducted (Bryman, 2012). Lastly, the decision of conducting this research as a case gave the possibility to elucidate the unique features of the chosen parks and their communities, the approach which is only specific to case studies (Bryman, 2012).

5.3. Methods and techniques

This investigation began with the performance of observation, which took place from the beginning to the end of the research. In this stage, two different forms of observation took place: non-participant and participatory observation. During the observational research phase, notes and photos were taken, mapping was performed. To get acquainted with the case study areas, firstly non-participant observation was performed, which was organized on eight different dates (4 different dates per park) in 4 months period, starting with April and ending with July (*Table 2*). One observation would usually take between one to three hours, depending on the observation object and how much time it would require. The initial visits were longer to get a sense of the spaces, as such criterias/ subjects as smell, materiality, activities, animals, litter, colour, visitors, food/ drinks (cafes, restaurants), objects, language, and sound were assessed. This data collection informed my understanding about the parks. The subsequent visits were shorter and they were dedicated to observe other qualities in the parks, for example, the ongoing activities and events, visitors. During the last observations, park visitors were counted. It was chosen to perform this counting on a workday, as the events, which usually occur during the weekends may have implications on the observations. In the time period of one hour park visitors were counted, as well as the way they come the parks was monitored (walking, running, cycling and etc.). The main aim of non-participant observation was to do a site visit to get a sense of the main characteristics of the space and its users. The performance of non-participatory observation helped to identify the main problems of the case study areas, characterize the main actor groups within the parks, and to notice civic engagement activities taking place in the parks. In this phase of observation, the researcher did not participate in the social setting and remained a passive observer, what is often considered one of the main qualities of non-participatory observation (Bryman, 2012).

Table 2. Non-participant observation in the case study areas

No. of activity	Park	Date
Observation I	Amstelpark	10 04 2019
Observation I	Vondelpark	20 04 2019
Observation II	Amstelpark	21 05 2019
Observation II	Vondelpark	29 05 2019
Observation III	Amstelpark	19 06 2019
Observation III	Vondelpark	24 06 2019
Observation IV	Amstelpark	11 07 2019
Observation IV	Vondelpark	16 07 2019

After non-participant observation, participatory observation followed, which took place from the beginning till the end of this research (*Table 3*). In this stage of observation, the role of the researcher had changed. By joining various activities and events concerning the maintenance of the case study areas (e.g. rose pruning, litter collecting or mowing grass), the researcher tried to be as more inclusive as it was possible. These activities helped the researcher to collect some park visitors insights, the conversations were taken with the people who participate in the maintenance activities. During these conversations, the main thoughts and ideas were taken in the form of notes. The majority of these activities and events were found on the websites of community groups, which organize these activities. Such events and activities allowed the researcher to get to know the research areas better and to get acquainted with the people who participate in these activities. The participation in these activities, which meant joining such activities as litter collecting or mowing grass, helped the researcher to better understand the meaning and necessity of these maintenance activities.

Table 3. Participatory observation in the case study areas

Activity	Park	Organizer(s)	Date
Kom snoeien! (Come to prune!)	Amstelpark	*Zone2Source & KETTER&Co*	10 04 2019
Kom spelen, tuinieren! (Come to play, to garden!)	Amstelpark	*Zone2Source & KETTER&Co, WeMakeThe.City*	22 05 2019
Werkochtend Rosarium (Working morning Rosarium)	Vondelpark	*Hart voor het Vondelpark*	29 05 2019
Werkochtend Schapenweide Vondelpark (Working morning Schapenweide Vondelpark)	Vondelpark	*Groene Buurten*	03 07 2019
Werkochtend Koeienweide Vondelpark (Working morning Koeienweide Vondelpark)	Vondelpark	*Groene Buurten*	10 07 2019
Werkochtend Vondelpark Slurf (Working morning Vondelpark Slurf)	Vondelpark	*Groene Buurten*	11 07 2019
Zwerfafval Actie Vondelpark World Cleanup Day (Litter Campaign Vondelpark World Cleanup Day)	Vondelpark	*Groene Buurten*	21 09 2019

Parkdialoog I: een dialoog over het park als tuin voor iedereen (Park dialogue I: a dialogue about the park as a garden for everyone)	Amstelpark	*Zone2Source & KETTER&Co*	21 09 2019
Goed doen met Burendag Vondelpark (Do good with neighbors day Vondelpark)	Vondelpark	*Groene Buurten*	27 09 2019
Parkdialoog II: een dialoog over het park als tuin voor iedereen (Park dialogue II: a dialogue about the park as a garden for everyone)	Amstelpark	*Zone2Source & KETTER&Co*	07 11 2019

The next qualitative method used this research was semi-structured interviewing, which took part in two forms: individual and group interviewing. The interviews were conducted with the stakeholder groups in the case study areas, as well as with the experts in the public space (park) planning and management areas (*Table 4*). The interviewees included park gardeners, coordinators of local community groups, project managers of artistic organizations (foundations) participating in the parks, as well as municipal officials from the Municipality of Amsterdam (*Gemeente Amsterdam*) responsible for the greenery and parks of Amsterdam. For the semi-structured interviews, lists of questions were formulated (*Appendix A*). For every stakeholder group, the questions being asked differed insignificantly and were oriented more towards reflecting the stakeholder group and its position in the park. The park where the interview would be held conditions the interview questions and would slightly differ, as the situation, the civic engagement and its forms are not even in Amstelpark and Vondelpark. A separate list of questions was formulated for the experts (*Appendix B*). Both lists had four main sections: introductory questions, maintenance, citizen involvement, and concluding questions. The lists of questions were formulated in relation to the citizen participation variables described in the conceptual framework.

Table 4. Semi-structured interviews of the case study areas
GA - Gemeente Amsterdam (Municipality of Amsterdam)

No.	Position	Location	Lang.	Date
1	Gardeners of Amstelpark (including the chief gardener)	Gardeners house, Amstelpark	NL	19 06 2019
2	Representative of *Hart voor het Vondelpark*	Rosarium, Vondelpark	EN	03 07 2019
3	Representative of *Groene Buurten*	De Slurf, Vondelpark	EN	11 07 2019
4	Project manager of *Zone2Source*	Rietveld Paviljoen, Amstelpark	EN	11 07 2019
5	Gardener - ecologist of Vondelpark	Vondelpark	EN	12 07 2019
6A 6B	Artistic director of *KETTER&Co* and Project manager of *KETTER&Co*	KETTER&Co studio	EN	12 07 2019
7	Team manager	Stadsdeel Zuid, GA	NL	02 09 2019
8	Green coordinator (chief gardener) of Vondelpark	Gardeners house, Vondelpark	NL	10 09 2019
9	Cleaner of Vondelpark	Gardeners house, Vondelpark	NL	10 09 2019
10	Gardener - ecologist of Vondelpark	Gardeners house, Vondelpark	NL	10 09 2019
11	Green and ecological activities manager	Ruimte en Duurzaamheid, GA	EN	25 09 2019
12	Coordinator *Buurtgroen020*	IVN Amsterdam office	EN	25 09 2019
13A 13B	Representative of *Vrienden van het Amstelpark* and Representative of *Natuur & Milieu team Zuid*	Arch. Buro, Amsterdam	EN	02 10 2019

The majority of the interviewees were contacted thanks to the internship organization, which recommended the possible interviewees. The other significant portion of the interviewees were found by doing a research on the Internet. A few interviewees were contacted through *a snowball method*, i.e. contacting a small group of people (or a person) who are relevant to the research and using them to get and establish contacts with other prospective interviewees, while these people may be able to suggest other people who may be interviewed (Bryman, 2012). The interviewees were chosen mainly for their expertise in the public space management and planning fields, or their involvement in one of the cases. Unfortunately, not everyone was accessible or wanted to participate in the research. The time of the year (summer) may also have been factor, which made it difficult to get in contact with the possible interviewees, as some of them may had been on holidays at that time. Because of the confidentiality and anonymity reasons, the respondents' identities were tried to be protected. Their names were not mentioned in this research, as the absence of respondents identities protection may lead to negative outcomes for the respondents.

The group interviewing with five gardeners of Amstelpark required a special preparation. The researcher prepared for this interview by reading some shared experiences and advices on the Internet of how to conduct a group interview. It helped him to become more familiar with this interviewing type and peculiarities. Secondly, he was required to get some assistance from one of his colleagues at the internship organization, as he needed some help, as the interview was held in Dutch. In some other following interviews, the research was also required some help, as they were also held in Dutch. Overall, the language barrier was the biggest challenge for the researcher, which is more in detail described in the limitations section below.

Most of the held interviews were audio-recorded and then subsequently transcribed. For these interviews, the interviewees were asked, if they agree with the interview being recorded. Audio-recording contributed to reliability of this research, as it helped to avoid misinterpretations, while the collected interviews were being analysed. However, two interviews were not audio-recorded and instead of that notes were taken in the most accurate way possible that was possible. In the first case, the interviewees refused to be taped. In the second case, the situation was different, as it was the interviewer's choice not to audio-record the interview, as the interviewing had naturally began only after meeting the interviewee, and he did not want to interrupt and disturb the interviewee, as it may have changed the atmosphere / energy of the interview. Except these two interviews, after every other interview transcriptions were taken. Later in the research, thematic analysis of interview transcripts was performed: various answers from different interviewees were analysed, compared and in order to answer the main research questions, as quotes they were used in this thesis. For the interviews analysis, qualitative data analysis package Nvivo was used.

According to Bryman (2012), the application of observation and semi-structured interviewing forms the basis of having a more open mind of research contours. Following this principle, the research was performed and the research thesis was written. However, while performing this research other research methods were used as well. Surveying was the next method that was performed for five days in one week at different times of a day (*Table 5*). For surveying park visitors, self-completion questionnaires were selected, which helped to save some time and more importantly, it ensured a higher response rate. The questionnaires were handed out by the researcher himself and were collected after they were filled out by the surveyed visitors. In most of the cases, the respondents chosen to answer the questions by completing the questionnaires by themselves. However, there were some cases when people avoided to fill in the questionnaires and would prefer to have a conversation. This was due to a few reasons: the language barrier, as by talking face to face you can always ask for an explanation, or because of the respondent's incapability, e.g. not having reading glasses.

In total, 208 surveys were conducted for both of the parks (104 surveys per park). Mostly, the randomly selected and surveyed people encompassed pedestrians, while cyclists, jogging and exercising people were not surveyed due to the obvious reasons. Some of the people declined to be surveyed, but they made up less than half of all of the approached people. The rationale of surveying more than 100 people per park was to get a representation of park visitors from different areas of the parks. As Amstelpark and Vondelpark are quite large parks, 70 or 80 surveys were not enough, especially in the case of Vondelpark, where people spread all over the park. Because of that,

Figure 8. Amstelpark: park visitors and activities in the park (author, 2019)
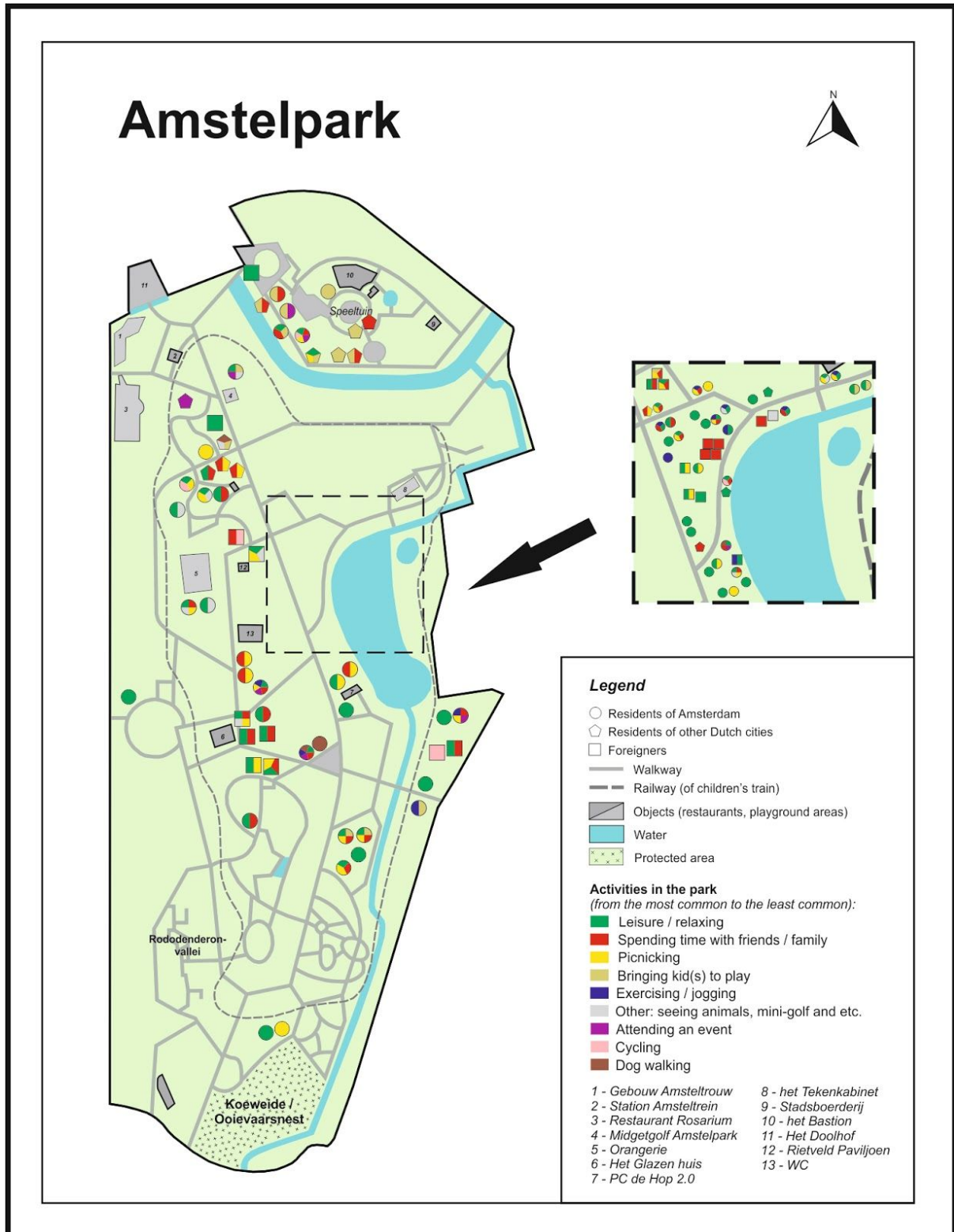
it was chosen to collect at least 100 surveys per park, the number which ensured that in the case of Vondelpark (as well as of Amstelpark) different areas of the park would be evenly covered and the people there surveyed. Surveying different areas in the parks was assumed to help to get different visitor perspectives and would contribute to the better representation of the visitors. The case of Amstelpark differed, as the visitors of Amstelpark were more centered around the center of the park, close to the pond, so to cover this park more evenly was hardly possible, as in some parts of the park it was hard to find people (*Figure 8*). This also contributed to the fact, that surveying required more time in Amstelpark, as this park is less visited than Vondelpark, and to find people to talk to was not that easy as it was in Vondelpark (*Figure 9*). Nevertheless, the researcher made an effort that at least the main areas of parks, where people gather, would be covered. To secure confidentiality of the surveyed people, all of the surveying was conducted anonymously. All the information about the research and the research was given in the beginning of the surveys (it was written in the beginning of every questionnaire). The questionnaires for Amstelpark and Vondelpark were attached in *Appendix C* and *D*.

Table 5. Surveying in the case study areas

Park	Number of collected surveys	Date
Vondelpark	55	27 05 2019
Amstelpark	36	28 05 2019
Vondelpark	49	30 05 2019
Amstelpark	30	31 05 2019
Amstelpark	38	01 06 2019

After the surveys were conducted, all of the collected questionnaires were counted and analysed. The collected survey data was mainly used for descriptive analysis, which helped to look at the characteristics of the visitors. Mostly, numerical and statistical data analysis was performed, where percentages of the surveyed people were counted. Based on the counted numerical values, tables, graphs and charts were drawn. In addition, the places of conducted surveys were localized on the maps. Based on the obtained results, the hypothesis in the conceptual framework section were tested in the results section. For the statistical analysis, quantitative data analysis software Excel was used, which was enough for the performance of simple statistical test. The hypotheses were tested using the statistical testing procedure called linear regression, which was applied to all three hypotheses of this research. All three hypotheses were composed of two sub-variables, one independent and another one dependent. The bivariate relation between these two sub-variables was tested by the application of Chi-Square statistical test, which helped to test this relation between two different characteristics in one park, not involving the other one. This statistical test choice helped to get more data on the citizen participation qualities in every of two parks separately, which later were compared park to park.

Finally, the last method (excluding the literature analysis, which was performed in-prior the data collecting) that was used in this research was virtual and policy document analysis. Using this tool, various websites of organizations and community groups were analysed, as well as social media websites (as Facebook) were used to get acquainted with how active those community groups are. The analysis of websites helped the researcher to get to know the local community groups better, to understand their role in engagement with the people and to see, if these organizations are being active not only on the social media, but also in terms of recent activities in the park (as their agendas were published on the websites, it helped the researcher to make some assumptions about them being active). In addition, green (public) space policy documents were analysed, such as *Green Agenda* (Green Agenda), *Visie Openbare Ruimte* (Public Space Vision 2025), *Structuurvisie Amsterdam 2040* (Structural Vision Amsterdam 2040) and etc. The analysis of these documents helped to get acquainted with the public space (park) management and planning in Amsterdam.

Figure 9. Vondelpark: park visitors and activities in the park (author, 2019)

5.4. Limitations and risks

According to Bryman (2012), three of the most known criteria to evaluate social research are reliability, replication, and validity. **Reliability** raises the question if the results of the study are repeatable (ibid). A comprehensive literature review and a variety of research methods applied in this investigation makes this research unlikely to be reproducible. However, if some of the methods that were used would be repeated again, such as participation, the collected results would be unlikely identical, as citizen participation and its forms fluctuate, and people who participate in these activities change. Following that, different answers and maybe even different approaches would be collected, although the same method or technique would be performed again in the same conditions.

The criterion of reliability is very close to **replication**, which is not very common in social research (Bryman, 2012). Replication holds a question if it is possible to replicate the findings of others by someone else (ibid). To ensure that it would be replicable, the researcher should spell out his procedures in great detail (ibid). In the methodology chapter, a detailed explanation was given of methods and techniques that were used in this research. However, does that mean that the research is replicable? Unlikely, as the majority of the performed methods were qualitative, which ensure that different research results would be collected. For example, if the interviewees would be interviewed again and asked the same questions, there is a possibility that they might give different answers. In this situation, a different interviewer would also have implications, as the people who would be interviewed, could give different answers to a different person. In the case of participation in the same activities and events, the outcomes would not be the same, as new activities take a place or old ones cancelled over time. Finally, in the case if the same quantitative methods and techniques would be performed, the possibility that the collected results would be more similar to the ones that were collected before would be much higher than in the case of the application of qualitative methods. This could be explained by the randomness of the people who would be surveyed, as if the survey would be performed again, the people who would participate in this survey would be random.

According to Bryman (2012), in many ways the most important research criterion is **validity**, which expresses the idea of the integrity of the conclusions, which are generated from a piece of research. Usually validity is distinguished in three main types: measurement, internal and external validity (ibid). There is also ecological validity. For this research, every type of validity was relevant, as the research was performed with the application of mixed research methodology.

- *Measurement validity* is mainly applied to quantitative research and refers to the question, if the chosen measure reflects the concept, which should be denoted (Bryman, 2012). In the case of this thesis, five variables of citizen participation were measured: sense of community, community problems, collective efficacy, norms of activism, and opportunities for involvement. For all of these variables, a variety of methods were performed (participation, interviewing, surveying, document analysis). The chosen methods were performed in a such a way that the presence of the variables would be proved existing in the case study areas.

- *Internal validity* is related to the issue of causality and is concerned with the question if there is causal relationship between two or more variables (Bryman, 2012). As this research used variables based upon research that was performed before (Foster - Fishman et al., 2013), it can be argued that the relationship between these variables was tested and proved already beforehand.

- *External validity* questions if the results of the study could be generalized beyond the specific context of research (Bryman, 2012). According to Bryman (2012), external validity is strong when the sample where the data was collected was picked out randomly. The randomness of this research was in the stage of surveying, as the surveyed respondents were selected in a random way. In the case of qualitative methods, for example, when the interviewing was performed, the randomness and coincidence was hardly possible. In order to represent the main actors in the parks, they were not randomly selected, but they were chosen. However, I did not know the specific person I would interview, so the randomness aspect could be notice here as well. Additionally, the generalization of findings to larger populations and the use of

random sampling, which enhances the representativeness of samples (ibid), gives some validity and reasonableness in the the external validity of research. Though this research was conducted on the cases where citizen participation is performed, generalization outside of this context should no be made, as participatory processes usually depend on many local conditions.

- Finally, *ecological validity* mainly represents the question if social scientific findings are applicable to natural social setting and people's everyday life (Bryman, 2012). In this research, the author tried to raise some questions if the people who have a connection to a place feel that their ideas and suggestions are represented and if these people would like to have a stronger voice in the management processes of these places. The findings of this research may be applicable to people's everyday lives, as the park usage and public involvement in planning was studied in this investigation.

5.4.1. Language barrier

Throughout the research, the biggest challenge and limitation was the language barrier, as the researcher did not have an adequate level of the Dutch language. It complicated the research in such a way, that the researcher was not able to access some of the information in Dutch (although some of the information was translated), to survey some people or to get in contact with some of the possible interviewees. Not knowing the language also interfered the researcher to fully participate in a couple of his interviews, which were organized with park gardeners and one municipal authority. However, Dutch colleagues helped him in these difficult situations. Nevertheless, to have a more in-depth discussion with the gardeners and the municipal authority was hardly possible and the quality of these interviews suffered. The quality of this interviews would have been better, if the researcher would have had an adequate level of the Dutch language.

The Dutch people are known for their high proficiency in English and it may be stated that the language problem was not that big, as it may have been in other countries. Communicating and interacting with the local residents was more than a pleasure, as the local residents were happy to have conversations concerning the things they worry and care about. However, it cannot be denied, that although most of the time communication went smoothly in English, something was still missed, because of not knowing the language at a decent level.

6. Research results

In this chapter the research results are presented and discussed. The research results are organized according to the variables from the conceptual framework: sense of community, collective efficacy and norms for activism, community problems, and opportunities for involvement. Lastly, the main findings of this research are summarized in the section called *Conclusion*.

6.1. Sense of community

Citizen participation is advantageous for many different groups: for the people who use the park (visitors), for the people who maintain the park (gardeners), as well as for the people who manage the park (municipal authorities). When one group is not participating, the park care is incomplete. As the project manager of *KETTER&Co* stated:

> *"And I think that the involvement of people, of the visitors, is both necessary for the parks, but also necessary for the gardeners. And if you make the visitors care, it lightens the load for everyone, because there is a triangle here of people that use the parks, and people that manage the parks, and people that maintain the parks. And now you have it that one of those three is not actually involved. If the people that are using the parks don't..., you know, you need two sides of the triangle at least to care, cause if they stop caring then it falls apart"* (Interview 6B, July 12).

Nonetheless, citizen involvement is beneficial for the people who participate themselves. Participation improves decision-making and creates a positive impact on future decisions that are taken (Monno and Khakee, 2012). It also contributes to the process of building a sense of community.

Figure 10. Interest in the park's problems in Amstelpark and Vondelpark

How interested are you in the problems of this park, especially regarding the management and maintenance of the park?

VONDELPARK: 32,69% — 31,73% — 17,30% — 9,61% — 1,92% — 6,73%

AMSTELPARK: 27,88% — 21,15% — 20,19% — 20,19% — 9,61% — 0,96%

Legend:
- Not interested (blue)
- Interested (green)
- No answer/Other (tan)
- No opinion (orange)
- Very interested (yellow)
- Somewhat interested (pink)
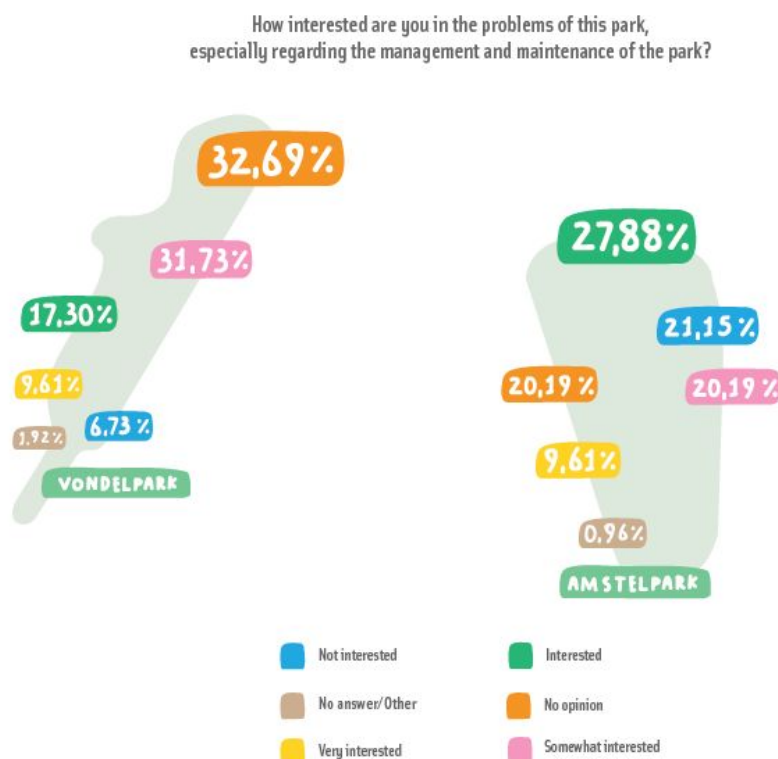
According to McMillan and Chavis (1986), one of the main aspects which describes community is a sense of belongingness, or in other words saying a sense of community. This sense of community was used as a research variable in the case studies and was measured with the first research hypothesis:

1. The more often the park is visited by participants, the stronger their interest will be in the park's problems regarding its maintenance and management.

The relationship between these two sub-variables was measured with the application of linear regression, which showed that there is a bigger correlation (almost twice) between the sub-variables in Vondelpark than in Amstelpark (*Table 7*). This correlation means that there is a stronger connection between the visitors' interest in the park (*Figure 10*) and how often they visit the park (*Figure 11*). The existing discrepancy between two parks could be explained by the fact that many surveyed people in Amstelpark felt interested in the problems of the park, though they did not visit the park very often. If the numerical data were to be analysed in more detail, the correlation coefficient of Vondelpark could be described as average, while in the case of Amstelpark it is more likely to be described as low. Although determination coefficient and effect size are low in both of the cases, correlation is still statistically significant, as the significance value (and p value) is less than 0,05. It shows that there is a significant positive relationship between two sub-variable.

Figure 11. Park visitation in Amstelpark and Vondelpark

The majority of the surveyed visitors answered that it was their first time in the park (about two-fifths of the visitors) and more than half of them were interested in the park problems. However, it does not translate into a stronger sense of community, as some other factors also had a role in it. Place attachment or residents' attachment to a place could be considered a reflection of a sense of community (Riger and Lavrakas, 1981; McMillan and Chavis, 1986; Pretty et al., 2003). This attachment can be strengthened by the residual place, as people residing near a public space may

have a bigger interest in the public space (as it may have an impact to the capital value of their houses), than the people who live further out (Carmona et al., 2008). However, this phenomenon does not always work, as sometimes the interest in the place arises even for the people from abroad. The case of Vondelpark reflects such a process as not only local residents were interested in the park and its problems, but also foreigners as well. In a similar sense, the respondents in Amstelpark were also not necessarily interested in the park issues, although they were living near the park.

Table 6. Linear regression between visitation and interest in the case areas (hypothesis 1).

	Amstelpark	Vondelpark
Multiple R (Correlation Coefficient)	0,296603694977039	0,534535361722463
R Square (Determination Coefficient)	0,0879737518740322	0,285728052931765
Adjusted R Square (Effect size)	0,0790323180688756	0,278725386784037
Significance F (Level of significance)	0,00223320641216642	5,07874146961204E-09
Coefficients (Intercept / Independent Variable - Visitation)	1,09802847754655 / 0,329682365826944	0,332419025386636 / 0,578290049606069
t Statistic (Intercept / Independent Variable - Visitation)	4,09764359387507 / 3,13669992923698	1,44773306332937 / 6,38770321752415
P-value (Intercept / Independent Variable - Visitation)	0,0000838803557611507 / 0,00223320641216619	0,150758452008082 / 5,07874146961204E-09

The increase of collective activities organized in the park develops a stronger community in the park. Collective activities tend to result in community change, which is a necessary for encouraging participatory behaviours (Perkins and Long, 2002; Price and Behrens, 2003). Collective activities, such as maintenance activities, also contribute to the process of building a sense of community.

Amstelpark. In terms of a sense of community, the park community of Amstelpark could be considered quite weak and not very well connected. Local residents are not involved and have no interest in being involved in the park life. It could be argued, that there is a missing connection between the park and the residents living near the park. Additionally, it is hard to involve the people who play a large role in the community, because there is a lack of interest in participation, although efforts are being made to do more to attract and involve them. As the project manager of *Zone2Source* stated: *"Also (we) propose to them many times, if we can do like give talks and show every like more bring people here and everything, but you can't have any interest out them" (Interview 4, July 11).* In addition, there is not only a lack of enthusiasm from the staff of the community center, but also from the residents living around the park. They themselves are passive and not engaging. Their passiviness in failing to contribute in various projects in Amstelpark, including the ones contributing to the maintenance of the park, makes the residents living around the park indifferent and somewhat detached from the pleasures brought through park visitations.

Vondelpark. In contrast, this research finds that there is a stronger sense of belongingness in Vondelpark. This stronger sense of connection could be noticed by the people who come to look after the park and who also contribute to its maintenance by participating in activities every week. These people are mostly part of an older demographic, even though there are some younger people who join as well. Therefore, the park's inclusivity of all kinds of people is one of the park's qualities that ought to be valued and enhanced, as it helps to cope with some contemporary problems existing in the modern societies, as the representative of *Groene Buurten* noticed: *"And we also have sometimes companies who work with lonely people or people with other problems" (Interview 3, July 11).* The

range of ages and mixture of backgrounds found in these communities gives the sense of openness and inclusivity, which could help to attract more people with different backgrounds. Moreover, these organized activities help to make connections among the volunteers and also the people who visit the park, since they are always welcome to join these activities. In addition, these organized activities help to build a sense of community and have many advantages for the people living in the surrounding areas as well, as the representative of *Groene Buurten* stated:

> *"For everyone and also for safety, for the social... People talk with each other, that is not only in the park, but also in neighborhoods. When they only live there then they won't be..., they even don't say hello to each other. When they start to green..., the maintenance..., to do the green maintenance together they getting to contact again, and it is becoming social, it is becoming safer in the area" (Interview 3, July 11).*

With the growth of feeling safe, in combination with getting more acquainted with the people living in the neighborhood, the level of social connection among the residents grows which translates into more bonded and connected community. That is important in the context of park planning, as the sense community growth has the capacity to motivate a community to take part in the planning process and to contribute to local development (Manzo and Perkins, 2006).

In summary, there is a stronger sense of community in Vondelpark than in Amstelpark. In Vondelpark people tend to come from various areas of the city to contribute to the maintenance by joining maintenance activities in the park. Meanwhile, the park community of Amstelpark is passive, not involved in the activities and events organized in the park and not very interested in involvement. This is mainly because of the lack of maintenance activities in the park.

6.2. Collective efficacy and norms for activism

One of the ambitions set up by the city government of Amsterdam is that planning and management of public spaces should become more of a shared task with the people who use these spaces (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2017). As the city government is taking less prominent role in public space management and has fewer financial resources available, there is a growing tendency within the city government to share this responsibility with citizens, citizen organizations and businesses (ibid). This room for citizen initiatives that the city has been offering could be seen as an opportunity.

Table 7. Linear regression between perceived representation and potential engagement in the case areas (hypothesis 2).

	Amstelpark	Vondelpark
Multiple R *(Correlation Coefficient)*	0,210965228172525	0,147336604446488
R Square *(Determination Coefficient)*	0,0445063274978856	0,0217080750098208
Adjusted R Square *(Effect size)*	0,0351387424733551	0,0121169777059955
Significance F *(Level of significance)*	0,0315801132030483	0,135556906180114
Coefficients *(Intercept / Independent Variable - Perceived Representation)*	1,09641255605381 0,149775784753363	1,12589305044382 0,0991556613985711
t Statistic *(Intercept / Independent Variable - Perceived Representation)*	9,24198538133622 2,1797016745923	10,1601269725201 1,50444566852002
P-value *(Intercept / Independent Variable - Perceived Representation)*	3,8728278745531E-15 / 0,0315801132030484	3,59983410876768E-17 / 0,13555690618013

Collective efficacy and norms for activism as variables in the case areas were measured through second research hypothesis:

2. The stronger the perceived representation of participants in the planning and management matters of the park, the stronger their potential engagement in the park's maintenance activities would be.

The relationship between these two sub-variables was measured with the application of linear regression, which showed that there is a bigger correlation (less than twice) between the sub-variables in Amstelpark than in Vondelpark (*Table 8*). However, this difference is not significant, as the number of answers given by the visitors were quite similar when they were compared. Most surveyed visitors did not have their own opinion or did not give an answer on the question if their views are being represented by the policies made in the parks (about half of all visitors). In the meantime, on the basis if they would be interested to be involved in the decision making processes more actively in the park, most of them (about two-fifths) gave negative answers (*Figure 12*). Moreover, the correlation itself is not significant, as it is not that strong. If the numerical data were to be analyzed in more detail, the correlation coefficient of both parks would be described as low. In this case, correlation is statistically insignificant, as the significance value (and p value) is more than 0,05 or close to this number. It shows that there is an insignificant relationship between two sub-variables.

Figure 12. Potential engagement in the park's maintenance activities in Amstelpark and Vondelpark

6.2.1. Perceived representation in the park planning and management

Although the municipality of Amsterdam and the residents of Amsterdam work more and more together (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2017), there is a lack of communication and representation in Amstelpark and Vondelpark. Some people, such as the representatives of community groups, feel more represented, other respondents, i.e. mainly the park staff, lack the feeling of being adequately represented and heard by the people who make decisions. In order to increase the representation in Amstelpark and Vondelpark, various measures could be applied, but one of the most important ways how this situation could be handled in a better way is a greater stakeholder involvement in the planning processes (Sanoff, 2000). This will not only help to increase the representation of various actors, but it will also increase the bonding and connectedness within a community (ibid).

Amstelpark. There is a lack of gardeners representation in the park planning and management in the case of Amstelpark. The park gardeners are not feeling represented by the decisions made by the municipal authorities and as one of the interviewed gardeners of Amstelpark said talking about the weight of their voice: *"It is screaming in the desert" (Interview 1, June 19).* Although sometimes the *leaders*, as the gardeners call them, may hear you, but they won't take any action on the suggestions that the gardeners make. This is a persistent problem the gardeners are coping with for years and it is not getting better. The lack of gardeners representation leads to the risk that as new challenges arise in the park, for example, related to the management of litter or the fallen trees after a storm, the authorities making decisions may not necessarily know what works in practice and what does not, if they do not consult with gardeners. As the artistic director of *KETTER&Co* emphasized, the budget cuts in maintenance are rationalized and mainly based on the perspectives of municipal authorities, as it follows:

> *"But then this budget cut in maintenance of the park and it is all rationalized. Rationalized in a sense that we..., that managers think of how parks should be maintained, instead of ..., and so when they make budget cuts they will think of ideas of how to do that and they think from their perspective and not from the..., they don't involve the gardeners in that" (Interview 6A, July 12).*

And the gardeners' situation is not getting better, as the artistic director of *KETTER&Co* who has been working in a couple projects with the Amstelpark gardeners noticed: *"One organization after the other making their position worse and also giving less and less voice of freedom in their role and job as gardeners" (Interview 6A, July 12).* However, this has to change as it challenges the park and how it is going to look in the future.

Contrary to the statements expressed by the gardeners of Amstelpark, the few Amstelpark community groups and the artistic organization based in Amstelpark are satisfied with their representation level at the moment. As the project manager of *Zone2Source* stated talking about the support from the municipal government:

> *"Yes. I mean, they support me, I get financial support and then I also have annual evaluations. I think they totally support it and they also talk about it when they were interviewed, for example, they wanted have happened in this park" (Interview 4, July 11).*

However, collaboration with the municipal authorities may not always be easy, as there may be some difficulties in the process, for example, when the personnel is changed new introductions are required, which may disrupt or put an end to the development of some of the ongoing projects.

Vondelpark. Representation levels in Vondelpark were found to vary depending on the person and their connections to the government officials. As the case of Vondelpark's gardeners showed, there could be both positive and negative examples of how the people working there are heard and represented. For example, one gardener of Vondelpark is satisfied with the current board and the connections he has with it:

> *"They do, yes, yeah. I think most of my colleagues are fine with the ..., and I am always trying to improve it and... Like this one, I had a wish to get this year and I did this but with my boss and a friend of mine, who run this organization for bees. And it was my wish and I think this is also an improvement for the biodiversity, to get the biodiversity going here. So my boss, he was taking me seriously and he thought that was a good idea to get this here" (Interview 5, July 12).*

Notwithstanding, not all of the gardeners are satisfied with the decisions made by the municipal officials, as sometimes their recommendations are being ignored and in the end there is no action taken. Furthermore, sometimes those decisions are made without consulting with the gardeners, which are the people who are most directly affected by those decisions, and as one gardener of Vondelpark stated:

> *"Yes, a couple things. Like for instance, they would place bins where you can throw away glass. If you would ask us in the first place, we would tell them that it's not going to work. When the regular bins are full, then people will automatically put regular trash in the bins that were made for glass" (Respondent No. 9, September 10).*

The situation could be improved by improved communication between the gardeners and the municipal staff, as well as by more involvement opportunities for gardeners so they could express their ideas and recommendations before the time decisions are made. More included gardeners in the park management matters would be also beneficial for the central government, as it would help to change the rooted perception that governments are usually taking place in participation to ensure that the concerns of residents and community-based groups would be voiced, but not trying to transform decisions or involve more actors in making them (Maginn, 2007a).

When it comes to the community groups working in Vondelpark, the situation in the park could be described as one which resulted from totally inadequate communication and discussions held in the park where communities would have a platform to express their ideas, thoughts, suggestions. Therefore, there could be more communication between different groups in the park so that a better understanding would be achieved about the park, its challenges, problems, future. In general, the people working in the park voluntarily felt satisfied with the current situation. For example, the representative of *Haart voor het Vondelpark* said: *"We have a good contact with the municipality and they listen to us, appreciate what we are doing, they try to help us" (Interview 2, July 3).* However, according to the representative, there can be some difficulties communicating with politicians: *"I think we are not heard by the politicians. With the people who are responsible for the park we have a really good connection, but not with the politicians" (Interview 2, July 3).* As the people who are directly responsible for the park, its staff and many technical things in the park are much easier to access. The main problem is the politicians, according to the respondent claims. They are less involved in the park development and its problems directly.

6.2.2. Potential engagement in the park maintenance and management

A higher level of stakeholder engagement in the park maintenance and management activities could be seen as a tool to improve the management of the contemporary public spaces. These days there are more and more positive examples of stakeholder involvement and Amsterdam is not an exception, as the green and ecological activities manager from the city's Department of Space and Sustainability (*Ruimte en Duurzaamheid*) noted: *"But nowadays we are trying more. Last year, so already. We are trying more to get them involved beforehand" (Interview 11, September 25).* However, do gardeners, leaders of community groups and other actors in the parks feel involved?

Amstelpark. This research has indicated that most of the respondents would like to be more involved in the management process of the park to express their ideas and to follow what are the upcoming plans for the park. Although the gardeners of Amstelpark would like to be more involved in the development process of the park, but according to them, it is difficult, as there are not many opportunities to engage with municipal staff. In the case of community groups working in the park, they would be interested in engaging more, but only if there will be results, as the representative of *Vrienden van het Amstelpark* emphasized:

> *"In general, yes, we are… You know, if it is more relevant, if you have the feeling that it actually leads to something, it becomes more..., yeah, absolutely, yeah. Cause the worst thing is that if you are heard and then nothing happens. Then you are basically just being quieted down, right? It needs to lead to something" (Interview 13A, October 2).*

In the case of a new project, it must be presented to government officials, who would approve or not approve the project and later would finance it or not. However, it is important that there be continuity of projects when they start, as projects can be disrupted by the changes in leadership or in the case when the responsible authorities leave organizations, as the representative of another community group in the park, *Natuur & Milieu Team Zuid*, marked: *"People leave before they can implement what they promised. Nobody else picks it up. Then you start all over again. And that is very demotivating" (Interview 13B, October 2).* Furthermore, the planning and decision making processes which are already complicated could be even more complicated by the involvement of more actors in the planning and management processes. On the other hand, the involvement of more actors with different backgrounds and interests and making the discussion environment more interdisciplinary could attract more people to engage, and possibly it could make the management of the park more integral and inclusive.

Vondelpark. A similar case can be found in Vondelpark, as most of the respondents indicated that they would be interested in participating more in the management process of the park, although some of them might find it difficult because of time or busyness reasons. The gardeners of Vondelpark were among those interested in being more involved. However, the only one difficulty was time, as the gardener - ecologist of Vondelpark stated: *"I would like to, but there is not enough time. If you have a meeting somewhere there is still a lot of work left to do. That's something I often get frustrated over, you have little time to do other stuff." (Interview 10, September 10).* Having more meetings and discussions with the authorities, and being more involved in the management process to get more updated on the actions taken in the park also seemed to be a good idea for the representative of *Groene Buurten*. However, for the representative of *Haart voor het Vondelpark* it does not seem a great idea, as she is already quite busy and possibly she would not have more time for extra activities, as: *"It is too much to do everything, to overlook everything for volunteers" (Interview 2, July 3).* As being more involved may be a good idea for some people and representatives, for others it may appear as an unrealistic idea. Some may see it as beyond their responsibility or they may not be capable to join in, because of lack of time, busyness or other reasons.

To conclude, the cases have shown that collaboration between different actor groups can be complicated, especially if there is a lack of communication between them. It could be stated, that there is a lack of representation in the involvement in planning matters related to park maintenance in Amstelpark and Vondelpark. Although the gardeners' voices are heard in both park cases, their advice is omitted when the final decisions are made. In the meantime, the community groups of both parks felt more satisfied with their representation in the official decision-making processes, although some improvements could be made in the field of communication with the municipality. Finally, the majority of the interviewed actors (gardeners, representatives of community groups) would be interested to engage in the processes of the park management and planning, while only some of these actors were not interested, as they would not have either enough time or just general reluctance. Additionally, they would not be interested, since they do not see it as their primary task. In the case of park visitors, only a minority of the surveyed visitors would be interested in contributing to the development of the park by participating in discussions and other activities dedicated for the parks and their future development guidelines.

6.3. Community problems

Problems in a community, neighborhood or park or all together could stimulate citizen engagement (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990; Perkins et al., 1990). Community problems are the political, social or physical disorders existing in a place, according to the residents, members, visitors or just in general, stakeholders having a connection with that place (Foster - Fishman et al., 2009). Community problems as a variable in the case areas was measured with the third research hypothesis:

3. The participant's level of satisfaction regarding a park's issues (e.g. maintenance, cleanliness, park's infrastructure and etc.) translates into a more positive opinion about the park's maintenance.

Table 8. Linear regression between satisfaction and positivity in the case areas (hypothesis 3).

	Amstelpark	Vondelpark
Multiple R (Correlation Coefficient)	0,235602591807988	0,45405739065743
R Square (Determination Coefficient)	0,0555085812666413	0,206168114010634
Adjusted R Square (Effect size)	0,0462488614751378	0,198385448461718
Significance F (Level of significance)	0,0160559434231715	1,29059474885357E-06
Coefficients (Intercept / Independent Variable - Satisfaction)	1,36917492931638 0,515620497083083	0,0116591879410999 0,886228979698527
t Statistic (Intercept / Independent Variable - Satisfaction)	1,50387962670889 2,44839306874161	0,0161871866221962 5,14690989485251
P-value (Intercept / Independent Variable - Satisfaction)	0,13570246313254 / 0,0160559434231714	0,987116678240491 / 1,29059474885365E-06

The relation between these two sub-variables was measured with the application of linear regression, which showed that there is a bigger correlation (almost twice) between the sub-variables in Vondelpark than in Amstelpark (*Table 9*). This difference could be explained by the fact that many people in Amstelpark did not give their opinion on how well Amstelpark is maintained (*Figure 13*), although they evaluated the park maintenance qualities on different issues existing or not existing in

the park. If the numerical data would be analysed more in detail, the correlation coefficient of Vondelpark could be described as more likely as average, while in the case of Amstelpark it is more likely to be described as low. Although determination coefficient and effect size are low in both of the cases, correlation is still statistically significant, as the significance value (and p value) is less than 0,05. It shows that there is a significant positive relationship between two sub-variables.

Figure 13. Park visitors' perception on Amstelpark and Vondelpark maintenance

How well maintained is this park?

Good
Poor
Excellent
Very good
Fair
No answer
No opinion
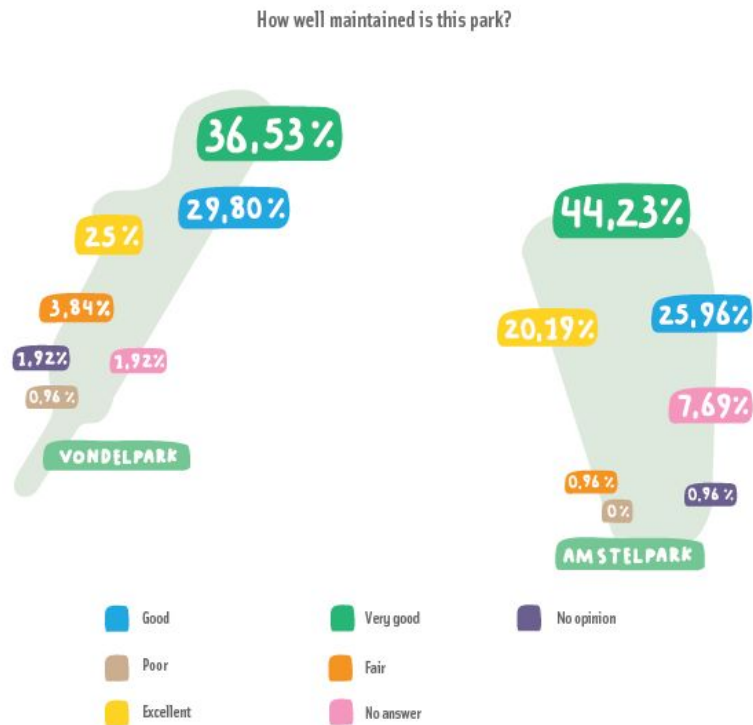
6.3.1. Park challenges and issues

Centralization of city districts and the concentration of control in one place may be one of the problems that touched Amstelpark, Vondelpark and many more parks in Amsterdam. As most respondents recognized, this reorganization has lead to more negative results than positive. Although some more extra money was saved, the reorganization meant that all city parks are governed from one place - the central city government, where every park would be treated in the same way, as the project manager of *Zone2Source* noticed: *"They used to be all city parks and now we have centralized it again. And so within the central government this becomes any park, whereas before within the city it was separately in Zuid it had a different kind of status"* (talking about Amstelpark, Interview 4, July 11). Consequently, as the gardeners of Amstelpark recognized, it worked better when there were separate city districts, as parks would have more individual attention. The city districts centralization also could be seen as the reason to occur to some other problems in the park, which are analysed below.

6.3.1.1. Budget cuts and its implications

Amstelpark. When it comes to problems and challenges in Amstelpark, the interviewees made it clear that one of the most fundamental problems the park is dealing with at the moment are budget (financing) cuts and its implications (e.g. lack of manpower, which is partly compensated by hiring

contractors, and etc.). Financial problems, i.e. less money allocated for the park's activities perceived as a contributing factor to other problems in the park, as with the budget cuts, which were executed recently, the number of gardeners were affected negatively, i.e. their number was decreased. As a consequence, there is less fixed gardeners signed for the park and there is less work performed in the park. According to the gardener of Amstelpark, now they have not only a smaller number of the park staff, but also other parks maintenance is assigned to them, as one gardener said:

> "Before we were working (with) 15 (gardeners) here, in this park. And that is only one park. And now we got four more (parks). So it increasing very much. We got four parks for five gardeners: Amstelpark, Beatrixpark, Gijsbrecht van Amstelpark, and Martin Luther Kingpark. Sometimes we go to even park six, but then we get help from them (other gardeners) as well" (Interview 1, June 19).

As the project manager of *Zone2Source* emphasized, the existing problem of lack of manpower in Amstelpark creates stressful conditions the gardeners of Amstelpark have to deal with: *"Yeah, I mean, I know from the gardeners that they are quite stressed out in their work, because they have been reducing numbers, those big budget cuts, they do a lot of work, they can't do it, and there is not enough time and people" (Interview 4, July 11).* The struggles the gardeners are dealing with such as the multiple sites they have to maintain with less manpower and less time for every park separately challenges the maintenance quality and the well-being of the gardeners themselves. In addition, their connection to the park is threatened, as the maintenance is being rationalized through implemented policies, as the project manager of *KETTER&Co* noticed:

> "There is an emotional connection and by rationalizing everything you tear off this emotional connection, which is actually the thing that involves care. Care means emotion. Caring for something involves emotion and if you are taking out the emotion and making everything rational, can you still care for something? So if you say care of the commons, well, there is no care, if there is no emotion if it is just yeah... So if you are ripping that out and making everything contractors and people who just do and run. That is what you lose" (Interview 6B, July 12).

These stressful conditions and the weakening connection to the park could have negative implications for the park's future and how it is maintained. It could lead to lower quality park maintenance. However, it could be argued, that the problem of lack of manpower shortage is trying to be solved by labour outsourcing, i.e. by hiring people from outside, such as contractors, which are cheaper, but not necessarily better for the park and its maintenance. Outsourcing of labour in the park and its outcomes negatively affect not only the park, but also its gardeners. As contractors are usually hired for a temporary time period and they would be in other parks and public spaces, the park gardeners are not feeling not that well connected with the group of people working in the park. Although having more contractors working in the park aids in cost savings, this has also some aforementioned negative implications, which could create tensions between the gardeners and the people from outside, i.e. contractors.

Vondelpark. Financial problems and the lack of manpower was also seen in the case of Vondelpark. Less money for parks and public spaces in Amsterdam and especially for Vondelpark is a very serious problem, as the representative of *Groene Buurten* noticed:

> "And it is a really a problem that we get less and less money. I think it is a priority, this park. Of course, it is also important that all parks get their money and they are really good maintained. But it is such a big park and such a lot of people, so the municipality really has their basics and preferably a little bit" (Interview 3, July 11).

The same problems were also recognized by the representative of *Haart voor het Vondelpark*. This decrease in funding threatens the park and the level of how it is maintained even more, as the organizations performing maintenance activities in the park could may also experience negative changes in their funding.

In the case of both Amstelpark and Vondelpark there is a serious shortage of gardeners. According to the gardeners of Amstelpark, this lack of manpower has been an ongoing problem in the park and some more extra staff support is necessary. The same opinion that there should be more gardeners and financing for the park was expressed by the representatives of local community groups working in the park. Although the financial cuts were implemented, one of the municipality's priorities is having more green spaces, as the representative of *Haart voor het Vondelpark* stated: "*Even though they (*municipality*) say it should be more green, they do not spend more money" (Interview 2, July 3).* As a consequence, the lack of maintenance support staff translates into maintenance issues. However, the gardeners and volunteers are trying to cope with this task to keep the park well-maintained, although it is challenging. The fact that there are more contractors working in the park does not help either, as it often complicates the work the gardeners have to do, as one of the gardener of Vondelpark noticed: *"And yeah, and often they are from another country or another city, and they just doing their job and they don't know the soil as well, because sometimes we get a company from the north of Holland and they are on sand" (Interview 5, July 12).* Though contractors may not seem as the best solution for the park and its maintenance, it is important to emphasize that in these changed conditions with less finances hiring more worker from outside, i.e. contractors, is one of the ways how to compensate the loss of workforce in the park.

As it was mentioned in the chapter above, the municipal government is taking a less prominent role in park maintenance and allocating less funding to it (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2017). This problem is prevalent not only in Amstelpark or Vondelpark, the two parks analysed in this paper, but it is also common in many green and public spaces in the city of Amsterdam. Although the financing of public spaces and their maintenance is decreasing, the interest in public spaces is growing, as the artistic director of *KETTER&Co* noticed:

> "Whereas the interest in green is very high in Amsterdam, because you see, politically a lot of people voted for the Green party. There is awareness about how important green is, clean cities, etc. And also the planet, the green as of the planet, etc." (Interview 6A, July 12).

With the growing interest in public spaces and in general, the environment that surrounds us, more people want to contribute to the care of these spaces. This leads to more people joining maintenance activities, which helps to save some budget money, but also to increase the awareness about environment, greenery and its importance.

6.3.1.2. Lack of overall park vision

Amstelpark. A more complex problem that Amstelpark has been dealing with is the lack of overall park vision, as the majority of the respondents recognized. Amstelpark, as a park, was created with the vision that the place would hold the world horticultural exhibition *Floriade*, which took place in 1972. However, in today's context it could be noted that the park has no overall current vision, as the project manager of *Zone2Source* noticed: "*But there is no vision as a total on this park. You know, it does still have kind of specific status being Floriade park, but it is never valued and what does that mean actually" (Interview 4, July 11).* These days the park still has a strong relationship to its past, which could be seen from the relics of the exhibition still sitting in the park. The purpose of Amstelpark

should be rethought, since currently the park has not adapted to the contemporary context. Therefore, it is important to have some thoughts and ideas of how this exhibition park with national audience could be transformed into a more local recreational park. Furthermore, Amstelpark should have an overall long-term vision for the future of the park to apply it for the contemporary context, as the representative of *Vrienden van het Amstelpark* recognized: *"There should be a kind of modest overall vision, where you could say - we can remove that pavilion, that is not the point where there should be anything, or that is the ideal place to put in. So they should have a little bit of philosophy about it"* (Interview 13A, October 2). However, because of the lack of initiative from the municipality, there is no progress in the direction of this vision question, it is not clear how this park should be steered that the *Floriade* heritage tradition would be retained. As the project manager of *Zone2Source* said: *"I think this park could become a much more special place with some vision"* (Interview 4, July 11). Overall, having a more complete and consistent park vision could make the park more successful in various kinds of notions, as well as it may be the cure for some of the problems the park has been having at the moment.

Furthermore, the absence of nature education in Amstelpark could be seen as a continuation of the lack of park vision problem and proof of the lack of interest from the city government in Amstelpark. Therefore, not having an actor responsible for nature education is seen as something that the park is missing and something that would only enrich the park and its visitors. The fact that the demand for nature education is growing in the city of Amsterdam, even more emphasizes the importance of nature education and the importance of its presence in the park. Unfortunately, as the project manager of *Zone2Source* stated, the municipality have a different approach to it: *"And there is no interest from the city and I think it such a missed opportunity"* (Interview 4, July 11). Additionally, it could be seen not only as the lack of vision, which would indicate how the park should look in the future, but also as mismanagement of the space, as the place stands still and there are no changes in the park. The relics from the *Floriade* exhibition are still in the park, which cause some disappointment among the visitors, as they see it as an example how the park is neglected and not treated as it should be. According to the representative of *Natuur & Milieu Team Zuid*, the park is just stuck in time: *"Nothing is allowed, nothing demolished and nothing built. Except what is already there, because it is protected. So it is a stand still park, nothing changes"* (Interview 13B, October 2). Not having a consistent vision also leads to some negative outcomes, for example, some trees are not properly maintained, they are not removed in a timely manner and they threaten the park visitors. A quite dangerous situation occurred during the last big storm when some trees became dangerous and could have fallen. If there were a long-term vision for the park, these situations could be avoided by removing the dangerous trees in a more timely manner.

Vondelpark. When it comes to Vondelpark, the vision for the park is also seen as one of the things the park is missing. However, the lack of overall vision in Vondelpark is a significant problem. Some of the interviewees would like to have a longer term vision, which would provide clearer guidance how the park should look in the future, and as one of the gardeners of Vondelpark said:

> *"I want a long-term vision of a minimum of 20 years, because that's what I need to work with and not a political image that changes after four years. That doesn't work, that's not what nature is like. You need to a have a long-term vision with which you can maintain the quality so that it stays good. Nature needs time to recover. That doesn't take one day or four years, it takes years"* (Interview 10, September 10).

However, other important actors in the park did not notice the lack of park vision as one of the prevalent issues in Vondelpark.

Financial problems and the lack of vision are the main challenges and problems Amstelpark and Vondelpark have been dealing with for years. These issues are also sources of other problems, such as the aforementioned lack of manpower. Furthermore, these problems are often intermingled with other issues the parks are having.

6.3.2. Park maintenance and management

There is a significant difference when the satisfaction level of how various actors groups are evaluated. As the analysis of Amstelpark case showed, the majority of the respondents are not satisfied with the level of how the park is maintained. In the meantime, the respondents of Vondelpark were satisfied with the current level of maintenance.

Amstelpark. Most of the respondents were not satisfied with the level of how Amstelpark is currently maintained and managed (since these enormous budget cuts were executed). According to the project manager of the international exhibition platform *Zone2Source*, the organization which has been in the park since 2013, maintenance and the level of how the park is maintained is decreasing:

> "*Yes, it is clearly deteriorating. If you were here in 2013, in the first two years it was one of the best maintained parks you have ever seen. The people who came were really really impressed with how well maintained it was. And the last couple years, nee (no), put down the maintenance level, mostly from 8 to 6, it is kind of a scale is. But you can really see that, there is a lot of... If you have been in the front here, it was like perfectly maintained. Now it is completely left wild*" (Interview 4, July 11).

A pretty similar experience was expressed by the representative of *Vrienden van het Amstelpark*:

> "*When we came two years ago, I had the feeling this is a wonderful well-maintained park. I have the feeling it is really quickly, probably was already the case, but it really went down. So they need to..., it is kind of urgent, there needs to be some decisions, some budgets, some changes*" (Interview 13A, October 2).

Furthermore, that the maintenance level in the park is diminishing was also confirmed by the people working in the park on a daily basis - gardeners, as in the beginning when they started working there they were quite happy with the maintenance level, while now they see that the park is going downhill rapidly. As a result of this park deterioration, the gardeners of Amstelpark acknowledge that it has an impact on their motivation which decreases consistently: *"We work with passion in the park and the passion goes away slowly" (Interview 1, June 19).* Although there is less maintenance performed in the park, it could be seen not only negatively, as it may also be a positive thing, which gives chances to nature. However, the origin of Amstelpark as an exhibition park should also not be forgotten, as some parts of the park, such as the rhododendron valley or rose garden, require a special attention and high maintenance activities to be performed, if the original park plan with all plants and flowers is wanted to be kept. Those areas cannot be left out and maintained in the tradition of ecological maintenance, where there is minimal human involvement, as it would lead to losing of some important qualities of the park.

Vondelpark. In contrast, a different situation was found in Vondelpark, where most of the interviewed actors were satisfied with how the park is maintained and managed. In general, the gardeners of Vondelpark were quite content with the park management and maintenance. While working in the park they noticed that the maintenance level of the park has improved. Meanwhile, the green coordinator of Vondelpark, the person responsible for all the gardeners and their work, had both positive and negative commentaries on the current situation: *"Yes and no. Yes, because with a few*

people we do a lot of work. And no, I don't have any money and not enough people. I would like to make the park a better place but there is just no money" (Interview 8, September 10). A different approach to the green coordinator's had the representative of *Haart voor het Vondelpark*, as she saw improvements in the maintenance, management and cooperation in the park. Next to that, the representative of *Groene Buurten* was also quite satisfied with how the park is maintained and managed today, although there could be made some improvements in the future:

> *"I am quite satisfied. Like I say, I think it is really getting better and better. How it looks and the cooperation with each other and yeah, but sometimes, yeah, I still see the problem of that lack of manpower of the municipality and so sometimes I think: ooh, when, yeah, like when people can get ill, etc., then it is really a problem and sometimes that happens. And then I think: ooh, then there is.., yeah, I think it is a pity that it is not a bigger team" (Interview 3, July 11).*

Generally, the interviewees were more satisfied with the maintenance level in Amstelpark, while only some of them had some remarks and recommendations for improvements.

It is not easy to find solutions to solve the issues and challenges the parks are dealing with, as well as improve the maintenance of these places. The first step to find solutions for these problems is to acknowledge them and it is happening already, as the green and ecological activities manager from the city's Department of Space and Sustainability (*Ruimte en Duurzaamheid*) stated: *"But the maintenance of the park and the green is a big problem, because it is really expensive" (Interview 11, September 25).* Secondly, there are efforts being made to find a solution for this problem, although there are some obstacles along the way, as the manager noticed: *"But we try, we try to cope. Yeah, we need money to do good maintenance, but well, we have a lot of things to sponsor with money" (Interview 11, September 25).* The financial aspect of it was also acknowledged by the team manager from a local city district body - *Stadsdeel Zuid*: *"It can be better, if you look at the level of care we are working with right now, that has been set by the establishment (politicians) and it is all about money" (Interview 7, September 2).* Although more finances and devoting more attention and care for the parks could help to solve some of these problems, it is still important that the current situation and possibilities would be evaluated and the current resources would be used, as the team manager suggested: *"We have the challenge to see what the possibilities are with this amount of money. Complaining about the amount does not help us. Let's find out what we can actually do with this money and still have a fabulous park" (Interview 7, September 2).* However, other tools, measures should be also evaluated, as for example, having clearer and consistent long-term visions for the parks could also help to improve the current situation and to avoid mismanagement of these places.

In summary, although there are many problems and challenges Amstelpark and Vondelpark are coping with at the moment, in this research it was found that the main ones are the lack of overall park vision in Amstelpark and to a lesser extent in Vondelpark, and the recent budget cuts for public spaces. These two challenges in the park are directly connected with other problems in the parks, such as the decrease of park staff in both of the parks, or the abolishment of nature education activities in Amstelpark. Meanwhile, on the basis of the maintenance level and management of Amstelpark and Vondelpark, the situation could be explained briefly: the gardeners, the community groups and the visitors of Vondelpark are satisfied with how the park is maintained and managed, while in the case of Amstelpark, most of the respondents (except visitors) were not satisfied with how the park is maintained and they see that the park has been deteriorating for a while. This park maintenance problem is also acknowledged among the municipal authorities, which according to them has a reasoning - it costs a lot of money.

6.4. Opportunities for involvement

Amstelpark and Vondelpark are different parks, when local opportunities for citizens to be involved in their neighborhoods maintenance activities are taken into consideration. When in Vondelpark it is possible to choose from a variety of activities where to join in, a completely different situation exists in Amstelpark, as there are almost no maintenance activities organized, particularly those, which would have recurrence and continuity. As the conducted survey revealed, more than half of the surveyed visitors in both parks do not know about these maintenance activities and would not be interested to join them *(Figure 14)*. However, there were a number of people, which accounted for one fourth to one fifth of the surveyed population in both parks, who would be interested in participating in these activities, although they were not well acquainted with these activities in the parks. Therefore, it is important that the situation would change and there ought to be more exposure to these activities, as well as there should be more of these activities, especially in the case of Amstelpark, as there is just not enough of them.

Figure 14. Familiarization with and participation in maintenance activities of Amstelpark and Vondelpark
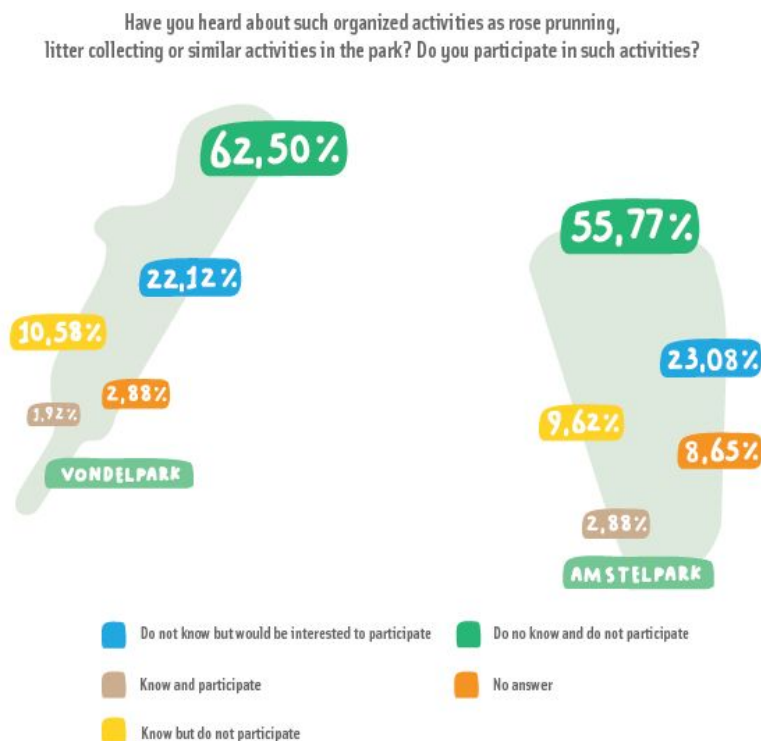
Vondelpark. Vondelpark could be taken as an example, as there is a variety of community groups in the park, which are responsible for different organized activities in the park, from educational to maintenance (*Figure 15*). There are a few local community groups, such as *Groene Buurten*, *Haart voor het Vondelpark*, *Vrienden van het Vondelpark*, which organize maintenance activities in the park attracting visitors to contribute to the care of Vondelpark. While *Hart voor het Vondelpark* organizes a rose pruning course, *Groene Buurten* is responsible for some more educational activities organization in the specially protected areas of the park: *Koeienweide* and *Schapenweide*. As the participatory observations conducted as part of this research have shown, *Groene Buurten* and *Haart voor het Vondelpark* almost every week (with some exceptions) organize maintenance activities in the park, while *Vrienden van het Vondelpark* has more of a role of activating and representing the park

community, while trying to question some decisions taken in the park, for example cutting trees and trying to find a consensus between the people who visit the park and the people who take these decisions. However, the main focus of this research was on the community groups who organize various maintenance activities in the park, as currently these organized activities attract more and more people, as the gardener - ecologist Vondelpark, who also helps to supervise the volunteers and their work, stated:

> *"I think no, that is what X does and she does it good and there is more and more people coming and helping. I am enthusiastic, and she is enthusiastic, and Y is really enthusiastic. And I think that if you are really enthusiastic then this park, you have this park it comes over and people like to join in, because they want to do something" (Interview 5, July 12).*

Figure 15. Maintenance activities organized in Amstelpark and Vondelpark (author, 2019)

Kom snoeien! (Come to prune!) in Amstelpark, 10 04 2019

Werkochtend Rosarium
(Working morning Rosarium) in Vondelpark, 29 05 2019

Werkochtend Schapenweide Vondelpark
(Working morning Schapenweide Vondelpark), 03 07 2019

Werkochtend Koeienweide Vondelpark (Working morning Koeienweide Vondelpark), 10 07 2019

Werkochtend Vondelpark Slurf
(Working morning Vondelpark Slurf), 11 07 2019

Zwerfafval Actie Vondelpark World Cleanup Day
(Litter Campaign Vondelpark World Cleanup Day), 21 09 2019

Despite that, the gardeners in the park would welcome more contributions from volunteers, as sometimes the organized activities are too short and not very effective to be helpful for the gardeners, as the green coordinator of Vondelpark noticed:

> *"It would make a difference if people would work here long-term, for example, half a day instead of 2 hours. In these 2 hours, they're going to chat with each other in the first 30 minutes. After that cleaning for an hour and they will start chatting again. It sounds stupid, but it's true. It they work for a day or half a day then there is still 4 or 3 hours left to work. It's good when people care for the park, but sometimes I feel like it makes no difference"* (Interview 8, September 10).

Although the role of these community groups could be questioned, if they are contributing enough and if they could and should be doing more, these organizations are not the only ones that help with the maintenance of the park. For example, supermarket Albert Heijn, which is close to the park, also feels a responsibility to contribute to the care of the park by annually sending its staff to collect paper and litter in the park. And there are some other companies, such as near the park situated Marriott hotel, which are interested in doing some cleaning and litter collecting in the park.

Amstelpark. In contrast, a different situation is found in Amstelpark, where there is a lack of maintenance activities organized. In the beginning stage of this research, it was noticed that there were some events organized, as *Kom snoeien!* or *Kom spelen, tuinieren!*, which were initiated to invite park visitors to help to maintain the park, for example, by pruning roses in the park. However, there was no continuity of these activities, as they were more likely to be experiments to see if there is an interest in the park, and secondly, the organizations, which organize these activities - *KETTER&Co* and *Zone2Source* are art organizations (foundations), which focus is on the development of artistic projects. Furthermore, there is one organization in the park, which is directly connected to the park. This organization, which was founded quite recently, in 2017, is called *Vrienden van het Amstelpark*. Its role is to protect and represent the park and its community. In addition, there is also *Natuur & Milieu Team Zuid*, the organization which has activities organized in *Amsterdam Zuid* district, which also covers Amstelpark and Vondelpark. However, as the representative of *Vrienden van het Amstelpark* acknowledged, there are no organizations, which would be responsible for maintenance activities in the park:

> *"Well, there are small entrepreneurs, like the Tekenkabinet or there is like... So there are some parties who use it, you can say. What is not there is maintenance community and this something of people have asked us, you know, can't we do something themselves."* (Interview 13A, October 2).

Although there is no community in the park responsible for maintenance activities, but the basis for its establishment is already there. Firstly, there is already a group of people, who would be interested in joining these activities, as it was stated in the quotation above. Although there are people who would be interested in these activities, but the problem is that no one wants to take the responsibility to coordinate these people and activities in the park, as the representative of *Natuur & Milieu Team Zuid* noticed: *"And there are enough people who like to do things like that for a couple hours of week, but not the responsibility, but just coming there and doing something"* (Interview 13B, October 2). Moreover, some people from the community groups that already work in the park would be positive about these maintenance activities. Also there is a possibility that some people would take this responsibility in their own hands, as the representative of *Vrienden van het Amstelpark* recognized:

> *"Well, it could be good because now our organization is for the people who like the park, they come for the park, but you know, we are not really doing anything, right?*

We are just representing the users. And if you would say, we actually, you know, every Saturday people go to the park and maintain it, you know, it becomes much more active" (Interview 13A, October 2).

In addition, there is already consideration of not only organizing these activities, but also helping to develop these activities, as the representative of *Natuur & Milieu Team Zuid* said: *"I would love to put some effort in that in organizing people to help maintain, because it is very rewarding to do for the people. That is how they get more involved in the park" (Interview 13B, October 2).* However, there are some challenges, which hinder starting these maintenance activities. Firstly, some of the respondents had doubts if the city would approve and if it would not be against this initiative to take the form of action required for funding. Actually, this is an important remark, because not only the person who started this initiative would be responsible, but also the government would take the responsibility as well, as the green and ecological activities manager recognized: *"And you have to take care of the organization of it mostly and you also are responsible as government that it is done well and that it is still a part of everyone, and not only for those people" (Interview 11, September 25).* Secondly, the funding and time should be taken into account, as the representative of *Natuur & Milieu Team Zuid* noticed: *"We can organize that, but there has to be some sort of money to pay our organizing. Because we do that in other parks maintenance with people, volunteers. But it takes quite a lot of time to organize it, people invite to come and help" (Interview 13B,October 2).* Therefore, the time which would be sent organizing these activities should be considered, as these organizations often are responsible for organizing and managing other activities as well. Furthermore, it is important to take into consideration the resources, financial support and capacity of these community organizations, as they affect how much involvement they can have.

Looking from the gardeners perspective, though currently there are not many people helping gardeners to maintain the park, the efforts made even by a small number of people are valued and appreciated. Therefore, the gardeners of Amstelpark would welcome some more help from people, as it is not very frequent. Also the current help the gardeners received could be better organized, as one of the gardeners of Amstelpark noticed: "*This year it was too late for it. The things they wanted to help us with was already done or needed to be done at that moment" (Interview 1, June 19).* However, the number of people currently helping the gardeners is very small and insufficient.

Figure 16. Parkdialoog: een dialoog over het park als tuin voor iedereen (Park dialogue: a dialogue about the park as a garden for everyone) organized on 21st of September and 7th of November (author, 2019)

*The photo on the right:
Parkdialoog I: een dialoog over het park als tuin voor iedereen (Park dialogue II: a dialogue about the park as a garden for everyone) 21 09 2019*

*The photo on the left:
Parkdialoog II: een dialoog over het park als tuin voor iedereen (Park dialogue II: a dialogue about the park as a garden for everyone) 07 11 2019*

In conclusion, there are more organizations working and organizing maintenance activities in Vondelpark than in Amstelpark. A variety of organizations that Vondelpark has translates into more opportunities citizens have to be involved in these activities, ranging from litter collecting to rose pruning, as well as to the possibility to choose where and how they want to contribute to the maintenance of Vondelpark. Meanwhile, Amstelpark lacks organized maintenance activities, although there is a demand from people interested in joining in. However, this park has potential to change the situation, as the park already has some people who would be interested not only in joining these activities, but also to possibly initiate them and to pioneer them. Furthermore, there are some promising ongoing processes in Amstelpark, which could lead to changes in the park. For example, there is a cycle of discussions called *Parkdialoog*, which are taking a place in Amstelpark (*Figure 16*). These discussions are organized to debate how can caretakers and users of the park work together and manage the park in a more common way. Hence, the situation in the park is changing by little steps, which promises that this place could become a more successful place, in terms of its maintenance and management.

6.5. Conclusions

This research showed that Amstelpark and Vondelpark are two distinct parks that are valued and managed differently, have diverse qualities and uses, and are experienced in various ways. These distinctions between the two parks become even more apparent when qualities like sense of community, collective efficacy, norms for activism, community problems and opportunities for involvement are compared. In summary, the main findings of this research are:

1. There is a stronger sense of community found in Vondelpark, where people from various parts of the city come to participate in various maintenance and non-maintenance activities frequently. In the case of Amstelpark, this sense of community is not as strong, as the community there is undeveloped and not very engaged in the park's issues and its ongoing activities. In addition, Amstelpark is less visited and there are few maintenance activities organized for that the public to participate in. Developing these activities could help to build a stronger sense of community.

2. There is a lack of representation in the planning matters related to the maintenance of the park among the gardeners of Amstelpark and to a lesser extent among the gardeners of Vondelpark. The community groups of Amstelpark and Vondelpark were satisfied with their representation in the management matters of the park, although there could be some improvements in communication with the municipality.

3. On the basis of potential engagement, there would be an interest of gardeners and community groups to participate and to be involved in the management processes of Amstelpark and Vondelpark. In the case of park visitors, only a minority of the surveyed visitors would have an interest in being involved in the development processes of the parks.

4. The most significant challenges in Amstelpark and Vondelpark stem from the recent budget cuts and the lack of overall long-term vision in these two parks of Amsterdam. These two issues often cause other smaller scale problems within the parks, such as the lack of educational activities in Amstelpark or the lack of manpower in both parks.

5. Vondelpark was mostly evaluated positively among visitors, gardeners or community groups, the maintenance and management of Amstelpark were evaluated negatively by the two actors groups, which look after the park; the gardeners and the community groups. Meanwhile, the visitors of Amstelpark were satisfied with how the park is maintained. That the situation could

be handled in a better way, for example, that there should be finances distributed for parks was acknowledged by municipal authorities. However, in the current context, it would be hardly possible, as there are no additional funds for parks or public spaces in general.

6. The opportunities for public involvement are uneven between Amstelpark and Vondelpark. Vondelpark is a park where a variety of maintenance activities can be found, starting from litter collecting to pruning roses. These activities have continuity and there are a few community groups organizing these activities. In the meantime, in Amstelpark there is an absence of these maintenance activities. However, there are some positive signs in Amstelpark that the situation could change and in the future there could be some maintenance activities organized.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

This thesis seeks to demonstrate the positive advantages derived from the involvement of gardeners, community groups, and visitors in the planning, management, and maintenance of parks, and that including these stakeholders in the overall scheme will certainly result in measurable benefits.

The research and the thesis itself were structured in a very similar way. Primarily, in the first chapter of the thesis author introduced the reader to the topic and background of the research, the main research questions, as well as the thesis outline. An extended literature analysis was performed, where the author delved deeper into the theories relating to commons, community and its main features, collaborative practices, from citizen participation to collaborative governance, and finally, public space management, maintenance and planning. Later on, all of this theory was incorporated and the main ideas were put into the conceptual model of this research. Furthermore, before starting the fieldwork, some basic information about the green space management of Amsterdam was looked up, as well as research for the case study areas was performed, where the author tried to understand the specific differences between Amstelpark and Vondelpark. Thereafter, the research methods and techniques were set up, which allowed to begin the collection of data with application of surveying and interviewing methods. After the data was collected and analysed, the main findings, insights and ideas were reflected in the results chapter. The final chapter presents the conclusions, policy and future research recommendations, social and theoretical implications. Firstly, the answers are given to the two research sub-questions and the main research question. Secondly, in the next section policy recommendations for case study areas are given, which aim to help to improve the current situation, as well as to solve some of the major challenges and problems in the parks, as well as recommendations for future research are presented. Finally, social and theoretical implications are given.

7.1. Research questions

1. To what extent are the visitors, gardeners and community-based groups of Amstelpark and Vondelpark involved in the management and maintenance practices of these public spaces?

The answer to this research sub-question was gained by surveying park visitors and interviewing representatives of community groups, gardeners, and municipal authorities. The author's participation in various maintenance activities and discussions organised in the parks also helped to get some insight about the involvement of different stakeholder groups in the park. To begin with, the visitors of Amstelpark are not really involved in the maintenance activities of this park, since there are so few organized activities, especially those which would under normal circumstances occur frequently. During the research, a few rare maintenance events were observed, for example, park visitors were invited to prune roses. However, such events were not repeated. The finding that the park visitors are not involved in the park maintenance was also backed up by the performed survey, as only 3 persons out of 104 reported participating in the organized maintenance activities in Amstelpark. On the contrary, as this research indicated, the visitors of Vondelpark are much more active in the maintenance activities. Although the survey results showed some different information, that due to the high percentage of foreigners, which made up more than half of all surveyed people, only 2 persons out of 104 participate in maintenance activities in the park. Nevertheless, in Vondelpark there are many more opportunities to be involved in maintenance than in Amstelpark (as in Vondelpark there are community groups organizing frequent maintenance activities).

Additionally, the opposite of the situation discussed above was noticed among the people maintaining the parks - gardeners and community-based groups. This research indicated, the gardeners of

Amstelpark are not feeling involved in the park management processes, since they see no response from the city to their proposed recommendations. A very similar characterization is the situation of the gardeners of Vondelpark, as they also do not feel represented when final decisions are made, since they are omitted from any consultative process. As a result, they feel ignored due to the staggering incompetence of bureaucrats and the failure of appropriate authorities to pay attention to the workers who know better than anyone what ought to improve the parks and make them more efficient. Notwithstanding, my findings demonstrate that the community groups of Amstelpark and Vondelpark were satisfied with their representation in the management matters of the parks, although the communication with the city could be improved. Therefore, there would be an interest among these groups to become more involved in matters of park management. In addition to community groups, the gardeners would be open to participating in discussions with a view to creating better management of the parks. It can be said, that the municipality is interested in seeking input from different stakeholders, since one of the ambitions of the city government of Amsterdam is that planning and management of public spaces must become more of a shared task with the people who use the spaces (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2017). In addition, as one municipal authority stated, the municipality is also trying to do more to involve them, i.e. different stakeholders, in the park management matters.

2. What are the differences and similarities between these two parks concerning the challenges related to their maintenance?

Challenges regarding Amstelpark's and Vondelpark's maintenance were observed in various ways: by non-participation and participatory observations, by surveying park visitors, and by interviewing the people who maintain the parks, i.e. gardeners and representatives of community groups. These research methods gave many distinct perceptions of how these two parks are different and similar in relation to their maintenance and the current challenges and problems. To begin with, there could be found some qualities and processes in Amstelpark and Vondelpark, which make these two parks similar. Some of the challenges the parks have been dealing for a while are similar or even the same. As this research indicated, the most significant challenges in Amstelpark and Vondelpark are the recent budget cuts imposed by the city government, the lack of maintenance staff, and the absence of overall long-term park vision by the city. The mostly negative stance against contractors among the gardeners is also perceived as a problem, which is prevalent in both parks.

Amstelpark and Vondelpark can be viewed as two different parks when their different levels of maintenance are compared. On one hand, as the interviews with a variety of stakeholders showed, the satisfaction level of Amstelpark maintenance is low, as the park has been experiencing deterioration lately. This situation requires some extra attention to be initiated by the city. In contrast, among the interviewees of Vondelpark exists satisfaction with maintenance, which indicates that the park is well maintained and that there are no deteriorating conditions in the park.. Furthermore, the parks are also distinct when the way they ought to be maintained is taken into consideration. For example, Amstelpark's maintenance requires more attention, since it is a designed exposition park, where ecological maintenance, or *natuurlijk beheer*, in the large part of the park cannot be practiced. Differently, it works in Vondelpark, where ecological maintenance is more practiced (especially in the protected areas of *Koeienweide* and *Schapenweide*, the areas where one of the community groups organizes maintenance activities every week). Therefore, although these two parks and their maintenance are evaluated differently by a variety of interviewed and surveyed stakeholders, the same challenges and problems exist.

Main Research Question: **How could citizen participation promotions mobilize the visitors, gardeners and community-based groups, i.e. the park communities of Amstelpark and Vondelpark, to contribute to enhanced participatory maintenance programs?**

As the literature review has shown, participatory governance improves stakeholder representation, which helps to react to the demands of residents and other groups of interest in a better way. Such implementations mean that public spaces, including parks, would experience democratization, which would create conditions for every citizen to become part of public space development process (Mullenger, 2017). Citizen participation practices may help to achieve this democratization and create additional inclusive development of parks and public spaces. In addition, with the public involvement and participation in the planning and management processes such merits as the growth of confidence in organizations, representativeness and the promotion of bonding within the community are established (Sanoff, 2000). Public participation can also be seen as a tool to improve the quality of physical environment and to have a better maintained space (Becker, 1977; Chavis and Wandersman, 1990). In fact, it was proven by this research, especially in the case of Vondelpark, which is a better maintained park attributable to the community groups organizing maintenance activities. This has established that in Vondelpark there is a higher level of satisfaction of park maintenance among its users and maintainers compared to Amstelpark. According to Sanoff (2000), the surrounding environment works in a better way if the people who are being affected by its decisions on a daily basis are involved in its planning, maintenance and management. As the analysis of Vondelpark has showed, the active participation of people from the surrounding districts and other districts in the city of Amsterdam helps to build a strong sense of community among the people, as well as it helps to solve loneliness and safety problems in the surroundings of the park.

As this research has shown, citizen participation also helps to mobilize various stakeholders to participate: park visitors as volunteers in the community-based groups working on the park maintenance, while it also helps gardeners to take the roles of supervisors and experts in the park by sharing their knowledge with volunteers (this was prevalent in Vondelpark and some of these positive practices could be applied in Amstelpark as well). In addition, citizen participation also allows park visitors to become part of the park maintenance and to take the responsibility for the park and its maintenance. This collaboration also positively affects gardeners, as their involvement in these citizen participation activities enriches with the people who want to contribute to the park maintenance (community-based groups) with knowledge and expertise. Overall, this cyclical collaboration between three different groups, which have different roles in the park, helps parks to become the places maintained in democratic and inclusive ways, in which every actor can contribute to the park development in his or her own way. Public involvement also increases stakeholder representation (Healey, 1997), which was shown by the example of Vondelpark.

7.2. Policy recommendations: rethinking the governmental (municipal) organization and developing ways to increase collaboration between different stakeholders

In order to improve vertical collaboration between the different stakeholders involved in managing the parks, municipalities should promote and organize discussions and consultations where actors with different professional backgrounds (architects, designers, business people, neighborhoods' representatives and etc.) would have the opportunity to share their thoughts and give recommendations. These discussions could be organized in various forms: workshops, open houses, planning charrettes. Having an annual event would also help to improve the current situation. A reorganization in the municipality, which is currently vertically organized, would also help to increase the representation of gardeners and other actor groups. The municipality could be reorganized in the way that the communication between different municipal levels, departments and different actors involved would be better organized and it would be easier to communicate, for example, for the gardeners and the people who are responsible for the park management and maintenance.

The knowledge and expertise of gardeners, as well as the input of community groups and active park visitors, should be taken more seriously by the city. Additionally, the awareness of their involvement for the city should be also increased. Gardeners have a great deal of knowledge in the field of park maintenance, so they should become the teachers of their field, who would share their knowledge with participants in maintenance activities. This would lead to an activation of park visitors, whilst participation in the parks would contribute to the maintenance of the parks.

Furthermore, the official decision-making process would benefit from tools or techniques which incorporate the input from gardeners, representatives of community groups, as well as the active and engaged park visitors. As the analyzed cases showed, although gardeners ideas and propositions are sometimes heard, they are not usually taken into consideration. A reorientation of this top - down management model towards to a more circular one would improve the inclusion of these excluded groups. A different approach to the care and maintenance of the parks, where every park is treated in its own way, would help to avoid some of the problems the parks are having now as well.

As the research findings showed, the case of Vondelpark can be seen as more of a success (compared to Amstelpark). Accordingly, there are not many recommendations for **Vondelpark**. Only one recommendation could be given for this park. As the park lacks an overall long-term vision, there should be more attention paid to its maintenance. Therefore, there should be an overall long-term vision prepared for this park, as it currently lacks it. This is also applicable in the case of Amstelpark, as the lack of overall long-term vision is an even bigger problem in this park. Next to these general recommendations, the following specific recommendations are formulated for **Amstelpark**:

1. As there is a lack of public involvement in Amstelpark, introducing new initiatives, such as maintenance activities, which would have continuity, could create more opportunities for the park visitors to be involved in the park and its maintenance. In order to start these initiatives, it is important to find the right person (or a group of them), who would take the responsibility to organize these events. At best, such a person would show up himself or herself and that would show that he or she is interested and motivated. In addition, it is important that the person would have ties to the park and would not see this position as a job; he or she should be connected with the place and should care about the place itself.

2. Efforts should be made to include the people living in the neighborhoods around Amstelpark, such as *Buitenveldert*. This could help the residents to become more engaged and active in the many matters of interest in their neighborhood with the park becoming a central focus point for social interaction.

3. Nature education should be brought back into programming for Amstelpark. It would enrich the park, attract more park visitors and it would help to enhance the park qualities (various flower collections, botanical sections and etc.) that are currently not used as they should be. As the park has such a biodiversity, this is an ideal location for nature education, hence, exhibition locations, as well as the park history and the *Floriade* relics could be used for educational purposes in a better way than it is done presently.

7.3. Recommendations for future research

Based on the research results, there can be given some future recommendations to explore this field, since this study only focused on the public space (park) management and maintenance aspects specifically related to citizen involvement and participation. Therefore, it is important that public spaces and their management, maintenance be researched from different stakeholder involvement aspects. As gardeners, park visitors and community-based groups were the main groups analyzed in this research, other stakeholders and their involvement were not really analyzed or were touched very briefly. With that being said, the role played by business, property owners, developers and other actors from public and private sectors should be explored. In addition, citizen participation itself should be further pursued. Participation variables should get more attention and there should be more studies based on the individual level citizen participation characteristics, where, for example, the relationship of residents involvement and their organizing skills would be analyzed. Since this research has provided a framework for future projects on citizen participation in parks and other public spaces, it is important that research on citizen participation processes, public spaces, their management and maintenance would be developed as there are still many fields to explore.

7.4. Social and theoretical implications

Looking from the perspective of social (societal) implications, the findings of this research are applicable in the context of future policies drawn for Amstelpark and Vondelpark. As such a variety of different people were interviewed and surveyed, it would be unfortunate that their perceptions and experiences about Amstelpark and Vondelpark, the problems, the processes ongoing in these parks would be ignored and would remain unheard. The main research findings could be applied in practice, whereas in this thesis the current problems the parks are dealing with, as well as the representation and involvement of different stakeholders in the parks are presented and discussed. Furthermore, this research accommodates a local level look at two parks, which helps to focus attention towards the matters that are only relevant for these two spaces. However, it could also be seen as a disadvantage of this study, as this may not be related to urban planning (in the most general sense), and more likely it could only reflect the two cases and their peculiarities. Even so, this approach is questionable, as similar problems may exist in other Amsterdam parks (at least in the parks in *Amsterdam Zuid*, the area where Amstelpark and Vondelpark are situated) due to the same decisions that were implemented by the municipality (budget cuts, reduction in the number of gardeners and etc.). Overall, the main findings of this study could be a good basis to start a debate about public spaces and their role, the way they are managed and maintained in the contemporary time of changes, when more and more attention is being paid for environmental problems. Discussions and debates could help to come up with better planning practices, which could be applied to the analyzed cases, as well as for other public spaces.

Meanwhile, looking from the theoretical implications stance, this thesis has contributed to the literature about public spaces, their management, maintenance and planning, as well as citizen involvement and participation processes. This study gave a unique perspective on civic engagement in two parks and their comparison, which is not very often found among studies about citizen involvement. The main findings of this research are linked to the theory that was analyzed in the beginning. The first section of this chapter, where research questions were answered, confirmed theories that were presented in the theoretical framework of this thesis. The assumptions and some hypotheses were also confirmed by this research. Overall, this research showed how important it is to develop a citizen participation topic. Additionally, this research will aid in understanding the importance of the contribution of public space users.

8. Reflection

The last section gives a reflection of the thesis research process, where the main focus is on the theory and methodology used in this research. In addition, it reflects the main problems experienced during the research.

8.1. Theoretical reflection

For this research scientific articles, books and websites were analysed in order to assemble different perspectives on citizen participation and how such involvement is manifest in public spaces and more precisely, parks. However, it could be argued that the variety of topics analyzed for this research and the broadness of literature in the theoretical framework complicated the process of this research, as some of the concepts may have questionable and doubtful connections with other concepts. Notwithstanding, the variety of literature analysed also had some advantages, as it helped the researcher to see the parks as a collision between commons, community, collaboration and care, the four concepts analyzed and presented in the theoretical framework. Briefly saying, a park could be seen as a common within the system of public space planning, management and maintenance (care), where various collaboration processes are prevalent: participation or involvement, collaborative governance or participatory governance, and etc., and where park community exists, which is active or not. Moreover, the link between the theoretical framework and the conceptual framework, where citizen participation and its variables were indicated, could be questioned, as from the four concepts in the theoretical framework there is a transition to the three part conceptual model, which only covers (park) community, citizen participation (in more general sense, collaboration) and public space planning, management and maintenance, but not the commons part, which is not in the conceptual model. In addition, the variables of citizen participation were chosen more for practical reasons, as they fitted the intent of this research. However, there were some discrepancies with the theoretical framework and its structure, since one of the variables was analyzed more in depth in the theoretical framework than others. Furthermore, talking about the choice of research questions, it is important to mention, that it was very difficult to cover all the research variables with an adequate number of questions (knowing that the interviewees and survey respondents would not have a lot of time for many questions). Because of that, some sacrifices were made by choosing to cover some variables with some more questions, while with researching others with different research methods applied, for example, participation. Overall, this research was performed in the way the author has chosen, since the investigation time frame was one of the factors limiting the choices and changes in the research process.

8.2. Methodological reflection

This research was performed as a comparative case study, where two parks in Amsterdam (Amstelpark and Vondelpark) were compared and analyzed. In order to make a contribution to park research, a more in-depth study could have been performed by investigating all parks in Amsterdam, as it would have made the results of this research more comprehensive. However, in this case that was hardly possible due to time limitations, as well as the author's capability to research such a large number of parks in the same way as this investigation was performed. In the meantime, in relation to interviewing and surveying, it is important to briefly discuss the choices that were made with every research group and the investigational techniques utilized. Firstly, it would have been better if park visitors would have been interviewed and not surveyed, as that would have helped to get deeper insights from park visitors. However, for one person it would have been a challenge, if more than 200 interviews would be required, as it would consume a lot of time, both spent in the fields, as well as transcribing all of the interviews. In addition, the interviewing could have been organized in a better

way, as the time when the majority of the interviews were undertaken was summer and many people were not in the country or they were not available due to other seasonal reasons. Therefore, a better organization of the interview process would have been improved the overall research quality. To conclude, the chosen research methodology with such a rich variety of applied methods helped me to get the best overview of the ongoing processes in the parks and it also enriched this thesis with much graphic information, varying from photos to tables and maps.

Challenges and problems that occurred during the research process should be also covered shortly, as they contributed to the research and how it was organized. First of all, it is important to acknowledge that that the biggest challenge of this thesis was the topic change, which happened several months into the process. This happened due to the opportunity to join the team of *KETTER&Co* and have an internship at the organization (foundation). Because of that, I had lost a lot of time (a few months), as I needed to start working on a new topic all over again. However, it was a wise choice, as to perform a research not knowing the place very well and how public space management works here would have been a big challenge, as neither I, nor my thesis supervisor come from the Netherlands. Because of that, it was necessary to have a person who would be acknowledged with park planning in Amsterdam and in a more general sense, the Dutch planning system. Therefore, the second challenge was the fact that I am not from the Netherlands and thus not aware of the planning system and park planning in the Netherlands. Lastly, the last challenge, which started with the beginning of this research and continued until the end of it, was the language challenge. Not knowing the Dutch language at a decent level posed problems while analysing policy documents, and most importantly, it complicated communication process with some of the interviewees and surveyed respondents. However, as this challenge was already addressed in the methodology chapter, there is no need to expand on this issue here.

Overall, challenges that occurred during the research were many. Notwithstanding, it was a wonderful rewarding experience. The opportunity to work as an intern with a highly respected organization made project much less difficult than I had anticipated. Language and culture were new to me, but I must recognize the very significant courtesies and assistance provided by a wide variety of officials at Utrecht University, City of Amsterdam, *KETTER&Co*, and many others. With the help I received so many of the imagined problems disappeared. To all those who helped me along the way, I shall always be sincerely grateful.

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