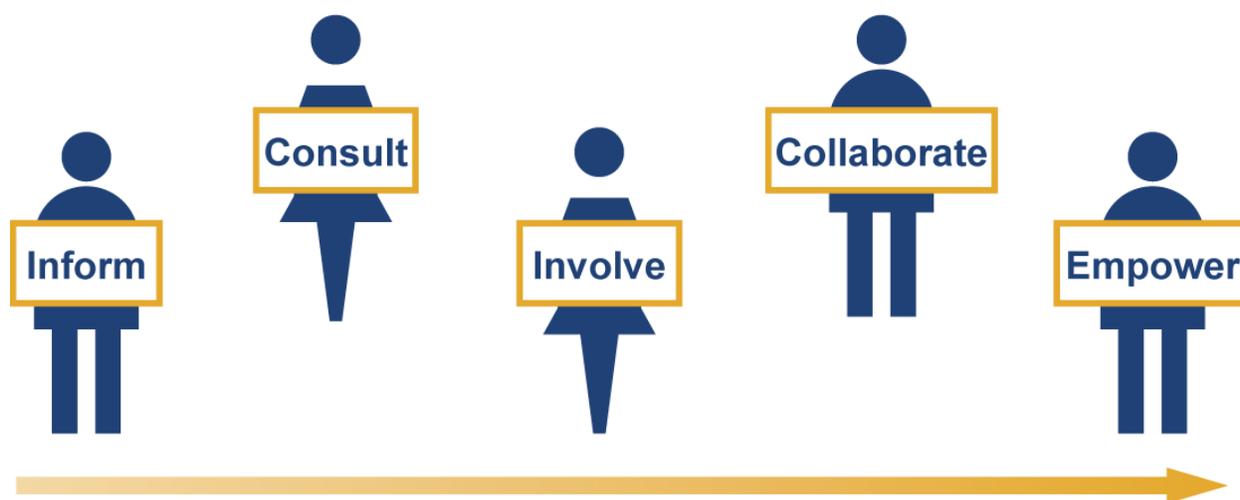




Utrecht University

Timing the Level of Citizen Participation in Spatial Planning Processes

Considerations of planning officials regarding timing the level of citizen participation in a participatory planning process



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Preface

In the beginning of 2020, I started a work experience internship at the municipality of Utrecht, where I was able to contribute ideas about citizen participation in drawing up a heat transition vision. It struck me that there are still many questions about the way citizens can best be involved in such a process; in particular how much influence citizens can and should have at different points in the spatial planning process. To my surprise, I found out that in the theoretical field little attention is paid to this as well. Research has been conducted on the participation paradox that manifests itself at the beginning of the process, but how the rest of the participative process is structured is underexposed. In my view, it is remarkable that participation moments are often still seen separate from each other, instead of being seen as a trajectory that is part of the planning process. So I started to investigate if this is justly and whether we can gather more knowledge about how a participatory process is designed, so that planners have more tools available when they organize citizen participation. This is particularly important now that participation in planning projects is made compulsory in by the new Dutch Environment and Planning Act.

In retrospect, there also seems to be a certain caution on the part of planning officials to express themselves about what they think a participation process should look like. The main reason for this is that spatial planning projects are seen as very context dependent. Perhaps this is true, but I believe we can learn lessons from the experience of planning officials. This research contributes to the issue of timing the level of citizen participation in spatial planning projects. I hope my research inspires professionals and theorists to dive further into this topic as well and will take more time to reflect on the participatory process, so that we can learn from it and be able to share knowledge.

My thanks go to all planning officials and professionals who have been willing to talk to me about citizen participation in their field. I have had very interesting and enjoyable conversations that have brought me many insights. I would like to thank my anchor and refuge Wouter Loomans for his patience, motivational words and advise. And last but not least, I like to give special thanks to my supervisor Marlies Meijer for her substantive feedback, but above all for her positivity. Thanks to her, I was able to maintain confidence throughout the process that there would eventually be a meaningful thesis, which I now proudly present to you.

Lisanne Loonen

Utrecht, September 26th 2020

Summary

Despite the fact that experience has been gained with participatory planning processes since the collaborative turn in planning theory, planning officials still struggle with the timing and level of participation. This research was set up to contribute to a better understanding of the timing of the level of citizen participation. Citizen participation provides citizens influence on a planning project, but the amount of influence is not always the same. From different sources (Arnstein, 1969; Castell, 2016; Leyenaar, 2009), six levels of participation have been derived that correspond with the amount of influence citizens get in a planning project: information, consultation, advising, dialogue, co-production and co-decision. Furthermore, six phases are distinguished in the participatory planning process: agenda setting, analysis, formulating policy, decision making, implementation and evaluation (Howlett & Giest, 2015; Macintosh, 2004). The level of participation can be different for each phase in a planning process. This raises the question *how planning officials decide about timing citizen participation and its level in a participatory planning process*.

To answer this question, it was important to first indicate in which phase planning officials apply which level of participation. To gain a deeper understanding why they choose a certain level of participation in each phase, insight was gained into the considerations planning officials make regarding timing the level of citizen participation. This study qualitatively analyzed the views and considerations of planning officials by interviewing eighteen planning officials that have experience with citizen participation in spatial planning processes. An extensive literature review on citizen participation formed the basis for the semi-structured interviews. Questions were asked on what their experiences are with citizen participation, what their views are on the level of participation in different phases in a planning process and what we can learn from their experiences in terms of timing the level of citizen participation. Besides general questions on their views and opinions on citizen participation, the interviewees were asked to divide points over the different levels of participation in each phase of the planning process. This exercise provided insight into which considerations planning officials make when designing a participatory planning process and how they justify their choices.

Throughout the interviews it became clear that participation in a spatial planning project does not exist of single moments, but can be seen as a participation trajectory alongside and connected to the process of a spatial planning project. Three main trajectories have been distinguished by analyzing the results (see image A): trajectory I: increasing influence, trajectory II: consistent average influence and trajectory III: consistent high influence. The first one can be described as a participatory trajectory in which the influence of citizens increases throughout the first three or four phases of a planning process. It seems that first an understanding of the context and a relation with the citizens has to be established, after which more attention is given to actual input. The second mentality resembles a more consistent average influence for citizens throughout the planning process, which is mainly based on the context specificity of spatial planning projects. However higher levels of participation are deemed less suitable, due to the power relations in place. In the third trajectory, higher levels of participation are believed to empower citizens within these power relations and are therefore deemed desirable, if the context allows it.

These graphs show the amount of influence the interviewees in each trajectory combined deemed desirable in the different phases. When the complete area is low (such as for agenda setting in trajectory I), the main focus lays on lower levels of participation. Furthermore, the vertical bandwidth of the area shows to what extent the interviewees appreciate multiple levels equally; when the areas' vertical bandwidth is wide, the interviewees allocate points equally to multiple levels of participation in the same phases.

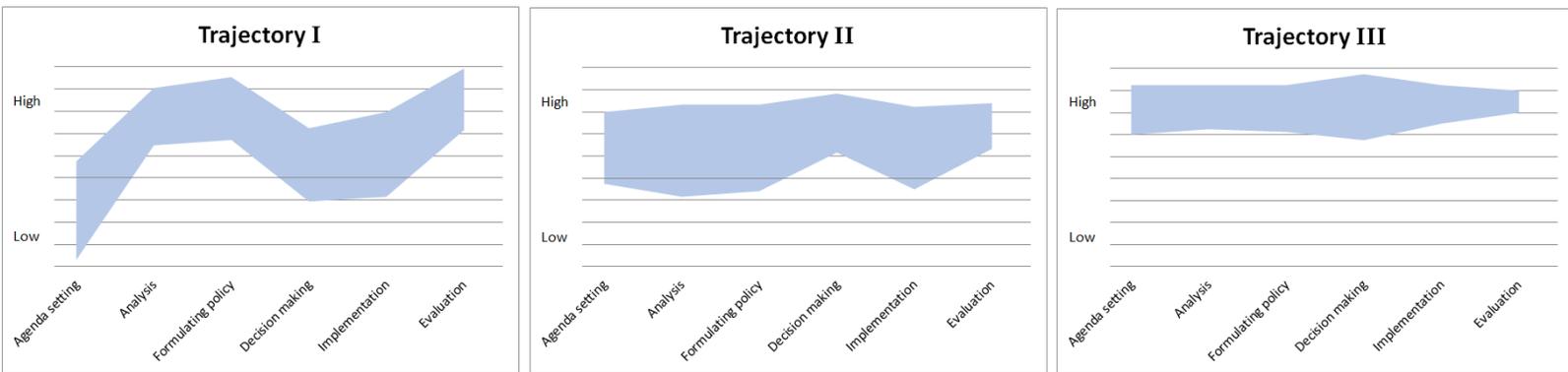


Figure A; Influence per phase in trajectory I, trajectory II and trajectory III.

The graphs in figure A show the amount of influence the interviewees in each trajectory combined deemed desirable in the different phases. Furthermore, the vertical bandwidth of the area shows to what extent the interviewees appreciate multiple levels equally.

However, it remains difficult to provide guidance for the level of participation per phase, due to the context dependency and personal view of the planning officials. It is therefore not possible to establish unambiguously how officials decide about timing the level of citizen participation in a participatory planning process, because the context of the project and personal preferences and reasoning predominate in the decisions they take. In conclusion, this research shows that it is not desirable, perhaps not even possible, to create one clear participation trajectory for all projects. Each project is unique and therefore participation is embedded differently in each project. However, a better understanding of the timing of citizen participation and its level in each phase can contribute to better planning practices. Therefore it is advised to step into the post-collaborative era as described by Castell (2016), in which the potential of participation is still celebrated and utilized, but with a critical look at the level of influence, conditions, forms and outcomes of participatory processes in relation to their context.

To further improve participation processes, more research is advised. Further research could zoom in on specific scales of spatial planning to deepen the findings of this research. Furthermore, it would be of interest to ask citizens when and how they want to be involved in spatial planning projects. In this research, we have seen the views of planning professionals on the timing and level of citizen

participation with all their experiences, but the subject is still inviting citizens to participate. So it would be of value to ask them at which moment in the process they consider their input to be valuable and how they want to be involved. Besides theoretical or practical guidelines, I believe proper evaluations on the participation trajectory would improve the knowledge of planning officials on how to deal with citizen participation, it's timing and the level of influence they give to citizens throughout the planning process. They would be able to learn more from their experiences when given time to profoundly evaluate the participatory process. With this research and the abovementioned recommendations, contributions are made to better prepare planning officials for the participation requirements that will be obliged in the Dutch Environment and Planning Act.

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1. Introduction

1. Introduction

This study researches participatory planning processes in the Netherlands. Citizen participation plays an increasingly important role in the Dutch planning practices, especially now participation is ought to become mandatory in the new Dutch Environment and Planning Act (Boeve & Groothuijse, 2020; Dieperink et al., 2016). However, this new act lacks guidance for planning officials on how to shape participatory processes and asks for a deeper understanding of how participatory processes are shaped in contemporary planning practices (Akerboom, 2018).

1.1 Background

Citizen participation is perceived as a necessary supplement in policy- and decision-making for years already and has become a guiding principle in spatial planning processes (Castell, 2016; Collins & Ison, 2009; Delgado et al., 2011; Pettersson et al., 2017; Soneryd & Lindh, 2019). Citizen participation is believed to be beneficial for multiple reasons. It improves local development (Castell, 2016), legitimacy of authorities (Pettersson et al., 2017) and it is argued to strengthen the representative democratic system, which has been under pressure of market powers (Soneryd & Lindh, 2019). It thus is no longer seen as a way to empower citizens, a counter-force to established hierarchies in planning practices, but as part of this established hierarchy (Ganuza et al., 2016). In contrary to what was once the goal of participation, citizen participation is in risk of producing mechanisms of exclusion (Checkoway, 2009). Agreement on how inclusion of the public should take place in practice is lacking (Delgado et al., 2011). There is a gap between theories on participation and the realities of their implementation in practice (Delgado et al., 2011; Monno & Khakee, 2012). Furthermore, citizen participation is in risk of prioritizing private interests over public interests (Soneryd & Lindh, 2019). Others say we are in a post-collaborative era, in which it is acknowledged that participation comes with complex challenges (Castell, 2016). This does not mean we do not see the potential of participation anymore, but we need to critically look at the conditions, forms and outcomes of participatory processes in relation to their context. This is seen as politicizing participation (Castell, 2016).

The above shows that there is a lot of discussion about participation and its benefits and pitfalls. These discussions mostly focus on how to participate and who should participate in what kind of issue (Healey, 1996; Kotus, 2013; Oughton, 2008). Multiple tools and techniques are developed for participation (Collins & Ison, 2009). Nowadays, less attention is given to the question whether participation is worth the resources and if it is necessary or not (Kotus, 2013). Participation has become a goal on itself, with the risk of implementing participation inappropriately (Collins & Ison, 2009). This can lead to undesirable consequences for policy- and decision-making and outcomes of spatial development processes.

1.2 Motivation

Striving to prevent inappropriate implementation of participation and making a contribution to closing the gap between theories and practice, this research focuses on another aspect of participation in spatial planning processes. As described above, most literature focuses on *why, how and who*. Instead, this research focuses on *when* citizen participation should be implemented. *When* in this case can mean two things. It can mean when citizen participation should or should not be implemented at all. It can

also mean in which phase of a spatial planning process which level of citizen participation should be implemented. This last question is the concern of this study. If it is decided that citizen participation is useful or necessary to implement in municipal planning projects, by law or reason, the question still remains at which moment during the process this should be done. Citizen participation exists in many forms and on many levels, such as information, consultation and coproduction (Arnstein, 1969). The levels relate to the empowerment of citizens and the influence they get in a planning project. But what level of participation should spatial planning officials implement in the beginning of a process when the problem is still being described? And halfway through the process when solutions are being considered and policies or decisions are being made? And near the end of a process when solutions are being implemented? If citizen participation is implemented too early, the audience of participation is difficult to define as well as their function within these early phases of the planning process (Mouter et al., 2020; Sprain, 2016). But the paradox is, when you implement citizen participation too late, the options for participation become limited because earlier decisions and their consequences cannot be reversed. Ganuza et al. (2016) states that participation is central in democratic planning principles, but few attention is given to how participation is connected to governance. How do administrations structure participation?

1.3 Research questions

This study researches whether there are desirable levels of participation in each phase by looking at how planning officials shape a participatory process, i.e. how they decide on questions of timing. This research is set-up to increase the understanding of the timing of citizen participation and how planning officials think of timing in a participatory planning process. It contributes to reducing the gap between theory and practice (Delgado et al., 2011; Monno & Khakee, 2012). The following research question is established:

How do planning officials decide about timing the level of citizen participation in a participatory planning process?

To answer this question, the following sub questions are formulated:

- *In which phase do planning officials apply which level of participation?*
- *What considerations do planning officials make regarding timing the level of citizen participation?*
- *Which factors do the planning officials take into account while shaping a participatory planning process?*
- *How do planning officials deal with the participation paradox?*

1.4 Relevance

This research contributes to a better understanding of timing the level of citizen participation throughout a participatory planning process and the choices officials make when implementing citizen participation. It provides insight in the considerations of officials when implementing citizen participation. Their professional view is shaped by real life experiences. This research does not aim to

merely address a pure practical or pure theoretical problem. It also tries to reduce the existing gap between theory and practice (van de Grift et al., 2020), by enriching theoretical views on timing and levels of participation with practical views. Often, practical experiences of a case study are translated to theory by researchers. This research does not focus on case studies or practical experiences itself, but on the views and opinions planning officials with practical experiences have. Their practical experiences allow us to learn what aspects influence the timing and level of citizen participation, which can contribute to improving participatory processes. In practice, the timing of citizen participation and the level of influence citizens should have in the different phases of a planning process is still considered difficult to decide. Study shows there is little agreement on this topic (Delgado et al., 2011). This research can be a starting point to open up the discussion for providing a guideline for planners in terms of timing the level of citizen participation. This is especially important because citizen participation is ought to become mandatory in Dutch planning practices with the introduction of the new Dutch Environment and Planning Act (Boeve & Groothuijse, 2020; Dieperink et al., 2016), but authorities and planning professionals feel like the new planning act does not provide sufficient guidelines to effectuate successful participatory processes (Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2020).

1.5 Research design

The study is set up to qualitatively analyze the views and considerations of planning officials concerning timing the level of participation. This is done by interviewing planning officials that have experience with citizen participation in planning processes. An extensive literature review on citizen participation forms the basis for the semi-structured interviews. Questions are asked about their experiences with citizen participation, what their views are on the level of participation in different phases in a planning process and what can be learned from their experiences in terms of timing citizen participation.

1.6 Reading guide

The literature review discusses citizen participation (2.1), the paradox of timing citizen participation (2.2), the levels of citizen participation (2.3) and the phases in a spatial planning process (2.4). The literature review is followed by the methodology chapter (3), in which the methodological approach is described and validated. Data collection is done by interviewing Dutch planning officials with experiences with (designing) participatory planning processes. Chapter 4 contains the empirical analysis with the results of the interviews and an elaboration on the findings. From the results and findings a conclusion is deduced in chapter 5. This is done in relation to the literature review. In this chapter the concluding results and answer to the research questions are presented, followed by recommendations for officials on how to improve citizen participation in spatial planning processes. The last chapter contains the discussion (6), in which the research is put in perspective and recommendations for further research are given.



2. Literature review

2. Literature review

This literature review focuses on existing research to participation in spatial planning processes. First of all, chapter 2.1 discusses citizen participation, starting with the collaborative turn in planning (2.1.1) to distinguish how participation has become a standard supplement of planning projects. Literature on participation predominantly focuses on the why (2.1.2), who (2.1.3) and how (2.1.4) of participation. Some scholars do recognize the importance of timing of participation (2.1.5). A critical note on participation is given by discussing a selection of pitfalls (2.1.6). Following the pitfalls, chapter 2.2 explains the paradox of the timing of citizen participation. Chapter 2.3 sheds light on the level of citizen participation. Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation is described and a comparison is made with the Dutch participation guidance (2.3.1). For the purpose of this research Arnsteins ladder and the Dutch participation guidance are combined into new levels of participation (2.3.2). These levels have more nuance than the Dutch participation guidance, but are less extensive and less negatively formulated than Arnstein's ladder of participation. At last, the literature review discusses spatial planning processes and its phases (2.4.1) and the view of spatial planning professionals on participation in the spatial planning processes (2.4.2). Chapter 2.5 entails the conceptual framework based on the literature review.

2.1 Citizen Participation

To conduct this research, a definition of citizen participation in spatial planning processes is required. In this paper, citizen participation is defined as *involving citizens in the spatial planning process one way or the other*. This can be, for example, information provision or active involvement of citizens in planning processes. Citizens can be individuals or organized groups such as neighborhood initiatives or interest groups. There are multiple terms in planning theory that are considered as, or related to, citizen participation in this paper; citizen engagement, public engagement, public participation, citizen dialogue, citizen deliberation and deliberative democracy (Delgado et al., 2011; Healey, 1992; Soneryd & Lindh, 2019).

2.1.1 Collaborative turn in planning theory

The importance of citizen participation in contemporary planning practice is a result of the collaborative turn in planning theory. The collaborative or communicative turn in planning theory has changed the paradigm of spatial planning. Before this turn, the rational planning of the 1960's and 1970's and the political economy that followed focused on the economics and management of urban regions in the Western world (Healey, 1996). In the planning, social relations, value of places and conditions of the natural environment were not taken sufficiently into account. The focus lay more on material conditions, than on the way people come to comprehend the qualities of their environments (Healey, 1996). This lack of recognition for the cultural diversity and complex urban systems of the time, resulted in conflict and tensions. The faith in the political systems decreased. The focus shifted to the way spatial strategies could evolve with consideration of the social context. The collaborative turn in planning theory promoted collective debate and decision-making on collective matters (Healey, 1992).

Communication was believed to improve reasoning and validity of reasons and widen the understanding and knowledge. Healey (1992) stated that planning can be seen as a way of acting which can be chosen after debating:

'A communicative approach to knowledge production - knowledge of conditions, of cause and effect, moral values and aesthetic worlds - maintains that knowledge is not pre-formulated but is specifically created anew in our communication through exchanging perceptions and understanding and through drawing on the stock of life experience and previously consolidated cultural and moral knowledge available to participants. We cannot, therefore, predefine a set of tasks which planning must address, since these must be specifically discovered, learnt about and understood through inter-communicative processes' (Healey, 1992 p.153).

Citizen participation is perceived as a necessary supplement in decision-making and has become a guiding principle for spatial planning processes (Castell, 2016; Delgado et al., 2011; Ganuza et al., 2016; Pettersson et al., 2017; Soneryd & Lindh, 2019). Participation is believed to improve legitimacy of authorities, effectiveness in governance and justice (Fung, 2015; Pettersson et al., 2017). It is argued to strengthen the representative democratic system, which has been under pressure of market powers (Soneryd & Lindh, 2019). Even though it is presented as necessary, more public involvement is not considered desirable in every process by some researchers (Bijker, 2003; Evans & Plows, 2007; Hamlett, 2003; Rip, 2003). Citizen participation is in risk of producing mechanisms of exclusion (Checkoway, 2009). There is a lack of agreement on how inclusion of the public should take place in practice (Delgado et al., 2011). There is a gap between theories on participation and the realities of their implementation in practice (Delgado et al., 2011; Monno & Khakee, 2012). Soneryd & Lindh (2019) therefore say that 'it is essential that those working with practical citizen dialogue are aware of power structures, for example, based on ethnicity, gender or class, and have practical skills for dealing with these structures' (Soneryd & Lindh, 2019, p.231). In addition, they say there is a tension in the boundary between citizen participation and the lobbying of strongly mobilized interests. Furthermore, citizen participation is of risk of prioritizing private interest over public interests (Soneryd & Lindh, 2019). Even though criticism on how collaborative planning deals with power relations were already given 20 years ago (Healey, 2003), they still seem relevant today. Others discuss that we are currently in a post-collaborative era, in which it is acknowledged that participation comes with complex challenges (Castell, 2016). This does not mean the potential of participation is denied, but a critical look at the conditions, forms and outcomes of participatory processes in relation to their context is needed. This is seen as politicizing participation (Castell, 2016).

2.1.2 Why

The collaborative turn in planning theory thus meant a paradigm shift from a process-oriented paradigm to a more context-oriented paradigm, in which stakeholder and citizen participation became more important within planning processes. The reasons for citizen participation can be distinguished into three rationales: instrumental, substantive and normative (Delgado et al., 2011; van de Grift et al., 2020).

- Instrumental: implementation of participation aiming for a particular goal, for example increasing legitimacy, public trust and social acceptability of a plan.
- Substantive: implementation of participation aiming to improve the decision-making outcome by means of incorporating local knowledge.
- Normative: implementation of participation to improve the planning process, for example more democratic, inclusive or transparent, empowering local community.

There can be tensions between these rationales. When striving for a normative goal, such as inclusive decision-making, this can be in conflict with the substantive goal of improved outcome (Delgado et al., 2011). For the instrumental rationale, it is mostly argued that participation increases awareness and acceptance, which increases the effectiveness and legitimacy of decision-making (Pettersson et al., 2017). Participatory processes create places for negotiation. Negotiating conflicting values is of importance to increase understanding by transformative learning processes (Sprain, 2016). This leads to changing behavior and acceptance. Furthermore, participation creates ownership of decisions, increasing legitimacy and public trust. For the substantive rationale, the lay knowledge of participants is of importance. Their viewpoints and ideas enrich the information about a topic, resulting in more informed and therefore improved decisions (Pettersson et al., 2017). Knowledge is co-created in spaces of negotiation and goals are shaped. Participants help adapt a planning solution to the local context, which can result in lower implementation costs (Sprain, 2016). Access to information and public participation are seen as key to make decision-making more transparent, inclusive and accountable (Sprain, 2016). It reduces marginalization and increases capacity building. In this normative rationale, participation is seen as a democratic right (Sprain, 2016). An increased understanding and co-creation of knowledge also builds adaptive capacity, improving the planning process. The three rationales can thus also reinforce each other.

Besides the rationales, citizen participation can also be enforced by legal requirements (Collins & Ison, 2009). For example, the European Union and all its members are obligated to implement public participation in decision-making processes as set out by Aarhus Convention (Pettersson et al., 2017). To increase the legitimacy and acceptance of planning processes and decisions and decrease opposition, inclusion of citizens is formally deemed necessary. Officials should take account of the outcome of public participation (Pettersson et al., 2017). Citizens thus have a right to participate in decision-making processes. However, Akerboom (2018) did research after the legal aspects of citizen participation in the Netherlands and the practical outcomes of these, and she stated that legal obligations for participation are not sufficient for deliberative ideals (Akerboom, 2018). The Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (nowadays Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations) has made a roadmap with steps an official should make before one can get started with citizen participation itself. It is expressed that an official should always consider if there is any leeway in the decision-making process for citizens to have a real influence on. Otherwise there is no use for participation (Ministerie van VROM, 2007).

New Dutch Environment and Planning act

Furthermore, the new Dutch Environment and Planning Act, which is expected to go into effect in 2021 (Rijksoverheid, 2020), is in line with the objectives of the Aarhus Convention (Dieperink et al., 2016). In

this new planning act, participation is deemed more important. This can be seen as a result of the collaborative turn in spatial planning and the paradigm shift from object and process oriented to context oriented planning practices. The goal is to increase social support and social acceptance, improve decision making and decrease lead times of procedures. To reach this goal, the new Environment and Planning Act states that participation should entail ‘involving stakeholders (citizens, businesses, civil society organizations and other authorities) at an early stage in the decision-making process about a project or activity.’ (Dieperink et al., 2016; Boeve & Groothuijse, 2020). An exact definition of ‘an early stage’ remains unclear, but this goes beyond the formal consultation as enacted nowadays. Citizens should thus be involved in the planning process before formal decision making procedures take place (Boeve & Groothuijse, 2020). However, it is questionable whether this new act in practice will result in more citizen participation. From a legal point of view, participation is not always legally enquired in the new Environment and Planning Act (Dieperink et al., 2016; Gierveld, 2019). It is only obligated that if participation is used, it must be substantiated how it happened and what happened to the results. In the first draft of the new act, no guidelines were given to design participation in the planning process. This would contradict the complex and context dependent nature of spatial planning projects (Boeve & Groothuijse, 2020). Planning officials and authorities were not satisfied with this lack of guidance in the new act and requested a tool to safeguard good participation. Therefore, in February of 2020 a motion has been passed which requires municipalities, provinces and other authorities to draw up a participation policy that specifies how participation is structured and what requirements apply (Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2020).

However, it is still not established by law when participation should take place, which topics require participation and who should be able to participate (Dieperink et al., 2016). This makes it difficult to enforce participation. Another aspect that makes it complicated to dismiss a project when insufficient participation has taken place, is the question in which phase of decision making participation on which detail of a topic should take place (Dieperink et al., 2016; Boeve & Groothuijse, 2020). Figure 1 represents the different legal products in the new Environment and Planning Act and their relations. Each product has its own participation trajectory (Boeve & Groothuijse, 2020). As shown, decisions that are made when drawing up the vision, have an effect in a later stadium on the decisions that can be made when drawing up the program.

Phased decision making in the new Dutch Environment and Planning Act

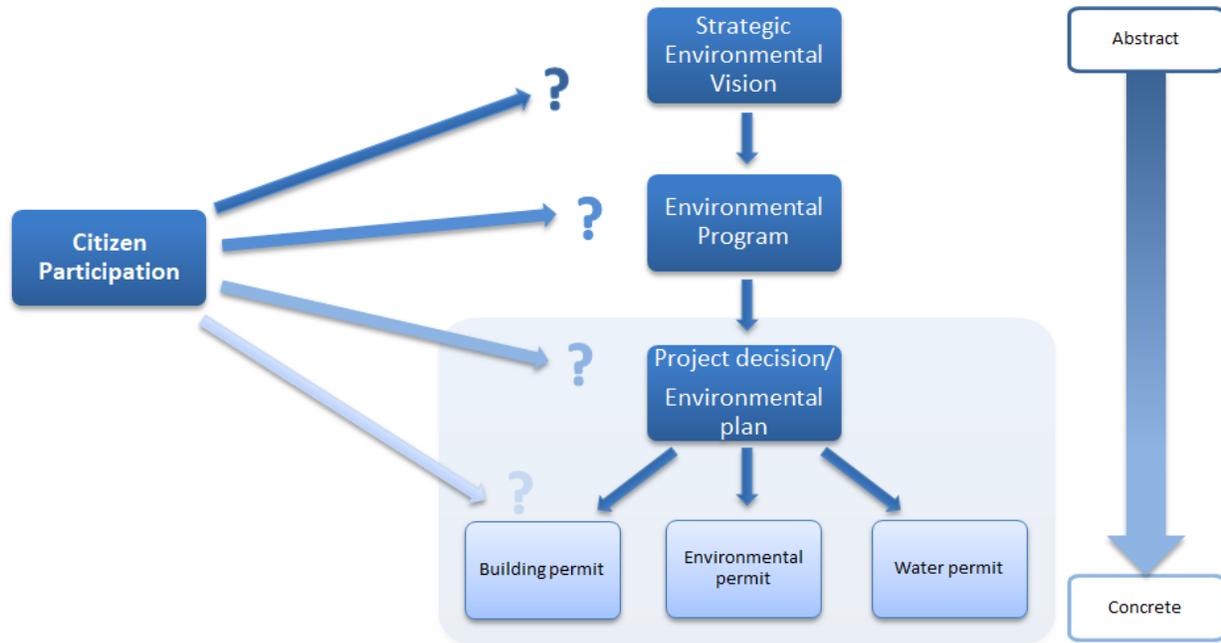


Figure 1; Position of citizen participation in the phased decision making in the new Dutch Environment and Planning Act. Figure based on the visualization of the new Dutch Environment and Planning Act of Boeve & Groothuijse (2020).

When citizens participate in the program phase, their influence can be limited by decisions that have already been made in the vision phase. It is therefore important to distinguish the decisions made in each phase and the way participation is designed in each phase. When asking themselves whether citizens participation in the environmental act has a legal structure and whether the involvement of citizens is actually legally better assured, Boeve & Groothuijse (2020) say:

'The statutory participation obligations under the Environmental Act have been designed (too) open-ended. There are few or no legal consequences attached to non-compliance with the obligations and are also difficult to enforce in court by the citizen. Moreover, little attention is paid to the role of participation in the relationship between the various legal instruments, as a result of which it can have inimitable consequences for a citizen if one participates at the "wrong" moment (in a wrong product).' (Boeve & Groothuijse, 2020) (own translation).

Dieperink et al. (2016) agree that the new act lacks legal pressure and a consistent and balanced picture of what is meant by participation, who should participate when and about what. Before a participation policy can be designed, an inventory should be made of ways to execute this in practice (Dieperink et al., 2016). The obligated participation policy can then provide more clarity for citizens as well as for planning professionals and municipalities (Geest, 2020). This makes it all the more important to discuss how a participation trajectory can be designed, which is the subject of this research. Dieperink et al. (2016) however, consider it plausible that the outcome of such inventory will result in the conclusion that a

framework for participation is not desirable. If so, she questions whether it is wise to incorporate participation in the new Environment and Planning Act.

In the end, even with the new Environment and Planning Act, citizens will not be more empowered. Municipal councils or other authorities still have the possibility to dismiss the input of participation to safeguard the public interest. It is their responsibility to take all interest into account, not only of those who have participated (Boeve & Groothuijse, 2020). This power relation will thus stay in place under the new planning act. Succeeding in the goals of participation in the new act will therefore depend on the weight governing bodies will assign to participation.

2.1.3 Who

The increasing importance and expanding variations of participation make it difficult to determine who should participate in the various forms and issues (Pettersson et al., 2017). There are multiple views possible when considering who should be involved in participation. When participation is seen as democracy, it becomes a fundamental right for everyone (Sprain, 2016). This would mean all citizens are entitled to be involved in planning processes by means of participation. The European Union Aarhus Convention and the new Dutch Environment and Planning Act deem citizen participation to be of importance, but the legal enforcement is questionable as discussed in paragraph 2.1.2. It does however show that participation, and in particular citizen participation, has become more important and established in recent years. Often, participation is used to represent relevant interests, in other words 'stakeholders' (Sprain, 2016). It then becomes of importance to determination who these stakeholders are and the representativeness of those participating. Most of the time, participation is organized in terms of stakeholders. Stakeholders are those who are affected by the change caused by the planning project (Pettersson et al., 2017). This can be (some) citizens, but also companies in the area or organizations etc.. It is not always clear on forehand who will be affected by the development, and can therefore be considered a stakeholder with a say in the decision-making process (Pettersson et al., 2017). Furthermore, stakeholders might not always be able to speak for themselves, such as nature, climate change or other non-represented interests (Pettersson et al., 2017). This research focuses on citizens and citizens participation. Other stakeholders are mostly involved in planning processes by public-private-partnerships (PPP). It is easier to involve them, since one person can represent a large company or organization, compared to citizens being individuals who are not or cannot always be represented by citizens initiatives or interest groups. Therefore, more attention is needed to assure that the citizens in an area are well-represented by the participants.

2.1.4 How

Participation can be organized top-down or bottom-up, which can also be translated to invited or uninvited participation (Delgado et al., 2011). The new Dutch Environment and Planning Act is set up to provide better processes for bottom-up spatial planning by means of initiatives. However, the authorities cannot always depend on initiatives when it comes to serving the public interest. Therefore, spatial planning projects are also initiated by the municipality, for which the new planning act obligates substantiation of the way participation was incorporated in the project. This paper therefore focuses on the invited top-down participation. Pitfalls for this form of participation is that citizens are assumed to

be interested and want to get critically involved. (Delgado et al., 2011). However, their responses are affected by their enthusiasm about the project. Citizens may be concerned, interested, informed or none of these (Delgado et al., 2011), and thus might not want to be involved or only participate to defend their own interests. For invited participation there is more control over the representativeness of a group of participants, but it does not tackle exclusion (Cornwall, 2002). Highly educated white males participate more often than non-natives or younger people, who are then under-represented in decision making (Kleistra & Walraven, 2014). However, the representativeness of the participating citizens can be increased by facilitating different methods and techniques for participation (Loyens, 2006). When adjusting the participation activities to these minority groups, they become better to reach.

There are endless forms of citizen participation. Delgado et al. (2011) mentions for example consensus conferences, focus groups, citizen juries and public consultations. Since it is impossible to describe all forms in the scope of this research, the different forms will be presented as levels. For this, Arstein's ladder of participation will be the basis. The levels of participation are based on the amount of influence citizens have on the outcome of the planning process. In paragraph 2.3.1, Arstein's ladder of participation is described in detail.

2.1.5 When

Recently researcher are recognizing the importance of the relationship between authorities and citizens in the different phases of a planning processes and the need for further research (Akerboom, 2018). Akerboom (2018) states that the timing and way of communication are more important than the influence one has by participating on the final outcome of a decision-making process. When participation is implemented or taking place too late in the process, it is possible that actual influence on the outcome is no longer possible (Pettersson et al., 2017). Decisions that are made earlier in the process are difficult to rollback or they might steer future decisions.

'For participation to actually increase the legitimacy of decisions and decision-making processes, that is, constitute effective participation, stakeholder participation must be sought through various stages in the decision-making process based on a model of knowledge exchange, and the views of stakeholders must be considered and integrated within decision-making' (Pettersson et al., 2017, 988).

In the Aarhus Convention, it is stated that citizen participation should happen in a reasonable timeframe for the different phases of the decision-making process with sufficient time to inform citizens. It is obligated that public participation takes place early, for which is meant that all options are open and participation can thus be effective. Furthermore, citizens should be able to prepare themselves for effective participation (Pettersson et al., 2017). Although this does provide some kind of direction, in practice it still seems difficult to decide at which stadium citizen participation should be implemented, and to which level. As discussed in paragraph 2.1.2, the new Dutch Environment and Planning Act does not provide any practical guidelines for this. Akerboom (2018) did a case study on public participation in the creation of windmill parks in the Netherlands. The conclusions of her case-study entails that participation in this case needed to be implemented earlier, more attention should have been given to the responses of citizens on the project and there was a lack of communication. These are typical pitfalls of participation (Soneryd & Lindh, 2019). However it appears that there is still no guideline for spatial

planners in which phase in the planning process which level of participation is advisable to implement to prevent these pitfalls.

2.1.6 Pitfalls

In her article about the ladder of citizen participation, Arnstein (1969) emphasizes that participation should be seen as citizen power, enabling the 'have-not citizens' to be involved in political and economic processes (Arnstein, 1969). Participation should therefore redistribute power from the powerholders to the citizens. This was the emancipatory ideal of that time. However in the 21st century, participation has become a standard part of planning processes, incorporated in conventional power structures (Ganuza et al., 2016). Even though a lot of attention is given to how and with whom participation takes place, and the scope of participation is expanded, less attention is given to the emancipatory and empowering potentials of participation. It is even questionable if participation still has its power to change the status quo and redistribute power now it has become part of everyday planning practices. Paragraph 2.3.3 will further elaborate on citizen power within participation and current day power relations in participatory planning.

Nowadays, the goal of participation is more related to the three rationales outlined by Delgado et al. (2011). Citizen participation can serve multiple purposes. Sometimes, citizen participation is organized for various purposes at the same time. These purposes can compete with each other, causing difficulties in practice (Soneryd & Lindh, 2019). Communication and transparency of the terms of participation is of importance to manage the expectations. For example, citizen participation is used to legitimize decision-making by inviting citizens to interact without providing participants the change to actually influence the plans (Soneryd & Lindh, 2019). This can decrease the trust of citizens in the authorities, especially for future participatory processes (Soneryd & Lindh, 2019). However, not involving citizens can also decrease the trust of citizens in the authorities. For big and complex issues, citizens are often not invited to participate in the decision-making process because it is believed to be difficult to involve them. Or certain voices are not invited because they are expected to disagree or critique a project. Only those who already agree, are invited. This is seen as antidemocratic practices (Sprain, 2016). Not being invited affects the willingness and feelings towards participation in other projects (Soneryd & Lindh, 2019).

Participating citizens

Composing the target audience also affects the success of citizen participation. When inviting an already existing citizen panel to give their opinion on a certain issue, different results will be established compared to inviting an interest group or citizens' initiative related to the issue. Members of the citizen panel might even not be interested in the topic at all, influencing their responses (Soneryd & Lindh, 2019). Another outcome could be that citizens act self-interested, without thinking about what is best for the community or a place (Ganuza et al., 2016). Participating takes time and effort to understand the issue, which citizens might not be willing to invest (Pettersson et al., 2017). However, inviting interest groups or citizens initiatives who are informed and considered, one cannot say that the participants are a good representation of all citizens of a city, district or neighborhood. Participants can also undermine participation processes by failing to see the situated specificity of their own concepts and practices (Healey, 2003). An already existing citizen panel is more suitable as a broad representation. But to

prevent segregation and exclusion, people who normally are not heard have to be involved in the process (as well) (Soneryd & Lindh, 2019). However, Pettersson et al. (2017) points out that 'more participation is not necessarily more democratic, as it may reinforce the interests of the already powerful' (Pettersson et al., 2017, p.988). In practice, officials realize that inclusion and openness to all perspectives can never be fully established (Soneryd & Lindh, 2019). There is a limit to the selection of participants (Pettersson et al., 2017), mostly dominated by budgets and timeframes. Furthermore, even when participation is organized optimally, it is not ensured that the views and ideas of citizens expressed during participation activities are actually taken into account by officials and changing the outcome of the spatial planning process (Pettersson et al., 2017).

Another pitfall of participation is more political. Pettersson et al. (2017) describes that:

'The emphasis on the individual's participation and on direct access to decision-makers also conflicts with the idea that elected bodies and decision-making are meant to in fact represent the public, a notion that is short-circuited by the direct involvement of individuals and interest groups' (Pettersson et al., 2017, p. 988).

This raises the question how much influence should be given to participating citizens. By means of participation and democratic representation their views and opinions will be considered twice, whereas the views of those who do not participate are only represented once. Participation removes the political discussion from the representative bodies to individual citizens, limiting the inclusion of those who do not participate in the decision making.

2.2 Paradox of timing of citizen participation

The timing of participation is crucial for the participation process and planning process. However, it still appears to be difficult to properly time the implementation and different stages of a participation trajectory in the planning process (Mouter et al., 2020). Citizens prefer to be involved in an early stadium. They want to be involved in defining the problem and values that underlie choices later in the project. Nevertheless, in this early phases of the planning project, plans and goals are not concrete yet, making it more challenging to define the role of citizens in participation. Citizens find it difficult to make useful contributions in this phase and do not feel addressed (Mouter et al., 2020). The paradox that occurs is that involving citizens in a later stadium, can raises several issues. Citizens can disagree with decisions that are already made and cannot be reversed, which causes tensions. They can struggle with the problem definition or weighing of values that have already been determined. These decisions can also have consequences for the choices that citizens later on do are involved in, limiting their options. Another issue can be that the planning process is shaped in such a way that there is little room left for participation. This phenomenon is known as the paradox of timing of citizen participation, in which it is difficult to determine the first participatory moment in a spatial planning project due to the pitfalls of participating too early or too late.

Because of this timing paradox, the planning phase in which the problem is defined, is of high importance (Sprain, 2016). It steers the direction and aim of a project. The definition of a problem is often seen as precursor to public engagement (Sprain, 2016). It affects who is considered to be a relevant stakeholder and therefore the audience of a participation process. A problem may, for example, be defined as a common problem, even though others might not experience this problem or define it differently (Quaghebeur et al., 2004). This can result in a participation audience that does not fit the planning project. It can exclude people that are affected by the project, or includes those who are not. Besides the commonality of the problem, it is often mistakenly assumed that participants have homogeneous needs and expectations. Planners have the tendency to obscure differences in interests of citizens (Quaghebeur et al., 2004). Participation in the phase of problem definition is thus complicated. On the one hand, it has to be prevented that problems are defined as common and homogeneous when they are not. On the other hand, to ensure a broad understanding and support for addressing a planning problem, the problem definition should resonate with the community (Sprain, 2016). Therefore, it is advised to consider a wide range of participants in this early stage. Nevertheless, the audience is difficult to define if there is no problem definition yet. And as stated before, citizens do not feel addressed yet when the context is still vague. They find it difficult to define their function in this phase and how they can make useful contributions (Mouter et al., 2020; Quaghebeur et al., 2004). Another paradox that occurs when participation is implemented in the problem definition phase, is that citizens might shape the problem in such an extent that the initial subject is not incorporated anymore (Sprain, 2016). For example, when considering climate change, participants might find other problems more important, causing climate change not to be addressed. Short-term and long-term interest compete with each other, where citizens mostly focus on short-term problems (Sprain, 2016). However, planning officials are responsible for the public interest and should therefore guard that the initial goal of the project is achieved.

The paradox of timing in participation is not only affected by choices that officials make in the implementation and timing of participation. Citizens tend to only get interested or concerned with a topic whenever the consequences for them become clear (Mouter et al., 2020). At the moment the consequences become clear, the authorities have already made decisions that are irreversible, limiting the options for participation.

Sprain (2016) emphasizes that flexibility of the participation process is of importance. As stated before, participation can produce shared understanding. But not everyone needs the same amount of time to get to this shared understanding. It is therefore important to be flexible when implementing participation in a planning process. However, the question for a framework of the timing of participation is still legitimate, but this needs to be seen as a guideline, not a strict workbook.

2.3 Levels of participation

In academic theory there is a broad understanding of participation. It can include information and education, reaction and review, but also dialogue and interaction (Pettersson et al., 2017). The Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (nowadays Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations) acknowledged the importance of matching the phases of a planning process with proper forms of participation (Ministerie van VROM, 2007). In this, the role of the participant is also mentioned. Every phase in the decision-making process asks for a different role of the citizen, and therefore a different level of participation. It is emphasized that each project requires a customized plan for participation where in the method of participation fits the goal and target audience (Ministerie van VROM, 2007). However, the Ministry matches methods of participation with the different phases instead of levels of participation. The presented methods are limited and do not match the contemporary (online) options for participation. Therefore, matching levels of participation with the different phases in a decision-making process would be more comprehensive. The levels of participation can represent many different methods. To define the different levels of participation in this paper, the Dutch participation guidance and Arnstein's ladder of participation will be compared. Arnstein's ladder of participation is the best known guideline to analyze different levels of participation and is the origin of many other forms. The Dutch participation guidance gives a better representation of the way citizen participation is implemented in planning practices in the Netherlands. Therefore Arnstein's ladder of participation will be explicated and compared to the Dutch participation guidance in order to create a useable set of levels of participation for this research.

2.3.1 Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation and the Dutch participation guidance

Even though Sherry Arnstein wrote her ladder metaphor in 1969, many still refer to her critical review (Castell, 2016). With over 13.000 citations in the last decade (Slotterback & Lauria, 2019), it cannot be denied that Arnstein's ladder is still relevant in contemporary planning theory. Exclusion and inequalities were the main drivers of her work and are still of relevance today, even in wealthy Western welfare countries (Castell, 2016). In Arnstein's view, participation in local governance has the potential to empower marginalized citizens, if participatory practices are based on citizen power, not tokenism or manipulation (Arnstein, 1969). Arnstein argues that participation is the cornerstone of democracy, in which the governed participate in their government. It is therefore embraced by many. In her view, participation redistributes power, allowing those who were excluded from the political processes to get involved and have a share in the benefits of the prosperous society (Arnstein, 1969). However, there is a downside to the term 'participation' and its broad meaning. Sometimes it is claimed that participation was used, when in reality powerholders did not use the input of participants and therefore no power redistribution took place. It is then claimed that all sides, with their own perceptions and views, have been heard and therefore citizens have been able to participate. In order to analyze whether participation results in power redistribution or citizen power, Arnstein developed the ladder of citizen participation as a metaphor to visualize and explain the different levels of participation and the influence it provides for citizens on political processes. In the ladder, the powerless citizens and the powerful are juxtaposed to emphasize the division between them (Arnstein, 1969).

The ladder exists of eight levels of participation which are categorized in three typologies: 'nonparticipation', 'tokenism' and 'citizen power'. Figure 2 illustrates the ladder and the division of all levels in the typologies. First, nonparticipation is seen as a way of educating or curing participants by the powerholders, without allowing actual participation. Participants can only listen to what the powerholders want to say. Second, tokenism describes a form of participation in which participants do have the ability to speak their mind and be heard, but there is no power for citizens to enforce that their opinion is taken into account by powerholders. Therefore, it does not assure that power is being redistributed and the status quo can change. Third, citizen power illustrates a form of participation in which participants do have the power to influence the decision-making process and is considered a genuine level of participation. In practice, the levels are more fluent and many more levels could be distinguished (Arnstein, 1969).

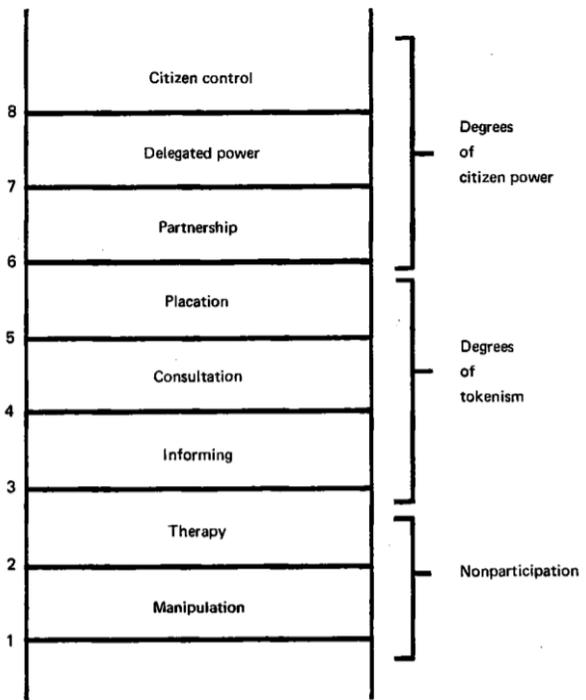


Figure 2; Eight levels on a Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969).

Although Arnstein's ladder has been used and referred to for more than fifty years, it has also been criticized. For example, Tritter & McCallum (2006) say participation is not only about citizen power and the redistribution of power. It is far more complex, and attention should be given to the desired level of participation of the public. When there is a mismatch in how the public desires to participate and the level of participation strived for by the municipality, citizen involvement will be ineffective and fail. The goal therefore should not be to endeavor higher levels of participation, but to design the participatory process in compliance with the citizens (Tritter & McCallum, 2006). However, to research how planning officials themselves think about the amount of influence citizens should get throughout the planning process, it is useful to use levels of participation to define this influence and relate it to the phases in a planning process.

In the Netherlands, a gap was present between citizens and politics, which threatened the representative democracy (Leyenaar, 2009). To strengthen the representative democracy and increase the legitimacy of the democratic constitutional state, multiple participation methods and tools have been developed to involve citizens in decision-making processes (Leyenaar, 2009). These tools allow citizens to engage more directly in the decision-making processes. To evaluate the impact of all these different forms of participation, Edelenbos and Monnikhof have developed a ladder of participation as well (Leyenaar, 2009). This ladder is used, among others, by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (heretofore Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment). This Dutch participation guidance is based on the role of the actors involved. Analogous to Arnstein, they compare citizens with

political leaders; the powerholders. Furthermore, they evaluate the political commitment to the outcomes of the participation levels and they grade the impact. The Dutch participation guidance exists of only four levels, being consultation, advising, co-production and co-decision, for which Leyenaar (2009) criticizes the levels of participation of Edelenbos and Monnikhof for a lack of nuance.

2.3.2 New Levels of Participation

In order to overcome the limited nuance in the Dutch participation guidance, a new set of levels of participation is proposed to research practitioners views on the timing of participation. Even though Arnstein’s ladder exists of eight steps, and therefore contains more nuance, it is quite negatively formulated. The negative formulation can affect the responses of officials and experts. To prevent this issue, more neutral terms are being chosen. Furthermore, the steps Arnstein describes as being tokenism, do not have to be negative. Arnstein (1969) herself also recognized that as long as there is transparency regarding the goal of participation and the influence participants is offered, communicating or asking for advise are important in a decision-making process as well (Arnstein, 1969). However, this should not be done under false pretenses. Lower levels of participation should always be combined with higher levels of participation in the timespan of a project to become legitimate forms of participation in the opinion of Arnstein (1969). However, this does not mean that for each phase in a project high levels of participation are necessary or even desirable. The levels in figure 3 are based on the Dutch participation guidance (Ministerie van VROM, 2007; Leyenaar, 2009) and further developed with influence from Arnstein’s ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969) and the Swedish stairs of involvement (Castell, 2012; Castell, 2016).

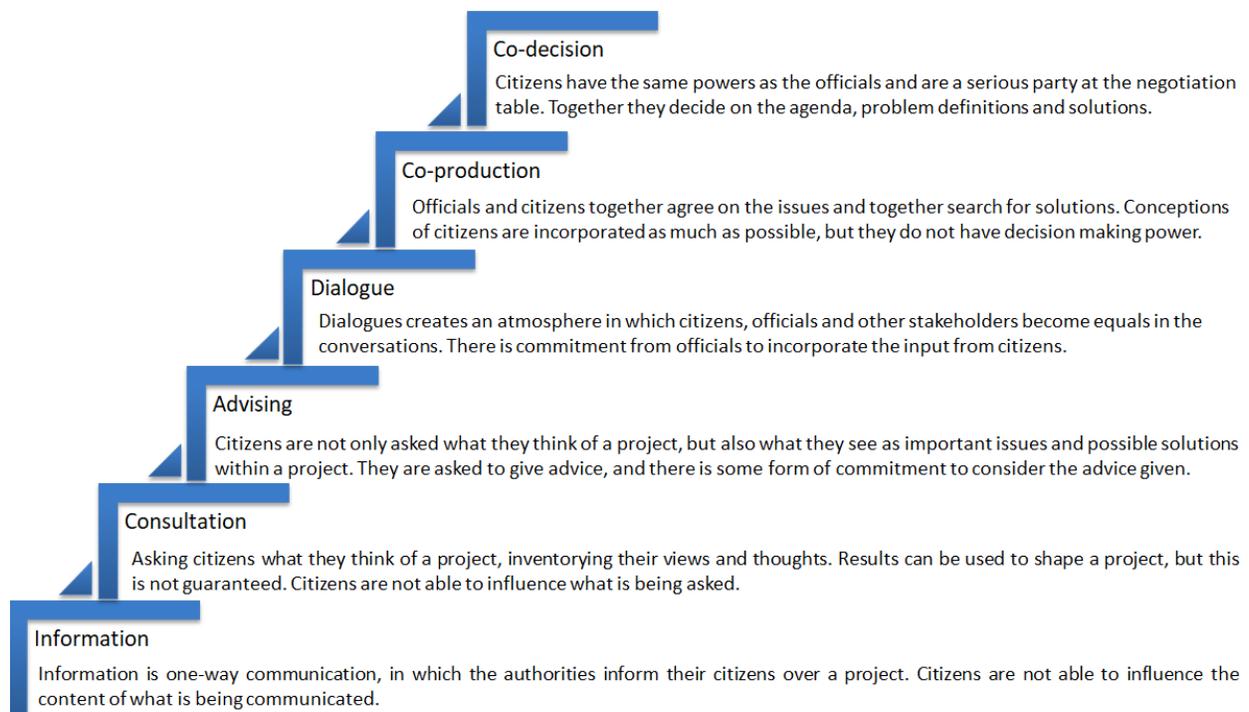


Figure 3; Redefined levels of participation.

Information

Informing can be a very important part of participation. However, information is often one-way communication, from officials to citizens (Arnstein, 1969). The officials therefore influence which information citizens receive and when. This might lead to the inability of citizens to influence planning and decision-making. By providing superficial or extremely difficult information, discouraging questions or giving irrelevant answers, citizens are disempowered. Besides informing citizens on the content of a project, it is important to inform citizens on the process. When citizens are informed of their rights and options to participate, legitimate citizen participation can occur (Arnstein, 1969).

Consultation

Consultation can be described as inviting citizens to share their opinion and knowledge, without promising any influence for the citizens. Citizens are not able to influence what is being asked, which problems are addressed or which solutions are considered. Consultation can be seen as inventorying the views and thoughts of citizens. Results can be used to shape a project, but this is not guaranteed (Leyenaar, 2009).

Advising

The level of advising in the Dutch participation guidance can best be compared to placation in Arnstein's ladder. Citizens are allowed to bring forward political issues and formulate solutions, but the political governance still determines the political agenda. In Arnstein's ladder, citizens get a say as well, but are easily outvoted or outfoxed (Arnstein, 1969). Citizens are allowed to give advice or even take part in planning, but the powerholders still judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advices or plans (Arnstein, 1969). Even though citizens do not have the power to set the agenda on the level of advising, they can influence the topics discussed. However, the political commitment on this level is still lacking, which makes the impact of citizens variable (Leyenaar, 2009).

Dialogue

Dialogue can be seen as a level of participation between Arnstein's placation and partnership and Edelenbos and Monnikhof's advising and co-production. Dialogues create an atmosphere in which citizens, officials and other stakeholders become equals in the conversations, but not in decisions (Castell, 2012; Castell, 2016). Dialogues provide the opportunity to transform opinions. Input from citizens is equivalent to the input of others. Citizens can address topics to be discussed, increasing their influence. In this step, there is commitment from officials to incorporate the input from citizens. However, there is no decision power for the citizens and officials can still deviate from the ideas of citizens.

Co-production & co-decision

For the Dutch participation guidance, both co-production and co-decision fit in Arnstein's description of the level of partnership. In both levels, citizens and powerholders work together in negotiation, but citizens do not have more power than officials, as in the higher levels of Arnstein's ladder. Nevertheless, whenever citizens and powerholders are negotiating, power redistribution takes place (Arnstein, 1969). To make partnerships an effective form of citizens participation, the citizens in the partnerships should be a correct representation of the community. Furthermore, the citizens should have the (financial)

possibilities to organize themselves, acquire expert knowledge and legal help. This is necessary to have equal negotiation positions (Arnstein, 1969). In co-production, the political agenda is determined together with citizens. The political governance and citizens together agree on the political issues and together search for solutions. In this step, the political commitment is higher. The powerholders incorporate the conceptions of citizens in decision-making as much as possible. Therefore, the impact of this level of participation is considered substantial (Leyenaar, 2009). However, they are allowed to deviate from the input of the citizens under conditions of proper argumentation. In co-decision, the political governance and citizens together come to a decision. The political administration does commit to the outcome of the joint decision-making process. Therefore, the impact of this level of participation is considered high (Leyenaar, 2009).

It is notable that there is no level of delegated power and citizen control in the Dutch participation guidance, as in Arnstein's ladder of participation. Delegated power and citizen control are even higher levels than co-decision, because it entails that citizens have been given dominant decision-making power (Arnstein, 1969). In the Dutch participation guidance, even the highest level of participation still involves a big role for officials. In the Netherlands we have a democratic system in which representatives are being chosen. They are the ones that approve or disapprove a plan. This means that even officials do not have the final say, and therefore cannot delegate power to citizens in a project. This makes it futile to incorporate these levels of participation in this research. It is questionable if real power redistribution in the Netherlands exists, and if exclusion and inequalities can be overcome by these levels of participation. Leyenaar (2009) furthermore states that co-decision almost never occurs in practice. Even co-production rarely exists in the Netherlands (Leyenaar, 2009). Hence, participation in the Netherlands does not empower marginalized citizens. One can even wonder if it strengthens the representative democracy and increases the legitimacy of the democratic constitutional state, which is seen as a reason to implement participation in political decision-making processes.

2.3.3 Power relations in participatory planning processes

Arnstein (1969) considers participation as a mean to change existing power relations and to empower citizens, especially those who were not being considered otherwise. However, other researchers experience that "participation [...] is always also itself part of an operation of power, governing people to behave or govern themselves in a particular determined way" (Quaghebeur et al., 2004, p.9). Participatory spaces are thus not neutral (Sprain, 2016). Relations in participatory processes are always subjected to existing power relations. Decisions that are made for the implementation of participation, the roles that citizens get appointed, and the level of participation are based on these power relations. Whereas Arnstein (1969) considers higher steps up the ladder better, this might not always be true or possible in practice, for example because of legal restrictions (van de Grift et al., 2020). The participation process defines the boundaries in which citizens are given a voice and how much weight is given to these voices (Quaghebeur et al., 2004). Participatory processes provide opportunities for agency and inclusion, but also create exclusion and hierarchy (Ganuza et al., 2016; Sprain, 2016). This makes it difficult to use participation to subvert these existing power relations. While participation is being characterized as a commitment to emancipation, it relies on directive, precise and hierarchically structured methods (Quaghebeur et al., 2004). These hierarchical structures are part of efficiency and

effectiveness demands of planning projects. Officials have an upward accountability for the success of a project, the finance, planning and quality of results, putting pressure and high demands on officials (Quaghebeur et al., 2004). They do not have the control over a lot of decisions, and can therefore not cede this control to participatory processes.

Within participation processes, local knowledge is often seen as pure, truthful and less sensitive to dominant manipulations. As Quaghebeur et al. (2004, p. 7) adduces: “the participation orthodoxy celebrates the local, indigenous and marginal at the expense of the antipathetic and deprecated technical or scientific”. But lay knowledge is also shaped by power relations. Thus, participation and participation processes are always subjected to power relations. However, this does not mean that Quaghebeur et al. (2004) believe that participation cannot succeed in changing the status quo. Whenever participants challenge their position in the participatory process and refuse to stick to the forms of participation that are offered, ‘true’ participation can occur. In their view, participatory projects are successful when it creates some kind of public space for negotiation, either about the project or the process. Participatory spaces empower participants to challenge the power of administrations (Ganuza et al., 2016).

2.4 Citizen participation in the phases of a spatial planning process

Spatial planning is an interactive process occurring in a complex and dynamic institutional environment (Healey, 2003). Economic, social and environmental forces affect the structure of interactions within this environment. In contemporary planning theory, the policy cycle is often used to describe the spatial planning process as a cycle of multiple phases (Howlett & Giest, 2015). In the process a problem is conceptualized and conveyed to a governing body, which formulates solutions and selects a policy. The policy is implemented, evaluated and revised (Nabukenya et al., 2009) The next chapter (2.4.1) will further elaborate on the policy cycle and the different phases of a spatial planning process in relation to invited citizen participation. In chapter 2.4.2, more attention will be given to the way policymakers decide upon the design of a participatory spatial planning process.

2.4.1 Policy cycle

Different versions of the policy cycle are used in planning theory. Howlett & Giest (2015) refer to the five-stage model that defines the following phases: agenda setting, policy formulation, decision making, policy implementation and policy evaluation. Whereas Macintosh (2004) speaks of five high-level stages in the policy life-cycle, which includes agenda setting, analysis, creating policy, implementing policy and monitoring policy (see figure 4). The difference between both models is that Macintosh

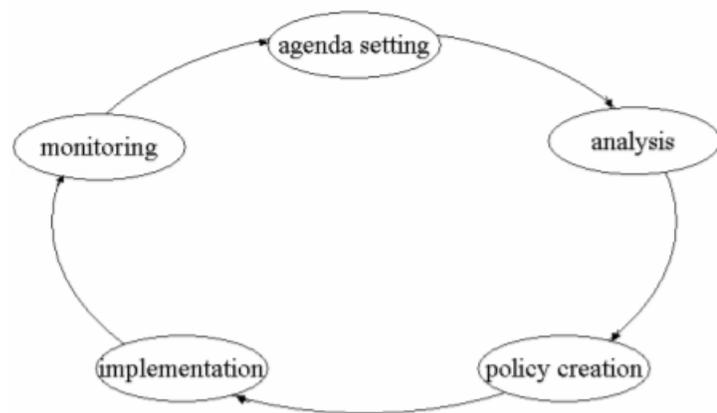


Figure 4; Five high-level stages in the policy life-cycle (Macintosh, 2004).

(2004) describes a phase for analysis before creating policy, whereas Howlett & Giest (2015) describe decision making as a separate phase before implementation. Since consultation is a legally defined form of invited citizen participation in the decision making phase in the Netherlands, decision making will be included as a separate phase in this research. Furthermore, both analysis and policy formulation are seen as important but divergent phases with different forms of citizen participation. This thus results in a policy cycle of six phases; agenda setting, analysis, formulating policy, decision making, implementation and evaluation. These phases are elaborated below.

Agenda setting

In this initial phase of the planning process, a problem is defined and brought to the attention. Problems can be defined by the authorities, by citizens (initiatives) or the authorities can invite citizens to discuss which issues need to be addressed. As discussed in chapter 2.2 about the paradox of timing of citizen participation, a good definition of the problem is important to determine the stakeholders. This affects which citizens are invited to participate. However, to ensure that the problem definition is agreed upon and supported by the citizens, they should already be involved in the problem definition (Sprain, 2016).

This thus creates a paradox. Furthermore, citizens often find it difficult to participate when the project is not concrete yet, but do not want to be involved too late in the process to have an actual influence (Mouter et al., 2020). In addition, planning officials have the responsibility to guard the initial purpose of a project or policy, which might limit the influence citizens can have in defining the agenda (Sprain, 2016).

Analysis

In order to formulate a policy, knowledge of the issue has first to be gathered and analyzed. The challenges and opportunities are defined more clearly. Information is gathered from different sources, which can include citizens and civil society organizations (Macintosh, 2004). The goal is to understand the (political) context of the issue and to develop different solutions. Since information and knowledge is very important for the development of different solutions, those who are considered to have the right information and knowledge have a lot of influence on the outcome of this phase (Howlett & Giest, 2015), and consequently on the following phases as well. When the reason for participation has a substantive rational, such as incorporating local knowledge (Delgado et al., 2011), citizen involvement can become more important in this phase, since this is the moment in which knowledge is most valuable to shape a project or policy.

Formulating policy

In this phase, the outcome of the analyses result in multiple policy options. The solutions as defined in the analysis phase are checked on feasibility and weighed on assessment criteria. Stakeholders will try to get their favored policy option ranked highly among the different options (Howlett & Giest, 2015). Invited citizen participation in this stage can provide insight in the opinions of citizens for the policy options. Their input can also be used to define a policy option or to make a decision which policy is most desirable. Studies have shown the importance of interaction in this phase, to develop and refine policy options (Howlett & Giest, 2015). However, the actors involved are often limited to those who are already interested or have an opinion on the issue, without having the necessary information to judge the context and feasibility of the policy option (Howlett & Giest, 2015; Nabukenya et al., 2009).

Decision making

For a policy to be implemented, formal actors of the authority have to decide upon whether they agree with a policy option. In the Netherlands, this phase includes the legal opportunity for citizens to respond or object to the policy proposal. After a decision is made, citizens have to be notified of the outcome. The decision-making process in public policy is mostly based on subjective bargaining and negotiation instead of rational deliberations and calculations (Howlett & Giest, 2015). Decision makers favor satisfying over optimization. This creates an opportunity for citizens to have greater influence on the outcome of the decision making phase.

Implementation

In this phase, implementation plans are made to implement the chosen policy. Citizens will be confronted with the outcome of the planning process so far. They have to be notified of the upcoming changes and might be invited to contribute to the implementation of the policy. Viewing the implementation phase from an instrumental rational, citizen participation can be less paramount in this

phase, because the social acceptability and legitimacy has already been established throughout earlier phases in the planning process. When much opposition occurs in this phase, one can wonder whether citizen participation has been sufficient or successful in earlier phases.

Evaluation

After a policy is implemented, the results of the policy need to be evaluated. This might result in the reconsideration of a policy, which initiates a rerun of the policy cycle (Macintosh, 2004). To evaluate whether a policy was successful or not, the influence on the initial problem or issue is monitored. However, success is a subjective concept. To be able to monitor if a policy goal is achieved, the goals should be stated very clear (Howlett & Giest, 2015). Citizens can be an important source for gauging the effect of a policy (Macintosh, 2004), which argues for including citizens in the evaluation.



Figure 5; Interchangeable phases of a planning process.

Figure 5 presents a conceptual framework of a spatial planning process in these six phases. Of course this conceptual framework is a simplification of the complex institutional process, but serves as a useful conceptual or analytical tool (Howlett & Giest, 2015). In this research, it provides a basis for discussing a participatory process which includes different levels of participation throughout the process. Although phases may be compressed or changed in order (Howlett & Giest, 2015), the phases define actions that occur in every spatial planning process, which enables to match these necessary actions with citizen participation. Lammers & Arentsen (2017) consider citizen participation not functional or necessary in every phase. They argue that involving non-experts is neither fruitful nor efficient in phases that ask for specific knowledge (Lammers & Arentsen, 2017), such as technical design processes that

can occur in the implementation phase. It is better to involve citizens in specific moments instead of involving them continuously or not at all (Lammers & Arentsen, 2017). This research contributes to defining these specific moments and the level of influence for citizens in these moments.

2.4.2 Views of spatial planning professionals

Planning professionals are individuals influenced by the context in which they work and ideologies of the time they are working in. This influences the position of planning professionals in a (municipal) organization. Donald Schön (1983, 1987) regards planners who combine thinking with acting as reflective practitioners, reconstructing a problem while working on it, to be able to comprehend it. The reflective practitioners are characterized by a self-conscious awareness that serves as critique and corrective (van Hulst et al., 2011). They learn from experience. The reflective practitioner can be seen as a predecessor of Forester (1999) deliberative practitioner. The reflective practitioner works more single minded, whereas the deliberative practitioner is aware of the sociopolitical aspects of successful practice and works on the relationships between the parties involved (van Hulst et al., 2011). Forester

describes planning not only as shaping physical spaces, but spaces for social learning through deliberation and argumentation as well. This is where participation becomes key. Besides managing the technical aspects of planning, planning professionals should also look at the emotions and values involved in solving a problem to come to a successful planning project (van Hulst et al., 2011). With the collaborative turn in spatial planning and the upcoming new Dutch Environment and Planning Act, this deliberative point of view becomes more important. Spatial planners are nowadays expected to involve citizens and other stakeholders in a planning process and should therefore be aware of the sociopolitical aspects, values and relationships between the parties involved.

In contemporary practice, participation is seen as a basic element of planning and sometimes even legally required. This makes it questionable if planning professionals that design participatory planning processes are real deliberative practitioners. Do they value deliberation, argumentation and social learning and do they choose it as a way of practice, or do they see it as something that simply must be done? Van de Grift et al. (2020) mention that studies mostly focus on investigating public responses and engagement, but less attention is given to the way project developers' motivations, beliefs and strategies shape participatory planning processes. However, Van de Grift et al. (2020) believe a deeper understanding of practitioners' ideologies and choices is necessary for a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the work field (van de Grift et al., 2020). In their research to community engagement professionals, they came across three distinctive perspectives. Some community engagement professionals view participation as co-creation. Others see their job as project management, to keep control of the process. And last, the most distant perspective, is the perspective that participation is something that must be done, enforced by law (van de Grift et al., 2020). With the new Environment and Planning Act the danger is lurking that participation becomes only a requirement, instead of an ideology. This could change the way planning professionals think of participation and how they implement it in spatial planning projects. At the moment of conducting this research, it is too early to analyze whether the new planning act will change the view of planning professionals. Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that planning professionals are individuals with their own subjective ideologies and that these views affect how they see and use citizen participation. This research does not directly focus on the ideologies of the planning professionals, but rather on the choices and argumentations they make in designing a participatory planning process. This should contribute to a better understanding of how planning professionals decide about the timing of citizen participation and its level in a participatory planning process. However, when interpreting the results, the individuality of these planning professionals and their subjectivity should be kept in mind.

2.5 Conceptual framework

Citizen participation provides citizens influence on a planning project, but the amount of influence is not always the same. In this literature review, different levels of participation have been discussed (chapter 2.3), which correspond with the amount of influence citizens get in a planning project. This can be different for each phase in a planning process (chapter 2.4). To contribute to a better understanding of the timing of the level of citizen participation, this research focuses on *how planning officials decide about timing the level of citizen participation in a participatory planning process*. How much influence do officials think is appropriate for citizens to have in the different phases of a planning process? First of all, it is important to indicate in which phase planning officials apply which level of participation. To gain a deeper understanding why they chose a certain level in each phase, it is important to gain insight into the considerations planning officials make regarding timing the level of citizen participation. Based on the literature review, it is expected that the considerations can be deducted into factors such as why, who and how. Together with the pitfalls of citizen participation and the participation paradox, these factors shape the context of the participatory process and therefore affect the considerations planning officials make when deciding on the level of citizen participation in each phase of the spatial planning process.

Besides these context-dependent factors, the ideologies of the time and personal opinions can also affect the choices made by planning officials when involving citizens in a project, but they are not scrutinized into detail. In the scope of this research it is chosen to focus on the considerations and argumentations of planning officials and the factors they take into consideration to be able to get a more general understanding of how planning officials decide upon designing a participatory planning process, as visualized in the conceptual model in figure 6.

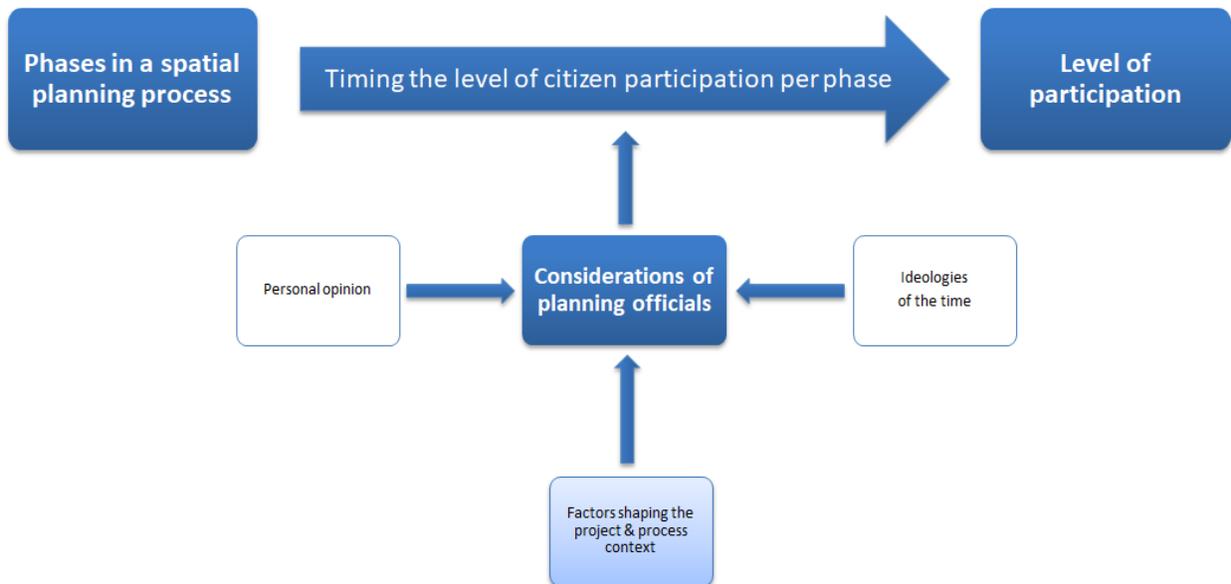
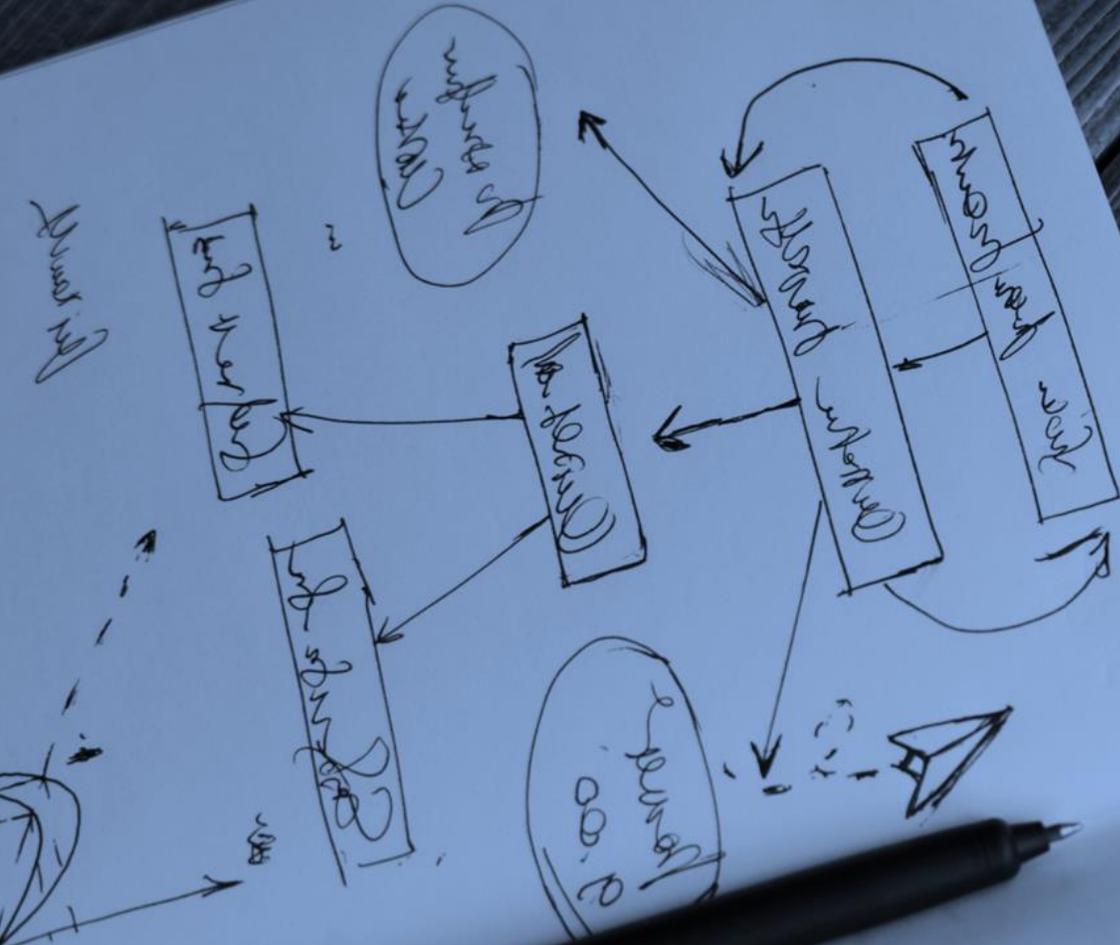


Figure 6; Conceptual model citizen participation in spatial planning.

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Handwritten notes on a separate piece of paper, including:

- Extensive
- Methodology
- Data Collection
- Data Analysis
- Data Interpretation
- Methodology
- Data Collection
- Data Analysis
- Data Interpretation

3. Methodology

3. Methodology

3.1 Methodological approach

This research was set up to contribute to a better understanding of the timing of the level of citizen participation. In this research, the following question is answered: *How do planning officials decide about timing the level of citizen participation in a participatory planning process?* The research question is divided into the following sub-questions;

- *In which phase do planning officials apply which level of participation?*
- *What considerations do planning officials make regarding timing the level of citizen participation?*
- *Which factors do the planning officials take into account while shaping a participatory planning process?*
- *How do planning officials deal with the participation paradox?*

To answer the abovementioned questions, qualitative data was needed about the views, opinions and experiences of planning officials. The data that is analyzed is therefore collected by semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2016) with planning officials that have experience with citizen participation. They therefore have professional knowledge on the subject and can explain how they make and justify their choices in designing a spatial planning process. A selection criteria for the interviewees is therefore that they have to have a position in which they can shape a participatory planning process, such as project leader or participation professional. As argued by Van de Grift et al. (2020), for a holistic understanding of the work field, one should look at the ideologies and choices of practitioners and how they shape planning processes with their motivations, beliefs and strategies. Every municipality has its own vision on participation, which can affect the opinions of officials. Furthermore, the size, resources, relationship with citizens, conceived legitimacy and other factors that distinguish a municipality and how it deals with participation can affect the responses of an official to the interview questions as well. Therefore, planning professionals from different (types of) municipalities and consultants that work for municipalities are interviewed to get a more comprehensive result.

The semi-structured interview provides a guideline for the interviewer based on predefined questions, but also enables the interviewee to give elaborate answers on which the interviewer can react (Bryman, 2016). It has to be acknowledged that whatever is being said in these type of interviews is always part of a social dimension (Bogner & Menz, 2009), and therefore cannot be seen as pure, context-independent and situation-independent statements. This research did not focus on a casus, but on a type of respondents, being planning officials. Planning officials are those working in the field of spatial planning for the authorities. This research aims to reduce the gap between theory and practice by enriching theoretical views on timing and levels of participation with views of practitioners. Often, practical experiences of a case study are translated to theory by researcher. Instead of looking at case studies or practical experiences itself, this research looks at the views and opinions of planning officials with practical experiences. They are the ones that make the decisions when it comes to implementing different levels of citizen participation in the phases of a planning process. It is therefore interesting to

get an insight in their considerations. Interviews with the officials about their opinions and views is therefore considered most suitable.

3.2 Data collection

As explained above, data was collected through semi-structured interviews with planning officials. In total, eighteen interviews have been conducted, see table 1. The planning officials all had experience with organizing a participatory planning process in the field of the built environment. The interviewed officials thus meet the criteria that they work in the field of planning and have practical experience with citizen participation. In the scope of this research the selection of planning officials was limited to those working for a municipality, to provide a commonality in the research units professional position in relation to citizens. In comparison to, for example, provincial officials or other authorities they are closer to the citizens and their work has a more direct impact on the living environment of citizens. Therefore they are more subjected to citizen participation and so it is interesting to research how they shape participatory planning processes. The first interviewees were collected through the professional network of the researcher. After that, interviewees were asked to recommend other possible interviewees. This snowball effect for collecting interviewees was stopped when saturation of data occurred. Due to the Covid-19 virus, interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams video calls. Interviews lasted on average 55 minutes and were recorded by video recording in order to transcribe the interviews.

Table 1: Interviewees.

Number #	Date	Function	Field	Municipality
#1	06-05-2020	Strategic advisor	Heat transition vision	Utrecht
#2	08-05-2020	Project and process manager	Energy transition	Utrecht
#3	02-06-2020	Program manager	Sustainability	Rotterdam
#4	08-06-2020	Process manager	Spatial Planning	Consultant
#5	10-06-2020	Project manager	Spatial Planning	Valkenswaard
#6	10-06-2020	Strategic advisor	Participation	Utrecht
#7	10-06-2020	Environment manager	Spatial Planning	Amsterdam
#8	10-06-2020	Senior Consultant	Civic Participation & sustainable energy	Consultant
#9	12-06-2020	Project manager	Strategic Environmental Vision	Consultant
#10	17-06-2020	Environment manager & advisor participation	Spatial Planning	Amsterdam
#11	17-06-2020	Senior program manager	Spatial Planning	Utrecht
#12	17-06-2020	Process manager	Regional Energy Strategy (RES)	Súdwest-fryslan
#13	19-06-2020	Project manager	Spatial Planning	Amsterdam
#14	19-06-2020	Communication advisor	Regional Energy Strategy (RES)	Súdwest-fryslan
#15	23-06-2020	Communication advisor	Sustainable social housing	Consultant
#16	24-06-2020	Policy advisor	Spatial Planning	Epe
#17	26-06-2020	Director innovation	Sustainable social housing	Consultant
#18	07-07-2020	Senior communication advisor	Spatial Planning	Amsterdam

Appendix I on page 86 contains the interview questions that were prepared as a guidance for the interviews, based on the literature review. The interview consisted of three parts. The first part consisted of general open questions on the respondents view on citizen participation. The interviewees were asked what they consider to be the value of citizen participation and the reason for using citizen participation in spatial planning projects. In this first part, they were also asked how they determine at which moment in a project citizen participation should be started, to see if they experience the participation paradox themselves and how they deal with the participation paradox.

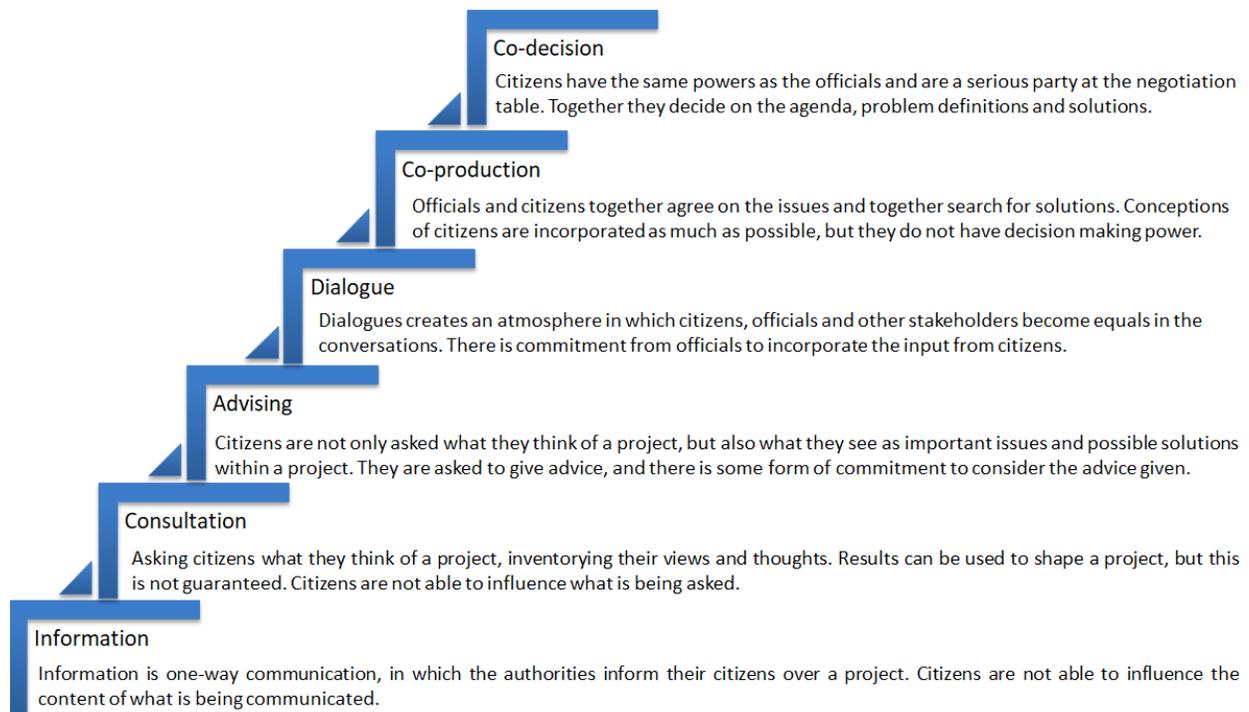


Figure 7; Operationalization of the levels of participation.

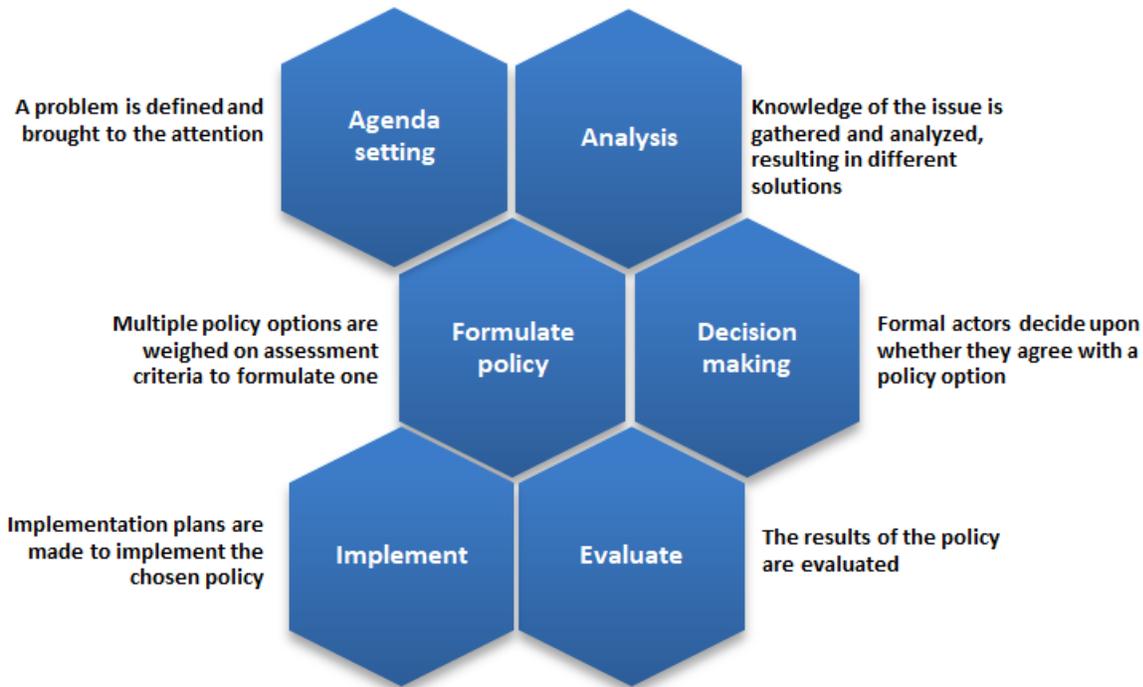


Figure 8; Operationalization of the phases in a spatial planning process.

In the second part, the levels of participation were linked to the phases in a planning process, based on the experiences and views of the interviewee. The levels of participation and the phases in the planning process are an operationalization of the literature in chapter 2.3 and 2.4 in the literature review and presented in figure 7 on page 40 and figure 8 on page 41. This exercise provided insights into which considerations planning officials make for designing a participatory planning process and how they justify their choices. The interviewees were asked to divide 100 points over the different levels of participation in each phase of the planning process. By asking the interviewees to divide 100 points in each phase, they were forced to think about which level of citizen participation they considered most important in each phase. The results of this part of the interviews are structured in a table. Table 2 is an example of what the result of this exercise of one interview might look like. The exercise also enables comparison between interviewees. To be able to better compare the results, they have been transformed into graphs which are presented in appendix III on page 90. The total results of all interviews per phase are presented as well, see appendix VII on page 102. The interviewees were also asked to motivate their choices. From the 18 interviews, three interviewees did not complete this exercise, being interviewee #3, #14 and #18. Three interviewees filled in the exercise beforehand, being #7, #9 and #13, but the results were still discussed during the interview. The other twelve interviewees completed the exercise during the interview, allowing the interviewer to follow the process of considering their choices.

Table 2: Example of an assessment table of the division of points over the different levels of citizen participation in each phase of a spatial planning project.

	Agenda setting	Analysis	Formulating policy	Decision making	Implementation	Evaluation	Total
Information	60	40	20	10	80	0	210
Consultation	20	20	0	20	20	50	130
Advising	10	20	10	10	0	30	80
Dialogue	10	10	30	10	0	20	80
Co-production	0	10	20	20	0	0	50
Co-decision	0	0	20	30	0	0	50
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	500

The last part of the interview focused on influence and power relations within participatory processes. The interviewees were asked how much influence citizens should have according to them and how the representativeness of the participating citizens affects the amount of influence they get. Furthermore, they were asked which pitfalls are common in citizen participation and what they advise other planning officials to do, or not to do, in terms of citizen participation.

3.3 Data analysis

The transcripts of the interviews are thematically analyzed. By coding the transcripts on different themes, it was possible to analyze the overall opinion of the officials on issues such as citizen influence, power relations, timing, level of participation, timing paradoxes, pitfalls and do's and don'ts of citizen participation. These themes were examined to gain an understanding of the interviewees perceptions and motivations. The conceptual model in the literature review forms the basis of the codes used to analyze the data. In the conceptual model it is visualized that the considerations of the planning officials are influenced by multiple context-dependent factors.

Besides the qualitative analysis of the considerations of the interviewees, the quantitative results of the exercise of part two of the interviews are analyzed as well. Therefore, the results have been transformed into graphs. First, the individual results of all exercises are presented in graphs, see appendix III on page 90. By looking at the division of points in each graph, the results of all individuals could be compared (anonymously). By examining the graphs and comparing them, similar results have been grouped. This way multiple common views on the timing and level of citizen participation have been deducted. Furthermore, the total results of all interviews per phase are presented as well, see appendix VII on page 102, making it possible to analyze if there were differences in the opinion in each phase. Together with the thematic analysis, this resulted in an understanding of how officials time citizen participation and its level in a participatory planning process.

3.4 Validity and reliability

The choices that have been made for the research method have certain implications which can affect the validity and reliability of this research. In this paragraph the research implications are discussed and it is explained how the results should be interpreted.

First of all, it has to be acknowledged that, although a quantitative element is introduced in the method by asking the interviewees to divide points, no statistical analysis is performed and therefore the numbers cannot be seen as significant results and should not be taken out of their context. However, this was also not the aim of the exercise. The goal was to make the interviewees think of what they consider to be valuable levels of participation in each phase in the planning process. This enables the researcher to ask them to motivate their answers and discuss the considerations they make. It is used as a conversation starter that prevents some levels or phases to be skipped. Furthermore, the structure of this exercise provides opportunities to compare the answers of the interviewees. Overall the quantitative method used in the qualitative interviews thus increased the external validity of the research. However, the interpretation of the motivations and considerations is at risk of being misinterpreted or colored by the political or ideological views of the researcher (Bryman, 2016; Paschen & Ison, 2014). This raises the ethical question whether the researcher has been neutral. To prevent this research to appear unreliable, the method of the researcher is extensively described. Furthermore, to make this research transparent, the interview questions, recordings and transcripts are available on request. Additionally, during the interviews the interviewer often summarized the motivations and considerations of the interviewees in her own words and asked if the interviewees agreed with this interpretation.

Because only one method has been used, no triangulation or other form of control is established. However, since eighteen interviews have been conducted with planning professionals of different municipalities, the results of this qualitative research are comprehensive and comparison between the interviews is used as a control mechanism, ensuring the internal validation. In the selection of research units, a conscious choice has been made to select professionals with different experiences, in terms of career length, field of work and function. As a result, a variety of insights have been collected that together are less context dependent. Though some interviewees did mention that their answers might be different when asked the same question a year later. Even though it is not certain this will really be the case, it is interesting to notice that the interviewees themselves consider their opinions to be time-dependent. The project they are currently working on and the phase in which that project was in time of the interviews affected their answers. This can also be related to the dependency on the ideologies of the time, as discussed in chapter 2.4.2 in the literature review. However, the interviews were conducted with professionals working in different fields and in different phases of the planning process. Hence, the context dependency is somewhat leveled out, but this should still be taken into account when interpreting the results of this research.

The operationalization of the literature review into phases of a spatial planning process, as described above, is most applicable to spatial planning projects that focus on policies for large scale areas, such as a mobility plan or heat transition vision. Therefore, some interviewees that work in small scale area development indicated that they use a different policy cycle. Nonetheless, they recognized the global phases as outlined in the research and were able to translate their policy cycle to the one used in the exercise in order to answer the questions. In case an in-depth follow-up research is done in which there is a focus on a specific scale or type of planning project, it is recommended to adjust the phases in the policy cycle to that specific context.



4. Empirical Analysis

4. Empirical Analysis

In this chapter, the findings of the interviews are described and discussed. First, the general outcome of the exercises, as discussed in the methodology chapter (3.2), is explicated in chapter 4.1. In the outcome, three main trajectories for citizen participation in a planning process can be distinguished. These trajectories are discussed consecutively and the underlying arguments are explored in chapter 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4. In these trajectories, the implementation phase and evaluation phase stand out and are therefore discussed separately in chapter 4.5 and 4.6. Thereafter, it is discussed in chapter 4.7 how planning professionals deal with the pitfalls distinguished in the literature review in shaping a participatory planning process.

4.1 General results of the exercises

First of all, it has to be acknowledged that spatial planning projects are always context related. This has also been stressed by all interviewees. However, this does not mean that the experiences and knowledge of planning professionals cannot provide valuable insights in the (basic) considerations planning officials make concerning citizen participation throughout the planning process.

As discussed in chapter 3.3, the interviewees were asked to divide 100 points among levels of participation in different phases. In general, the more points a level of participation got in a particular phase in the exercise, the more valuable or suitable the interviewee considered that level of participation in the particular phase. Before analyzing the division of points between the levels, a first impression is given by examining which levels of participation were actually mentioned most by the interviewees in each phase. Table 3 shows the amount of interviewees that mentioned a level of participation to be valuable or suitable for each phase. For example, in the agenda setting phase, information and consultation were mentioned most often, more than half of the interviewees mentioned them, followed by advising.

Table 3: Amount of interviewees that considered a level of participation important in a certain phase.

	Agenda setting	Analysis	Formulating policy	Decision making	Implementation	Evaluation	Total
Information	10	7	4	7	7	5	40
Consultation	11	11	6	9	3	8	48
Advising	8	13	9	10	4	7	52
Dialogue	5	10	11	5	6	12	49
Co-production	3	5	11	5	9	2	36
Co-decision	2	1	1	4	6	1	15

Looking at the table, it is notable that there is some sort of increase in the level of participation until the decision making phase. In the implementation and evaluation phase again higher levels of participation are mentioned most often. Co-decision is not mentioned as much, only 15 times overall, whereas the other levels of participation are mentioned as valuable or suitable between 36 and 52 times throughout the entire exercise.

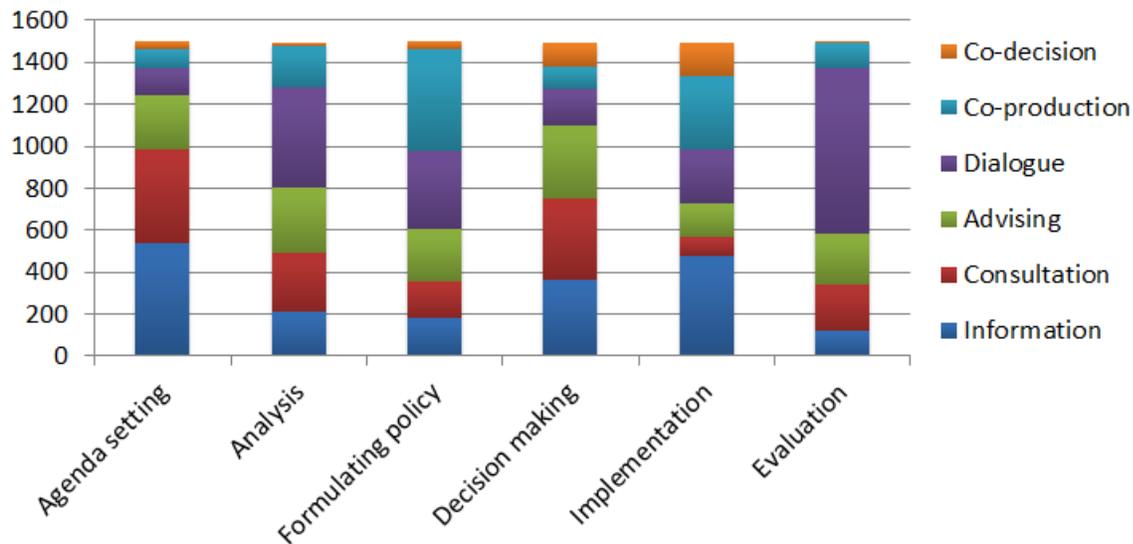


Figure 9; Group division level of participation per phase.

Figure 9 shows the total amount of points a level of participation has gotten for each phase in a planning process throughout all exercises. In total, 15 interviewees did the exercise in which they divided 100 points over each phase, so in total 1500 points per phase have been divided. The division of points is somewhat comparable to table 3, showing how often a level of participation was mentioned in each phase. However, this figure presents the relative weight as well. Again, overall co-decision did not receive a lot of points and dialogue is appreciated most in the evaluation phase. However, there are also some differences. One of the differences is that, even though in the implementation phase co-production was mentioned more often than other levels of participation, information actually received most points in this phase. The figure does also show a growth in influence for citizens up to the decision making phase, in which the level of influence drops.

To further analyze how planning officials think of the timing of citizen participation in spatial planning projects, the individual divisions of points, as shown in appendix III on page 90, are compared to each other. Looking at the individual divisions of points, there are multiple interviewees who divided the points in the same matter, especially in the first four phases. Thereafter, in the implementation and evaluation phase, the results become less similar. This resulted in three main variations of a participation trajectory derived from the first four phases. These trajectories are based on the amount of points the interviewees allocated to a level of participation throughout the different phases and whether the amount of influence was growing, decreasing or stable throughout the process. The following paragraphs will describe the trajectories and the underlying arguments of the interviewees.

4.2 Trajectory I: Increasing influence

The first trajectory that has been distinguished is characterized by an increase of influence for citizens throughout the first three to four phases. Eight of the interviewees allocated the most amount of points to lower levels of participation in the agenda setting phase, followed by more points for higher levels of participation in the analysis and policy formulation phases. Appendix IV on page 98 contains the individual graphs. In the agenda setting phase, information and consultation received most points. In the analysis phase, advising and dialogue were given more points and in the policy formulation phase, dialogue and co-production were considered more important. Thus, an increase in influence for citizens appeared throughout the first three phases. However, six out of eight of these interviewees (#2, #4, #10, #12, #15, #16) drastically lowered the amount of influence in the decision making phase, foremost allocating points to information, consultation and advising. The average division of points of these interviewees is presented in figure 10. The other two interviewees (#7 and #9) however still followed the path of increasing influence for citizens in the decision making phase, see the graph with average division of points in figure 11.

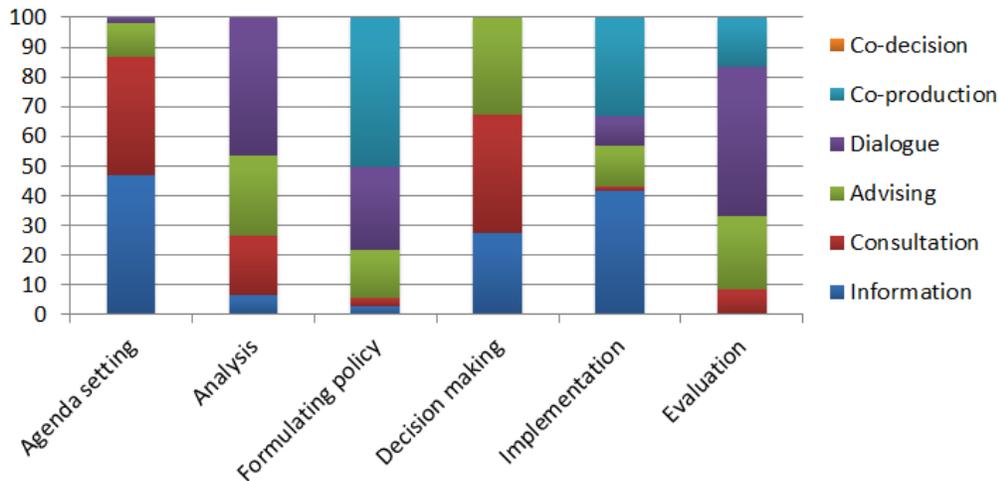


Figure 10; Average division of points of the interviewees following the trajectory with increasing influence for citizens until the decision making phase.

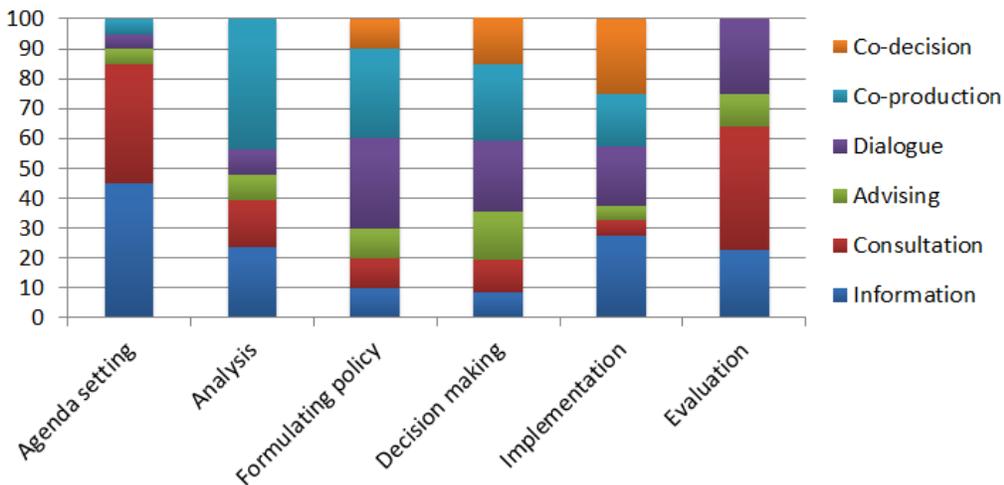


Figure 11; Average division of points of the interviewees following the trajectory with increasing influence for citizens including the decision making phase.

Table 4: Interviewees trajectory I: increasing influence.

Number #	Date	Function	Field	Municipality
#2	08-05-2020	Project and process manager	Energy transition	Utrecht
#4	08-06-2020	Process manager	Spatial Planning	Consultant
#7	10-06-2020	Environment manager	Spatial Planning	Amsterdam
#9	12-06-2020	Project manager	Strategic Environmental Vision	Consultant
#10	17-06-2020	Environment manager & advisor participation	Spatial Planning	Amsterdam
#12	17-06-2020	Process manager	Regional Energy Strategy (RES)	Súdwest- fryslan
#15	23-06-2020	Communication advisor	Sustainable social housing	Consultant
#16	24-06-2020	Policy advisor	Spatial Planning	Epe

Although the interviewees have different functions in different fields and locations, as shown in table 4, their answers still show similar results. The following quote from interviewee #9, a consultant in project management for strategic environmental visions, gives a good impression of the overall thought process of the interviewees of trajectory I;

*“My main point with dividing these points is that if you have a fairly regular planning process, for example an strategic environmental vision, that **you gradually shift to heavier forms of participation**. So in the beginning the initiative is emphatically by the government to collect that information and get reactions about it. Then it is not so much about making choices, so consultation is sufficient. And the more you go towards choices, and certainly also when the process shows that parties really want to participate and want to think along, you can use heavier forms of participation.” #9 (own translation)*

To get a deeper understanding of the reason why the interviewees in trajectory I gradually shift to heavier forms of participation, the considerations and argumentations per phase are elaborated on.

Agenda setting phase

Interviewee #9 states in the quote above that in the beginning less choices have to be made, and the focus is primarily on collecting information, for which lower levels of participation are sufficient according to him. This corresponds to the view of interviewee #12, a process manager for the regional energy strategy of Súdwest-fryslan. He says that there are still a lot of uncertainties at the beginning of a planning process. If you cannot show something clear to the citizens, the story you are telling becomes vague for the citizens and therefore participation at this point does not yield anything in his opinion. However, he states that the difficulty is that starting to participate at a moment in the process in which you do have something to show, choices have already been made. This will jam the participation trajectory as well. The balance between these two moments is a daily struggle in planning practice according to interviewee #16, a policy advisor in spatial planning for the municipality of Epe. This corresponds to the participation paradox discussed in the literature review. For interviewee #12, the moment in which you start real participation depends on how concrete you can make it for the citizens. More clarity will make people more willing to participate. But to put the project on the agenda, it is still one-way communication for the time being according to interviewee #12, where you provide

information for the citizens. Interviewee #15, a consultant in communication advisement for sustainable social housing, thinks participation is often introduced too late in a process. She appreciates it when the input of citizens help shape a better plan. However, she does acknowledge the difficulties with providing vague information to citizens. She experiences that citizens want concrete examples and clarity. If they are not provided a good story, citizens are less eager to participate and engage in the project. She therefore states that communication is key, in which there is not shared too much in the beginning of a project because citizens cannot do anything with it. Instead, the information should be provided in phases in her opinion, slowly building up to the big and complex developments that are coming.

Analysis phase

Interviewee #16 shares the opinion that you should not overwhelm citizens with complete plans right away. Especially in cases in which a negative impact on the living environment of citizens is expected, it is important to invest more time in the early stages of the participation trajectory. He does point out that for projects in which there is more freedom to choose which goals you want to achieve, there is room for higher levels of participation in the early stages of a project, such as dialogue and co-production. But for projects initiated by the municipality with certain assignments, the early phases of the process are more about explaining why a development must take place, thus lower levels of participation are suited.

"I would prefer to involve them if there is almost nothing on paper to include them in the thinking process we go through. Because we also take them with us in any struggles that the neighborhood goes through, thoughts that we have, considerations we make. Then you make them a part of it, you create understanding for certain choices." #16 (own translation)

Interviewee #7, an environment manager in spatial planning projects for the municipality of Amsterdam, also recons that higher levels of participation are valuable in the analysis phase, so citizens can be taken along in the different ways of thinking or think patterns. Slowly building up also allows citizens to get familiar with the topic and the context. Interviewee #9 thinks this important as well, explaining the broader context, informing them what plays a role in the project as well, besides what is at the forefront of their minds. He therefore believes a gradual shift to higher levels of participation is desirable in regular planning processes. As the process progresses, more considerations and choices have to be made, for which higher levels of participation seem more adequate. Interviewee #15 says the following about the analysis phase:

"In the analysis phase, I would proceed to dialogue. In the base you mainly start with sending, of course, and at a certain point you also get more in return and you build up trust. You also give them the feeling that they can contribute to the plans, and that is really the case. And that is very important, so that a citizen at a given moment is informed in such a way that he or she stands behind the plan, that he or she can also act as an ambassador for the plan. In that way, they can involve other neighborhood residents in a plan, forming the most desirable situation." #15 (own translation)

So she describes that building a relation with the citizens in the span of the process is important as well, and therefore higher levels of participation are necessary. However, even though interviewee #16 also finds higher levels of participation more important in the analysis phase compared to the agenda setting

phase, he is more reserved in how much influence citizens should get. He considers consultation and advising to be most important in this phase.

"In my idea you sometimes need quite a bit of expertise in such an analysis phase, to properly describe the situation." #16 (own translation)

He thus argues that expert knowledge is necessary in this phase. Which opportunities are revealed, is partly an outcome of the knowledge and competence of the planning official. Interviewee #12 also finds consultation and advising most important, because he considers this moment in the process important to get an indication if citizens understand the context and if they have particular feelings towards the project. Hence, overall the input of citizens becomes more important in the analysis phase. However this has less to do with lay knowledge and influence, but more with building a relationship and understanding.

Formulating policy phase

In the following phase, the results of the analysis are used to form a policy or plan. Interviewee #7 therefore says it is important to give citizens much input, because different solutions for a process come up in the analysis phase. She also states that it preferred to, for example, submit decisions made in this phase to the citizens. She therefore even granted some points to co-decision. However, she is the only one in this trajectory who did so. For the formulating policy phase, interviewee #12 appreciates dialogue and co-production.

"I think you are now at the place where you have to open your first dialogue. Here you have to try to find out what people in the area think of it. You have to talk to the people and you have to ensure that they can make a contribution, that they can come up with ideas themselves and that they want to do certain things themselves in the area. If you can show that, then you go to your decision-making very differently. That decision-making is simply a matter of government, the municipal council must make a decision." #12 (own translation)

As the quote shows, the focus in this phase is more on the influence of citizens, enabling them to contribute with the mean to incorporate their ideas. Interviewee #16 argues that in this phase it is important to involve the citizens up to co-production as well. Depending on whether the project is suitable for it, he would invite them to the drawing table. Interviewee #15 says it is important to grant citizens a high level of influence at this point because in the end the plan has an influence on their living environment, making their opinion important when a plan is drawn up or a policy for the area is formulated.

Decision making phase

The quote of interviewee #12 also shows that the formulating policy phase has a relation with the following phase, the decision making phase. It is stated that if citizens have been involved in the formulating policy phase, this has an influence the proceeding to the decision making phase. According to interviewee #10, an environment manager and advisor in participation in spatial planning projects for the municipality of Amsterdam, in the formulating policy phase the final advice you submit to the board is drawn up, and she thinks citizens should be allowed to participate in this final advice. Because the final decision always rests with a government body, making this phase last chance for citizens to have an

actual influence before a decision is being made. For the decision making phase she thus says the following:

“Than it is actually about informing. Of course, you have that formal say. But the final decision is ultimately taken by the board. If you worked really well together in the formulating policy phase, then the advice you give to the board is really a co-production, so all interests have been carefully weighed. Then it is ultimately up to the board to enact it, because it is still a representative democracy that we live in.” #10
(own translation)

Interviewee #2, a project and process manager for citizen initiatives in the energy transition for the municipality of Utrecht, has a similar opinion, saying that in the decision making phase the participation should already be in order, so that all there is left in this phase is the official decision. However she also thinks it is important that all stakeholders have a final possibility to say one last time what they think of it. Otherwise, support is lost. Therefore, she thinks information and consultation are both equally important in the decision making phase. This is the point where a big difference in results appear. Even though interviewee #7 and #9 showed similar results for the agenda setting, analysis and formulating policy phase, being an increase in influence, they did not drop the level of participation in the decision making phase. As already explained, interviewee #9 believes a gradual shift to higher levels of participation is desirable for regular planning processes, because he argues that higher levels of participation are important when choices are being made, including the decision making phase. Even though interviewee #7 gave points to all levels of participation in the decision making phase, she granted most points to dialogue, co-production and co-decision, saying the following:

“I granted most points to co-production and co-decision, precisely because you want most people to agree with the decision. And I have always said informing is the first step, because you must be able to take them along in all the steps that have gone before. But you want to be able to come to a decision together.” #7
(own translation)

From this, it can be interpreted that it is import to involve citizens in the decision making to not lose the support or social acceptability of the plan, an instrumental normative.

4.2.1 Conclusion trajectory I

Looking at the considerations that the interviewees have expressed, some factors can be defined that affect the level of participation throughout the spatial planning process. First of all, the insecurities and uncertainties in the beginning of a project are seen as reasons to use lower levels of participation in the start of a participatory process. It is argued to be necessary to include citizens in the context of the project, thus the focus is more on explaining instead of participating. More clarity would also make people more willing to participate, which is also mentioned to affect the level of participation. This however also creates the paradox discussed in the literature review. In the beginning the insecurities and uncertainties of a project create a vague story to tell to the citizens, making it difficult for them to participate. However, when participation is initiated later on, citizens feel that decisions have already been made without their input. This paradox remains a struggle for the planning officials and is further analyzed in chapter 4.7.2.

Besides getting the participants familiar with the context, the interviewees believe it is important to build a relation with the citizens. Therefore, the influence of citizens is slowly increased. An understanding of the context of the project and building a relation would also create social support for the plan, according to the interviewees. It is mentioned that projects that are expected to have a negative impact on the living environment of the citizens need more investment in participation in the first phases to create this understanding and social support.

Furthermore, it is mentioned that the amount of decisions to make affects the level of participation as well. When the project progresses to the formulating policy and decision making phase, more decisions are made, so more influence should be given to citizens, according to the interviewees. Here, a shift in the rational for participation can also be seen. The first phases are more about creating social support; an instrumental rational. After these phases, the emphasis lays more on the input, lay knowledge and real influence; a substantive and normative rational. Furthermore, projects in which there is a lot of freedom in choices, higher levels of participation are argued to be more suitable. Projects initiated by the municipality often offers citizens less freedom in the choices being made, so lower levels of participation are more suitable compared to citizens initiatives.

By most of the interviewees in trajectory I, the formulating policy phase is seen as the last phase in which the citizens can actually have an influence. To make sure the plan nominated to the council has social support, higher levels of participation are deemed desirable. Thereafter the council has the decision power in the decision making phase, as enacted by the Dutch representative democracy. The power relation in place therefore affects the level of participation, in which some interviewees deem lower levels of participation possible in the decision making phase. Others however disagree, saying higher levels of participation are desirable precisely because decisions are being made, and you want the citizens to agree with these decisions, thus involve them as much as possible. However, this can only be executed when they have been involved in the earlier phases as well. Thus a personal difference in opinions is visible here, which in practice shapes the planning processes. Planning officials thus look at context specific factors such as uncertainties, positive or negative impacts, influencing space, understanding of the context and earlier involvement to shape the participation trajectory throughout the planning process.

4.3 Trajectory II: Consistent average influence

In trajectory I there was an increase visible in the level of participation throughout the first three to four phases. The trajectory was based on eight out of fifteen results of the exercises done by the interviewees. The remaining seven exercises show more divergent results. It is therefore no surprise that the overall results as discussed in the beginning of this chapter, show the most similarities with trajectory I. However, two other trajectories can be distinguished as well. These two trajectories show a different kind of view on the level of participation throughout the spatial planning process, in which the level of participation is more consistent throughout the different phases in the process. In this chapter, trajectory II is described and the underlying arguments and considerations are discussed. The same will be done in chapter 4.4 for trajectory III. Trajectory II can be described as a trajectory in which the results of the exercise shows a consistent average level of participation throughout the first four phases in the spatial planning process. In this trajectory the lower and average levels of participation foremost receive the most amount of points, being information, consultation and advising, see figure 12. This trajectory is based on the results of interviewees #11, #13 and #17, see table 5 and appendix V on page 100 for the individual results.

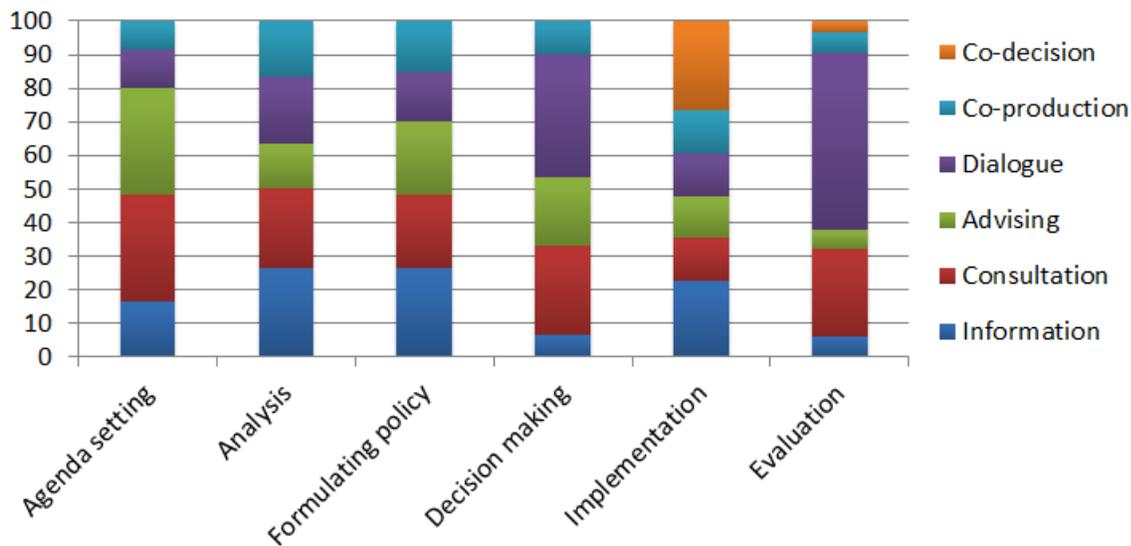


Figure 12; Average division of points of the interviewees following trajectory II: consistent average influence.

Table 5: Interviewees trajectory II: consistent average influence

Number #	Date	Function	Field	Municipality
#11	17-06-2020	Senior program manager	Spatial Planning	Utrecht
#13	19-06-2020	Project manager	Spatial Planning	Amsterdam
#17	26-06-2020	Director innovation	Sustainable social housing	Consultant

Opposite to the graphs in trajectory I, the graphs in trajectory II show that the planning officials divided most of the points over three to four levels in each phase, whereas the planning officials in trajectory I divided most of the points over one or two levels in each phase. Interviewee #11, a senior program

manager in spatial planning for the municipality of Utrecht, explains that she divided the points more equally to represent that participation in spatial planning projects should always be customized to the project and its context. She stresses that citizen participation in spatial planning projects should always be well considered in the context of the project. Additionally, she states that it is important to rethink the participation trajectory in each new project and in each phase of the project, and therefore remain flexible throughout the entire process.

Agenda setting phase

However, interviewee #11 still divided the points differently for each phase, in which she considered information irrelevant, because in her opinion information is not a form of participation, but something that always must be done. For the agenda setting phase she says the following:

"I find it complicated to divide points in this phase, because I think that sometimes you can do the agenda setting yourself without perhaps involving someone. But it is useful to consult people anyway, but there are also examples where you really have to do that together. But if the municipality ultimately decides it is in any case never a co-decision. My point is that you have to see what is possible and what is most applicable there." #11 (own translation)

She again emphasizes the importance of customization by dividing points from consultation up to co-production. However, she does illuminate co-decision, because according to her argumentation this is not suitable when the municipality ultimately decides. Interviewee #13, a project manager in spatial planning for the municipality of Amsterdam, also does not see co-decision as a desirable level of participation in the agenda setting phase, but because of a different reason:

"I agree not to let people co-create or co-decide when initiating a plan. Because in my experience you will then quite not get it done. If there is certainty of the continuation of the project, then you involve people in what that should look like." #13 (own translation)

He thus does not necessarily mention the decision power as a reason to not co-decide or co-produce, but the retainment of the initial purpose of the project. He argues that in the agenda setting phase the goal of the project has to be guarded by the planning official and giving citizens a lot of influence occasionally has resulted in losing sight of the initial goal or purpose.

Analysis phase

In the analysis phase a clear difference in opinion appears. Interviewee #11 thinks consultation, dialogue and co-production are valuable levels of participation in this phase.

"We government often think that analysis is something objective, but there is a lot of experience behind it. Where we like the layout of the square because it our standard, which can be part of an analysis, we ignore the experience people have, which is part of the actual things. And we don't know them, there are things we just don't know. So I think we underestimate how much knowledge there is in the city in that analysis phase." #11 (own translation)

She thus appreciates the input of citizens in this phase, to be able to incorporate the lay knowledge in the analysis. Interviewee #13 shares this opinion, saying that this input is needed to discover how a project can positively contribute to a neighborhood. However, he also states that the objectivity of the

planning professionals is important in this phase as well, to be able to take all interests into consideration, especially the common interest, the budget of the municipality and the development of the city. Citizens often do not pay attention to this. Interviewee #17, the director of innovation of a sustainable social housing consultancy, divided her points differently in the analysis phase compared to the other phases. She argues:

"My preference is that if you are analyzing, a kind of task that you have to focus on, you do not want other people to put certain things up for discussion during that process. Then you just want to make that calculation, and you want to discuss that later. But of course this is very personal." #17 (own translation)

In this phase expert knowledge weights heavier than lay knowledge in her opinion. although she also emphasizes that this is a personal view and that other professionals might think differently. Looking at the graphs in appendix V on page 100, this is also the case. Even though she fits the profile of average consistency in the other phases, she clearly thinks different than others in this phase.

Formulating policy phase

For the formulating policy phase, interviewee #17 grants points to higher levels of participation, saying the following:

"I think that after you have done your homework in the analysis phase, you will convert that into policy, and then you want to give more space to consultation, advice and dialogue with the residents." #17 (own translation)

Interviewee #11 shows a similar division of points. She elaborates that planning officials are responsible for the product that has to be enacted in the following decision making phase. They are therefore responsible to deliver a decent product. Hence, the influence for citizens is limited and co-decision in her opinion is not suitable. Nevertheless, the influence of the planning officials themselves is also limited. The planning officials should incorporate the considerations and different solutions and leave the decision up to the council. That is how the democratic system in the Netherlands works and how the opinion of citizens is represented. Interviewee #13 agrees that it is important in the formulating policy to elaborate multiple options that are all valid and meet the guidelines of the municipality, so that in the next phase a choice can be made.

Decision making phase

In the opinion of interviewee #13, the choice for a policy or plan can be made in dialogue with the citizens, in which the consequences of the different options are discussed. Interviewee #11 already explained that the decision itself is up to the council, but she does think there is room for participation.

"For decision making we generally have decision-making bodies. You may again have an opinion on it, and on that basis adjustments can be made. So you do have consultation, you do have a voice, and you can also advise on it. In complex or sensitive cases, I think it is very wise to start a dialogue with the different parties. And you can even formulate your proposal or your decision together, but the decision is taken by another body." #11 (own translation)

This citation shows that the opinion of citizens is still considered valuable in this phase. Here again, as in trajectory I, it is mentioned that projects that are sensitive need a more intensive form of participation. So also in this phase it is important to be aware of the context, adjust the level of participation to the situation at hand and remain flexible.

4.3.1 Conclusion trajectory II

In this trajectory, the planning officials consider it important to carefully adjust the level of participation to the context and therefore state that all levels of participation are important to consider. It is therefore said that the participation trajectory should be customized to each project and within a project it is important to be flexible and rethink the level of participation in each phase of the project. It is also mentioned that the choice for a certain level of participation is very personal, which is also illustrated by the differences in considerations and argumentations in this trajectory.

One of the factors that is often taken into consideration is the influencing space, which has also been mentioned in trajectory I. The decision making power of the council limits the influencing space for citizens. Citizen participation is thus subject to power relations. Furthermore citizens often are concerned with their own interest, instead of the common interest of the city. The planning officials can objectively take all interest into account and make sure the initial purpose of the project is not lost out of sight. They are also responsible for the plan that is presented to the council, and have to make sure it is valid and meet the guidelines of the municipality. Therefore it is argued that co-decision is not a desirable level of participation.

Another aspect that is important to take into account is the sensitivity of a project. Sensitive projects need more intensive participation, which has also been mentioned in trajectory I. Thus, important factors in designing a participation trajectory are the sensitivity of a project, earlier involvement and the influencing space, often shaped by power relations and responsibilities of the municipality to serve the public interest. These factors shape the context of the participation trajectory, which makes each of them unique and asks for a customized and flexible approach.

4.4 Trajectory III: Consistent high influence

In this chapter, trajectory III is described and the underlying arguments and considerations are discussed. Trajectory III is comparable to trajectory II in the sense that both trajectories show a more consistent and divided division of points in the first three to four phases in comparison to trajectory I. Trajectory III distinguishes itself from trajectory II by the higher levels of participation, with points foremost allocated to advising, dialogue, co-production and co-decision, see figure 13. Here the influence of citizens is thus bigger, especially in the decision making phase. This trajectory is based on the exercises of interviewees #6 and #8, see table 6 and appendix VI on page 101.

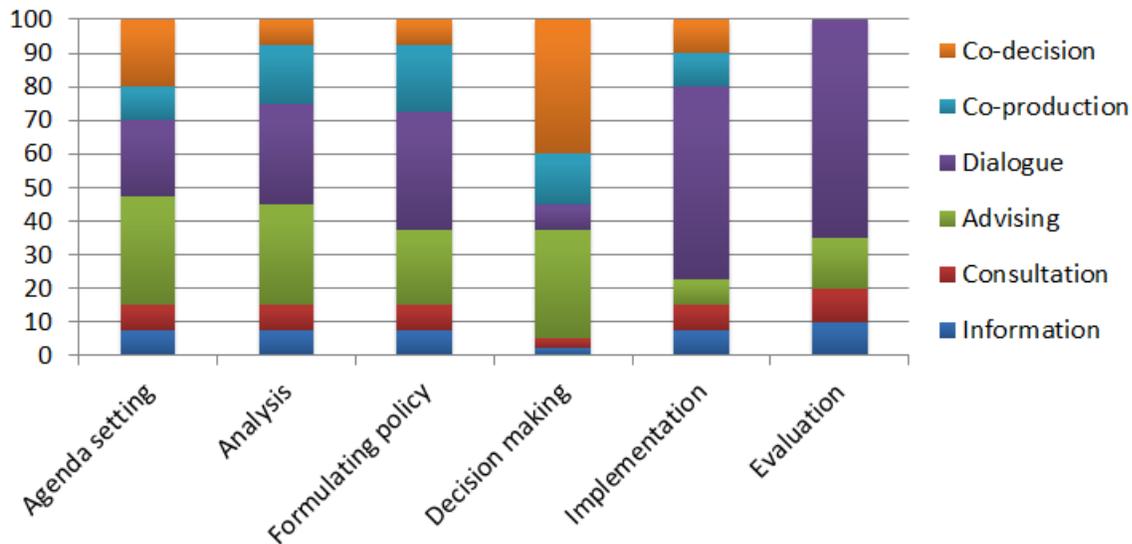


Figure 13; Average division of points of the interviewees following trajectory III: consistent high influence.

Table 6: Interviewees trajectory III: consistent high influence				
Number #	Date	Function	Field	Municipality
#6	10-06-2020	Strategic advisor	Participation	Utrecht
#8	10-06-2020	Senior Consultant	Civic Participation & sustainable energy	Consultant

Agenda setting phase

Interviewee #6, a strategic advisor for participation within spatial planning projects for the municipality of Utrecht, and interviewee #8, a senior consultant in civic participation and sustainable energy projects, are focused on higher levels of participation throughout the entire exercise. For the agenda setting phase, interviewee #6 argues that working together in setting the agenda results in understanding and a plan that is supported by the city. He furthermore says that he appreciates co-decision as well in this phase, but it depends on the project if co-decision is suitable, saying it might be complicated to implement this level in this phase. Interviewee #8 divided points over all levels because he says they are all important. However, he puts a little emphasis on co-production and co-decision, saying the following:

"I think the reason I give the top two the most points is because you really want to have support, that's why the top two have the word 'co' in it, so if they have cooperated in determining what the problem is, then of course you have won a lot. Then they internalize it. If citizens have co-defined the problem, you will of course benefit much more from that support than if they have advised on it, but are not sure whether that has been included." #8 (own translation)

This line of argumentation can be compared with the argumentation of interviewee #6, both appreciating higher levels of participation because of the social support of the plan.

Analysis phase

Interviewee #6 again explains that the context of the project is of importance here. He mentions that for a traffic circle for example it is no problem to use higher levels of participation. But for a mobility plan for the city it is more difficult, because citizens all think about their own living environment and their own interests.

"If it is a city-wide mobility plan, you have to be able to put aside your own interests, if you want to be able to give good advice or to be able to talk to each other about mobility throughout the city. But there are also projects, very small, in which you can do much more at a level of co-creation with residents. That is where self-interest plays a role, you can take that better into consideration. And what you do with, for example, a neighborhood park has little effect on the rest of the city." #6 (own translation)

So according to him the impact a project has on the living environment and the common interest play a role in deciding how much influence citizens should get. As mentioned in trajectory I as well, the impact of a project on one's living environment thus affects the level of participation. Interviewee #8 put more emphasis on advising and dialogue in this phase, because at this point decisions are not necessarily made. He thus relates the level of participation to how many decisions have to be made, which has been mentioned in trajectory II as well.

Formulating policy phase

In this phase, interviewee #8 considers advising and dialogue most important, because according to him it is important to give people the feeling they have a say. He furthermore says co-production and co-decision will come in a later phase. This is opposite to the argumentation of interviewee #6, who says the following:

"The responsibility issue does play a role here. It is important to take into account who should have the responsibility to ultimately decide on it, because the policy you formulate or the plan you make has yet to be determined. I experience in larger urban projects that the municipal council mostly decides. They have to weigh up all interests. Of course they make the decision in the decision-making, and for that decision they receive advice, and in that advice must weigh heavily what the people, what the stakeholder have said about that plan." #6 (own translation)

He thus argues that higher levels of participation are preferable in the this phase, because then the opinion of the stakeholders is incorporated in the advice given to the council, who can then decide in the decision making phase. Here again, it is put into words that the power relations in place affect the influencing space for citizens and therefore shape the participation trajectory.

Decision making phase

In this phase, interviewee #6 stresses the importance of the scale of the project again. For small scale projects which only impact a few citizens in a certain neighborhood, he would prefer co-decision. But for urban projects that effect bigger areas this is not possible, because the council decides. However, he can imagine that the council wants to inform herself on the opinion of the citizens and to do so advising would be appropriate in his opinion. Interviewee #8 has a different thought process and says the following about the decision making phase:

“As you move towards decision-making, co-production and co-decision become more important of course. Because information and consultation, how important is that in this phase? It should be clear by now, of course.” #8 (own translation)

This shows that all previous steps are important and affect the level of participation in this phase. Because citizens have participated in the previous phases, it is possible to spend less time on informing and collecting opinions, and more on co-production and co-decision. Participation thus does not exist of single moments, but should be seen as a trajectory alongside the spatial planning process, in which the different participatory activities and their level of participation affects other participatory moments and their level of participation.

4.4.1 Conclusion trajectory III

Trajectory III again illustrates differences in considerations and argumentations. In trajectory I it was mentioned that to create understanding and support, the participation trajectory should start with lower levels of participation and slowly increase. Even though interviewee #6 and #8 agree that it is important to create understanding and support, they actually think this should be done by using higher levels of participation. Here it is clearly visible that although the interviewees have the same goal, they prefer a different approach.

The impact a project has on ones living environment is also mentioned as a factor that affects the level of participation. Smaller projects that have a direct impact on the living environment of a few citizens are more suited for participation with higher levels of influence, whereas bigger projects with a less direct impact which effect a lot of citizens asks for lower levels of participation.

Furthermore, the power relations and earlier involvement as mentioned in trajectories I and II are also taken into consideration by the interviewees of trajectory III. So again, important factors in designing a participation trajectory are the expected impact of a project, the influencing space, understanding of the context and earlier involvement. These factor shape the context of the participation trajectory, which makes each of them unique and asks for a customized and flexible approach.

4.5 Implementation phase

Because the results of the implementation phase cannot be contained in any trajectory due to the large differences, this phase is reviewed separately in this chapter. In the beginning of the empirical analysis (4.1) it was already discussed that table 3 on page 45 and figure 9 on page 46 do not align for the implementation phase, in which co-production was mentioned more often than other levels of participation, but information actually received most points in this phase. In appendix VII on page 102 the results of all fifteen interviewees who did the exercise are presented per phase. When comparing the graphs, it is visible that the implementation phase is the only graph with two peaks, see also figure 14, whereas the other graphs all have one.

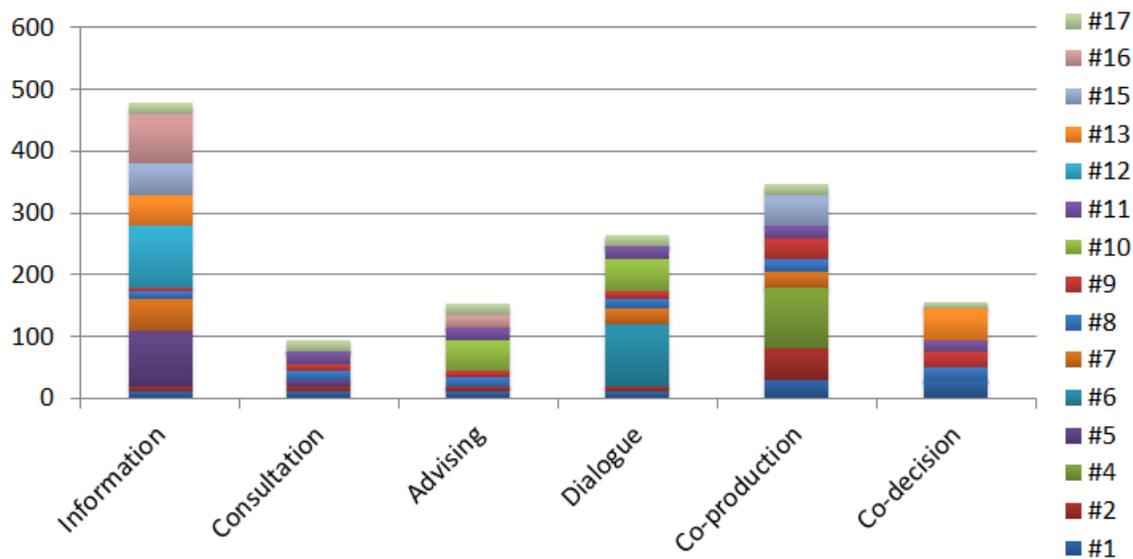


Figure 14; Overall results of the implementation phase.

In the span of this research it is not relevant to discuss all argumentations, because there are too many different opinions. The main point here is that the opinions of the planning professionals differ. However, regardless of the trajectories discussed before, two mentalities are visible in the implementation phase: information must always be provided, and, in addition, a number of the interviewees find it important to start the conversation.

In the implementation phase, a plan or policy that has been designed in the earlier phases of a spatial planning process is put into work. Even when the plan or policy was drawn up via a participatory process, not all citizens are aware of the developments. Interviewee #12 therefore considers it to be important to focus on providing information, because citizens who have not been involved in the process yet should be informed about the plans. Interviewee #16 says the following about the implementation phase:

“If you are implementing a plan and you just have the construction phase, then you are just dealing with technical work and things outside. There is not much you can say about it. We should leave that to the technicians and other professionals.” #16 (own translation)

In his opinion information is thus most suitable in this phase because of the expert knowledge necessary to implement the plan. He does however acknowledge that there should be room for citizens to voice their preferences on how the implementation is executed, which is also considered important by interviewee #6.

"I do think that there should be a good dialogue about how that implementation takes place and that you can make adjustments together when necessary." #6 (own translation)

Interviewee #5 agrees, saying information is most important, but there should also be room to listen to new insights of citizens by means of consultation. So only informing citizens might not be adequate in this phase. Some of the interviewees therefore divided points over all levels of participation, saying that it depends strongly on the project, process and decisions that still have to be made in this phase. Interviewee #11 therefore says:

"When you participate in an urban vision, I think you will reach other people and in a different way than when it concerns a certain housing complex with your own home in it. So I think you have to draw attention to that again and involve and invite other people in a different way. That also requires that you do not say: when do I participate, but why do I do it than, why am I doing it, what am I doing it about and what is the scope for influence?" #11 (own translation)

The timing of the level of participation is thus context dependent, in which the scale, direct impact on one's living environment and the influencing space are important factors that determine which level of participation is desirable and suitable in this and other phases of the planning process. Furthermore, in this phase it is important to reconsider the stakeholder group and which citizens need to be involved in this phase according to interviewee #11. However, interviewee #2 argues that earlier involvement throughout different phases on different levels allows you to use higher levels of participation in this phase. Opposite to this opinion, interviewee #13 actually sees earlier involvement as a reason to use lower levels of participation. He assumes that lower levels of participation can be used because the plan has already been thoroughly discussed before. This again shows that participation is subject to the opinions of the planning officials and that it should not be seen as a momentary activity, even in the implementation phase, but as a trajectory throughout the entire planning process.

4.6 Evaluation phase

For the implementation phase, most points have been allocated to dialogue, see the graph in figure 15. Four out of fifteen interviewees gave dialogue all hundred points and only two of them gave zero points to dialogue. This gives the impression that most interviewees see dialogue as a desirable level of participation when evaluating the project. However, it is called desirable here, because most interviewees mentioned that not all projects are evaluated and even less processes are evaluated. This is often because there is no time or budget reserved for the evaluation phase.

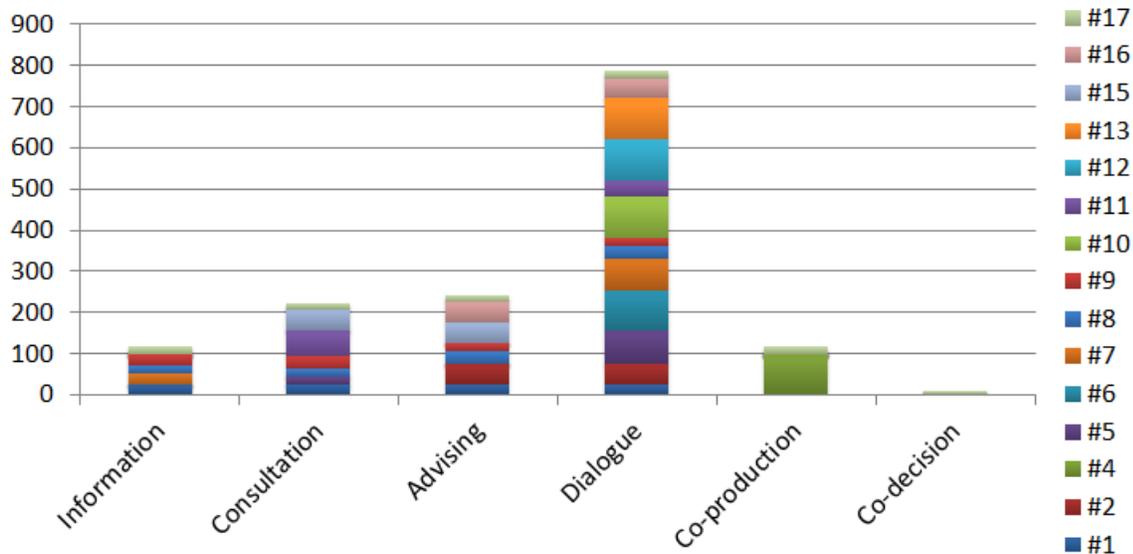


Figure 15; Overall results of the evaluation phase.

Overall, the interviewees say that for the evaluation it is important to have a conversation as equals, in which everybody is taking seriously. Interviewees think that the best way to find out how the citizens feel about the project and how they experienced it, is through dialogue. In the opinion of interviewee #17, you cannot take the influence of citizens away at this point in the process. If you have given them a high level of influence throughout the project, citizens should be involved in the evaluation in the same way. Interviewee #13 argues that citizens often find it difficult to let go of their frustration, which can influence the evaluation negatively. He says citizens have the right to be frustrated with the outcome of a project, but that should not be the ground for a bad evaluation of the process. He therefore thinks co-production or co-decision are less suitable in the evaluation phase because the objectivity of the evaluation cannot be guarded properly in these levels of influence. Interviewee #2 says it is important that a planning official should on beforehand think through what can be done with the results of the evaluation.

“You have to think in advance of what you have to offer. And if you have nothing to offer, you have to think about whether and how you involve citizens in the evaluation. It is always necessary to evaluate, but how you approach this towards citizens must be organized very carefully. But also state why you did not include that citizen in the evaluation if you involved them during the entire preliminary process.” #2 (own translation)

In her opinion, you should be able to do something with the input of the evaluation. Interviewee #11 says this is important as well, because it is difficult to make citizens willing to participate in the evaluation if you do not have something to offer. It is therefore also important that you can explain why it is meaningful for citizens to participate in the evaluation phase. She also mentions that for projects that went mostly flawless, consultation can be sufficient as well in her opinion. However, for projects that did not go smoothly or end well, dialogue is a better mean. According to interviewee #16 it is valuable to also invest time in evaluating projects that went well. In his opinion it is a missed opportunity that the evaluation is often skipped, because it is a good opportunity to learn and it provides knowledge on how to deal with participation in future projects.

4.7 Timing the level of citizen participation with an eye on the pitfalls

In the literature review it has been discussed that although citizen participation is deemed important in spatial planning, some pitfalls which prejudice participation and the planning process need to be taken into consideration when implementing participation. It is of interest to know how planning officials deal with these pitfalls. In the following paragraph, it is discussed whether the level of participation is affected by who participates. Thereafter, the participation paradox is discussed in the eye of the interviewees.

4.7.1 (Un)balanced representation of citizens

In the literature review, it is discussed that the representativeness of the citizens who particularly participate in spatial planning processes is often questionable. To get a better understanding of how planning officials take this into account when implementing participation and deciding on the level of influence, they were asked if the representativeness of the participating citizens affects the amount of influence they would give to the citizens. Interviewee #1 and interviewee #3 both think the representativeness indeed should be taken into account when determining the amount of influence citizens get. A planning official should be aware of the validity of the participatory process, which interviewee #5 and #11 also mention.

“You also need to have people who actually live in the area. Because the moment you live in street A and you are going to make decisions about street B or C, that doesn't work either. Then you ultimately have no support. So that is also important, that you have a good representation of the citizens from the area.” #5 (own translation)

Interviewee #2 agrees, saying that a stakeholder analysis should be done on forehand and criteria for the representation can be made to ensure the validity. She also says that citizens need to feel represented by those participating, otherwise the participation loses its value. However, she experiences that it is difficult to form a representative group of participants.

Even though some interviewees think the representativeness should affect the amount of influence, they hesitate to state that in practice it actually does. Most of the interviewees do not directly answer the question, but express the importance of putting an effort in involving different type of citizens and making sure all citizens have the possibility to participate. Based on a stakeholder analysis, the forms of participation can be adjusted to the types of citizens in an area, according to interviewees #4 and #18. Some citizens are creative and want to think along at the beginning of the process, some are more practical and want to think along at the end of the process. Despite using different forms of participation, it still remains difficult to get a representative group of participants. Interviewee #5 and #17 therefore say that the amount of influence does not have to be adjusted to the representativeness of the participating citizens, because you often will not get a representative group. When initiating a participation activity, some level of influence is promised, and you cannot change that accordingly to the citizens present. Interviewee #6 says you never get a truly representative group of participants, so he prefers to have ‘the whole system in the room’. This means that in his opinion it is more important to

have all different kind of views and opinions be represented, instead of an accurate reflection of the population. Opposite to other interviewees, he thus does not strive to give everybody the opportunity to participate, but instead he strives to incorporate every opinion in the participation. This way, everybody can feel represented. He furthermore mentions that a single step in the participation trajectory is never truly representative, but throughout the process this can still be accomplished. Interviewee #17 agrees, saying that when the participating citizens do not form a good representation of the neighborhood, it is important to validate the outcome of the participation activity among other residents as well.

Interviewee #9 says the representativeness of the participating citizens is more important in phases in which decisions are being made.

“When you move towards choices, it also becomes more important to reach that broad table. Because then there is the most to choose. ... I don't think you should fall into the trap of saying that at least 20 percent of the residents must have participated. I think you have the representative democracy for that, to ensure that you can make responsible decisions. And when it comes to participation, it is mainly about showing that you have made a serious effort to reach as many target groups as possible. And I think you should eventually show that to the municipal council when they make the decision.” #9 (own translation)

Hence, the council should be informed about the participation trajectory and who have participated. This enables her to decide how she will take the input of the participation trajectory into consideration. Furthermore, interviewee #1, #9 and #10 mention that in the representative democracy of the Netherlands the council represents the opinions of the citizens. This makes it questionable if a lot of influence should be given to citizens by means of participation, since their opinions should already be represented.

Interviewee #12 argues that if the representativeness of the participating citizens is low, the value of participation is also nil and makes it easier for the council to dismiss the input. In conclusion, it is not explicitly stated that the representatives of the participating citizens affects the level of influence provided by the planning officials, but planning officials strive to get a representative group of participants, and the representativeness can eventually affect the influence of citizens in the decisions the council makes.

4.7.2 Considerations in the paradox of the first participatory moment

As discussed in the literature review (chapter 2.2), there is a paradox in the timing of the first participatory moment in a planning process. Therefore, the interviewees were asked when they think participation should first be implemented in a project and how they decide when this moment should occur. Interviewees mentioned they want to involve citizens early in the process. According to interviewee #11, early participation is also mandatory in the new Dutch Environment and Planning Act. But when asked what the interviewees precisely mean with early, they acknowledge it is difficult to say and they struggle with this in everyday practices themselves.

Interviewee #1 mentions that citizens want a clear story and get to a concrete proposal in a fast pace, but this is not always possible. And to get to that clear story, you actually need to involve the citizens. If

the citizens are not involved early on, interviewee #4 experiences as well that they are disappointed that they are not involved.. Therefore, you want them to participate, but it is difficult for them to see how their input is used, especially in complex or long-term projects. Clear communication about what is realistic to expect and when citizens can participate or how they can stay involved is thus necessary. Therefore, it has to be considered who should be involved when in the different phases of the process.

On this topic, interviewee #4 believes that the moment you talk about citizens, they should be involved. If they are not involved, one cannot make agreements with them or know what expectations they have. Interviewee #2 wants to invite citizens as early as possible as well. Even if there are still a lot of insecurities or unknowns, they should be informed about them in her opinion. She also considers how participation in this early stage can contribute to the purpose of participation in the project. She furthermore argues that inviting citizens or providing the opportunity to participate does not mean they have to participate, but it provides them the opportunity to be involved in this early stage.

Interviewee #5 also thinks it is important to let citizens participate as early as possible to create support. He prefers to invite them when there is nothing on paper yet, and let them think along. However, to be able to do so, there have to be clear preconditions and rules, because ultimately the council decides and some preconditions cannot be ignored. According to interviewee #5 and #6, citizens often think that when they participate, they will get their way. But this is unrealistic since there are other interests that have to be taken into account as well. So here again expectation management is very important.

Although most interviewees prefer early participation, there can be considerations to postpone participation. For example, a consideration can be the responsibility to serve the public interest. In the opinion of interviewee #9 this can be a reason to prepare a piece of the analysis before involving citizens. For interviewee #10 and #13, it is important that the continuity of a project is certain, as far as you can estimate, before starting participation, otherwise you can only cause unrest. Another factor that can be taken into account according to interviewee #1 and #16 is the impact a project is expected to have on the living environment of citizens. When interviewee #16 expects a project to have a negative impact, he finds it important to participate in an early stage and invest more time in the early phases of a project. Whereas for projects that he expects to have a positive impact on ones living environment, he thinks you need less time to participate. Interviewee #7 argues that the influencing space is a factor that has to be considered when deciding to first participate. If there is no room for influence for citizens, in her opinion, there is also no use to participate. Interviewee #16 mentions the influencing space as well, saying that when there is a lot of different directions to choose from, it is desirable to participate early on in the process. So before inviting citizens to participate, it has to be clear what influence they can get.

In conclusion, some factors can be distinguished that planning officials take into consideration in deciding when the participation should first be implemented. One criteria can be that when citizens are mentioned in the plan, they should be involved. Other factors are the influencing space, the responsibility to serve the public interest, the expected impact of the project and whether or not there is some sort of certainty that the development will take place. It is furthermore of importance to manage the expectations of the participating citizens and provide frameworks for the participation trajectory. In the end, interviewee #17 sometimes feels that in the opinion of the citizens you will never

do it right anyways, so the best thing you can do is to make a conscious choice with regard to the timing. A choice you can explain and defend to the outside world.

4.7.3 Power relations limiting higher levels of participation

In the participation trajectories defined in chapter 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, it is notable that higher levels of participation, and in particular co-decision, are often seen as less suitable by the planning officials. This explains why Leyenaar (2009) stated that co-decision almost never occurs in the Netherlands. In this paragraph it is discussed why planning officials find co-decision less suitable.

Interviewee #11 mentions that the democratic system in the Netherlands does not always offer the opportunity to let citizens co-decide. Interviewee #4 agrees and elaborates:

“Because the political administrative system does not allow it. And because when you talk to the municipality, you can appoint someone to handle it, or even several people. When you talk to citizens, it becomes very difficult to identify a party that you can address. Apart from the fact that as a citizen you wouldn't want it either I think. And in fact, the function of, for example, the alderman or a municipal council implies that they actually have to weigh up those interests.” #4 (own translation)

He thus thinks co-decision does not fit the political administrative system in the Netherlands and that it is not desirable to let citizens co-decide, because of the responsibility issue. Furthermore, as mentioned by interviewee #6, #9 and #13, the authorities have the responsibility to serve the public interest and therefore take all interests of different kind of stakeholders into account, basing their decisions on what is good for the entire city, whereas citizens mostly base their decision predominantly on their own interests. This makes it less desirable to participate on a level of co-decision.

Furthermore, the complexity and scale of a spatial planning project are mentioned as a reason why co-decision is difficult to achieve in spatial planning projects. On a bigger scale, it can become so complex that it is not desirable to let citizens co-decide in the opinion of interviewee #7. Budget can also be a factor that can affect whether or not it is possible to let citizens co-decide, which has been mentioned by interviewees #4, #5, #7, #11 and #18. Especially when the budget for the project comes from the authorities and is thus community money destined for all citizens, not only those who participate. Interviewee #6 however, says the following, in the context of a smaller scale planning project:

“As soon as municipal money goes to a project, no matter how small it is, the council must decide on that. But then you can implement the co-decision in such a way that the council decides what the residents have proposed.” #6 (own translation)

This again shows that planning officials think differently on how citizen participation can be implemented in the planning process and how much influence citizens can or should have, even in the eye of power relations and public responsibility. However, most interviewees see power relations and serving the public responsibility as reasons not to implement higher levels of participation.



5. Conclusion

5. Conclusion

Citizen participation provides citizens influence in a planning project, but the amount of influence is not always the same. In the literature review (chapter 2), different levels of participation have been discussed (2.3.2), which correspond with the amount of influence citizens get in a planning project. Furthermore, six phases in the planning process were distinguished: agenda setting, analysis, formulating policy, decision making, implementation and evaluation (2.4.1). The level of participation can be different for each phase in a planning process. To contribute to a better understanding of the timing and the level of citizen participation, this research focuses on *how planning officials decide about timing the level of citizen participation in a participatory planning process*. In this research, the focus was on top-down citizen participation in which the municipality invites citizens to participate. The results of this research (chapter 4) were obtained by interviewing eighteen planning officials (see chapter 3). In this concluding chapter the research questions will be answered based on these empirical results and a discussion of the literature. In 5.5 the main research question is answered. Thereafter recommendations for participatory planning practices follow in chapter 5.6. In the end, this research is reviewed and placed in the context of present-day planning practices in chapter 6.

5.1 In which phase do planning officials apply which level of participation?

First of all, throughout the interviews it became clear that participation in a spatial planning project does not exist of single moments, but can be seen as a participation trajectory alongside and connected to the process of a spatial planning project. When deciding which level of participation is suitable in a certain phase, the interviewees often referred to how they would have involved citizens in the phases before, and how they think citizens can be involved in upcoming phases. This is also visible in the results of the exercises, which are added in appendix III on page 90. Three main trajectories have been distinguished by analyzing the results: trajectory I: increasing influence, trajectory II: consistent average influence, trajectory III: consistent high influence, see figure 16.

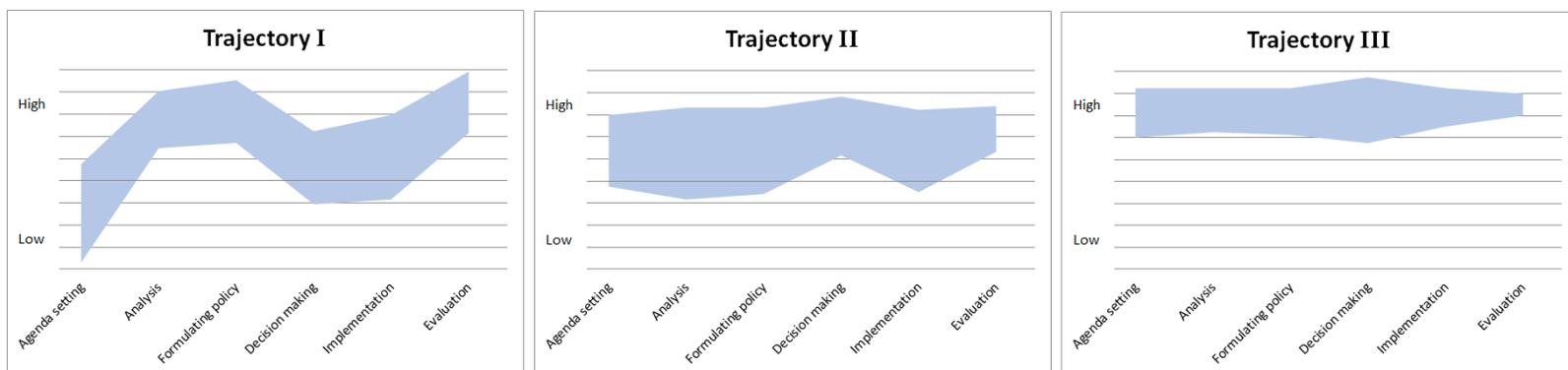


Figure 16; Influence per phase in trajectory I, trajectory II and trajectory III.

These graphs show the amount of influence the interviewees in each trajectory combined deemed desirable in the different phases. When the complete area is low (such as for agenda setting in trajectory I), the main focus lays on lower levels of participation. Furthermore, the vertical bandwidth of the area shows to what extent the interviewees appreciate multiple levels equally; when the areas' vertical bandwidth is wide, the interviewees allocate points equally to multiple levels of participation in the same phases.

Trajectory I was the most occurring trajectory and shows an increase in influence for citizens throughout the first three to four phases in a spatial planning project. In the agenda setting and analysis phase, the interviewees mostly emphasize the creation of understanding and social support, an instrumental rational (Delgado et al., 2011; van de Grift et al., 2020). To reach this goal, lower levels of participation are deemed adequate. In the following phases, formulating policy and decision making, is the focus lays more on the input, lay knowledge and real influence, a substantive and normative rational, for which higher levels of participation are deemed desirable. By most of the interviewees in trajectory I, the formulating policy phase is seen as the last phase in which the citizens can actually have an influence. Therefore, higher levels of participation are appreciated most in the formulating policy phase. Thereafter, the council has the decision power, as enacted by the Dutch representative democracy. Hence, lower levels of participation are deemed possible in the decision making phase. Nevertheless, a personal difference in opinions is visible as well, which in practice shapes the planning processes. Some disagree on lowering the level of influence in the decision making phase. According to them, higher levels of participation are desirable especially when decisions are being made: you want the citizens to agree with these decisions, thus involve them as much as possible. However, this can only be done when they have been involved in the earlier phases as well, for which they show an increase in influence and therefore have been included in trajectory I.

Trajectory II and III show a more consistent influence for citizens throughout the different phases in a spatial planning project in which almost all levels are appreciated. This represents that participation in spatial planning projects should always be customized to the project and its context. It is therefore important to be flexible and rethink the level of participation in each phase of the project. The two trajectories differ from each other on the highest levels of participation. The interviewees of trajectory II view the highest levels of participation less suitable due to the power relations between the council, planning officials and the citizens, whereas the interviewees in trajectory III believe higher levels of participation are important to empower citizens within these power relations. Nevertheless, both trajectories are based on the same basic principle, being customized participation trajectories in which the level of participation depends on the context. Even though in all three trajectories creating understanding and support is mentioned to be important in the first phases as well, the interviewees in trajectories II and III believe this should be done by using average or higher levels of participation. Here, deliberation is seen as a way to increase understanding and support by transformative learning (van Hulst et al., 2011; Sprain, 2016), whereas in trajectory I information and explanation through lower levels of participation are deemed adequate to strive for this instrumental rational. In practice, the level of participation is thus subjected to the personal views of the planning officials.

5.2 What considerations do planning officials make regarding timing the level of citizen participation?

The interviews conducted provided an insight into the considerations planning officials make regarding citizen participation. It is notable that in their considerations planning officials often referred to what they considered to be valuable in citizen participation, showing that they do not see participation as something that simply is part of contemporary planning practice, but they value deliberation. This is in line with how scholars like Healey (1992, 1996, 2003) and Forester (1999) framed collaborative planning as an ideal type for good planning.

At the end of the theoretical frame the deliberative practitioner (Forester, 1999) was introduced, describing practitioners who value learning through deliberation and argumentation to incorporate sociopolitical aspects in order to come to successful spatial planning processes (van Hulst et al., 2011; Sprain, 2016). Although research of van de Grift et al. (2020) shows that the danger is lurking that participation becomes only an requirement for planning officials, especially with participation becoming mandatory in the upcoming Dutch Environment and Planning Act (Boeve & Groothuijse, 2020; Dieperink et al., 2016), the considerations and argumentations of the interviewees show that they still value deliberation in (some phases of) the spatial planning process. Therefore it can be said that the deliberative practitioner still exists.

The interviewees often stressed that participation trajectories in spatial planning projects need to be customized, because the context of these projects are always unique. However, it can also be concluded that personal opinions of the planning officials shape the participation trajectory as well. Although they often mentioned the same context related factor in their argumentation, the reasoning frequently led to a different level of participation. As discussed in chapters 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, one notable consideration that kept reoccurring was, the amount of influence citizens were provided in previous phases or could be provided in upcoming phases affects the level of participation that planning officials deem valuable or suitable in a certain phase, resulting in the trajectories distinguished.

5.3 Which factors do the planning officials take into account while forming a participatory planning process?

During the interviews some factors, like impact, influencing space, earlier involvement and power relations, kept reoccurring in the considerations planning officials made to decide which level of participation they appreciated most in each phase. Most of these factors also occurred in the literature review (chapter 2.1.2 to 2.3.3), but are now linked to the level of participation in the following paragraphs, including an elaboration on how planning officials take these factors into account while forming a participatory planning process.

Limited levels of influence by power relations and public responsibility

Throughout the interviews, it was frequently mentioned that the amount of influence citizens can have on a project is often limited. This is due to the decision making power of the council or the aldermen, as enacted by the democratic bureaucracy in the Netherlands. In addition, planning officials have the responsibility to serve the public interest, whereas citizens are often concerned with their own interest. Therefore, the level of co-production and particularly co-decision did not receive a lot of predilection by the interviewees, which explains why these levels occur less in practice, as stated by Leyenaar (2009). Planning officials believe it is their responsibility to guard the initial purpose of a planning project and to make sure that the plan presented to the council is valid and meet the guidelines of the municipality. This also limits the influence planning officials are willing to give to the citizens.

Impact & scale; more direct effect means more influence

Another factor which frequently has been mentioned to affect the level of participation is the expected impact of a project on the living environment of the citizens. Projects with a small and indirect impact on one's direct living environment of many citizens are often considered less suitable for higher levels of participation compared to projects with a big impact on the direct living environment of a few. This can be explained by the amount of interests that have to be taken into account and the amount of limitations for possible solutions. Complex, large-scale, urban projects often provide less possibilities for citizens to influence the process or outcomes (Sprain, 2016). It is therefore important to determine who will be affected by the project and how big the impact will be. This is often inherent to the scale. Furthermore, a more intensive participation trajectory is considered to be needed for projects which are expected to have a negative effect on one's living environment. More time has to be spent on participation, especially in the early phases of a planning process, to create understanding and incorporate the values of the citizens, which is intended to result in less resistance. Planning officials thus assess the expected impact in order to shape the participation trajectory.

Participants (under)represent citizens

When seeking for participants who represent the citizens correctly, one is faced with two challenges. The first challenge is the difficulty of who will be affected by a spatial planning project and should therefore be considered a stakeholder (Pettersson et al., 2017; Sprain, 2016). Especially for citizen participation, it is important to analyze who to consider a stakeholder. The second challenge is to form the group of participants without the under- and over-representation of certain citizens (Soneryd &

Lindh, 2019). Because of these two challenges, planning officials often have to work with a less representative group of citizens.

The interviewees were asked whether or not they would adjust the level of influence when the participants do not form a complete representation of the affected citizens. However, the interviewees were hesitant to answer this question, often saying that the municipality has an obligation to make an effort to get a representative group of citizens. According to them, this should be done by means of facilitating various forms and moments of participation during the process. This way, more diversity in the group of participating citizens can be accomplished throughout the planning process, which together can form a representative group of participants. That is why citizen participation should be seen as a trajectory that is linked to the process of a project, instead of a stand-alone activity to advance the project. Overall, it is not explicitly stated that the representatives of the participating citizens affects the level of influence provided by the planning officials, but that planning officials strive to get a representative group of participants. However, the representativeness can affect how serious the council the input of participation takes and thereby eventually affect the influence of citizens. Furthermore, all citizens are represented by the council in the Dutch representative democracy, which should be taken into account when providing influence to the participants in order to avoid exclusion or disempowerment of non-participating citizens (Cornwall, 2002; Ganuza et al., 2016; Pettersson et al., 2017; Soneryd & Lindh, 2019), which has also been mentioned by some of the interviewees. However, this line of reasoning stresses even more that planning officials have the responsibility to validate the participatory planning process by striving to and monitor the representativeness of the participants.

Factors related to understanding of the context & earlier involvement

Some other factors that can be deduced from the interviews are the understanding of the context, earlier involvement and insecurities and uncertainties within the project. These are all factors that the planning officials take into consideration when deciding upon the level of participation throughout the different phases in a spatial planning projects. In the beginning of a project, it is deemed to be important that citizens get familiar with the context of the project and a mutual understanding of the purpose and context of the project is established. Some therefore believe higher levels of participation are desirable to achieve this mutual understanding. Others however prefer lower levels of participation in the first phases, to exchange information and knowledge. When the process progresses, higher levels of participation become more appropriate now that the context is understated and more decisions are being made. Here thus, earlier involvement affects the level of participation planning officials find suitable. This also works the other way around, by saying that less influence is needed in the decision making or implementation phase because the citizens have been profoundly been involved in formulating the policy or plan throughout earlier phases. The earlier involvement and understanding of the context thus affect the level of participation that planning officials consider in the different phases of a planning process. The factors regarding the insecurities and uncertainties within a project have most often been mentioned in relation to the first phases of a planning project, in which the participation paradox occurs. These factors will further be discussed in the following paragraph.

5.4 How do planning officials deal with the participation paradox?

As discussed in the literature review (chapter 2.2), there is a paradox in the timing of citizen participation. In the beginning of a process, there can be insecurities. This makes it difficult how to involve citizens. Citizens often ask questions which cannot be answered yet, or they feel that they cannot contribute. But when citizens are not involved early on, they feel left out and there is less support for the choices that have been made (Mouter et al., 2020). To get a better understanding of how planning officials deal with this paradox, they were asked when they think participation should first be implemented in a project and how they decide when this moment should be. Most interviewees mentioned they want to involve citizens early on in the process. But when asked what the interviewees precisely mean with early, they acknowledged it is difficult to say and that they struggle with this in everyday practices themselves. In conclusion, it can best be described as *as early as possible*, unless there are considerations to postpone.

One of these considerations can be the expected impact of the project. Especially projects that are expected to have a negative impact on the living environment of citizens are considered to need more investment in early participation. Furthermore, it is important that a project is certain of continuation, to avoid unnecessary unrest. Insecurities however are not seen as a reason to postpone, but as a reason to involve citizens. Via participation they become aware of the insecurities the municipality is dealing with and more support for the decisions in the early phase can be brought out.

One last topic was often mentioned; is the importance of managing the expectations of the participating citizens and provide frameworks for the participation trajectory. So before inviting citizens to participate, it has to be clear what influence they can have. This would also provide more clarity for the citizens on how they can make a contribution in the early phases of a project.

5.5 Concluding answer to the main research question:

How do planning officials decide about timing the level of citizen participation in a participatory planning process?

Although citizen participation is perceived as a necessary supplement in policy- and decision-making and has become a guiding principle in spatial planning processes (Castell, 2016; Collins & Ison, 2009; Delgado et al., 2011; Pettersson et al., 2017; Soneryd & Lindh, 2019) and therefore carries the risk of becoming a necessary burden for planning officials, the interviewees are still intrinsically motivated to implement citizen participation and believe in its value. Though introduced 20 years ago (Forester, 1999) and criticized by several authors (e.g. Allmendinger & Tewdwr-jones (2010) and Collingwood & Reedy (2012)), this study confirms that the deliberative practitioner still exists. The considerations and argumentations of the interviewees show that they still value deliberation as a way to increase understanding and support by transformative learning (Sprain, 2016; van Hulst et al., 2011).

The reasoning on why and how participation should be done differs, based on personal experiences and ethics. Some planning officials mentioned more substantive reasons to involve residents, like improving the plan or policy by incorporating local knowledge, while others consider more instrumental reasons, like increasing the support for a plan (Delgado et al., 2011; van de Grift et al., 2020). Even when planning officials with the same conviction strive for the same goal when implementing citizen participation, opinions differ about the level of participation that is adequate to achieve the rational. In the considerations of the interviewees, often the same factors are considered, such as earlier involvement, decision making power of the council, responsibility to serve the public interest and impact on citizens living environment. However, some of these factors clearly guide to specific levels of participation, while other factors lead to divergent participation levels, dependent on the interviewee. It is therefore not possible to establish unambiguously how officials decide about timing the level of citizen participation in a participatory planning process, because the context of the project and personal preferences and reasoning predominate in the decisions they take. Yet, three main trajectories have been distinguished, that set out the main underlying mentalities towards timing the level of participation in a spatial planning process of the planning officials, interviewed in this research. Nevertheless, also in these trajectories micro variations were visible, that can be explained by the personal views and experiences of the interviewees. In conclusion, the answering of the main research question can be formulated as follows:

How do planning officials decide about timing the level of citizen participation in a participatory planning process?

It remains difficult to provide guidance for the level of participation per phase, due to the context dependency and personal view of the research units. Nevertheless, it has been induced that participation should not be seen as separate moments, but as a trajectory that mutually influences which level of participation is appropriate in each phase of the spatial planning process. Furthermore, although each planning official has its own experience and ethics, three main trajectories can be distinguished: Trajectory I in which the level of participation is increased during the first three to four phases of a planning process; trajectory II in which average levels of participation are appreciated and

the level of participation is adjusted to the context; and Trajectory III in which higher levels of participation are appreciated most if the context allows it.

5.6 Recommendations

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for future practice. Because citizen participation is context dependent and shaped by the personal views of planning officials, it is advised that planning officials on forehand carefully consider how they are going to shape the participation trajectory throughout the different phases in the planning process. Therefore, it should be considered why citizen participation is necessary, who is affected and should therefore be involved, what the impact of the project will be and how much influence can be given to citizens in each phase. The initial design of the participation trajectory should be revised in every phase of the process, because the context can change during the process and new insights or sounds from society might change who and how citizens should be involved.

One problem that occurs when implementing citizen participation, is the participants often not being representative for the residents of the project area. To increase the representativeness of the participating citizens throughout the participatory process, different types of participatory activities can be organized. This way, different types of citizens can be attracted to participate. The participatory activities can be adapted to the characteristics of the affected citizens. For example, some citizens are creative and want to think along at the beginning of the process, when there is more freedom, while others are more practical and want to think along at the end of the process, when the aim is more clear.

Most importantly however, is to communicate the participation trajectory with the citizens and how much influence they have, to manage their expectations. To make sure the council can properly decide whether or not they take the input of the participating citizens into consideration in their decision, planning officials can involve the council in the participation trajectory or at least inform them on how citizens have been involved. Another possibility is to let the council on forehand agree with a framework for the participation trajectory. This way the expectations of the council can be managed as well and the participation trajectory and its input will not be subject to discussion.

In conclusion, this research shows that it is not desirable, perhaps not even possible, to create one clear participation trajectory for all projects. Each project is unique and therefore participation is embedded differently in each project. However, a better understanding of the timing of citizen participation and its level in each phase can contribute to better planning practices. This is further elaborated on in the discussion.



6. Discussion

6. Discussion

In this final chapter, I review my findings and stress the importance of increasing the knowledge on how participatory planning processes are shaped within contemporary and future planning practices, especially in the light of the upcoming Dutch Environment and Planning Act.

Despite the fact that experience has been gained with participatory planning processes since the collaborative turn in planning theory, planning officials still struggle with the timing of participation. Especially the participation paradox remains a daily struggle. Planning officials find it difficult to decide when to first involve citizens in a planning project. When asking planning officials how they would prefer to involve citizens throughout a planning process, three main mentalities can be distinguished. The first one can be described as a participatory trajectory in which the influence of citizens increases throughout the first three or four phases of a planning process. It seems that first an understanding of the context and a relation with the citizens has to be established, after which more attention is given to actual input. The second mentality resembles a more consistent average influence for citizens throughout the planning process, which is mainly based on the context specificity of spatial planning projects. However higher levels of participation are deemed less suitable, due to the power relations in place. In the third trajectory, higher levels of participation are believed to empower citizens within these power relations and are therefore deemed desirable, if the context allows it.

How participation is organized in the beginning of a spatial planning process (who, when, how much influence) affects what the rest of the participation process will look like, what still needs or can be done for participation. A bad start in the participation process, for example by making too little time available for it, not giving enough influence, giving too much influence or not having a representative group of participants, can result in having to put a lot of time in the participation trajectory towards the end of the process to create support or a good plan. That is why one has to think carefully about the participation trajectory in the context of the project in advance, but has to remain flexible so that one can respond to the needs of citizens or the council.

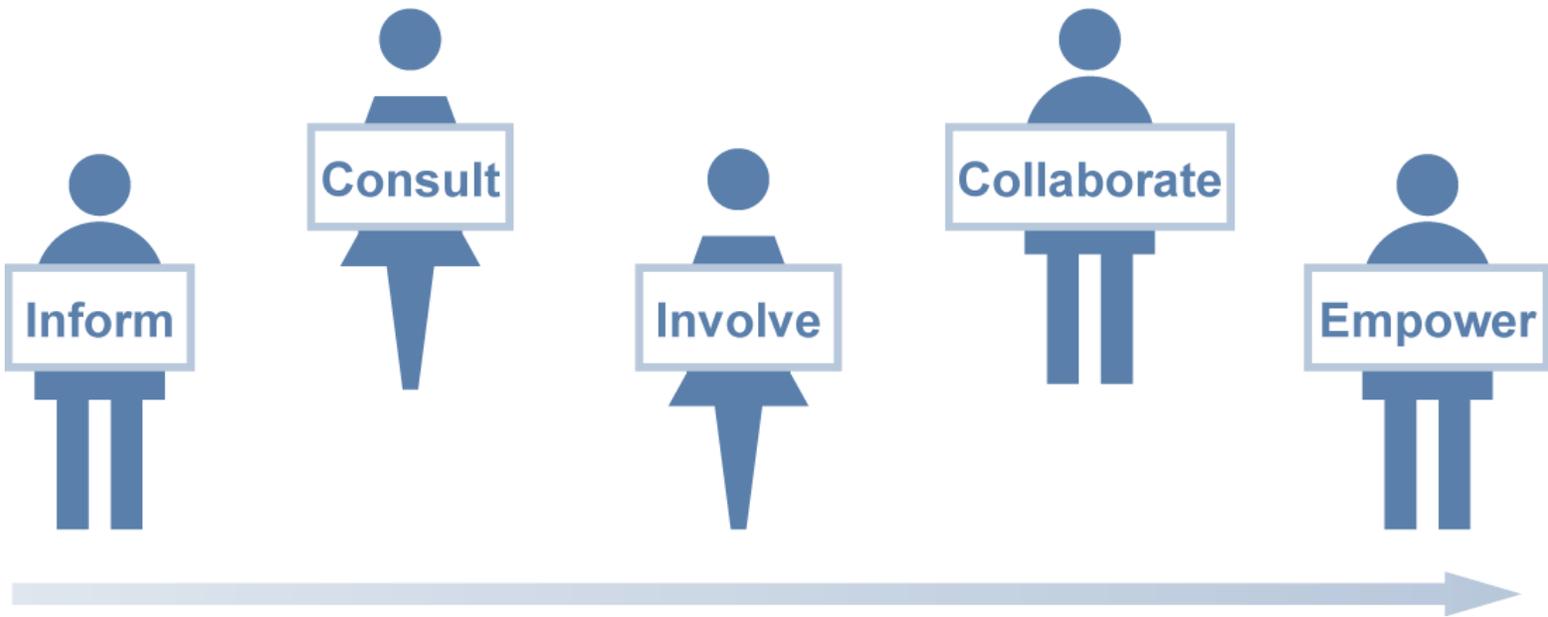
Even though there are spatial planning projects which always occur, such as area development or creating a mobility plan for the city, the context of these projects keep changing. Nowadays lot of attention for example is given to sustainability, circularity and the one-and-a-half-meter society due to the Covid-19 virus. Because strategic decision-making processes are complex and dynamic, oversimplifications have to be avoided (McDaniel & Ashmos, 1996). It is therefore difficult to deduct a framework for participation from the experiences of the planning officials. However, with the new Environment and Planning Act being implemented in the Netherlands in 2021, citizen participation in spatial planning projects becomes mandatory. Since there are still so much insecurities among the planning officials concerning citizen participation, I am wondering how they are going to deal with this requirement of the new planning act. In this research, I tried to deduct the considerations into basic factors which can be taken into consideration when designing a participation trajectory. However I do not want to copy context specific knowledge, because the context keeps changing. So how can we properly deduct useful insights that help planning officials shape their participation trajectory? This is a question that in my opinion needs more attention, especially with the new Dutch Environment and

Planning Act. So therefore it might be wise to step into the post-collaborative era as described by Castell (2016), in which the potential of participation is still celebrated and utilized, but with a critical look at the level of influence, conditions, forms and outcomes of participatory processes in relation to their context.

In conclusion, this research shows that it is not desirable, perhaps not even possible, to create one clear participation trajectory for all projects. Each planning official and the project they work on are unique and therefore participation is embedded differently in each project. However, a checklist with factors to take into account, can help planning officials improve the participatory planning process and prevent important factors to be overseen, such as who is affected and should therefore be involved, what the impact of the project will be and how much influence can be given to citizens in each phase. This checklist however exceeds the scope of this research and should be further investigated in the future.

Often the interviewees have find it difficult to discuss citizen participation without a given context. To deepen this research, a close-up on different scales of spatial planning would be interesting. Focusing on either large scale complex spatial planning projects with widespread impact for citizens or small scale standard spatial planning projects with local impact for citizens (street or neighborhood level), would contribute to the insights of this research by providing scale specific rationales. In case such an in-depth follow-up research is done, it would be wise to adjust the phases in the policy cycle to that specific context. Furthermore, it would be of interest to ask citizens when and how they want to be involved in spatial planning projects. Now we have seen the views of planning professionals on the timing and level of citizen participation with all their experiences, but the subject is still inviting citizens to participate. So it would be of value to ask them at which moment in the process they consider their input to be valuable and how they want to be involved. This can then be compared to outcomes of this research to improve the timing of citizen participation in planning processes and the relations between authorities and citizens within those projects. Besides theoretical or practical guidelines, I believe proper evaluations on the participation trajectory would improve the knowledge of planning officials on how to deal with citizen participation, it's timing and the level of influence they give to citizens throughout the planning process. They would be able to learn more from their experiences when given time to profoundly evaluate the participatory process.

I am curious to see how citizen participation in spatial planning projects will evolve in the coming years. The Covid-19 virus has created a new online society and pushed citizen participation into online settings, changing the way participatory planning processes are shaped. In addition, the upcoming Dutch Environmental Act is foreseen to increase the participatory activities in spatial planning. Together these proceedings mean a shift for citizen participation into a new and exciting era.



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Pictures

Front picture: By Patrick Mariru
<https://ilakenya.org/what-about-public-participation-where-are-we/>

Introduction: By Luis Quintero
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Appendix I - Interview questions English

Explanation research: invited citizen participation

Introducing the interviewee

- What is your job description?
- What do you think is the value of citizen participation?
 - What are reasons for you to implement participation in a spatial planning process?

General questions

- How do you determine at which moment participation is needed?
 - What considerations do you make in this regard?
 - What are criteria for timing?
- How much influence do you think citizens should have in a planning project?
 - What are criteria for the degree of influence that citizens have?

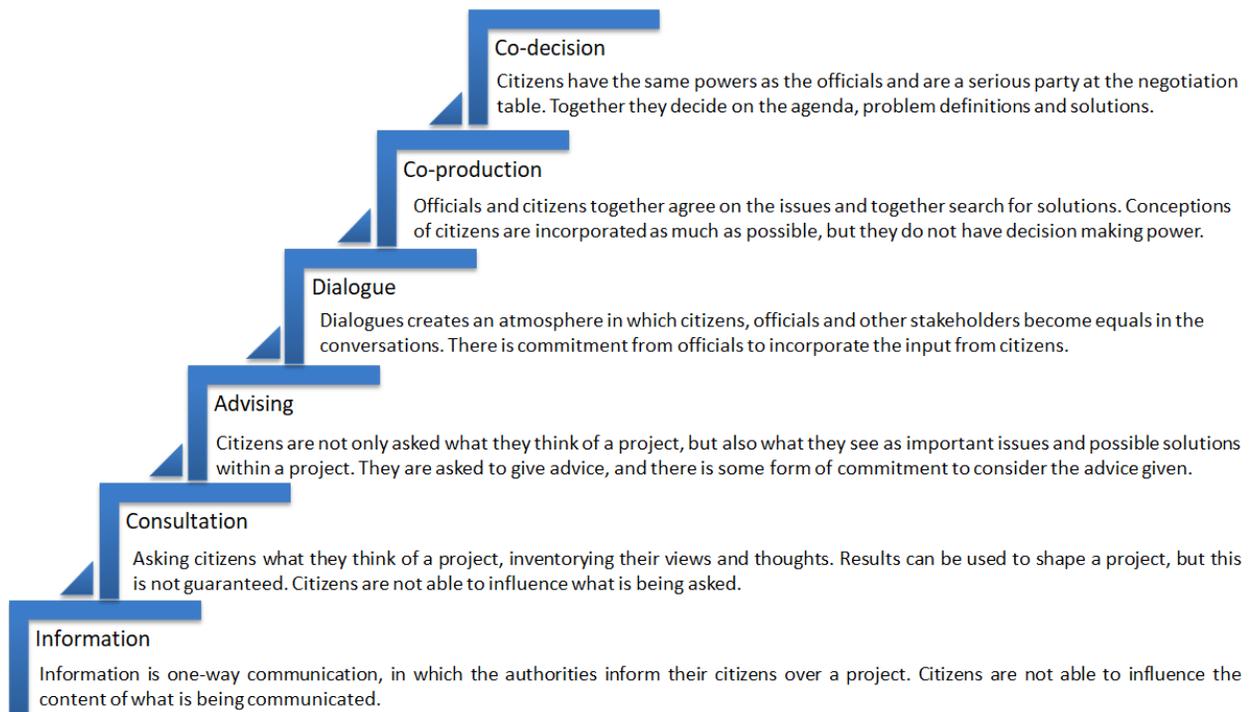
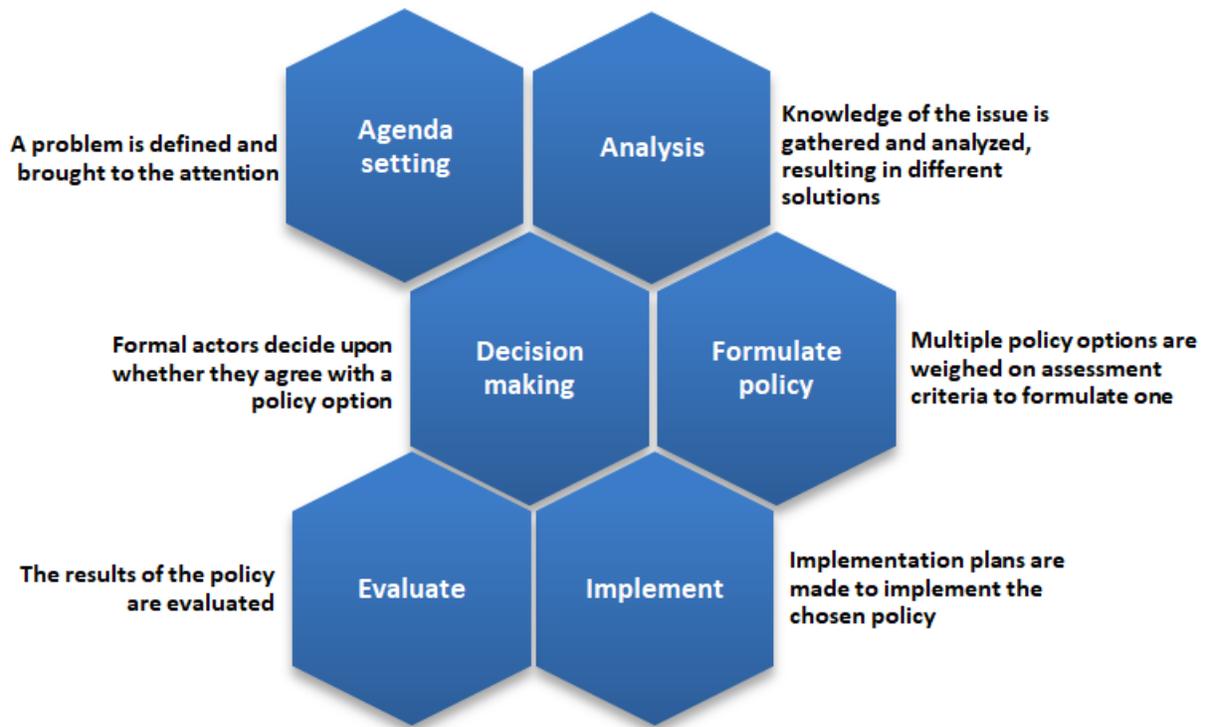
* Exercise of the division of points over the level of participation in each phases

Influence of citizens

- In your opinion, does the representativeness of the participating citizens affect how much influence they should have?
- How does citizen knowledge relate to expert knowledge in practice?
 - What do you think of this?
 - Do you think that citizens need a minimum of information before they can participate?
- What do you see as pitfalls when implementing participation?

Concluding question

- Do you have advice for me as a future planner what I should take into account in the field of citizen participation?



Divide for each phase in the planning process **100 points** over the different levels of participation.

Agenda setting							
Definition: a problem is defined and brought to the attention of a governing body.							
Level	Information	Consultation	Advising	Dialogue	Co-production	Co-decision	
Points							

Analysis							
Definition: knowledge of the issue is gathered and analyzed to understand the context. The challenges and opportunities are defined more clearly and different solutions are developed.							
Level	Information	Consultation	Advising	Dialogue	Co-production	Co-decision	
Points							

Formulating policy							
Definition: multiple policy options are checked on feasibility and weighed on assessment criteria. A policy option is considered most desirable and further elaborated on in a policy proposal.							
Level	Information	Consultation	Advising	Dialogue	Co-production	Co-decision	
Points							

Decision making							
Definition: formal actors of the authority have to decide upon whether they agree with a policy option.							
Level	Information	Consultation	Advising	Dialogue	Co-production	Co-decision	
Points							

Implementation							
Definition: in this phase, implementation plans are made to implement the chosen policy.							
Level	Information	Consultation	Advising	Dialogue	Co-production	Co-decision	
Points							

Evaluation							
Definition: the results of the policy are evaluated.							
Level	Information	Consultation	Advising	Dialogue	Co-production	Co-decision	
Points							

Appendix II - Interview questions Dutch

Uitleg onderzoek: uitgenodigde burgerparticipatie

Introductie van de geïnterviewde

- Wat is uw functieomschrijving?
- Wat is volgens u de waarde van burgerparticipatie?
 - Wat zijn voor u redenen om participatie in een ruimtelijk planproces te implementeren?

Algemene vragen

- Hoe bepaalt u op welk moment participatie nodig is? Welke overwegingen maakt u daarbij?
 - Welke overwegingen maakt u daarbij?
 - Wat zijn criteria voor de timing?
- Hoeveel invloed denkt u dat burgers zouden moeten hebben op een planningsproject?
 - Wat zijn criteria voor de mate van invloed die burgers krijgen?

* Oefening verdelen van punten over de niveaus van participatie per fase

Invloed van burgers

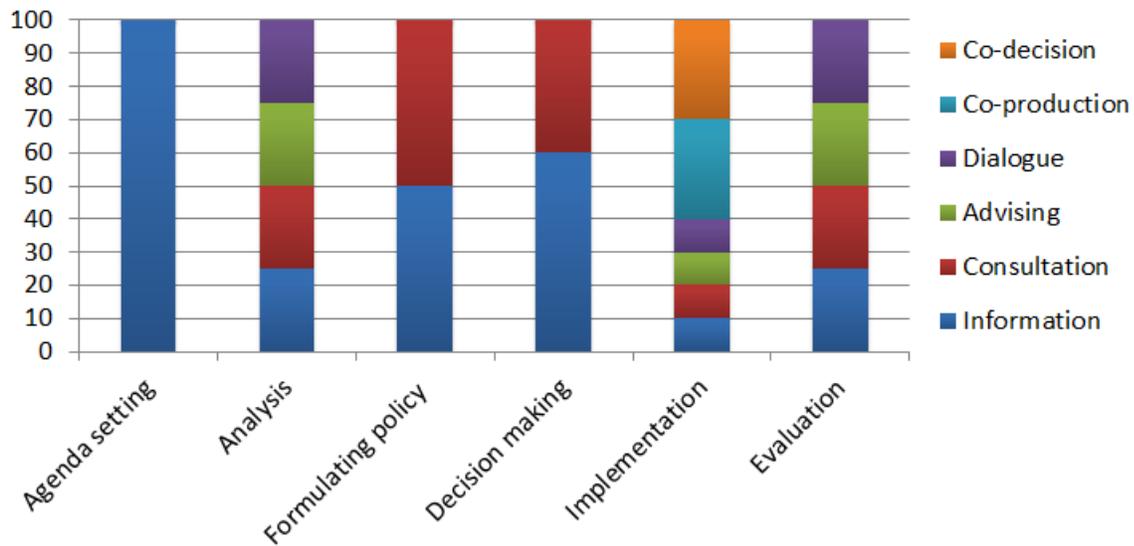
- Heeft, naar uw mening, de representativiteit van de deelnemende burgers invloed op hoeveel invloed zij zouden moeten hebben?
- Hoe verhoud burgerkennis zich tot expert kennis in de praktijk?
 - Wat vind u hiervan?
 - Denkt u dat burgers een minimum aan informatie nodig hebben voordat ze kunnen deelnemen?
- Wat zijn volgens u valkuilen bij het implementeren van participatie?

Afsluitende vraag

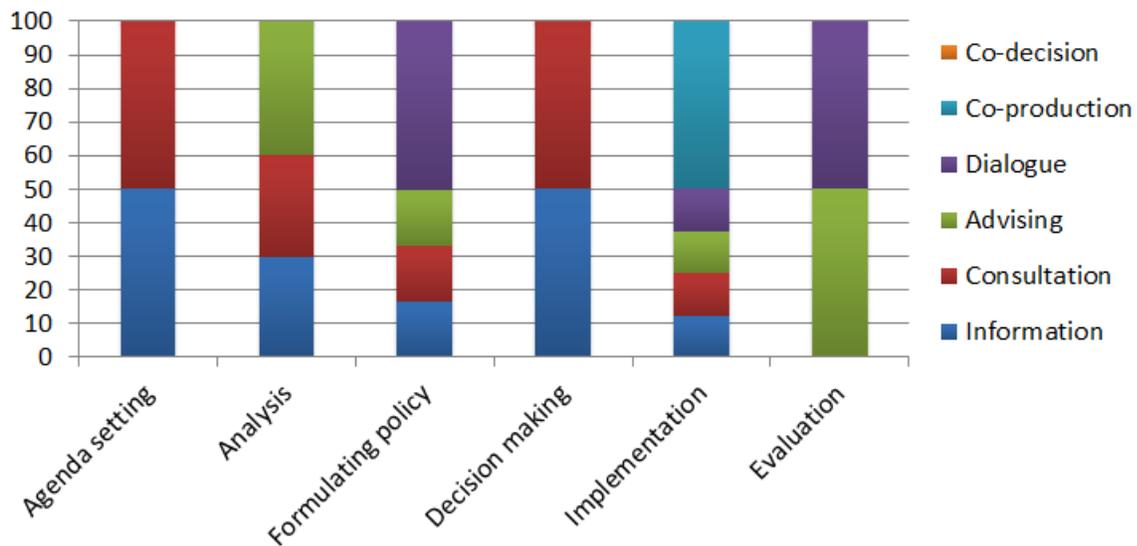
- Heb je advies voor mij als toekomstig planoloog waar ik rekening mee moet houden op het gebied van burgerparticipatie?

Appendix III – Exercise: Individual divisions of points

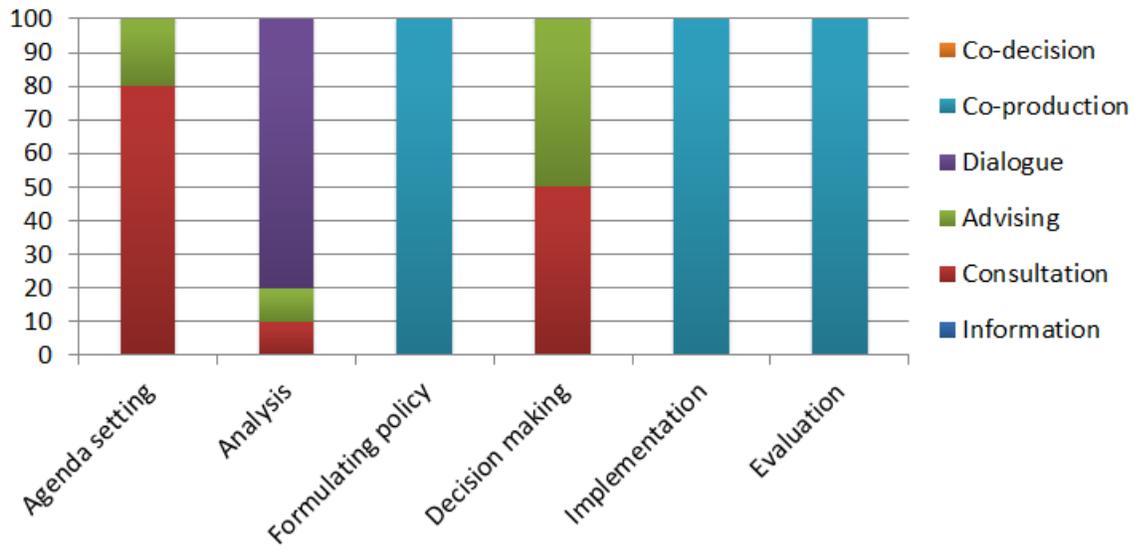
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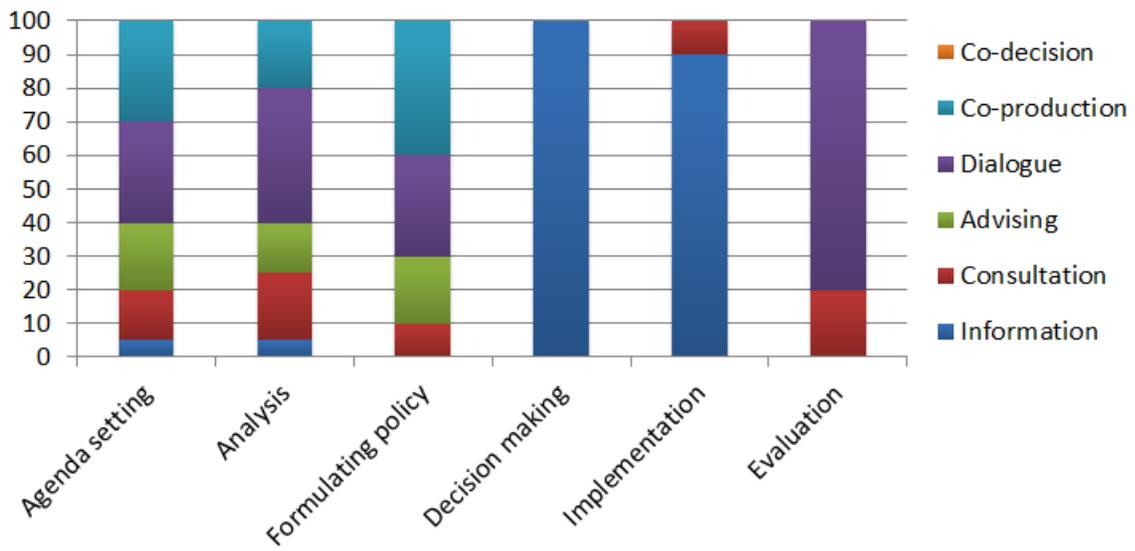
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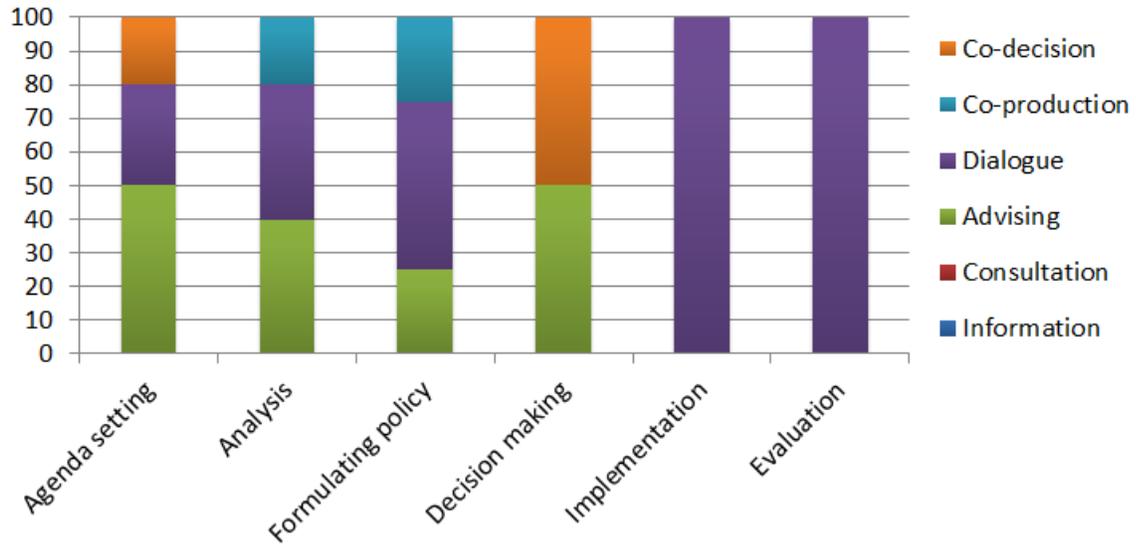
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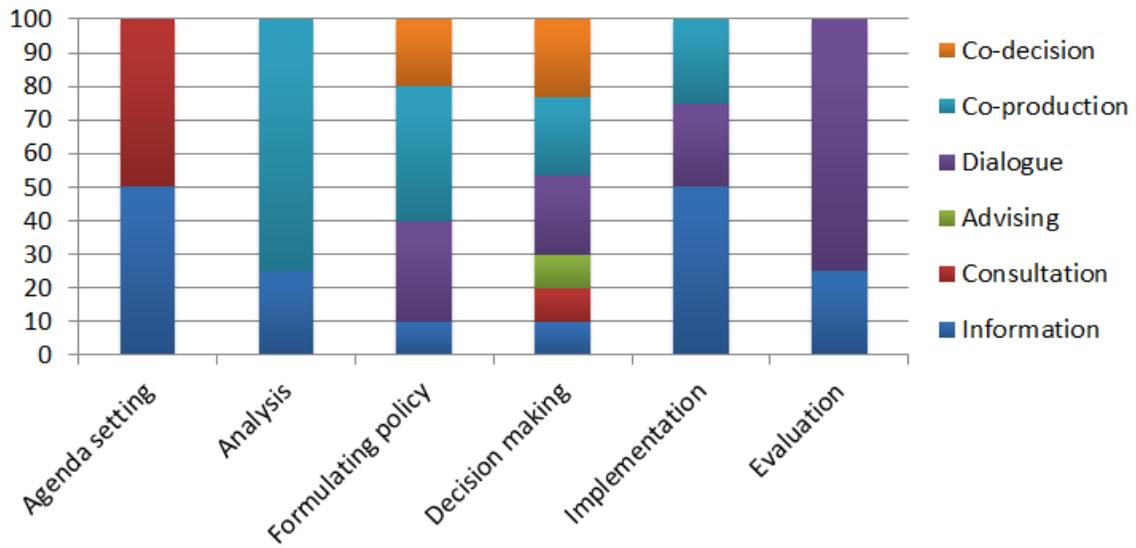
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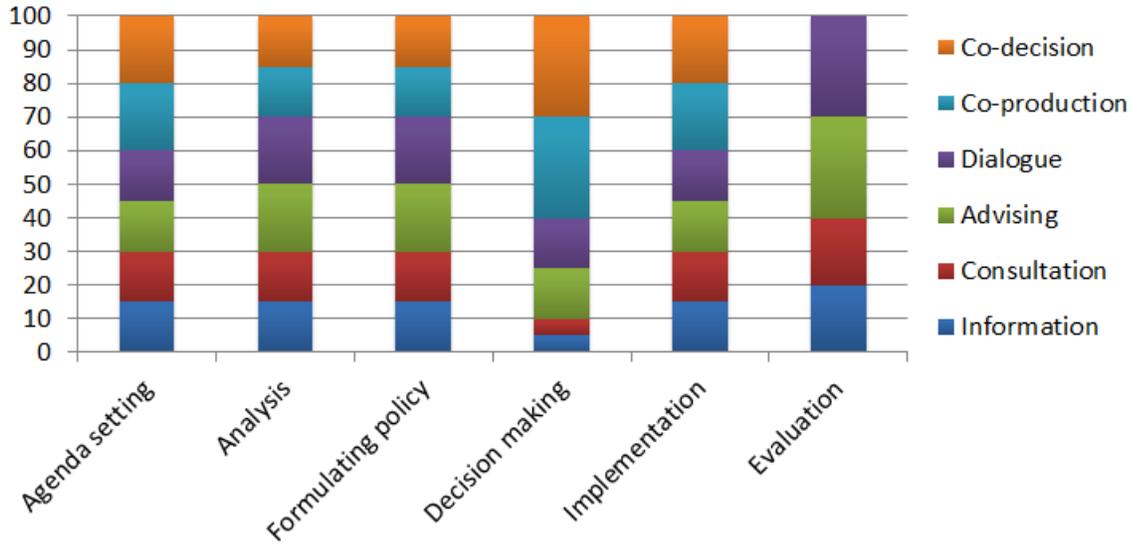
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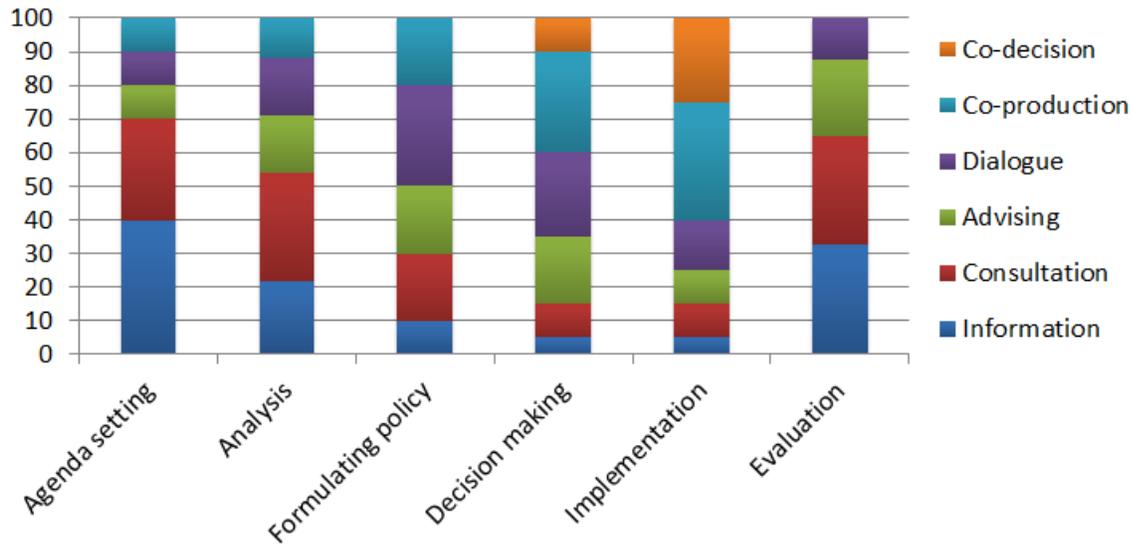
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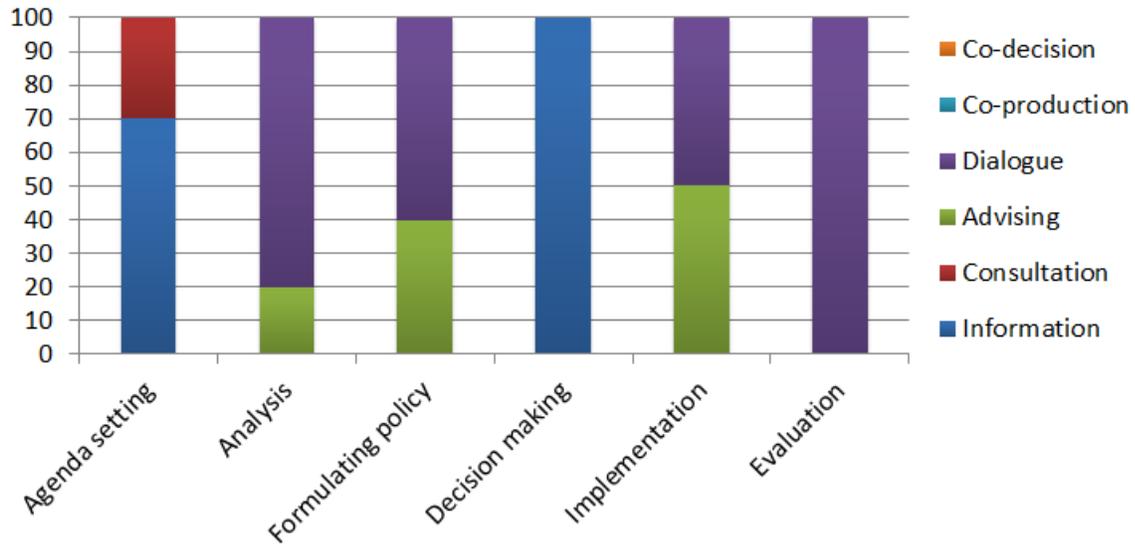
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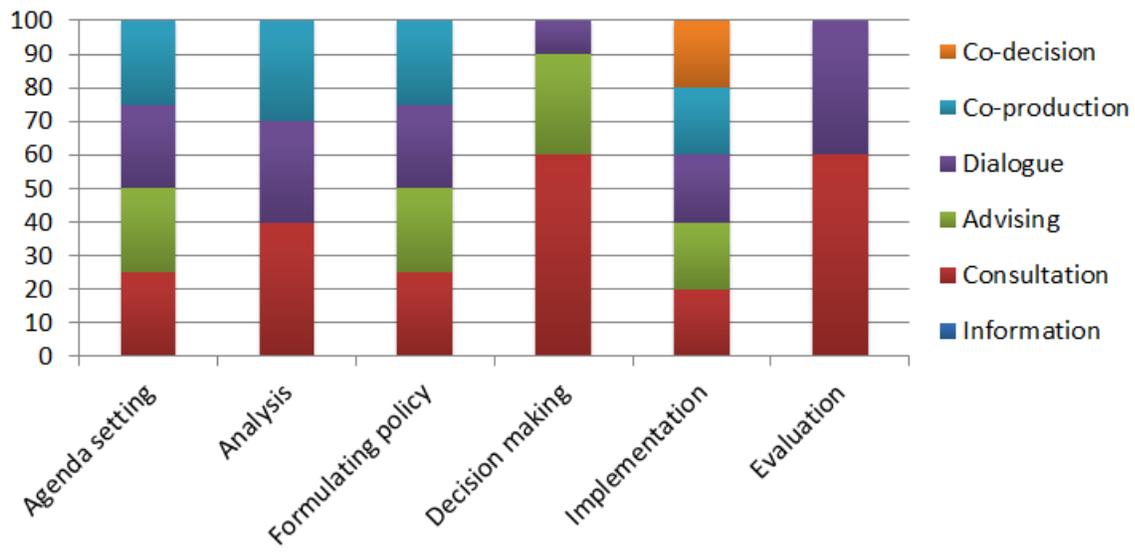
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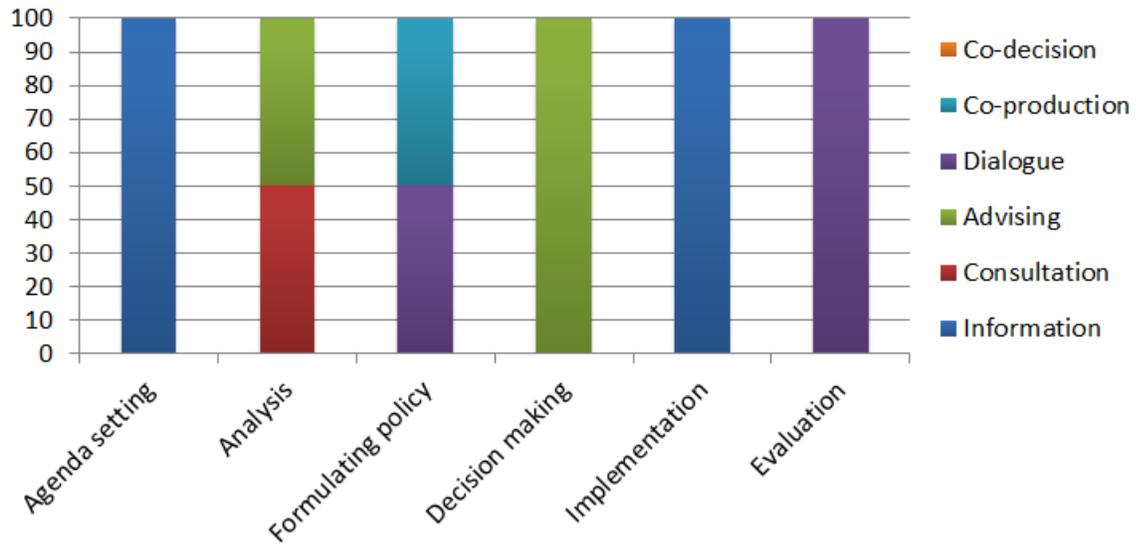
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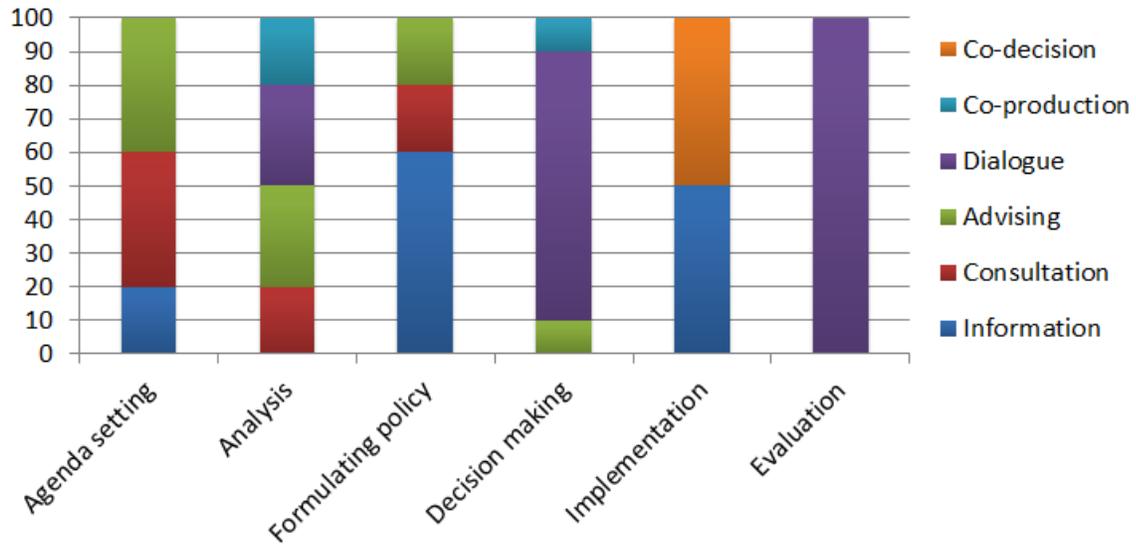
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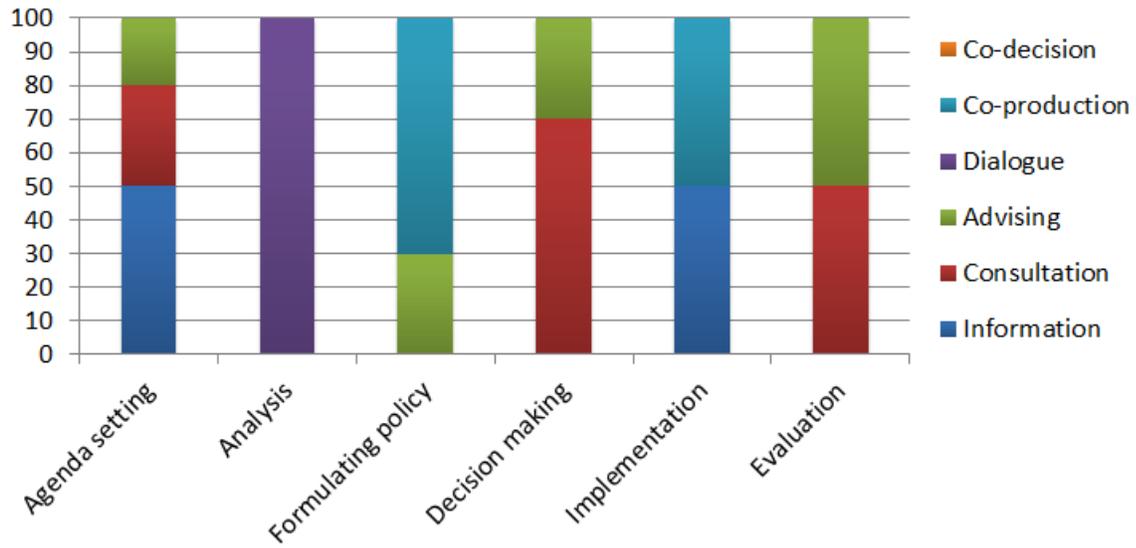
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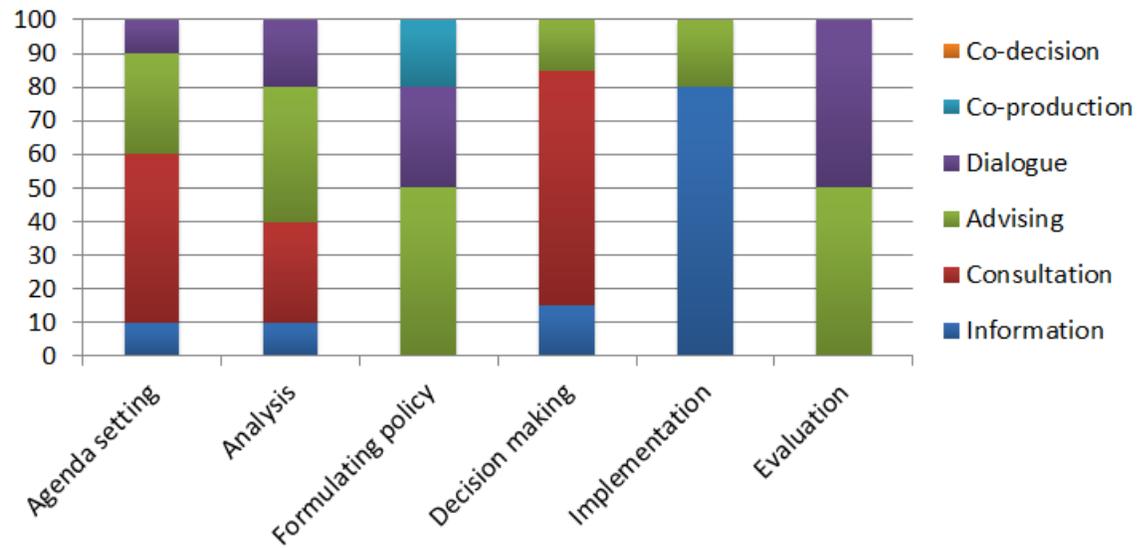
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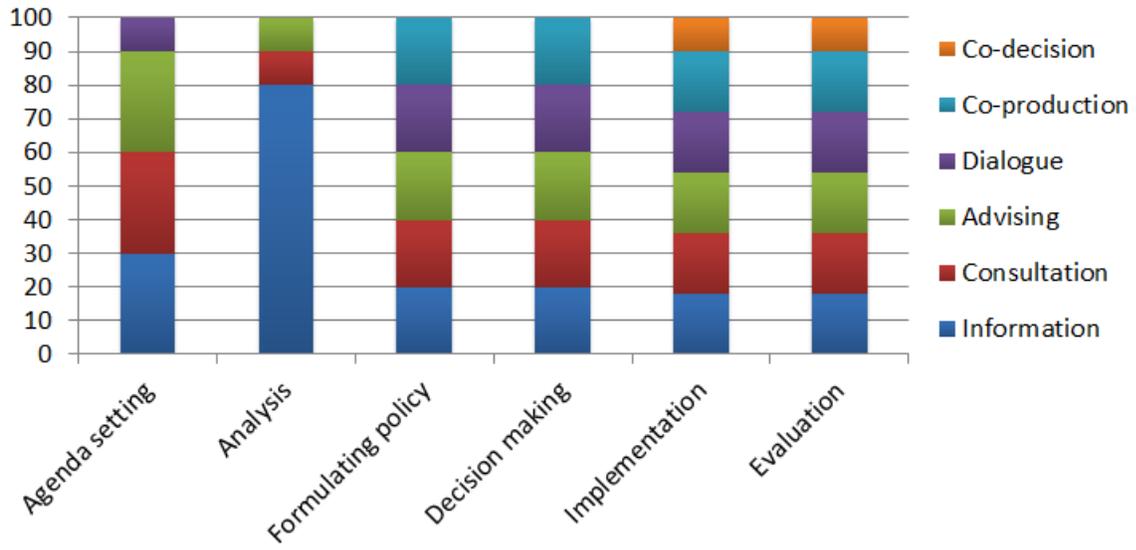
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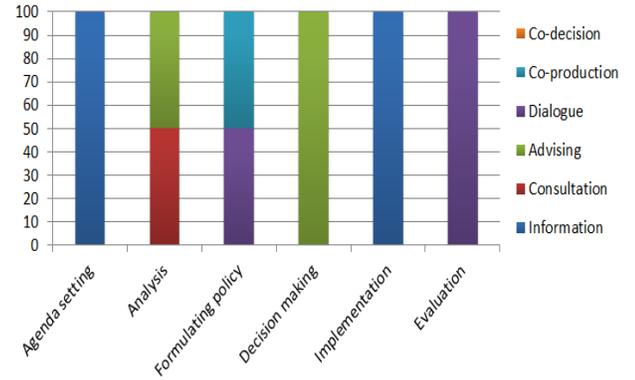
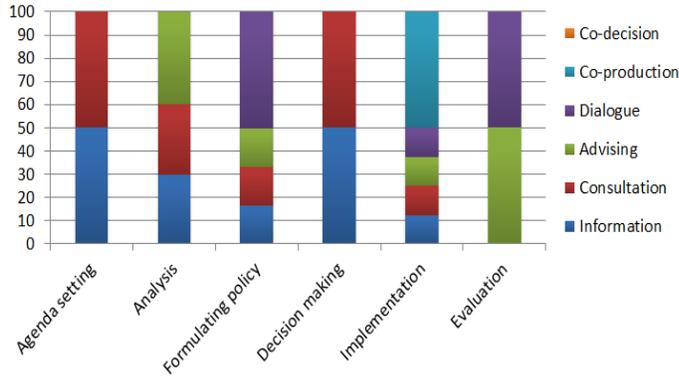


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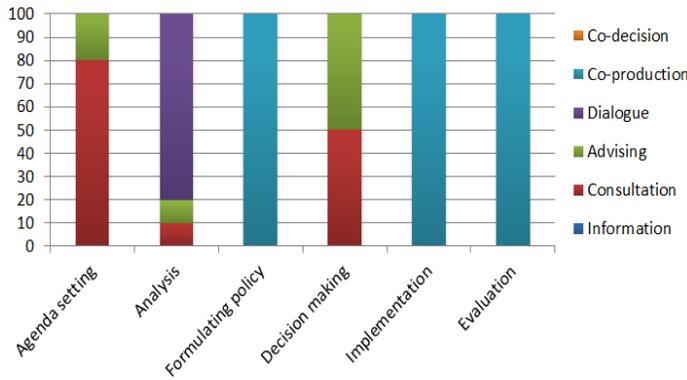


Appendix IV – Exercise: Individual divisions of points of trajectory I

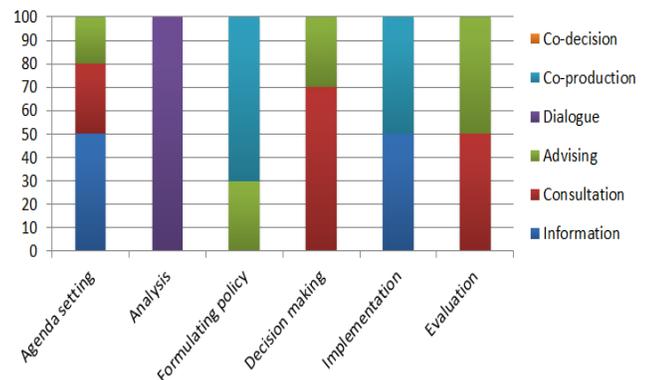
Graphs trajectory I a – Increasing influence until decision making



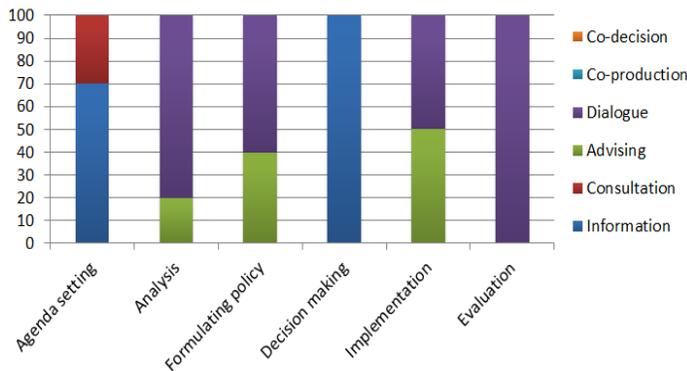
Division of points of interviewee #2 – Project and process manager Heat transition vision Utrecht



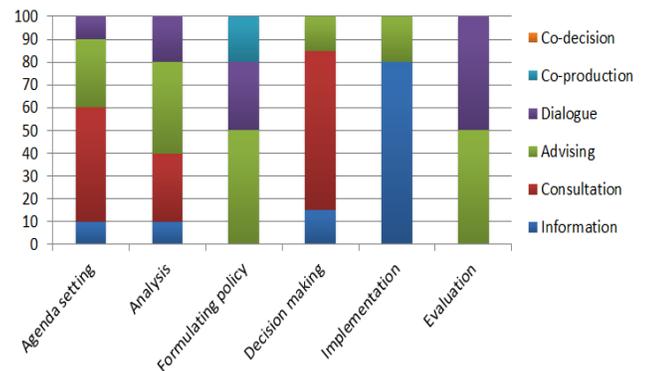
Division of points of interviewee #12- Process manager Regional Energy Strategy Súdwest-fryslan



Division of points of interviewee #4 – Process manager Spatial planning consultant



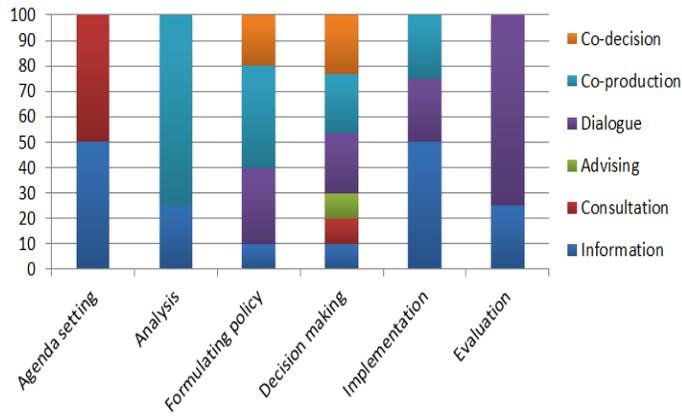
Division of points of interviewee #15 – Communication advisor Sustainable social housing consultant



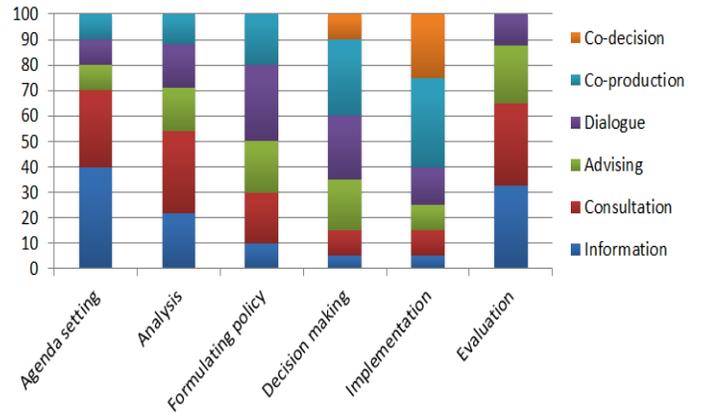
Division of points of interviewee #10 – Environment manager & advisor participation Spatial planning Amsterdam

Division of points of interviewee #16 – Policy advisor Spatial planning Epe

Graphs trajectory 1b – Increasing influence including decision making



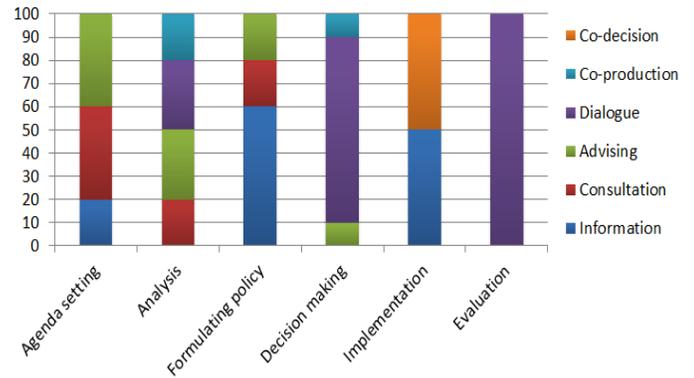
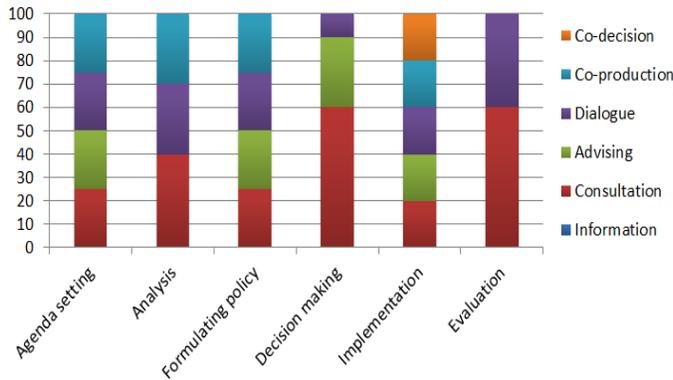
Division of points of interviewee #7 – Environment manager Spatial planning Amsterdam



Division of points of interviewee #9 – Project manager Strategic Environmental Vision consultant

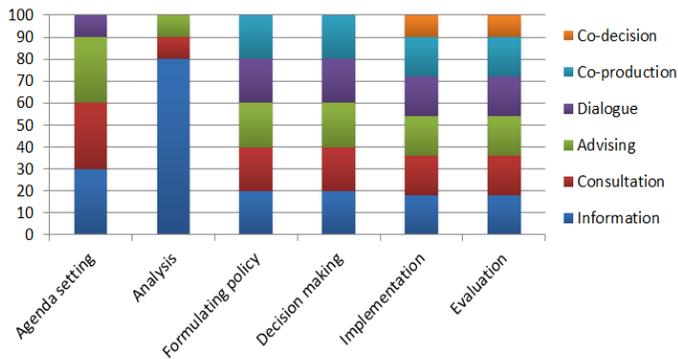
Appendix V – Exercise: Individual divisions of points of trajectory II

Graphs trajectory II – Consistent average influence



Division of points of interviewee #11 – Senior program manager Spatial planning Utrecht

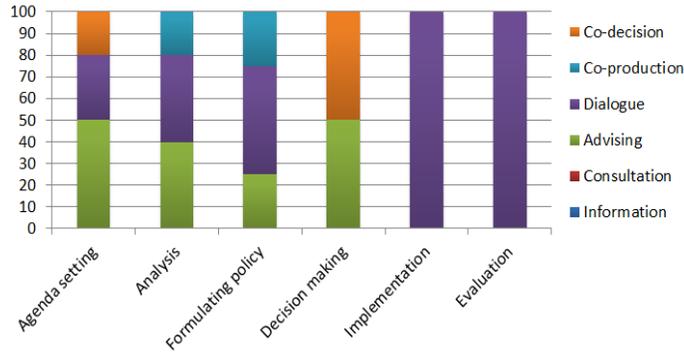
Division of points of interviewee #13 – Project manager Spatial planning Amsterdam



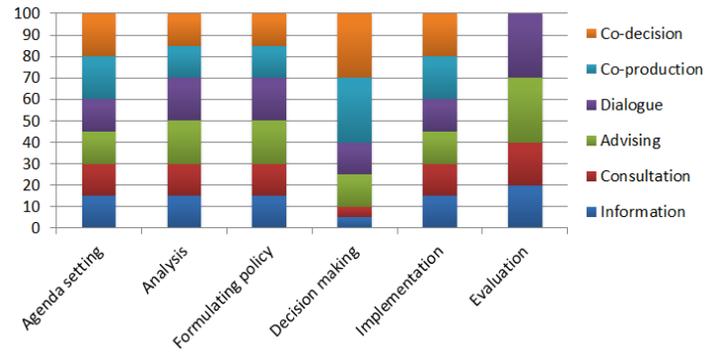
Division of points of interviewee #17 – Director innovation sustainable social housing consultant

Appendix VI – Exercise: Individual divisions of points of trajectory III

Graph trajectory III – Consistent high influence



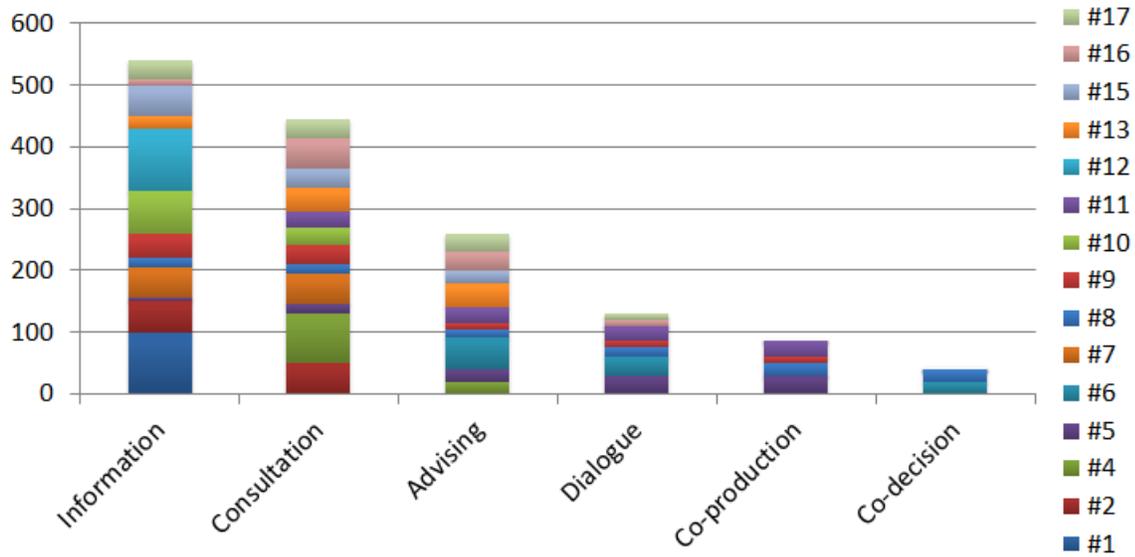
Division of points of interviewee #6 – Strategic advisor Participation Utrecht



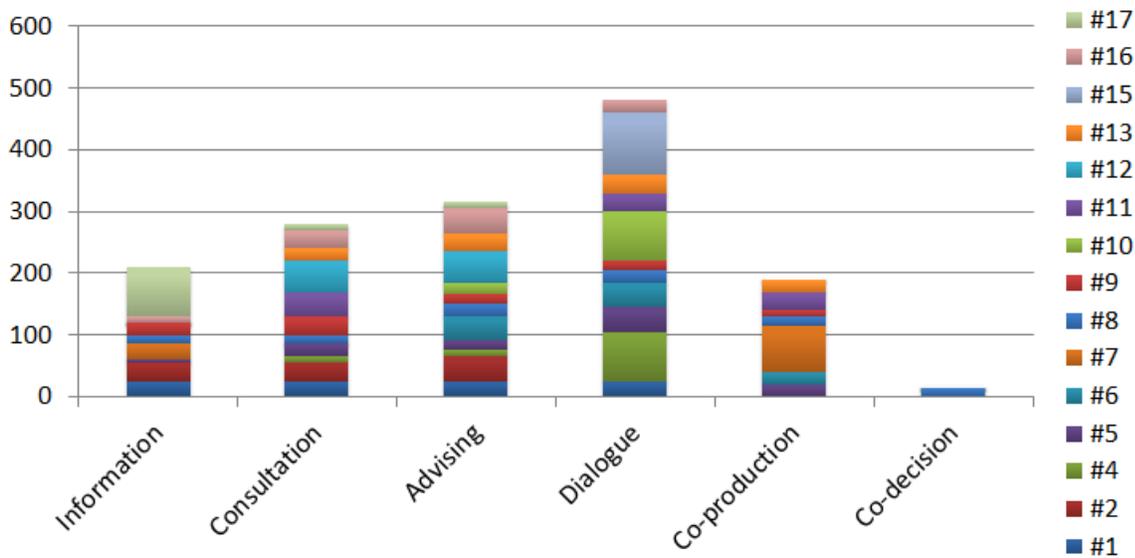
Division of points of interviewee #8 – Senior consultant Civic participation & sustainable energy

Appendix VII – Exercise: Group results per phase

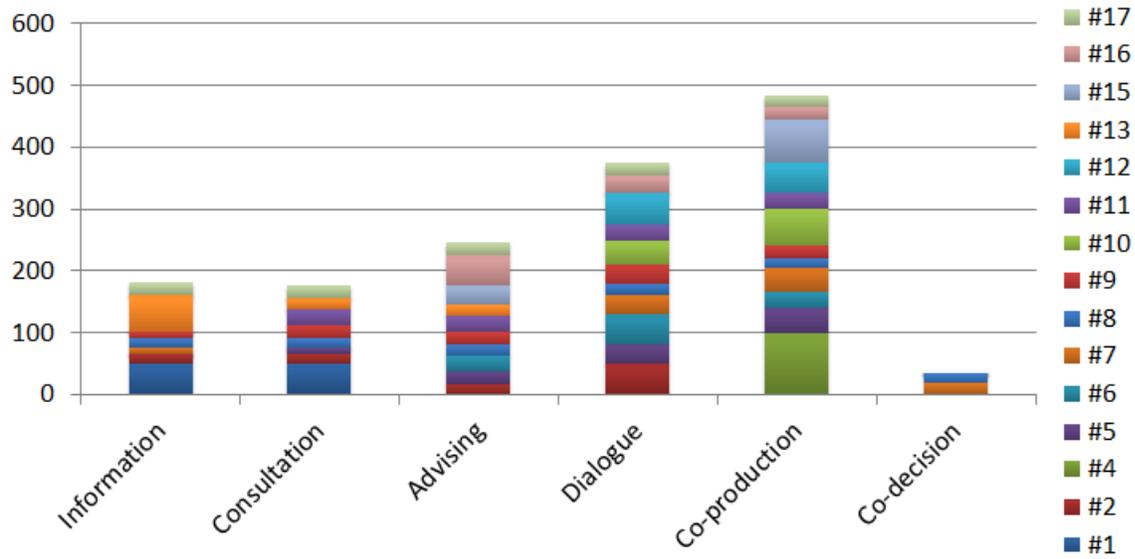
Agenda setting



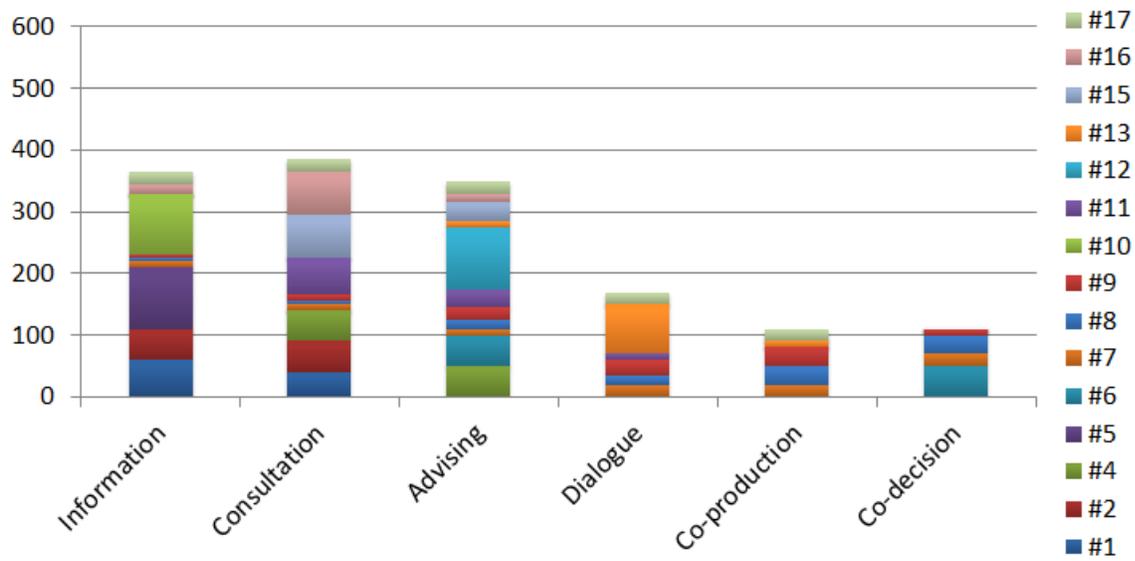
Analysis



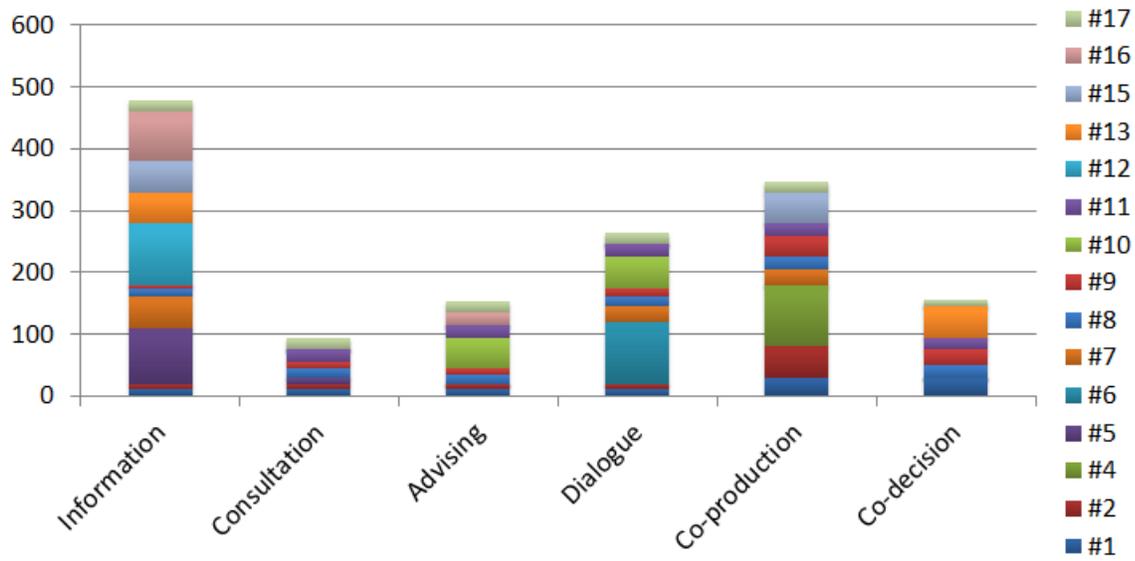
Formulating policy



Decision making



Implementation



Evaluation

