

Towards responsive policy making

Enabling policy advisors to experience thinking and acting in response to the needs of youth

A need for connection and mutual trust

Dutch municipalities are making efforts to enhance their connection with residents and increase mutual trust. Nevertheless, the voice of youth is often overlooked in this process, despite their right to be heard in policies and decisions that affect their lives. Reinforced by bureaucratic institutions primarily focusing on executing tasks, processes, and protocols, youth and their needs risk getting sidelined, causing them to disengage from governments and other institutions. Therefore, a growing need for municipalities to involve youth in their policy making emerges. However, many policy advisors struggle to do so, despite the availability of various tools and strategies.

Proposing a learning process

This 'research through design' project revealed that challenging policy advisors' assumptions about youth and their needs through active and attentive experiences proves to be essential to enable policy advisors to reconsider and possibly reshape municipal structures and processes. A personally guided learning process can create space for this, allowing current attitudes and practices to change. These can promote the structural and meaningful use of participatory approaches and result in policies that meet the needs of youth. The project thus offers a new perspective and a small yet fundamental step by the municipality towards a mutual relationship with its (younger) residents.

The learning process enables policy advisors to enter a loop of reflecting on habitual thinking and acting, and reshaping underlying beliefs, rules, norms and roles.

A facilitator guides policy advisors through experiences and reflections of the personal learning process.



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