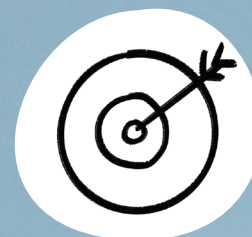




Master Thesis  
Strategic Product Design



# RETHINKING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLICYMAKING

A Frame Innovation Approach  
by Susanna Osinga

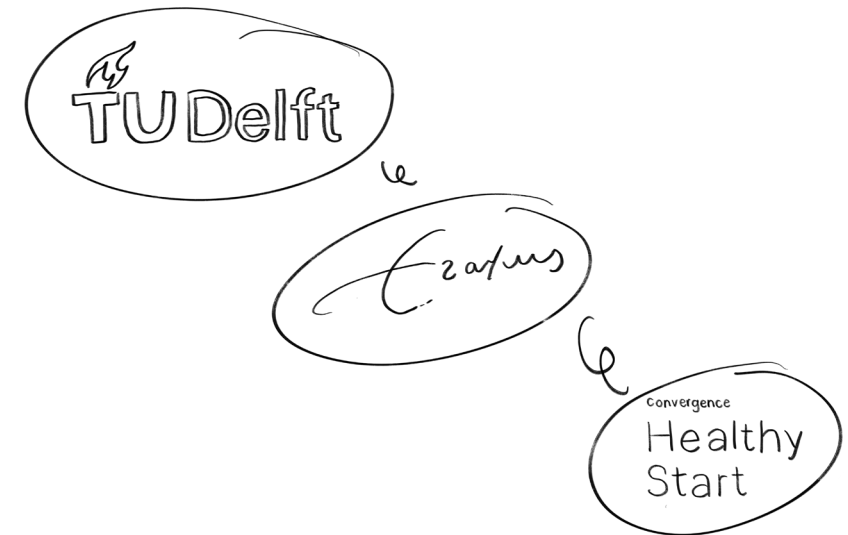






# RETHINKING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLICYMAKING

*A Frame Innovation Approach*



## Master thesis | Strategic Product Design

*Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering  
Delft University of Technology*

*February 2024*

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### In collaboration with

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## PREFACE

*Dear reader,*

*I am very excited to present my graduation project to you. Initially, I anticipated that executing such a significant project would be a daunting task, but the past five months have flown by. This is largely due to the contributions of many individuals who have supported this project. Before diving into the details, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to them.*

*First and foremost, I wish to express my gratitude to Irene and Betsie. Being part of our team has been a joy! From engaging in deep discussions about the subject matter to sharing both small victories and bigger successes, I am so grateful for the opportunity to have worked with you and learned from both of you.*

*I would also like to thank everyone at Healthy Start and all the enthusiastic, sharp minds who participated in my sessions. Viewing this topic through a multidisciplinary lens has added immense value.*


*Additionally, I extend my thanks to all the individuals from the Rotterdam municipality who contributed to this project, especially Yentl, Saida, and all the young people from the sounding board group. Your contributions during my project's creative sessions were invaluable.*

*I must also acknowledge some people who indirectly influenced this project. Lucas, you might be tired of hearing about participation by now, but thank you for all the coffee breaks, uplifting words, taking over dishwashing duties, and your unwavering support. To my parents and sisters, your enthusiasm is the cornerstone of my support system; I couldn't do it without you.*

*Last but certainly not least, my supervisors from TU Delft: Milene and Mieke. Thank you for your enthusiasm and critical perspectives! I have thoroughly enjoyed our meetings and brainstorming sessions on abstract themes and potential frameworks. Your guidance has significantly advanced both me and this project.*

*With pride, I now present to you my project on youth participation in the Rotterdam municipality.*

*Warm regards,*

*Susanna* 



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth participation is becoming increasingly important in municipal governance. However, despite the introduction of new tools, podcasts, and events designed to foster participation, engaging young voices in policy-making remains a challenge. This project explores whether a different perspective on this challenge can lead to more meaningful engagement.

This project is part of Healthy Start, a collaborative initiative between the Delft University of Technology, Erasmus Medisch Centrum and the Erasmus University Rotterdam, which seeks to enhance the well-being of young individuals. Among its ambitions is the enhancement of youth participation. The project will emphasize youth participation in municipal policy in Rotterdam.

Using the Frame Innovation method, a design approach focused on redefining problems to uncover innovative solutions, this study aims to discover unique insights by ‘reframing’ the issue of youth participation. Achieving an understanding of the stakeholders and their values was accomplished through a Research through Design approach. A variety of design activities were undertaken, including engaging policy advisors in creative sessions at Het Timmerhuis, and deploying cultural probes during dialogues with young individuals in a sounding board group and at the Rotterdam Blaak library.

The findings reveal that stakeholders have diverse needs. Not all officials view participation the same way, and differences among young people are significant. Four main themes emerged, reflecting the values of these diverse groups:



**Open Hearts, Open Minds:** This theme underscores the importance of genuine interactions and empathy, highlighting how prejudices can complicate matters. For example, officials may fear being perceived negatively by the public, while young people worry about being seen as inexperienced.



**Navigating the Unknown:** Participatory processes involve uncertainties, requiring both youths and officials to venture into unfamiliar territory. This theme explores how they can feel in control despite these uncertainties.



**Driven by Responsibility:** This focuses on the sense of duty and how it affects engagement. It questions when stakeholders consider something important enough to warrant their involvement.



**What You Do Matters:** This theme emphasizes the significance of feeling that one’s contributions are impactful and explores the dynamics of power within participation. Both youths and officials can feel powerless, doubting the impact of their efforts and not seeing the success of their actions.

Reframing the problem based on these themes offers new perspectives on addressing the challenges of youth participation. Navigating the Unknown might suggest a future with a municipal “travel agency” for participation, providing guidance, resources, and connections to make the participatory process less daunting and more accessible. Or adopting an “open hearts, open minds” approach one could imagine facilitating transparent discussions about roles and aspirations, enhancing engagement and ensuring participation leads to meaningful outcomes.

This report proposes new strategic approaches to youth participation in Rotterdam’s policymaking. By gaining a deeper understanding of the problem space and reframing it, these new perspectives offer avenues for further exploration. Insights into the frame innovation methodology are also shared to inform future studies.





## SPREEK

Jij daar  
Die altijd zachtjes  
En veerkrachtig  
Waarvan de woorden altijd in je hoofd  
Vochten en zich vlochten tot onrust  
Jij die altijd maar  
Niet wist  
Hoe jouw muren omlaag  
Maar een vlaag van verbijs tering je liet bouwen  
Jij daar die de zwaarte  
Vergleek met jouw licht  
En zo het zicht  
Op je stem verloor  
Ik ben een en al oor als je praat  
Dus  
Ik vraag jou of je nu spreekt  
Want de woorden die je ontweek  
Willen verteld worden  
Niet verborgen maar gesproken worden  
Jij die altijd maar je woorden bewaarde  
Ze opspaarde totdat ze zinnen waren  
Jij daar  
Luister maar, deel maar, spreek maar

- VIENNE LISA HAAGOORT  
JEUGDSTADSDICHTER ROTTERDAM, 2020



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# INTRODUCTION

Introducing the Project



# INTRODUCTION

A common Dutch saying is: “Wie de jeugd heeft, heeft de toekomst.” Whoever has the youth, has the future. This aphorism is also relevant in the field of policymaking. Engaging with youth is essential for shaping a future that is more aligned with their needs. When young people are actively involved in discussions about policies that affect them, it leads to more effective and relevant outcomes (Checkoway, 2011; Macauley et al., 2022). This engagement isn’t just good practice; it’s a fundamental right - all children and young people have the right to be involved in decisions that impact their lives - as outlined in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (Assembly UNG, 1989). The Resolution of the Council of the European Union (2018) for 2019 till 2027 also recognised that: “All young people are a resource to society, all policies and activities concerning young people should uphold young people’s right to participate in the development, implementation and follow-up of policies affecting them.”

In recent years, efforts to involve young people in decision-making have been picking up pace. And the term “youth participation” has become somewhat of a buzzword. There’s a surge in mediums like podcasts, events, and reports focusing on this theme, signalling a growing recognition of the importance of young people’s involvement. Lectures, discussions; every week there is something going on around this subject. However, the challenge remains to move beyond just talking about participation to actual implementation where young people are active participants in shaping the policies that affect their lives.

**“I WOULD REALLY LIKE TO PRAISE HOW WELL YOUTH PARTICIPATION IS GOING, HOW WELL POLICYMAKERS ARE LISTENING TO US. BUT I’LL GET STRAIGHT TO THE POINT, UNFORTUNATELY, THAT’S JUST NOT REALITY.”**

- IVAR VAN DER VELDE (MEMBER OF THE GRONINGEN YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL) (E6)

There are significant gaps in how youth participation is implemented. Research indicates that not all groups of young people have equal opportunities to influence policy; particularly, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, girls, and those who have experienced violence often find themselves on the margins (Checkoway, 2011; McMellon & Tisdall, 2020). Current participation opportunities tend to lack adaptation to diverse preferences (Gazit & Perry-Hazan, 2020). This lack of diverse representation leads to policies that don’t fully address the needs of all youth. Moreover, there’s a general feeling of disconnection between young people and the political process. Young people often have a complicated and problematized relationship with current politics (Farthing, 2010). According to a UNICEF poll amongst more than 1000

Dutch youngsters, 95% of Dutch youth believe that municipalities should seek their input. However, 65% of those surveyed feel that their opinions are not considered to be significant.

This might also be reflected in the Dutch municipal elections of 2022 when only 36% of young people under 25 voted – a strikingly low number. This disconnect might indicate that even though many toolkits are created, reports with tips are published and events are being hosted - current initiatives are not sufficiently addressing this issue.

In the Netherlands, municipalities have been the central authorities for youth participation since 2015 (Janta et al., 2021). The municipality of Rotterdam, like many other Dutch municipalities, faces the daunting task of engaging a diverse youth population in policymaking. Youth participation in the municipality of Rotterdam will be the setting of this graduation report.

## Project background

This project is part of “Healthy Start,” a joint initiative involving the Delft University of Technology, Erasmus Medisch Centrum and Erasmus University Rotterdam. This initiative aims to improve the well-being of young individuals (Healthy Start - Convergence, 2023). One of its six core objectives is to enhance youth engagement. In March 2023, a two-year design project was initiated with the goal of enhancing youth participation in municipal policies. For my graduation project, I have been collaborating with Irene Fierloos, a Postdoc researcher associated with Healthy Start, actively involved in this initiative. My project will also be part of her overarching effort. From August 2023 to February 2024, Irene Fierloos conducted semi-structured interviews with civil servants involved in youth policy and/or citizen participation at the municipality of Rotterdam. The focus of this large project will be on providing insight into the barriers and facilitators to youth participation in policymaking.

Furthermore, another graduate student, Betsie Loeffen, who is working towards her degree in Design For Interaction, will also be working on this project. Her primary focus will be on policymakers; she will be looking for an approach that enables them to involve youth in youth policy development. She will be active within the municipality (‘meelopen’) and will be conducting small experiments with policymakers. For several activities within this project, I will collaborate with both Betsie and Irene, and certain parts of this report will be based on research and design work they have conducted.

Ultimately, my project will not conclude upon the submission of this report. Hopefully, Irene and other researchers within Healthy Start can utilise Betsie’s and my findings to make a meaningful impact and enhance youth participation in Rotterdam. I will go into more detail about the continuation of this project and the buzz it will hopefully create in the chapter called ‘discussion’.



Me, Susanna Osinga



Irene Fierloos



Betsie Loeffen



This report defines ‘young people’ or ‘youngsters’ as those individuals falling within the 15 to 24-year age range



# PROJECT APPROACH

## Frame Innovation

For this graduation project, I will employ the Frame Innovation Approach developed by Kees Dorst, which is particularly suited for complex social problems. In his book "Frame Innovation" Dorst (2015) argues that many of today's problems are open, complex, dynamic, and networked, making conventional problem-solving approaches inadequate.

**"THEY ARE MORE LIKE "PROBLEM SITUATIONS" IN WHICH THE ISSUES KEEP SHIFTING AROUND, AND ANY PREMATURE ATTEMPT TO DRAFT A PROBLEM DEFINITION CAN LEAD TO SUBOPTIMAL OR EVEN COUNTERPRODUCTIVE SOLUTIONS."** - KEES DORST (2015)

As this report will illustrate, youth participation in municipal policymaking is indeed open, complex, dynamic and networked. I'll illustrate this briefly.

- **Open:** The involvement of young people in shaping policies affects and is affected by numerous stakeholders. It's challenging to determine which stakeholders are essential and which are not. Not only is the municipality itself an expansive, open system, but the youth also have their own complex network of involved parties. The concept of openness also suggests the existence of a limitless array of potential solutions, characterizing this as an 'open solution space'.
- **Complex:** The (un)involvement of youngsters in policymaking is one that consists of many elements, with numerous connections. This makes it very hard to split up the overall problem situation into smaller chunks that could be dealt with more easily. For instance, consider the dynamics of communication between young people and civil servants. It's not just about providing a platform for youth to express their opinions; it might also involve generational differences and navigating the preconceived notions and biases that both civil servants and young people can hold about each other.
- **Dynamic:** This situation is fluid and evolves over time, with the approaches to youth participation in municipalities continuously developing and adapting.
- **Networked:** The role of youth in influencing policy is intertwined with a broad spectrum of societal developments. These range from poverty issues to workload pressures within municipal systems and schools, and even how young people in Rotterdam are represented in the media.

This method assists in understanding the problem situation in a broader context, aiming for a deeper comprehension of the underlying factors. The ultimate objective is to create a new approach or 'frame' for the problem.

So what is a 'frame'? Framing is about defining a problem in a way that gives you insights into previously not considered solutions. A frame offers a different perspective for addressing a problem, which could be a metaphor or a parallel situation with similar underlying themes. Frames usually encompass a new view on the issue and principles that guide towards a resolution. Essentially, a frame is a proposition: 'If we view the problem from this angle and adopt a working principle linked to this viewpoint, we can achieve the desired outcome.' Frames are most often formulated like this: If the problem situation is approached as if it is ..., then ...

Let's consider an example from the book by Dorst (2015). One scenario involves retail stores facing declines in sales and increases in thefts from fitting rooms. Kees Dorst delves into the concept of value creation within the live shopping experience and redefines the problem as follows:

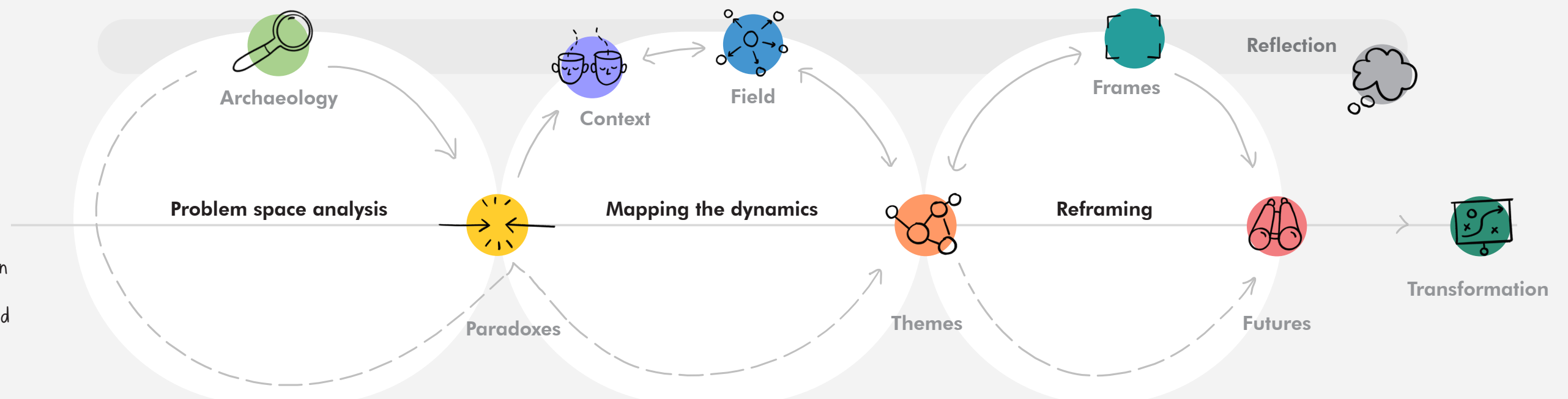
"If the problem situation of the department store's declining sales is approached as if it is a problem of creating a more fulfilling social shopping experience, then the fitting rooms should be ... a catwalk."

Rather than concentrating on security issues or dwindling customer numbers, the emphasis is shifted: not to conceal the fitting room, but to position it at the heart of the shopping experience and link it with the shopper's wider social network.

In applying Dorst's frame creation process, I will undertake eight steps. These steps are designed to address complex problems by broadening the context and identifying underlying themes for action:

1. **Archaeology:** Analysing and understanding the history of the problem space and formulating the way the problem is currently formulated and approached.
2. **Paradox:** Analysing the problem situation: What makes this problem so hard to solve?
3. **Context:** Diving into the world of the direct stakeholders: who are they and what do they value?
4. **Field:** Exploring the broader field. Who is indirectly connected to the problem?
5. **Themes:** Which deep human motivations can be recognised in the broader field?
6. **Frames:** Identifying patterns between themes to create frames. How can we act upon the themes? What new visions/approaches to the problem space can be created?
7. **Futures:** Exploring outcomes and value propositions for the stakeholders based on the frames.
8. **Transformation:** Investigating strategies for the implementation of this new strategic approach.

This is a visual representation that provides a more vivid portrayal of how I experienced the design method. It will be connected to chapters in the project overview.



By applying the Frame Creation Approach, this project will explore various aspects of youth participation, including the roles and perceptions of both young individuals and policymakers. The outcome will be frames and a corresponding set of innovative strategies and recommendations aimed at reshaping the dynamics of youth participation in Rotterdam, offering insights that could be valuable for other cities facing similar challenges.

Linking to the Healthy Start initiative and managing expectations, this report will not offer concrete solutions but aims to introduce these new frames; innovative, strategic approaches to viewing the involvement of young people in policy-making. These frames are intended to inspire new directions in design, research, and strategies. I envision Healthy Start utilizing the developed frames as a source of inspiration and a launching pad for further investigations into areas that may have not been explored previously. At the end of this report, I will share a reflection on the application of the Frame Innovation Approach within this context, providing recommendations and things to keep in mind when adopting this method.

Co-creation and Research through Design

Given that the project’s main goal is to improve participation, it only makes sense to adopt a participatory approach to this graduation project itself. I’ve organized many co-creation sessions throughout the project to learn from various stakeholders. Some of these sessions included “cultural probes”. The main focus of cultural probes is to collect data through various means, such as diaries, photographs, drawings, and written responses (Sanders & Stappers, 2014). These probes help us learn more about people’s experiences and emotions. My activities, including these co-creation sessions with cultural probes, can be classified under the Research through Design approach: where “design activities, along with designed artefacts, are established as the chief elements in the process of generating and communicating knowledge” (Stappers & Giaccardi, 2011). Think of each co-creation session as a small research activity with the goal of gathering useful information, not just from the sessions themselves but also from the people involved. Often, the outcomes of the co-creation session - collages for example - were not the most interesting, but the learnings from co-creating and having conversations with stakeholders were.

Project Overview

The figure on the next page provides an overview of the project approach, illustrating the research questions and activities for each stage of the Frame Creation process. Information about the research activities and their codes can be found in Tables 1 and 2. In Appendix A, a summary of all of the activities can be read. As we delve into each chapter, in-depth explanations of the respective activities and research questions will be provided.

An overview of the main takeaways from the activities can be found in Appendix A



Table 1: Organised activities

| Abbreviation | Session & participants                                                                                                                                                      | Date                        | Additional information                                                                               | Appendix |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| IC1          | Interviews performed by Irene Fierloos: Fourteen policy advisors participated, a communications advisor, three youth consultants/youth and family coaches and two managers. | August 2023 - February 2024 | 1 attended by me, 3 transcribed by me.                                                               | A        |
| IY1          | Interview MBO student                                                                                                                                                       | 17-10-2023                  |                                                                                                      | A        |
| CD1          | Frame creation workshop                                                                                                                                                     | 20-10-2023                  | Facilitated by Mieke van der Bijl-Brouwers                                                           | A & E    |
| IC2          | Call with chief administrative strategist reflecting on municipal politics                                                                                                  | 28-10-2023                  |                                                                                                      | A        |
| IO1          | Interview school psychologist                                                                                                                                               | 5-11-2023                   |                                                                                                      | A        |
| CC1          | Guerilla-style interviews with creative prompt at the Timmerhuis<br>Around 50 civil servants                                                                                | 9-11-2023                   | Materials designed by me, session organised and facilitated by Irene Fierloos, Betsie Loeffen and me | A & I    |
| CCY1         | Creative Session with Klankbordgroep and Civil Servants                                                                                                                     | 16-11-2023                  | Materials designed by me, session created and facilitated by Betsie Loeffen and me                   | A & J    |
| CY1          | Tienskip event, 100 MBO students developed concrete solutions. I facilitated two groups of ten students                                                                     | 19-12-2023                  | Organised and prepared by Tienskip                                                                   | A        |
| CY2          | Guerilla style interviews with creative prompt at the Blaak library, speaking around 27 youngsters with different backgrounds                                               | 21-12-2023                  | Materials designed by me, session facilitated by Irene Fierloos and me                               | A & K    |
| CO1          | Ideation and Reflection on Themes and Frames with Multidisciplinary Researchers in Psychology, Governance Innovation, and Sociology                                         | 11-01-2024                  |                                                                                                      | A & L    |
| ID1          | Interview four IDE alumni                                                                                                                                                   | January - February 2024     |                                                                                                      | A        |
| ID2          | Interview Kees Dorst                                                                                                                                                        | 30-01-2024                  |                                                                                                      | A        |
| CC3          | Transformation session with two civil servants                                                                                                                              | 08-02-2024                  |                                                                                                      | A        |
| CY3          | Transformation session with the sounding board group                                                                                                                        | 21-02-2024                  |                                                                                                      | A        |



Table 2: Attended activities

| Abbreviation | Session & participants                                                                 | Date       | Additional information                                                                                                                                                                                     | Appendix |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| E1           | Co-creation Session at Youth Hub Hefhouse                                              | 19-09-2023 |                                                                                                                                                                                                            | A        |
| E2           | Photo Exposition “Getekend door het Leven” Opening at the Timmerhuis                   | 31-10-2023 |                                                                                                                                                                                                            | A        |
| E3           | Workshop on co-design with vulnerable groups                                           | 14-11-2023 | By Robin Simonse, a researcher at Erasmus University, who ventured into neighborhoods to engage with welfare recipients, discussing what they require to transition from receiving benefits to employment. | A        |
| E4           | Stadsmakerscongres Rotterdam                                                           | 17-11-2023 |                                                                                                                                                                                                            | A        |
| E5           | GoPlu meeting about ways to reach ‘hard to reach groups’                               | 21-11-2023 |                                                                                                                                                                                                            | A        |
| E6           | #MijnStemTelt event, engaging and brainstorming with a variety of experts in the field | 7-12-2023  |                                                                                                                                                                                                            | A        |
| E7           | Inclusie-bijeenkomst at Hoogeschool Rotterdam                                          | 14-12-2023 |                                                                                                                                                                                                            | A        |
| E8           | Healthy Start meeting                                                                  | 29-01-2023 |                                                                                                                                                                                                            | A        |

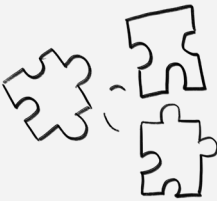
How to Read the Codes?

AB#

A = Activitiy type  
(Interview, Co-creation, etc.)

B = Participants  
(Civil servants, Youth, etc.)

# = number  
(Numerical identifier of repeated combinations of A+B)



Abbreviations of Codes

Activity types  
I = Interview  
C = Co-creation  
E = Attended Activity

Participants  
C = Civil servants  
Y = Youth  
D = Designers  
O = Other





PROJECT STRUCTURE

Although frame innovation may appear linear and structured, in reality, various elements and creative processes intertwined, resulting in a more iterative and fluid approach. Therefore, some activities span across different chapters and research questions, making them challenging to categorize under a single topic.



How to Read the Codes?

**AB#**

A = Activitiy type  
(Interview, Co-creation, etc.)

B = Participants  
(Civil servants, Youth, etc.)

# = number  
(Numerical identifier of repeated combinations of A+B)



ARCHAEOLOGY



PARADOX



CONTEXT



Research questions

What is youth participation?  
How can we define its quality?

What does the municipal organisation in Rotterdam look like and how can (young) inhabitants participate within this system?

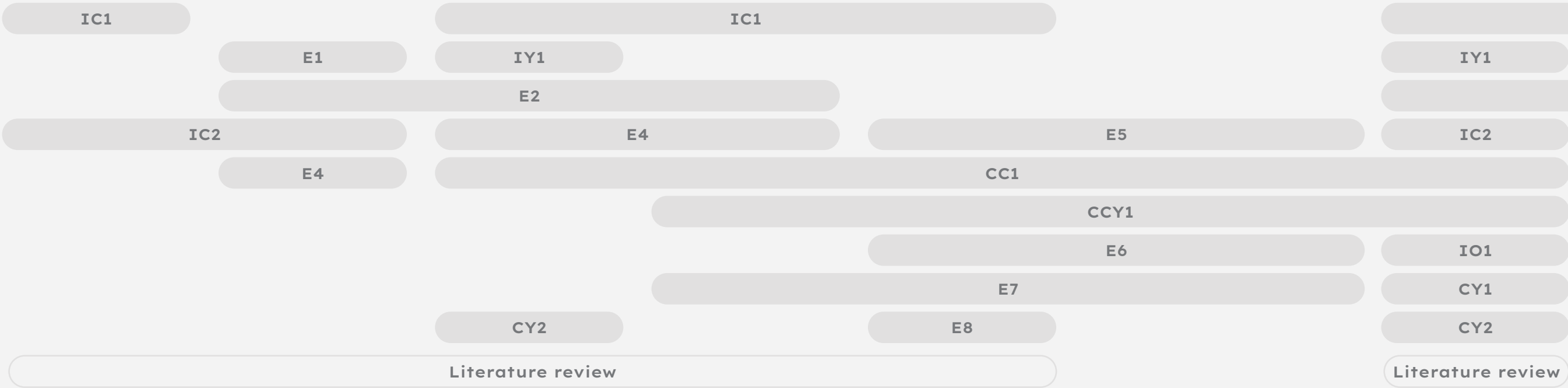
What are the apparent challenges surrounding youth participation in policymaking?

How can we define the current way this problem is framed?

How do problem owners currently try to solve this problem?

What are the key paradoxes that make this problem hard to solve?

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they value?







For the sake of confidentiality and privacy, most interviewees and participants in our activities will remain anonymous. In cases where we use quotes from these sessions elsewhere in the report, fictitious names will be used. Additionally, for certain civil servants, departmental or cluster details will be omitted to minimize the risk of their identification.



**FIELD**

Who is indirectly connected to the problem? What do the people indirectly involved value?



**THEMES**

Which deep human experiences can be recognised in the broader field?



**FRAMES**

How can we act upon the themes? What new visions on/approaches to the problem space can be created?



**FUTURES**

What could be outcomes and value propositions for the stakeholders based on the frames?



**TRANSFORMATION**

How do stakeholders assess the suggested frameworks and future scenarios, and what recommendations can be made for the next steps?



**REFLECTION**

What lessons can be learned from the application of frame innovation, particularly in the context of youth participation in municipal policymaking?

IC1

IY1

IY1

CD1

IO1

CC1

CO1

CY1

CY2

Literature review

CC3

CY3

Literature review

ID1

ID2

Let's dive right into the report!



# ARCHAEOLOGY

Investigating the Problem Space



# 1. ARCHAEOLOGY



In order to reframe the way we approach youth participation in policymaking, it can be valuable to turn our gaze backwards, to the history of this problem space. In this part of the frame innovation method, aptly named “Archaeology,” we will investigate the apparent problem, as well as earlier attempts to solve it. Thus, the goal of this section is to create an overview of how problem owners currently frame and approach the problem, based on the issues they encounter.

Research questions:

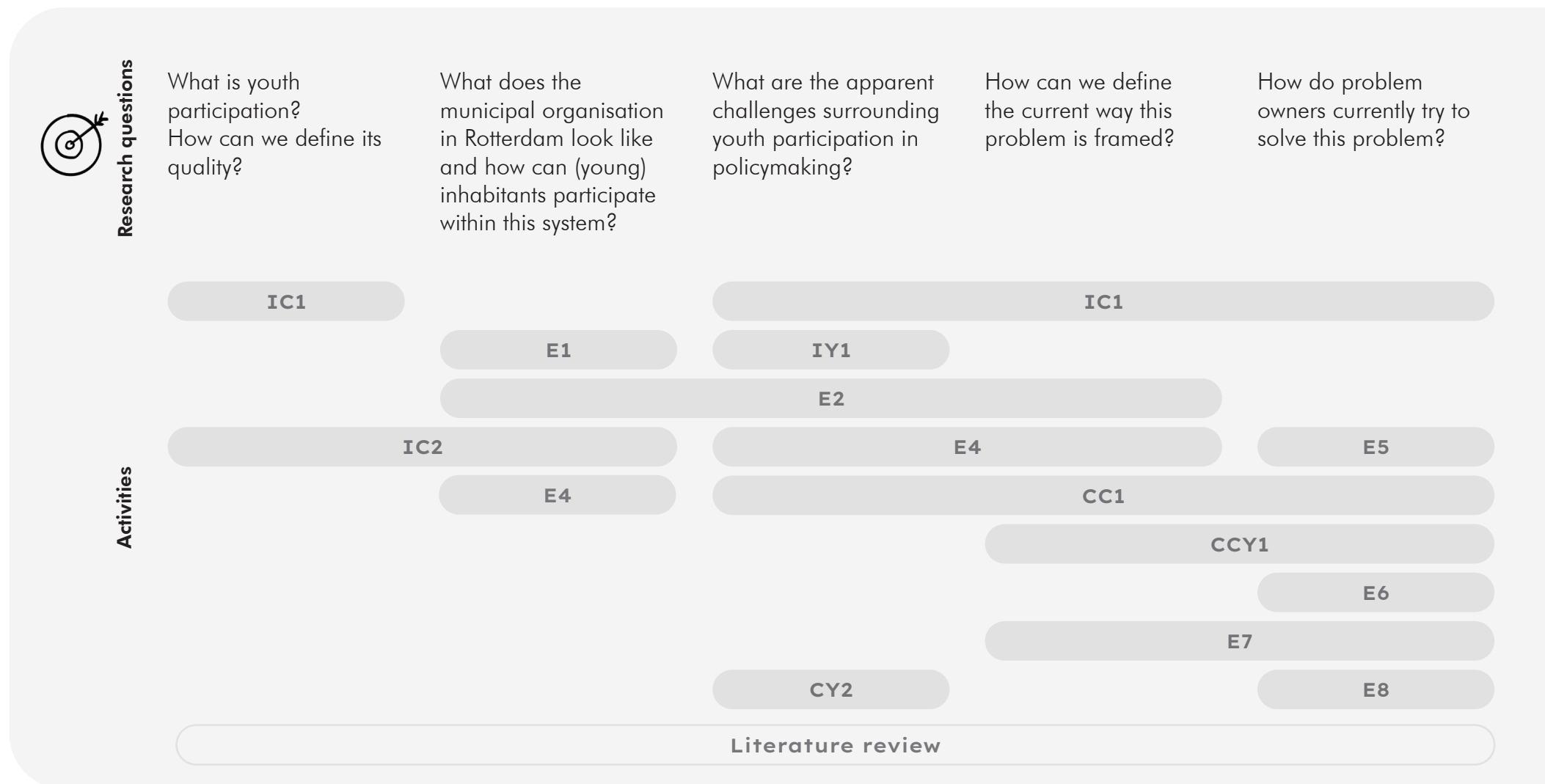
1. What is youth participation? How can we define its quality?
2. What does the municipal organisation in Rotterdam look like and how can (young) inhabitants currently participate within this system?
3. What are the apparent challenges surrounding youth participation in policymaking?
4. How can we define the current way this problem is framed?
5. How do problem owners currently try to solve this problem?

We begin with an exploration of ‘Youth Participation.’ What does it mean when we say the youth are participating in policymaking? How is it different from adult participation? How can we define its quality?

Next, the municipal organisation in Rotterdam will be explained, with a focus on how (young) inhabitants currently participate within this system.

We’ll then focus on the apparent problems and hurdles surrounding youth participation in policymaking. What issues do stakeholders see themselves when it comes to youth participation? This will help to define the current way this problem is framed by stakeholders.

Next, current approaches to the current problem will be explored in two steps. Firstly, the way the municipality and organisations working on youth participation have recommended to approach youth engagement in the past will



**“THIS ANALYSIS IS CRUCIAL, AS WE NEED TO DELVE DEEPLY INTO THE WORLD OF THE PROBLEM OWNER IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE PAST HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM.”**  
- DORST (2015)

be summarised. Next, models and tools of youth participation that have been developed by other IDE students will be explored. However, despite all of these efforts, meaningful youth participation in policymaking still remains a goal for many municipalities. This realization brings us to the crux: that existing solutions have not fully grasped or addressed all of the underlying complexities. This section will end with the current way stakeholders define the problem we defined, now also including the approaches to this current frame.

In essence, the “Archaeology” section aims to get an overview of the historical landscape of youth participation in policymaking. By examining what has been done, we gain a better understanding of the current problem space.



# WHAT IS YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND HOW CAN WE DEFINE ITS QUALITY?

## What is Youth Participation?

The first thing to get clear is what we mean when we talk about youth participation, particularly in the context of municipalities. Checkoway, renowned around the world for his work in youth studies, stated: "Youth participation is a process of involving young people in the institutions and decisions that affect their lives. (2011)"

A similar definition came to the forefront in conversations I had with civil servants. They seem to define it as a range of activities: creating together, deciding together, thinking together. This includes youngsters actively taking part in decision-making, helping to create policies, and making decisions together with others.

**"YOU ASK YOUR CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE OR YOUNG ADULTS WHAT THEY THINK OF THE POLICY, WHAT THEY THINK THE SOLUTION SHOULD BE, WHAT THEY THINK OF THE SOLUTION THAT YOU HAVE COME UP WITH."**

- IMKE, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

Youth participation involves different kinds of efforts. The Commonwealth Youth Programme and UNICEF (2006) emphasized that participation varies due to different cultures and individuals. In essence, participation means people can actively engage in social and developmental activities by their own choice and with knowledge. For example, young people getting together to address issues they care about, adults including young individuals in community organizations, and partnerships between different generations of people. It might look different in various places, but the main idea is that young people are involved in decisions that affect their lives (Checkoway, 1995).

## The difference between youth participation and adult participation

Why is this report focusing on improving youth (age 15-24) participation specifically? When looking at the differences between adult participation and youth participation in policymaking, it's clear that the concept of participation is much alike across age groups. Throughout this report I will reference initiatives and statements about participation with adults, seeing as there are many similarities in, for example, the challenges that occur. In essence, participation by children and young people is no different than participation by adults, however, there are some differences that make it worthwhile to place a focus on youth participation.

**"IT'S EASY TO TALK OVER CHILDREN, OR TO JUST THINK, OH I ALREADY KNOW WHAT IS GOOD FOR THEM."**

- JANNIK, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

**"IT IS EVEN MORE COMPLICATED TO WORK WITH YOUNGSTERS, HOW YOU GO ABOUT ASKING THEM ABOUT POLICY."**

- JANNIK, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

When looking at the differences between adult participation and youth participation in policymaking, these are primarily due to differences in life experiences, priorities, and needs which will be explored later in this report. An important difference to already note is that youngsters face more barriers to participation, including age-based restrictions and societal perceptions about their capabilities. A study by Quintelier (2007) examining differences between age groups suggests that young adults and adults are similar in their political attitudes, with the exception that young people have fewer opportunities for political participation.

Effective participation efforts should consider distinctions while also recognising the diversity of perspectives and needs within both adult and youth populations. It is important to remember that there are many differences within the target group of children and young people. Encouraging inter-generational dialogue and collaboration can be valuable in bridging these differences to create more inclusive and effective policymaking processes.

**"YOUNG PEOPLE CAN OF COURSE BE CALLED A SEPARATE TARGET GROUP, BUT THERE ARE ALSO 100,000 SUBCULTURES WITHIN "YOUNG PEOPLE". SO IT IS ALWAYS DIFFICULT TO THINK IN TERMS OF TARGET GROUPS."**

- NOOR, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

## Benefits participation

Involving young people in decision-making processes offers various well-documented benefits. Youth participation has two main purposes. Firstly, it helps achieve specific legal or policy goals, like providing input for policy documents or giving recommendations to decision-makers.

Including the perspectives of young people on issues that impact them is important for enhancing public services and policies that effectively address their needs (Macauley et al., 2022; Checkoway, 2011). There's a direct link between children exercising their right to be heard and improvements in their situations, for example in healthcare, and protection from harm (European Commission, 2015).



Secondly, it's an important exercise of children's democratic right to participate as citizens in their own right. As noted by Hart, expecting young individuals to become responsible adult citizens without prior exposure to relevant skills and responsibilities is unrealistic (Hart, 1992).

Research has shown that child participation also brings personal and social benefits, it can help young people develop various skills, including political literacy and communication and group skills (Macauley et al., 2022; Checkoway, 2011). Participation can also improve their mental health, their performance in school and their self-confidence. For example, the young people felt more comfortable expressing their views with adults.

Providing children with opportunities for participation not only helps them understand the democratic process but also develops the skills and confidence needed for active engagement (Hart, 1992). Research even suggests a positive connection between childhood participation in political and democratic activities and increased civic involvement in adulthood (European Commission, 2015).

**"PARTICIPATION IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS EMANCIPATION. [...] EMANCIPATION IS BEING ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE, PARTICIPATION IS BEING ABLE TO PARTICIPATE."**

- TIM 'S JONGERS (MOVISIE, 2022)

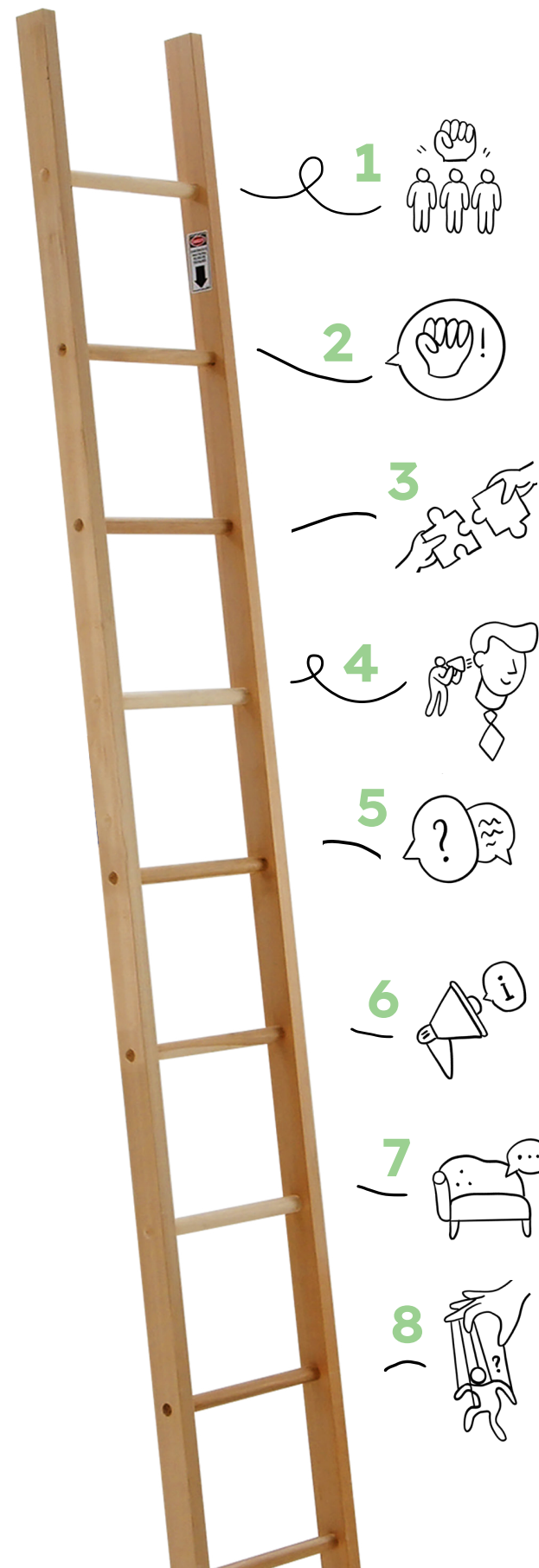
### Considering the quality of participation

Now we have discussed what the importance is of youth participation, we also need to explore when participation is meaningful. How is the quality of participation determined? In 1998, Checkoway stated that participation quality should not only be measured by its size, like the number of participants or activities attended, but also by its impact. This means that individuals should genuinely affect the process, shape specific decisions, or achieve favourable results.

Youth at Heart and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a toolkit for meaningful youth participation (2022) and stated that: "Youth participation is not just about working with young people on matters that are high on our agenda. Young people should have the opportunity to speak out about their own agendas as well. A vital part of the participation process is to ensure young people are properly informed about the issues at hand and the processes they are engaged in."

This idea is inspired by Arnstein's participation ladder. The "Ladder of Participation" is a conceptual framework developed by Sherry Arnstein (1969), later revised by Roger Hart (1992), to illustrate different levels of citizen or community involvement in

decision-making processes. This ladder is used to categorise and analyse the extent to which individuals or groups have a say or influence in various initiatives or projects. The ladder consists of eight rungs, each representing a different level of participation:



**Citizen Control:** The top level represents complete citizen control, where the community or citizens have the final authority and control over decision-making. Authorities support the initiatives of the community instead of leading them.

**Delegated Power:** At this level, power is given to the community or citizens. They can make decisions on their own, but they may work with authorities when necessary.

**Partnership:** Citizens are actively involved in partnership with authorities. They collaborate with authorities, share decision-making, and have a more substantial say in shaping policies and initiatives.

**Placation:** Placation means making small efforts to involve citizens. Their input is taken into account, but it might not have a big impact on the final decisions. Authorities make symbolic gestures to appease the community.

**Consultation:** At this level, authorities ask people or communities for their opinions. They might do surveys, have public meetings, or collect feedback to think about when making decisions. However, the authorities are the ones who make the decisions.

**Informing:** Here, citizens are informed about the decisions that have already been made or will be made, but they are not actively involved in shaping those decisions. It's a one-way flow of information from authorities to the community.

**Therapy:** People are sometimes asked to join programs or initiatives, but their participation is usually just for show: symbolic. It's more like therapy or treatment for them rather than giving them a real say in decision-making.

**Manipulation:** At the lowest rung, citizens have no real influence or power in decision-making. They are simply informed or "manipulated" by authorities, who hold all the control.



The ladder serves as a tool for evaluating the depth and authenticity of participation in various projects or initiatives. It highlights the importance of moving beyond superficial forms of participation (lower rungs) towards more genuine involvement and influence (higher rungs) in decision-making processes. The ladder of participation has been influential in discussions about participation. The problems surrounding youth participation will be explored later on in this chapter, however, I will already note that currently, participation is still sometimes organised in a 'tokenistic' way; youngsters are not given decision power. They are there 'just for show'. It is therefore important to have a clear understanding that there is a difference in quality between different forms of participation and that participation on the lowest two rungs of the ladder might even harm the trust youngsters have in their municipality; increasing the feeling of 'not being heard'. From rung 6 onwards, initiatives can have a positive effect. Not every policy issue requires Delegated Power; in some cases, informing can be sufficient. However, the higher rungs are the most interesting for truly incorporating the insights of participants.

## WHAT DOES THE MUNICIPAL ORGANISATION IN ROTTERDAM LOOK LIKE AND HOW CAN INHABITANTS CURRENTLY INFLUENCE IT?

Now that we've defined what youth participation is and, perhaps more importantly, what meaningful youth participation entails, it's important to look at the current situation in Rotterdam. This section derives from insights retrieved from the literature review, a call with a chief administrative strategist reflecting on municipal politics (IC2), observations during Stadsmakerscongres Rotterdam (E4) and the Photo Exposition at the Timmerhuis (E2).

How can young people actively engage in "thinking, doing, and deciding" within this municipality? To achieve this, it's important to first gain an understanding of how the local government operates and what the policymaking process looks like. This involves providing a brief overview of key stakeholders and important jargon within the municipality. The goal is to examine how and when citizens can currently participate within the municipality of Rotterdam.

### A brief overview of the municipality of Rotterdam

The municipal organization of Rotterdam operates as the local government overseeing the day-to-day management and development of the city. Rotterdam's municipal organization consists of various departments, each responsible for specific aspects of city management. For example, there are departments focused on urban planning, public safety, and social services. These departments implement the policies set by elected officials and work to improve services and infrastructure. At the top of the municipal hierarchy are elected officials. This includes the city council, the mayor, and the aldermen. The city council debates and votes on matters like policies, budgets, and major initiatives.



**"IT MAKES THE ROLE OF POLICY ADVISERS A BIT DUBIOUS, THEY SOMETIMES ADVISE WHAT THEY SHOULD DO THEMSELVES AFTERWARDS."**

- JOS, CIVIL SERVANT (IC2)

**City Council (Gemeenteraad):** The Rotterdam City Council is the highest legislative body in the city (Gemeente Rotterdam, n.d.-a). It consists of council members representing various political parties, and, every four years, they are elected by Rotterdam's residents. The council has the authority to debate, amend, and approve policies. These policies cover a wide range of areas, such as education, transportation, housing, and environmental concerns. Rotterdam, as a large city, also has area committees, which have tasks and responsibilities for part of the city (ProDemos, n.d.). The members of these area committees are elected by the residents of the relevant district.

**The Municipal Clerk (Raadsgriffier):** The municipal clerk is responsible for procedural support and advising the municipal council (Nederlandse Vereniging voor Raadsleden, n.d.). They can also assist in organizing public engagement activities to facilitate citizen participation in local government decision-making.

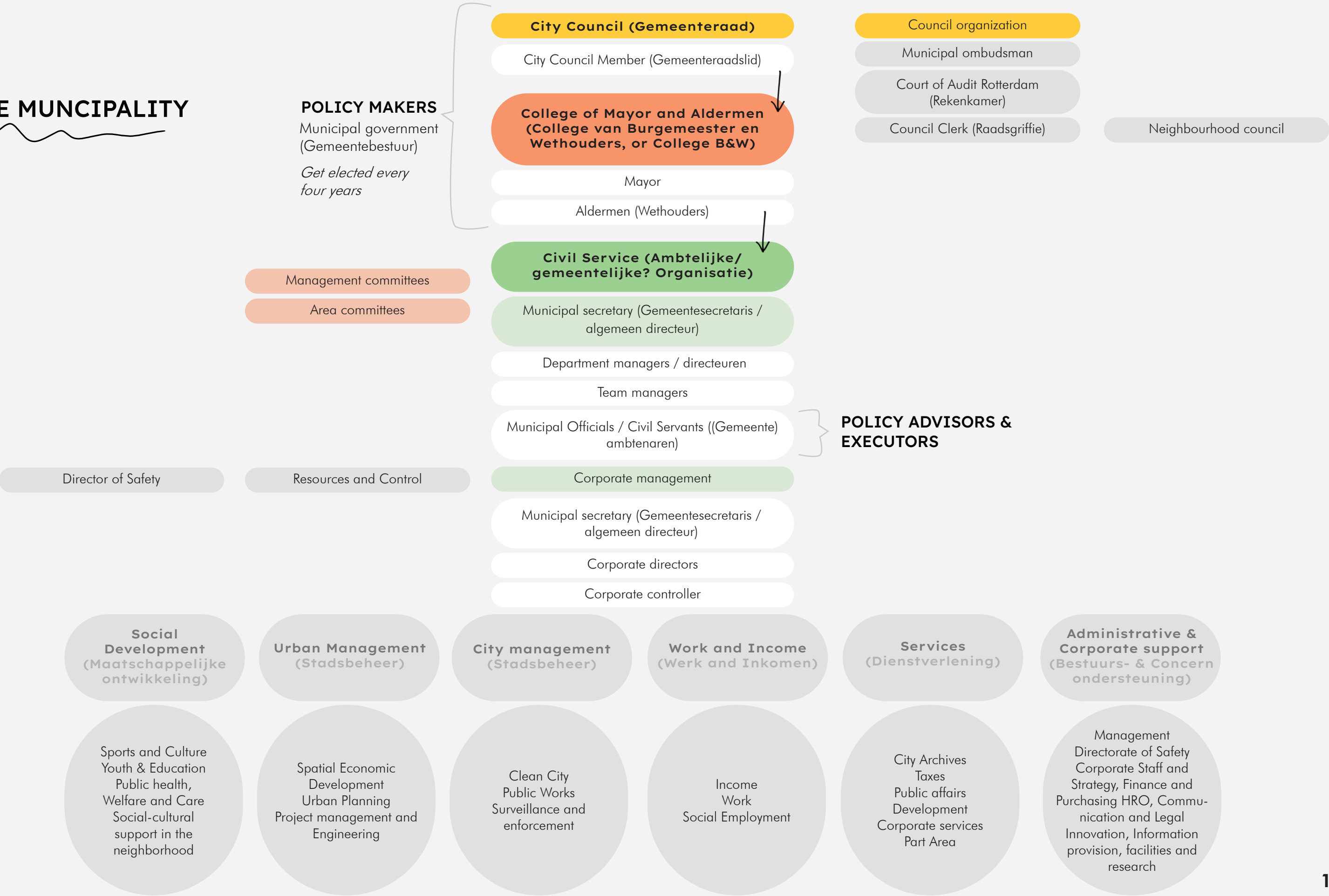
**College of Mayor and Aldermen (College van Burgemeester en Wethouders, or College B&W):** The College of Mayor and Aldermen is the executive branch of the municipality. After the municipal council elections, council members negotiate the number of aldermen each party will provide (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2019). During these negotiations, they collectively decide which responsibilities or portfolios the aldermen will hold. The parties nominate candidate aldermen to the municipal council. Subsequently, the municipal council appoints the candidate as an alderman. The municipal council also oversees the work of the aldermen. So, like the council, the aldermen change every four years. The College of Mayor and Aldermen oversees the implementation of policies and ensures that the policies adopted by the city council are put into practice. Each alderman is typically responsible for specific policy areas (ProDemos, n.d.). The mayor, who is the head of the city council, has both ceremonial and administrative duties. The mayor doesn't vote on policies (ProDemos, n.d.).

**Civil Service (Ambtelijke Organisatie):** Within each department, there are civil servants who carry out the day-to-day tasks necessary to keep the city running efficiently (CPZ, 2021). These civil servants don't change every four years like the elected officials. They manage public facilities, enforce regulations, and provide services to residents. Civil servants are also called policy advisors (or: beleidsadviseurs, beleidsmedewerkers) as they advise the city council on making decisions on policies (CPZ, 2021). The municipal secretary is the first policy advisor and the connection between the council and the official organization. They are ultimately responsible for the civil service. Civil servants play a vital role in the policymaking process by conducting research, providing expertise, drafting policy proposals, and overseeing policy implementation. The civil service helps bridge the gap between the council's policy decisions and their practical application. When talking about participation, civil servants working on policy can often be the ones organising participation. Van Ostaaijen (2023) recommends councils to leave the substantive aspects of participation to the municipal civil service since it can take up much time due to the complexity. This does not alter the fact that the role that the council has in this regard is important, namely checking whether citizen participation is properly organized.



An overview of the municipality and the different roles

THE MUNICIPALITY





## The policymaking process

Policymaking in the municipality typically follows a structured process, often explained in five steps: agenda setting, policy presentation, decision-making, execution, and evaluation & monitoring. I will elaborate on these steps below and also explain the current opportunities for participation at each stage. These opportunities are based on the Dutch participation guide (Participatiewijzer); The Participatiewijzer was created to assist aldermen, municipal officials, council members, and their support staff in having productive discussions about citizen participation and making informed decisions (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken & Democratie in Actie, 2020). This guide outlines specific opportunities currently presented to civil servants. We must acknowledge that these do not encompass the full spectrum of possibilities; many options may not ascend to the top tiers of the participation ladder. These opportunities do reflect the potential approaches presently acknowledged in many municipalities.

### 1. AGENDA SETTING



The policymaking process often starts with the identification of an issue or challenge. This can be initiated by various stakeholders, including city council members, the mayor, city departments, or external factors such as research findings. Once an issue is on the agenda, it undergoes thorough analysis. Data is collected, research is conducted, and stakeholder input is gathered to better understand the problem.

**Opportunities for participation:** Exploring what is going on in the area, generating (new) ideas from residents, letting residents determine policy agendas (priorities of themes).

### 2. POLICY FORMULATION



City departments and policy experts collaborate to develop proposals and draft policies in response to the issue. This stage involves detailed research, data analysis, and consultations with relevant stakeholders. Multiple policy options and alternatives may be considered during this phase. These options are presented so they can be evaluated and discussed.

**Opportunities for participation:** Informing residents about plans, asking residents for advice about specific plans (generating ideas or information), letting residents make their own choice between solutions, letting residents come up with solutions to policy questions themselves.

### 3. DECISION MAKING

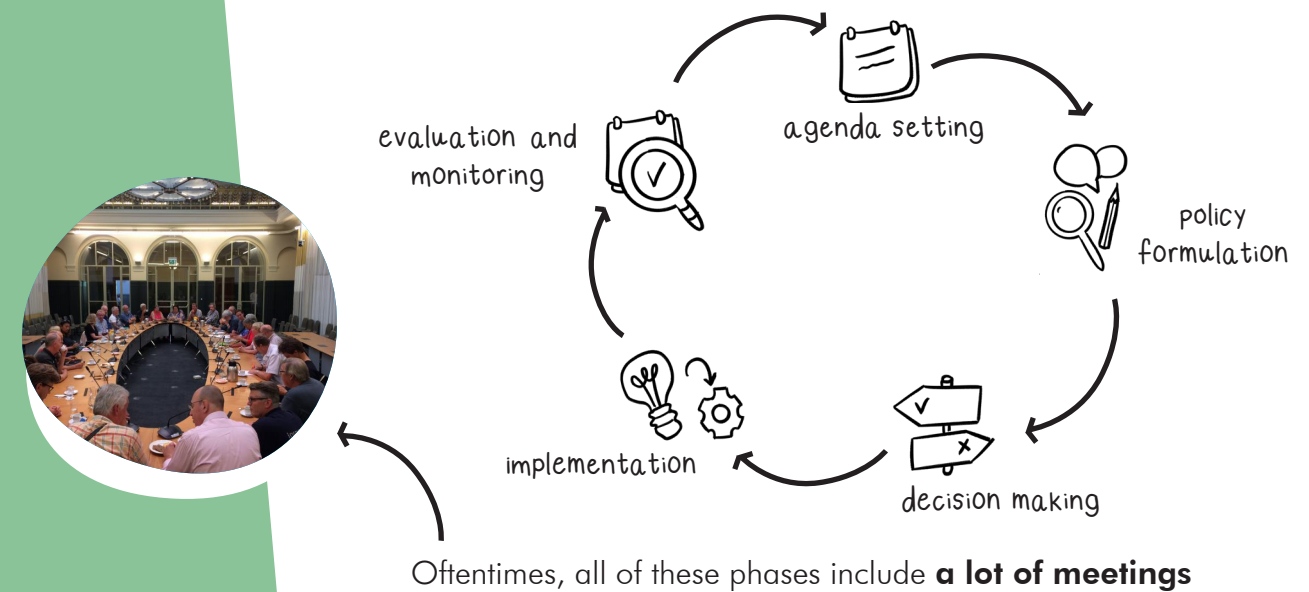


The Rotterdam City Council (Gemeenteraad) is the legislative body responsible for making policy decisions. It consists of elected council members who represent various political parties. Council members review the proposed policies, debate their merits, and may propose amendments. After discussions, the council members vote on whether to adopt the policies. A majority vote is typically required for policy approval.

**Opportunities for participation:** Letting residents make their own choice between different solutions.

## THE PROCESS

The process is often visualised as being iterative, circular even, with evaluating and monitoring leading into a new phase with agenda setting.



### 4. IMPLEMENTATION



Once policies are approved, city departments and agencies are responsible for implementing them. This involves putting the policies into practice and ensuring they align with the city's strategic goals. City departments allocate resources, including budgets and personnel, to carry out the policy initiatives.

**Opportunities for participation:** Adolescents can participate by collaborating with city departments on policy implementation. This may involve volunteering, serving on advisory boards, or providing feedback on specific projects.

### 5. EVALUATION AND MONITORING



Policies are regularly assessed to determine their effectiveness. The results of these evaluations feed back into the policymaking process. Adjustments and improvements may be made based on the evaluation findings.

**Opportunities for participation:** Young people can participate in policy evaluations by sharing their experiences, suggesting improvements, and participating in surveys or focus groups. Feedback mechanisms, such as online portals or community meetings, can facilitate ongoing communication between the public and policymakers, allowing for continuous adjustments to policies based on public input.

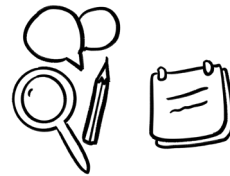


A list was compiled of activities mentioned in the Dutch participation guide (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken & Democratie in Actie, 2020) and labeled them with icons of the steps of the Policymaking Process where they can be applied.

-  **Agenda Setting**
-  **Policy Formulation**
-  **Decision Making**
-  **Implementation**
-  **Evaluation and Monitoring**

### Public Hearing (Inspraakbijeenkomst)

Organized events where citizens provide feedback on municipal policy proposals.



### Online Workshop

Digital collaboration among citizens to discuss and achieve common goals, especially useful when physical meetings are challenging.



### Advisory Council (Adviesraad)

Structured participation involving volunteers who advise local authorities on municipal policy in various domains.



### Information Meeting

A public gathering to exchange information on specific policy topics or practical matters, with an emphasis on informing citizens.



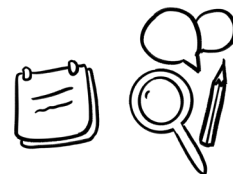
### Right to Challenge (Uitdaagrecht)

Allows citizens to compete with other providers, often commercial, by presenting proposals for taking over government tasks if they believe they can do them better, cheaper, or differently.



### Citizen Summit (Burgertop)

Gatherings for residents to engage in discussions on specific themes or open agendas, aiming to find common ground or take collective action.



### Survey

Questionnaires, either written or verbal, to gather citizens' opinions on various topics.



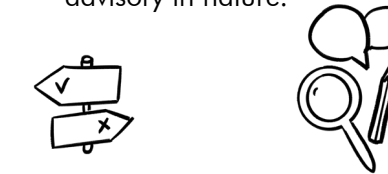
### Village and Neighborhood Council (Dorps- en Wijkraad)

Local representative groups working with local authorities to advocate for community interests.



### Referendum

A vote among residents on significant local issues, indicating support or opposition to government proposals, although they are advisory in nature.



### Citizen Audit (Burgervisitatie)

Involves citizens in policy evaluation, enhancing engagement with local democracy through activities like the V-100 Verantwoordingsdag.



### Field Visit (Werkbezoek)

Officials or politicians visit neighbourhoods to identify local issues and gather citizen input for solutions.



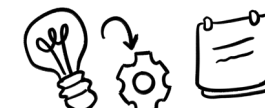
### Participatory Budgeting (Participatief begroten)

Citizens decide on a portion of the municipal budget through phases like agenda setting and decision-making, often using digital tools and meetings.



### Community Initiatives (Maatschappelijke initiatieven)

Small-scale voluntary efforts by citizens for the benefit of society, from local events to park maintenance.



It's interesting to briefly reflect on what the municipality calls participation; from a design perspective surveys and field visits would not be considered typical forms of participation since citizens would not 'participate'. It seems that in municipalities the term is more broadly interpreted as "trying to take into account the opinions of citizens in policymaking". Informing participants about what plans are would also often be considered participation. An alternative term for "participation" could perhaps be "involvement" but given that the term is so well-understood within the municipality—something everyone comprehends—I will maintain its use in this report to describe the current practice of the municipality.



## WHAT IS CURRENTLY BEING DONE AROUND THE MUNICIPALITY OF ROTTERDAM?

Now that we have examined the general steps that the policy process follows and have explored how young people could participate during this process, we observe what is happening in Rotterdam. What can we identify in terms of participation at this moment?

In the Netherlands and some other European countries alike, youth participation systems are mostly initiated by adults and were mainly established in the 1990s and 2000s, often due to laws or regulations, a study by the European Commission (2021) found. Most of these systems seem to be ongoing and provide regular opportunities for children to participate, such as youth councils, parliaments, and regular conferences. Some mechanisms are created for specific purposes, like seeking children's input on a Children's/Youth Strategy, and these are temporary. There are also one-time consultations, studies, or events. Sometimes, project-based and one-time mechanisms use existing permanent structures.

In Rotterdam, these conclusions often appear to hold. Several ongoing initiatives can be identified, and below, I have provided a brief overview of what I have observed happening in the context of participation in the municipality of Rotterdam at this time. This list may not be exhaustive, but it does provide insight into how the municipality has been addressing this topic so far.

### Youth councils

There are several youth councils, such as the Rotterdams Jongerenpanel. The city government periodically presents this panel with online surveys on specific topics to gather young people's opinions. Those who wish to be more actively involved in influencing their local government can join the youth advisory council, Young010 (Young010, n.d.). Since their official appointment in the city hall council chamber on February 23, 2017, Young010 has been the primary liaison for youth affairs in Rotterdam. Young010 fosters dialogues with both their peers and adults in the city. This council provide a platform for youth to voice their concerns, offer recommendations, and actively participate in decision-making processes.

### Focus groups

Additionally, the city government maintains focus groups, also referred to as sounding board groups (klankbordgroepen). An example is the youngsters that fall under the action plan "Vastpakken en Niet meer Loslaten," which focuses on vulnerable



young people aged 16 to 27 (CCY1). A sounding board group gives the municipality the opportunity to listen to the concerns and needs of youngsters (Stichting Nederlands Platform Burgerparticipatie en Overheidsbeleid, 2023).

### Children's mayor and youth council

Since 2022, the city of Rotterdam has introduced a Children's Mayor and Council (Kinderburgemeester en Kinderraad, n.d.). Dominique has been serving as the Children's Mayor since September 2023. The city also boasts a YouthCouncil, currently comprising Yara, Alissia, Mehdi, and Kadiatu. The Children's Mayor serves as the voice for all children in Rotterdam, providing a platform for youth to share their ideas with the city. They engage with decision-makers and advocate for issues that are important to the youth of Rotterdam.

### Civic education programmes

Schools and community organisations may implement civic education programs to educate young people about the political process, government structures, and their rights and responsibilities as citizens. All schools in Rotterdam have made agreements about citizenship education in the manifesto 'Schools: a safe training ground for citizenship'; this is an initiative from the youth policy framework 'Education 010' by the municipality of Rotterdam. Goals for students are participating constructively in society, practising agreeing and disagreeing and forming and giving your opinion (Gemeente Rotterdam - Onderwijs 010, 2020).

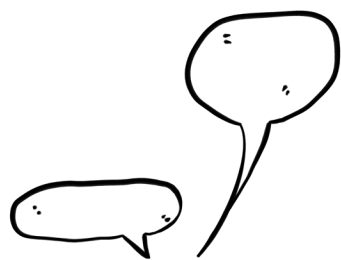
### Neighbourhood councils

Neighbourhood councils (wijkenraden) advocate for the community. They link the neighbourhood and the municipality. Rotterdam has 39 neighbourhood councils and 291 neighbourhood council members (Wijkenraden, n.d.). Through these councils, residents, organisations, and businesses can bring attention to matters that are important to them within the community. It's worth noting that young people as young as 16 years old can participate in these neighbourhood councils (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2023). These councils are elected by residents every four years.

### Online panels/surveys

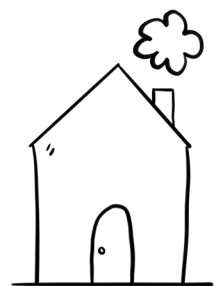
Digital platforms and social media are increasingly used to reach and mobilise young people. Municipalities are dedicated to creating online initiatives to encourage citizen participation, as highlighted by Romero et al. in their 2022 study. Rotterdam has a website called "Mijn Rotterdam" where residents can participate and have a say (Gemeente Rotterdam, n.d.). This pertains to plans and projects initiated by the municipality that have an impact on neighbourhoods. There are questionnaires or polls for projects or people can provide a brief response to a question. There is also information about when you can provide





**“THE PARTICIPATION DEPARTMENT GIVES ADVICE ON WHAT A PARTICIPATION PROCESS CAN LOOK LIKE. AND IN THAT SENSE, WE ARE NOT SPECIALISTS IN YOUTH PARTICIPATION OR HAVE SEPARATE TOOLS FOR YOUTH PARTICIPATION OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT.”**

- SOUFIAN, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)



feedback on the plans and whether there is an information meeting scheduled. Additionally, neighbourhood councils can use “My Rotterdam” to engage with residents and gauge their concerns.

Department and training for participation within the municipality Rotterdam has a department for participation. Finding information about this department online appears to be difficult, but from an interview by Irene Fierloos and observations by Betsie Loeffen, we can learn what this department does. It mainly supports civil servants across various clusters within the municipality. There is also participation training that civil servants can take. However, the participation department is not target group-specific; they do not have separate advice for participation with youth. They mainly have a general advisory role.

### Youth-Friendly Spaces

Designing physical spaces within communities where young people can gather, discuss issues, and plan initiatives can encourage youth participation. These spaces are often equipped with resources and support. An example of a youth hub is Excelsior Jongerenhub Schuttersveld, intended for youth from the neighbourhood. In addition to a football field in the former swimming pool, a learning centre has been set up, learning workplaces, a room for private conversations and an E-zone where young people can play games (Excelsior Foundation, 2022).

Another example that is still in development is the HefHouse (E1). This youth hub emerges from a collaborative effort by Erasmus University Rotterdam, Hogeschool Rotterdam, and Albeda College. Its mission is to connect academia with South Rotterdam’s young population, aiming to tackle educational and social disparities. (Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2021).

### Collaborations with organisations that focus on youth participation

The municipality frequently collaborates with youth participation-focused organizations, some of which are non-profit. Irene Fierloos conducted twelve interviews with representatives of non-profit organizations in Rotterdam and other parts of the Netherlands dedicated to enhancing youth participation in policymaking (Fierloos et al., 2023). Some examples are Tienskip (CY1) which started in Friesland but now works in different regions (Tienskip, 2023) and Speaking Minds which was founded by Save the Children (Speaking Minds, 2023). These organizations may provide advice to government institutions, youth care, and social organizations on shaping youth participation and facilitating it. Others organize youth participation activities around specific themes, such as mental health. The input from young people is communicated to local, provincial, and/or national authorities. Within these organizations youth participation also takes various forms (some we have discussed before), including youth councils,

youth panels, online surveys, participation events on specific topics, mentoring youth ambassadors within municipalities, delivering civic education lessons, promoting civic service and hosting brainstorming sessions by and for young people.

### Events and activities to inspire

Events are often organized in collaboration with existing systems, youth councils, focus groups, and organizations dedicated to enhancing youth participation.

An example is Jongerentop010: On a specially scheduled day, hundreds of young people engaged in conversations about topics that are truly important and current to them. In collaboration with the Youth Advisory Council Young010, supported by LOKAAL, and the municipal council’s office of the City of Rotterdam, they formulated points for the municipality to work on. (Jongerentop010 et al., 2021).

Another example of an event I attended is the #MijnStemTelt event (E6). During this event, experts in the field engaged in a panel discussion. A podcast was produced from this event to inspire anyone interested in working on participation initiatives. Or the Tienskip day, where 100 students from MBO Rijnland took on the challenge of addressing societal issues they identified in their communities and municipal officials attended to hear their ideas.



### Conclusion

Again, this is not a complete overview of everything that happens within the municipality of Rotterdam, but it does give an impression of the systems within the municipality. What is already happening in the field of youth participation? What stands out is that there are already quite a few established systems within the municipality, and in addition, events where a lot of tips are shared. In light of the considerable efforts being made, it begs the question: why is participation not resulting in more favourable outcomes? Nevertheless, despite these established systems and informative events, stakeholders consistently encounter certain challenges. These challenges will be explored in the next part.



## WHAT ARE THE MENTIONED CHALLENGES SURROUNDING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLICYMAKING?

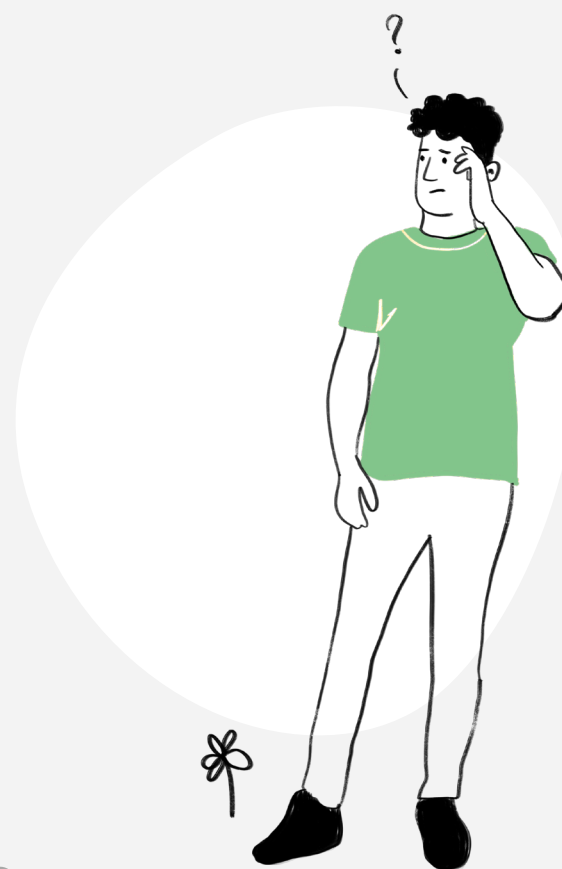
Recognising the importance of youth participation in policymaking and having seen what is already happening in the municipality of Rotterdam, several challenges persist. This part of the Archaeology will explore what challenges stakeholders mention to encounter. The analysis of the interviews (IC1) was conducted thoroughly, with a focus on extracting segments where participants discussed the challenges they face. Additionally, I examined notes taken during the Creative Session with the Advisory Group and Civil Servants (CCY1), the session at the Timmerhuis (CC1), the Tienskip event (CY1), and at Blaak (CY2). All these pieces of data were compiled and systematically categorized. This involved clustering together similar points raised across the different data sources, including notes from events and interviews, as well as findings from literature research. The clustering process was aimed at identifying recurring themes and insights, which were then rigorously compared and contrasted to draw meaningful conclusions. This will help to understand how stakeholders currently frame the problem space. Next to this, it's a good way to gain a first understanding of what stakeholders value and need for meaningful participation - we will delve more into these values and needs in the chapter Context.

### The gap between youngsters and civil servants

In a study by I&O Research amongst 3.446 youngsters in the Netherlands, more than half of the young people believe there is a gap between them and policymakers because policymakers think 'they are always right' (I&O Research et al., 2021). Young people also indicate that, in their opinion, policymakers do not have much interest in them.

'Politicians do not regard young people as important. At least, that is the feeling among young people.' (I&O Research et al., 2021)

A similar point is made by Professor Kaulingfreks in a lecture about participation (Movisie, 2023): Young people have a low level of trust in the government. She also talks about the question of where this distrust comes from. A common factor she mentions is that young people feel that the government makes decisions that affect their lives, but the government officials responsible for these decisions lack insight into how their lives unfold. They perceive that these officials lack empathy and personal understanding of their experiences and have preconceived agendas. Both young people and administrators agree that they



don't understand each other very well (I&O Research et al., 2021).

I also observed this during various design and research activities (sessions: Soundingboard group CCY1, Tienskip CY1, Blaak CY2). Young people may believe policymakers don't trust them and take them seriously, they may suspect that even if they participate: they won't be heard. Societal perspectives and attitudes regarding children, their capabilities, and their potential for meaningful participation represent significant obstacles to creating impactful and inclusive children's involvement. Children have mentioned that adults often lack trust in their ability to participate, viewing them as too young or as lacking the capacity and knowledge required for meaningful engagement (Janta et al., 2021) (sessions: Tienskip CY1, Blaak CY2, interview IY1).

The concerns of some youngsters about the distrust in their capabilities can correspond with the view of some policymakers, who lack trust in young people's abilities to participate, believing they are too young or inexperienced.

**"IN THE CASE OF YOUNG PEOPLE, I THINK PERHAPS WHAT IS AT PLAY IS THE IDEA THAT WE HAVE ABOUT THEM: THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH LIFE EXPERIENCE OR TOO LITTLE SENIORITY, SO TO SPEAK."** - DANIËL, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

On the other way around, policymakers may think that citizens and young people view them negatively. Among policymakers, there's the perception that citizens and young people see them as "bad guys" or "boosdoeners". Some worry about a lack of common ground. They also may perceive young people as disinterested. (Session Timmerhuis CC1)

Additionally, there are instances where they worry about a lack of common ground, feeling it might be harder to establish positive interactions with young individuals. This can make it less appealing to engage with citizens. Language barriers may also make communication between young people and civil servants more difficult.

**"I WOULD LIKE TO WORK TOGETHER WITH THE MUNICIPALITY, BUT I DON'T THINK THEY WOULD ASK ME AND I ALSO DON'T THINK THAT IF THEY DID, THEY WOULD LISTEN TO ME."** - LISE, YOUNGSTER (CY2)



**"I DON'T KNOW IF I WOULD TALK TO SOMEONE FROM THE MUNICIPALITY. MY OPINION WOULDN'T CHANGE ANYTHING ANYWAY. THEY'D PROBABLY THINK I'M CHILDISH. OR, WELL, THAT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING."** - AMIRA, YOUNGSTER (CY1)

**"IT IS OFTEN SAID: 'THE MUNICIPALITY IS THE CULPRIT OF EVERYTHING AND WE ARE DOING A TERRIBLE JOB.'"** - KARIM, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

**"THOSE YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T REALLY SEE ME AS A LIKE-MINDED PERSON. AND LOOK, I DON'T WANT TO SAY WHAT ISN'T NOW... IT CAN ALWAYS HAPPEN, OF COURSE, BUT I DO THINK IT REQUIRES INVESTMENTS. YOU CAN'T THINK, I'LL JUST WALK OVER TO A YOUNG PERSON AND HAVE A GOOD CONVERSATION WITH THEM."** - BENTHE, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)



**"AND ALL THOSE CHANGES... YOU KNOW, NEW COUNCILLORS ALL THE TIME, WELL, ALL THAT DOESN'T HELP EITHER. YOU HAVE TO CHANGE COURSE EVERY TIME. SO THAT IS ALSO DIFFICULT."**

- LOÏS, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

**"THE WAY IN WHICH WE HAVE EVERYTHING ARRANGED IN THE MUNICIPALITY IS ALWAYS SO COMPLICATED AND DIFFICULT AND SOMETIMES EVERYTHING TAKES FOREVER AND IT ALL HAS TO BE DONE YESTERDAY. BEFORE YOU ARRANGE ANYTHING, YOU MUST FIRST HAVE HAD 27 CONVERSATIONS WITH THIS AND THAT PERSON."**

- LOÏS, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

**"I JUST DON'T HAVE THE ENERGY FOR THIS. NO TIME, NO DESIRE. I'D RATHER BE AT WORK OR AT HOME."**

- IMARA, YOUNGSTER (CY1)

Some young people may indeed see policymakers as "boosdoeners", leading to disengagement. In a British study of adolescents by Henn and Foard (2013), young people viewed politics as a complex and distant process, seemingly disconnected from their daily experiences. They saw politicians as self-centred elites who lacked interest in youth concerns. This also corresponds with my findings during activities (sessions: Tienskip CY1, Blaak CY2, interview IY1).

"There are only crooks (zakkenvullers) at the municipality, they cannot be trusted." (session Tienskip CY1)

It is also important to note that opportunities for youth participation often lack flexibility - they are often one-size-fits-all (Gazit & Perry-Hazan, 2020), which makes it harder for certain groups of young people to participate in a way that fits their needs.

### Complexity of the Municipality

Secondly, the municipality's structure and routines may hinder collaboration and create confusion. The municipality's civil service department is divided into clusters, each responsible for different public tasks, focusing on supplying what is needed. Many programs and projects are happening at the same time in different parts of the city and the organization, often without clear connections between them. Political agendas, which change every four years, add another layer of complexity, as different city councils can change project priorities and directions based on personal interests or political motivations. Project team members are often limited by their established work routines, work within their specific groups, and tend to see issues as individual "problems." It is not clear who does what and it is difficult to get an overview of everything that is happening. This can cause confusion among employees and citizens.

### Practical barriers

Participation also demands significant time and effort from the side of policymakers (Richards et al., 2004), involving activities like organising events and informing the community about project progress. Some policymakers mention that they view youth participation as too complicated. They might believe they can make decisions more efficiently on their own.

**"I THINK PARTICIPATION IS VERY IMPORTANT, DON'T GET ME WRONG. BUT IT MUST ALSO BE DOABLE. AND WHEN I THINK OF WHAT MY WORK LOOKS LIKE AT THE MOMENT WITH ALL THAT PRESSURE. YES, SOMETIMES IT IS JUST NOT POSSIBLE TO REALISE IT."** - IMKE, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

Young people also mention they have other things to do with their time and energy (Richards et al., 2004). (Session Tienskip CY1, Blaak CY2).



**"I DON'T WANT TO TALK TO THE MUNICIPALITY. THEN I WOULD HAVE TO DELVE INTO COMPLICATED THINGS AND I DON'T HAVE THE ENERGY OR TIME FOR THAT."**

- THOMAS, YOUNGSTER (CY2)

### Self-confidence

Engaging with citizens, navigating social networks, and working effectively at the local level can also be challenging skills for some civil servants to acquire. Not every civil servant may naturally possess the disposition to organise participation sessions, collaborating or co-creating with youth, participation involves relinquishing control, ownership, and decision-making power, which may be unfamiliar territory for policymakers. Policymakers mention a lack of guidance, time and training for organising participation sessions.

Some young people might believe that they are not smart enough to participate (Session Tienskip CY1, Blaak CY2). Nearly half of the participants in the study by Henn and Foard (2013) felt insecure about their political engagement skills and knowledge.

**"I DON'T KNOW ENOUGH. TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO THE MUNICIPALITY, YOU HAVE TO KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT."** - MAYA, YOUNGSTER (CY2)

### Empty Participation or no participation at all

If the threshold is high enough, civil servants might decide to refrain from organising participation and young people from participating. Or policymakers may engage in superficial participation, where they claim involvement without genuinely considering young people's input, making it ineffective. This issue reflects a tokenistic approach where societal attitudes downplay children's capabilities for meaningful participation. There is a risk of "empty participation," or "tokenistic participation" where policymakers claim involvement while disregarding young people's input, essentially rendering it ineffective (Arnstein, 1969).

Some youngsters mention they "know" when participation is "empty" (Session Soundingboard group CCY1). There can be a fear that a decision may already have been taken, despite policymakers claiming that they offer participants the chance to influence that decision (Richards et al., 2004).

### Lack of feedback

For youngsters, the outcomes of youth input can remain unclear, with a lack of feedback on what happened with their input (Session Soundingboard group CCY1). Even if policymakers do implement their suggestions, there's often no follow-up with the participants. This lack of communication can lead to a sense of dissatisfaction with not being heard (McMellon & Tisdall, 2020).





## Lack of inclusivity

A crucial issue is the struggle to ensure proper representation in youth participation, which may reinforce existing power imbalances. Research consistently shows disparities in involvement among adolescents, with those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, girls, and those who have experienced violence less likely to participate (Checkoway, 2011; Horwath et al., 2012; McMellon & Tisdall, 2020).

*“YOU CAN FILL A ROOM WITH 150 RESIDENTS. THAT MIGHT SEEM GREAT, AND EVERYONE IS TALKING. BUT IF YOU LOOK A LITTLE MORE CRITICALLY, YOU WILL SEE THAT THERE ARE 150 ALMOST THE SAME TYPE OF PEOPLE. SO YOU DIDN'T INVITE OR GET THE ENTIRE NEIGHBOURHOOD THERE IN ALL ITS COLOURS.”*

- SOUFIAN, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

An educational divide affects both young people and adults. Those with lower educational levels are less likely to engage in political activities due to differences in psychological engagement, skill development, and the transmission of values and social identity. Additionally, young people with immigration backgrounds may face barriers such as cultural and language differences in political participation.

In summary, those individuals who actively participate are not usually representative of the population overall.

## HOW CAN WE DEFINE THE CURRENT WAY THIS PROBLEM IS FRAMED?

As previously noted, Rotterdam is bustling with activities aimed at fostering participation, including youth hubs, focus groups, and various events. These initiatives are noteworthy, and the enthusiasm surrounding the topic of participation is palpable. Yet, despite these efforts, the scope of facilitated participation remains somewhat constrained. In essence, while the initiatives set a positive groundwork, the depth and breadth of meaningful participation orchestrated by civil servants appear to be significantly restricted.

In Rotterdam's policymaking landscape, key challenges in youth participation persist. There seems to be an experienced gap between young people and civil servants: both young people and administrators seem to acknowledge a mutual lack of understanding.

The municipality's complex structure further complicates collaboration. Its segmented clusters, changing political agendas, and unclear roles create confusion among both employees and citizens. Policymakers view youth participation as a burdensome task due to its time-consuming nature. Young people also cite a lack of time and energy for engaging in municipal matters.

Self-confidence issues arise for both civil servants and youth. Officials struggle with skills for effective engagement, while young people

doubt their political knowledge. Additionally, superficial “Empty Participation” where young people's input is not genuinely considered, together with the lack of feedback post-engagement, contribute to feelings of disenfranchisement among the youth.

In conclusion, when people are currently talking about “improving youth participation” they are talking about **bridging the gap and creating more meaningful and inclusive youth participation in policymaking**. At present, the problem space might be framed as follows:

**YOUNG PEOPLE ARE NOT SUFFICIENTLY HEARD IN POLICYMAKING FOR ISSUES THAT AFFECT THEIR LIVES.**

It's considered a problem of **accessibility** and **organisational culture (including guidance, time, and examples)**.

This current, perhaps unconscious, framing drives how people currently try to solve the issues surrounding this topic. Next, we will examine previous efforts to address this problem. By analyzing prior work by IDE students' insights and frequently mentioned recommendations from reports, events, podcasts and more we can gain an even clearer understanding of how people have previously approached and recommended to approach this problem. This understanding of past approaches is necessary to develop a fresh perspective or “frame” for tackling the problem anew.





## HOW DO PROBLEM OWNERS CURRENTLY TRY TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

We have now outlined how the problem space is currently framed: “Young people are not sufficiently heard in policymaking for issues that affect their lives.” The remaining research question is: How do problem owners currently try to solve this problem? We have previously discussed what is already happening in the municipality of Rotterdam regarding youth participation, but evidently, this does not fully resolve the issue. Young people still feel unheard. This section of the report is divided into two parts. When reviewing earlier reports about youth participation, watching lectures by experts, or revisiting suggestions from youth advisory boards, it’s clear that recommendations often remain unchanged. The first section summarizes these suggested practices and tips which, apparently, are challenging to implement. In the second part, I will examine graduation reports from IDE students who have investigated this or similar problems and proposed solutions.

This section will lead to an overview of the current or proposed approach to this problem space. It’s crucial to avoid seeking solutions in ways that have already been attempted or tried as we move towards exploring possible solutions. The section will conclude with a more detailed overview of the current framing and attempts to address the problem space.

### Overview earlier recommendations

During my research – attending podcast recordings, reading reports, watching lectures – it became clear that recommendations for municipalities to improve youth participation are often the same. I have mapped out these recommendations. This is not a complete overview, since mapping all new insights and recommendations could be a graduation project in itself. However, simply reiterating or presenting these recommendations will not be the solution so it is useful to have an understanding of what is already being recommended.



### Common recommendations I found...

- **Be transparent and manage expectations:** make it clear to residents, council members and other stakeholders in advance what the process looks like, what the content is about, what room for influence participants have and how their input can influence the final decision-making. Transparency is key. (Rekenkamer Utrecht, 2022; Stichting Alexander, 2022; Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties & Nr. 5 Foundation, 2021; Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2023)
- **Provide clear feedback:** Provide feedback to residents and council members in the meantime and afterwards about what has been done with the input from stakeholders. Explain why the input did or did not lead to changes in the end product. (Rekenkamer Utrecht, 2022; Jongerentop010 et al., 2021; NJR & JOGG, 2023)
- **Consider young people as experts and think of rewards:** Consider experiential expertise as equally important as process expertise. Also, consider rewards for this expertise. This could be money or a gift voucher, but also an internship (Movisie & Kaulingfreks, 2023; Stichting Alexander, 2022; NJR & JOGG, 2023; NJI, n.d.)
- **Match your language and way of communication** (emails or social media) to the people participating (Stichting Alexander, 2022; Meeting ‘hard to reach groups’: E5)
- **Show a part of yourself in what you do, be vulnerable** (Stichting Alexander, 2022; Meeting ‘hard to reach groups’: E5)
- **Align with the context of young people** (Stichting Alexander, 2022; Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations & Nr. 5 Foundation, 2021), connect with their experiences, both in form and content.
- **Keep participation activities concrete, tangible, and accessible** (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations & Nr. 5 Foundation, 2021)
- **Be open to fresh perspectives and avoid overly rigid frameworks** (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations & Nr. 5 Foundation, 2021; Movisie, 2023b)
- **Ensure a quick turnaround time** (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations & Nr. 5 Foundation, 2021)
- **Talk about your (shared) vision as a municipality;** Be clear to yourself and your team about why you want to implement participation and what is required for successful participation. (Movisie, 2023b; NJR & JOGG, 2023; NJI, n.d.)
- **Learn by doing.** Don’t linger too long in writing policy documents about using expert knowledge or other forms of youth participation. Start small and learn as you go (Dienstverlening 010 & Gemeente Rotterdam, 2023; VNG & Het ministerie van BZK, n.d.; MijnStemTelt event: E6).



I will include these recommendations at the end of the chapter for an overview: in what ways have others attempted or suggested to find solutions?



## What are earlier attempts to solve this problem?

I have reviewed graduation reports from fellow IDE students available in the TU Delft repository. Some have devised solutions for (youth) participation, while others have developed solutions for problems that overlap in certain ways. I will provide a brief overview of each project and will conclude this section with the main takeaways, including the earlier insights from the section before: in what ways have others attempted or suggested to find solutions? A more complete overview can be found in Appendix C.



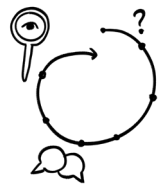
### 1. IMAGO (HEIN GIJSMAN):

A card game involving role-playing, listening to each other's stories and discussing to help young people understand their own assumptions and attitudes, particularly regarding diet, exercise, and bodies (Gijzman, 2021).



### 2. BUURTHUIS (LINDA SMIT):

A physical booth in a public space where people can share their opinions through voice messages, written comments, and responses to statements. The design aims to simplify the development process of a citizen's initiative within the public space, making it accessible to interested residents.



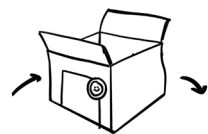
### 3. WIJ-MODEL (EVA LEGEMAATE):

A systemic co-design process for civil servants in Delft to implement youth well-being policies (Legemaate, 2020). The model involves seven steps - like: envisioning an ideal future without the problem - to help policymakers address complex municipal issues, such as adolescent loneliness.



### 4. MEESTER BURGER (ANNA SMULDERS):

A toolkit to play with within the classroom setting, with students working in groups of four. A municipal councillor introduces the class to the topics they will be working on then students explore their own opinions, engage in conversations, consider alternative perspectives, and generate ideas to positively impact the chosen theme (Smulders, 2023).



### 5. WIJKBOX (PUCK GRÄFFNER):

A box filled with questions; a tangible platform for citizens to express their opinions, dreams, and concerns about their neighbourhoods (Gräffner, 2022). This box was distributed by civil servants, promoting a more personal and direct approach to engagement. As the boxes circulated among citizens, they not only collected input but also tried to facilitate social connections within the community.



### 6. DESIGN YOUR DREAM MUNICIPALITY (EVA PEET):

Youngsters design their dream municipality, add elements related to the energy transition, and post it online (Peet, 2022). Everyone can vote on their favourite design, the winners brainstorm with the municipality about implementation.



### 7. RAKE PRAAT (MARIJN VAN STEEN):

A toolkit to help students and politicians define potential projects together. With four co-creation sessions, each with its own focus, secondary vocational education students (MBO students) and politicians navigate together from problem to solution (Marijn, 2022). A session plan can be designed by the municipality and schools with the use of the Activity Cards.

Let's summarise the main takeaway from all of these projects. What are common themes?

1. Accessibility: Several projects emphasise the importance of making participation accessible to individuals, whether they are young people, students, or residents by bringing it inside classrooms or to their doorstep.
2. Engagement Platforms: Many projects introduce digital or tangible platforms (cards, board games, boxes) to facilitate engagement and communication between different stakeholders.
3. Structured Processes: Projects like the WIJ-Model, Rake Praat and Design Your Dream Municipality implement structured processes to guide participants through research, collaboration, and implementation stages.
4. Fostering Understanding: Projects such as Meester Burger and Imago aim to enhance understanding, whether it's understanding municipal themes or personal aspirations.

Let's integrate these themes with the earlier recommendations described in the previous section to form a conclusion about previous efforts.

## Conclusion of chapter



When considering all previous efforts and comparing them with the current perception of the problem, a pattern emerges. The problem space, framed as "Young people are not sufficiently heard in policymaking for issues that affect their lives," is partly approached through the lens of civil servants' attitudes. Efforts focus on providing tips or structure for their processes, emphasizing clear feedback, learning by doing, goal-setting, language use, opening up, and incentive systems. Additionally, solutions revolve around (communication) tools aimed at fostering understanding between groups; some projects introduce digital or tangible platforms (cards, board games, boxes) to facilitate engagement, with the ultimate goal of increasing accessibility.

However, these approaches appear to fall short of addressing the entire problem space, as the challenge of initiating meaningful participation continues to persist. Perhaps managing the time constraints of both policymakers and youngsters remains a challenge. The issue might also involve the discoverability of these projects. Or maybe they seem to overlook the emotional constraints of stakeholders, fears and thresholds might remain unaddressed. In any case, this emphasises it could be valuable to reconsider how we can reframe the problem space. The next chapter, "Paradoxes," will shed further light on why the problem, as currently and previously framed, is so challenging to address.



# PARADOXES

Discovering the Deadlocks



# 2. PARADOXES




In this section, we carry on to explore the problem definition. When analysing youth participation in policymaking, paradoxes will be discovered – situations where conflicting ideas or realities coexist, making the path to effective solutions challenging. This section titled “Paradoxes,” will delve into these contradictions to explore the complexities they present in the context of youth engagement in Rotterdam. These are the deadlocks that keep stakeholders from moving forward. By formulating these deadlocks, it will become more clear why this problem is so hard to solve. They also provide more explanation about why the solutions or recommendations previously described have ultimately not been able to fully solve the complex problem. The research question of this chapter is:

**What are the key paradoxes that make this problem hard to solve?**

This question is answered by the research conducted in the archaeology section. A deep understanding and immersion into the issues at play helped me to better comprehend where the deadlocks lie. This was achieved through the discussion of current issues in group conversations and consistently pondering the question: What are the challenges stakeholders are facing? Kees Dorst suggests that “it has proven practical to express the paradox as a clash of rationalities in a series of ‘because’ statements (Dorst, 2015).” An example from his book is:

- Because* the Sydney Opera House is such a special place and iconic building, it attracts protesters who seek attention.
- Because* these protests need to be prevented, the podium section is closed off to everybody.
- Because* the podium section is closed off to everybody, the Sydney Opera House cannot be fully experienced as a special place.

By writing down different problems and insights from the archaeology section in ‘because’ statements and reasoning through them, paradoxes emerged. Some proved to be valid, others less so. Through iteration and reflection within my research team, four important paradoxes came to the fore. The paradoxes mentioned are illustrative rather than exhaustive; the four outlined effectively underscore the complexity of resolving this issue.

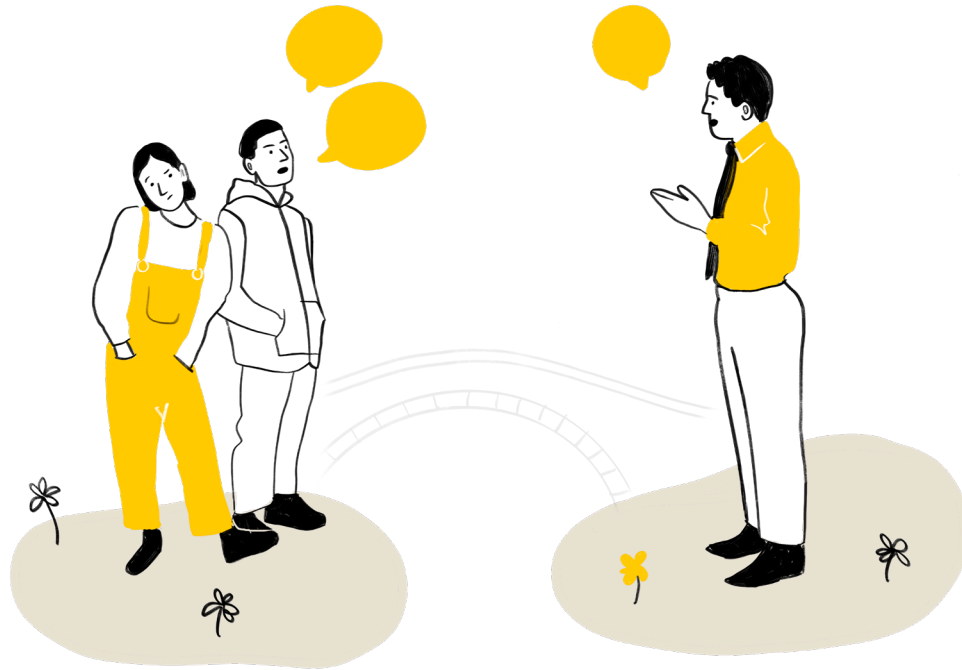
 Research question

What are the key paradoxes that make this problem hard to solve?

Activities

- E5
- CC1
- CCY1
- E6
- E7





### 1. To bridge the existing gap between the municipality and youngsters, there must already be a bridge

*Because* young people and policymakers are far removed from each other's world, it is essential for good policy that they enter into discussions with each other.

*Because* they need to have meaningful conversations, it is important that there is first a certain degree of insight into each other's world.

&

*Because* policymakers aim to build trust with young people, they involve them in decision-making.

*Because* past experiences of empty participation have bred scepticism, young people may be hesitant to engage fully.



### 2. Youngster's lack of experience and abilities prevent them from acquiring expertise and abilities

*Because* youngsters (perceived) lack experience in politics and certain abilities, they are not often invited or trusted to participate in decision-making.

*Because* youngsters are not included to participate, they are not offered the opportunities to gain the experience and abilities they need for meaningful participation.



### 3. Making the way the municipality works more flexible to accommodate a diverse group, increases the desire for standardisation and equal treatment

*Because* the municipality wants to responsively include a diverse group of young people in their policymaking process, they need to change the way they are currently working.

*Because* a lot of people within the organisation need to start organising participation in many different situations, there is a great desire for standardisation, which makes the process less adaptable and more one-size-fits-all.





#### 4. Participation requires trust that either you will be heard or that investing time in it has added value, but without participation, you won't earn this trust

*Because* youngsters believe their opinions don't matter or won't get heard they don't want to participate.

*Because* these young people are not included in participation, they won't gain trust their opinions matter or will be valued.

&

*Because* policymakers don't always trust there are enough benefits of investing time and effort into youth participation, they sometimes refrain from doing so.

*Because* policymakers don't have positive experiences with youth participation, they don't see the added value of investing their time and effort in it.



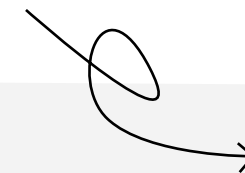
## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have uncovered these paradoxes that underlie the complexities of youth participation in policymaking:

1. To bridge the existing gap between the municipality and youngsters, there must already be a bridge
2. Youngster's lack of experience and abilities prevent them from acquiring expertise and abilities
3. Participation requires trust that either you will be heard or that investing time in it has added value, but without participation, you won't earn this trust
4. Making the way the municipality works more flexible to accommodate a diverse group, increases the desire for standardisation and equal treatment

These contradictions represent the deadlocks that impede progress in solving the problem. Even though it might feel counterintuitive, for now, we leave these paradoxes as they are. To shift the problem situation effectively, we must turn away from these paradoxes, since the solutions are not here! It is important to clearly identify these paradoxes to seek solutions outside of this existing frame. This step is part of "deframing" the problem, allowing us to subsequently "reframe" it." (Van Leeuwen et al., 2020).

In the next chapter, the paradox statements will be put aside. We will delve into the context: who are the direct stakeholders and what do they value?



**The next step: investigating the main stakeholders of this problem space**





# CONTEXT

Investigating the Values of the Main Stakeholders



### 3. CONTEXT



In this part of the report, we're exploring the 'context' of youth participation in policymaking in Rotterdam. In the 'context' section, we're going to dive deep into the lives of the people directly involved in youth participation. This means looking at who these stakeholders are, what's important to them, and what influences how they act. Understanding these direct stakeholders gives us insight into the immediate world of youth participation in Rotterdam.

In this problem situation, there are two groups that could be called the "main stakeholders": the youth and civil servants. However, these are not uniform groups. Most importantly there are significant differences within the group of young people. There are significant (demographic) differences within each group, especially among young people. For instance, a 15-year-old high school student has different values and needs compared to a 22-year-old living on welfare and in search of stable housing.



Research question

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they value?

Activities

IC1

IY1

CD1

IC2

CC1

CCY1

IO1

CY1

CY2

Literature review

One way to divide the group of young people is:

- Secondary School Children
- Adult Youngsters
- Youth in Vulnerable Positions
- Youth with Municipal Knowledge ("Beroepsjongeren")

Within the municipality, there are naturally different roles: For example, there are civil servants working on youth policies, street-level bureaucrats, council members and aldermen who all have different relationships with youth participation. Additionally, surrounding these two groups are other stakeholders in the context, such as youth workers, parents/guardians and national politicians. These stakeholders also directly deal with and/or influence the current problem situation. I will elucidate all of these stakeholders based on:

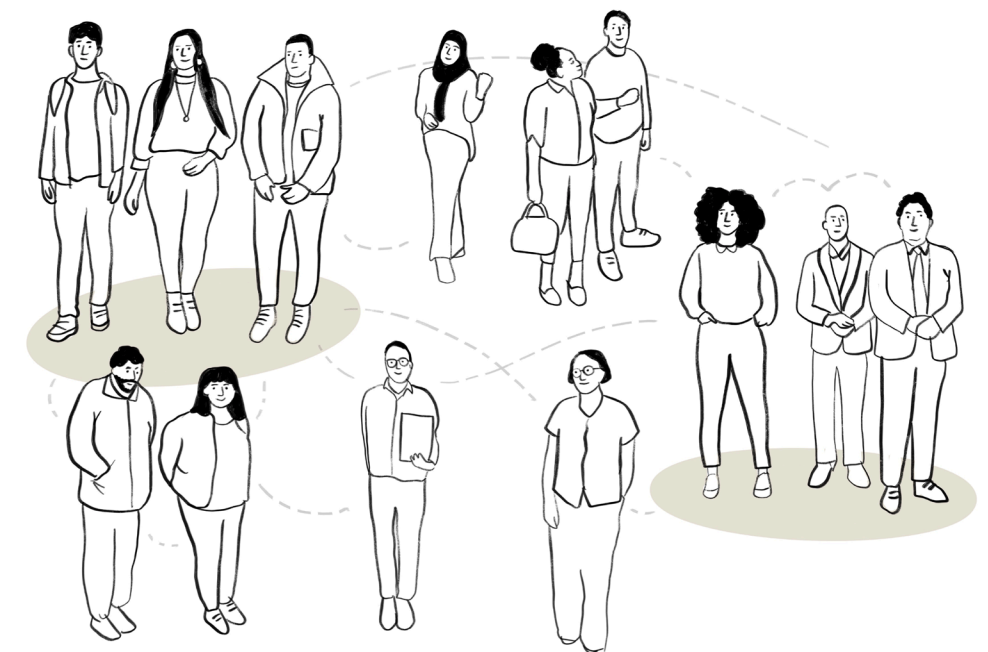
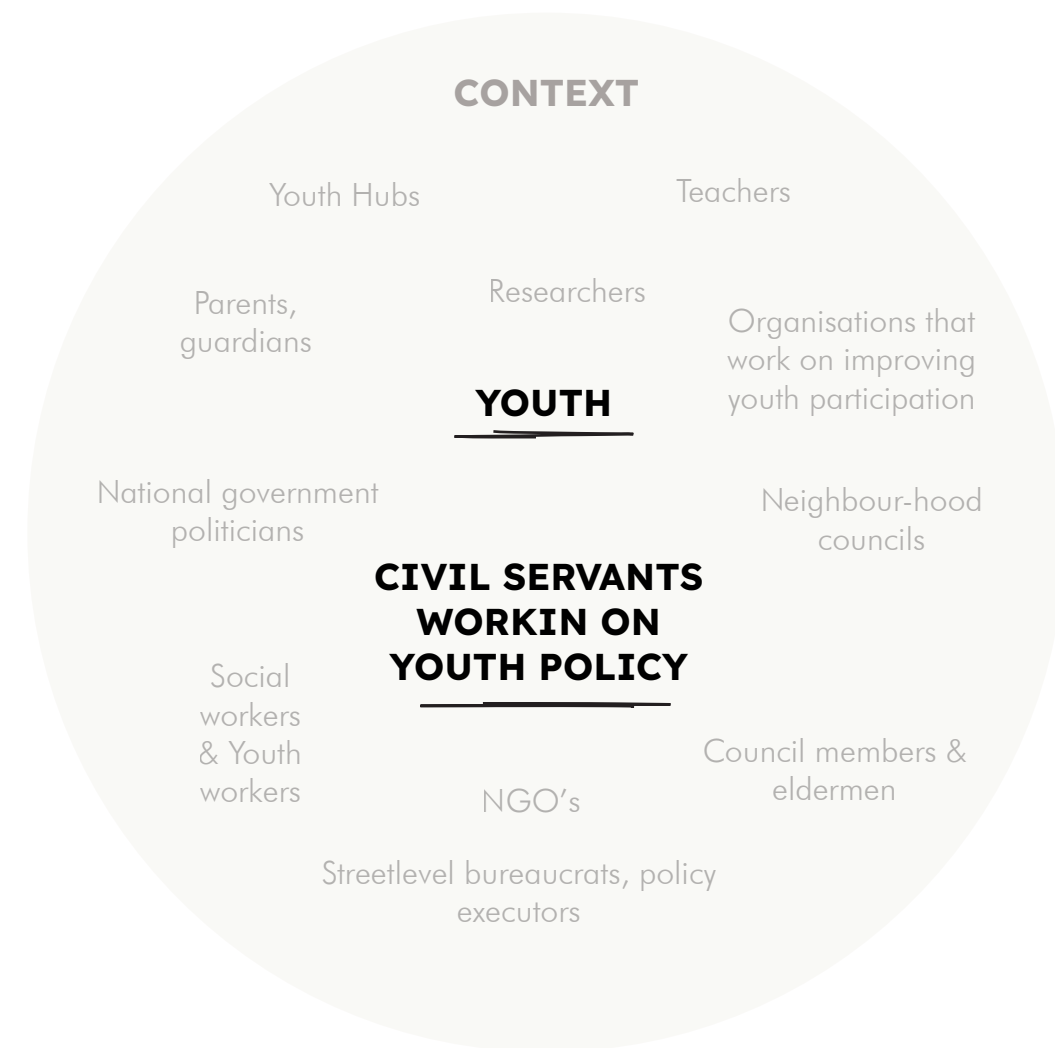
- Who They Are: We will look at the identities of these individuals.
- What They Value: We'll explore what matters most to these stakeholders, like fairness, community, or making a real impact.

Additionally, personas were created of the two groups of main stakeholders. Based on various research and design activities, I have split these two groups into four personas each, eight in total. These eight personas describe the varying opinions, attitudes, and visions of young people and civil servants regarding youth participation. One persona might be motivated and might recognize the importance of youth participation. Other personas experience more barriers or are hesitant, sometimes even sceptical. They are therefore not classified based on background, age or, for example, role within the municipality. These personas help to gain an understanding of the differences within these two groups. The structure of the personas builds on personas as developed by Muzus (Muzus et al., 2018).

Several activities were undertaken to identify the direct stakeholders and their values. These activities included sessions with cultural probes involving various groups. A sounding board group from the municipality (CCY1), a session in the Timmerhuis with 50 civil servants (CC1), and an event that co-created with twenty vocational education and training students (CY1) were part of these sessions. Additionally, more in-depth interviews were conducted with civil servants, youths, and a school psychologist (IC1; IC2; IY1; IO1). An initial step in establishing the values of the direct stakeholders was made during a frame creation session with designers and researchers (CD1). The analysis of stakeholder values and perspectives commenced with an extensive review of the qualitative data gathered, aimed at understanding the nuanced views and values of the stakeholders involved. Thus, the 'context' section will provide a complete overview of the direct stakeholders and their values. The research question for this chapter is therefore:

**Who are the main stakeholders and what do they value?**

Let's explore these stakeholders!





# DIRECT STAKEHOLDER AND VALUE ANALYSIS

## ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE



### Secondary School Children

They are often navigating complex social dynamics, academic pressures, and the beginnings of their civic awareness. They might prioritize peer acceptance, and fairness, and are increasingly aware of social and environmental issues.

Influences: Teachers, peers, family, role models, and digital media significantly shape their worldviews.



### Adult Youngsters

They're navigating the transition to adulthood, often influenced by higher education, early career experiences, and a growing sense of social responsibility. They are balancing education, early career challenges, and personal growth. They seek independence, and self-expression, and are often also driven by a desire for social impact.

Influences: Higher education, early work experiences, colleagues and bosses, friends, digital media and broader societal issues.



### Youth in Vulnerable Positions

This group includes those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds or with challenging home environments, whose participation is crucial yet often limited. They face unique challenges related to socioeconomic status, family dynamics, or personal hardships. They often prioritize basic needs, and security, and seek supportive communities.

Influences: Social workers, friends and family, role models, community programs, and local support systems.



### Beroepsjongeren (Youth with Municipality Knowledge)

Such as members of youth councils like Young010, who have firsthand experience in youth advocacy and policy influence. They actively advocate for youth interests, influencing policies and decisions at the municipal level. Their insights are grounded in both personal experiences and broader youth perspectives. They often have success stories when it comes to youth participation, but often also have experiences with barriers and do not always feel that they are taken seriously. Among civil servants, a prevailing notion seems to be that the contributions of these young individuals may not accurately reflect broader youth perspectives. This is attributed to the perception that these youths represent a specialized segment, one seasoned in political engagement, and are thus informally labelled as 'beroepsjongeren.'

Influences: Municipal leaders and policymakers, peers, role models, other members from youth advocacy groups, and community feedback.

## VALUES



Overlap between categories is a possibility; individuals may align with more than one category. For instance, 'Adult Youngsters' may concurrently be identified as 'Youth in Vulnerable Positions.' These classifications are not intended to be rigid or dichotomous but rather serve as a means for exploration and to signal the dominant values within this context.



# POLICY AND GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS



## Civil Servants Working on Youth Policy

These civil servants focus on integrating youth perspectives into broader policy frameworks, navigating bureaucratic systems, and liaising between different governmental levels. They are engaged in policy development, often juggling bureaucratic pressures and public service motivations. They value public service, efficacy, and creating impactful policies.

Influences: Governmental directives, public opinion, interdepartmental collaborations.



## National Government Politicians

National government politicians set the legislative and policy agenda impacting youth, often balancing national priorities with local needs. They are focused on national policymaking, often balancing political agendas with public interests. They value political ideology, national interests, and constituency needs.

Influences: Party lines, voter base, and national and international events.



## Councilmembers and Aldermen

Elected, local policymakers who play a crucial role in translating youth needs and aspirations into municipal policies. They are involved in local governance, addressing community-specific issues. They value community service, responsiveness to local needs, and civic engagement.

Influences: Local electorate, community leaders, and municipal challenges.



## Street-level bureaucrats; Policy executors

These frontline workers directly interact with citizens, playing a critical role in implementing government policies and delivering public services at the local level. They are at the forefront of face-to-face interactions with citizens on a daily basis, which places them in a unique position to observe and understand the immediate impacts of policies on youth. They value practical effectiveness, empathy, understanding and flexibility.

Influences: Policy implementation guidelines, community feedback and interaction, resource constraints and practical challenges.

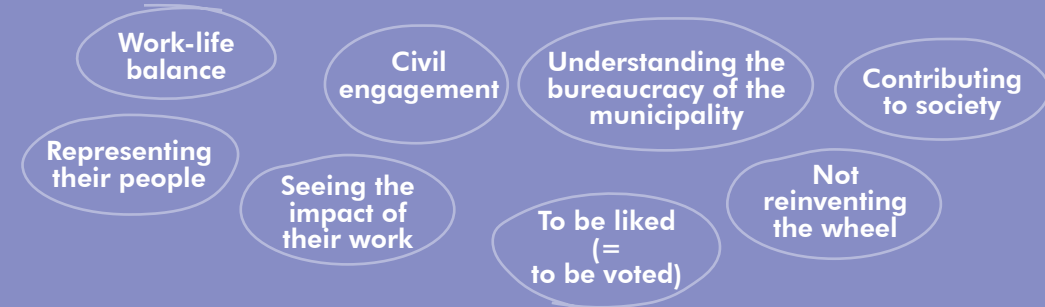
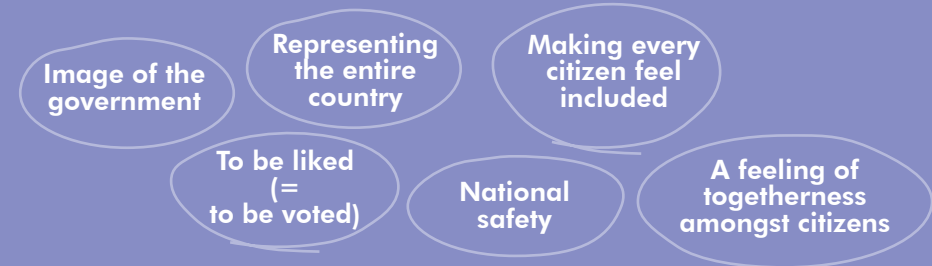
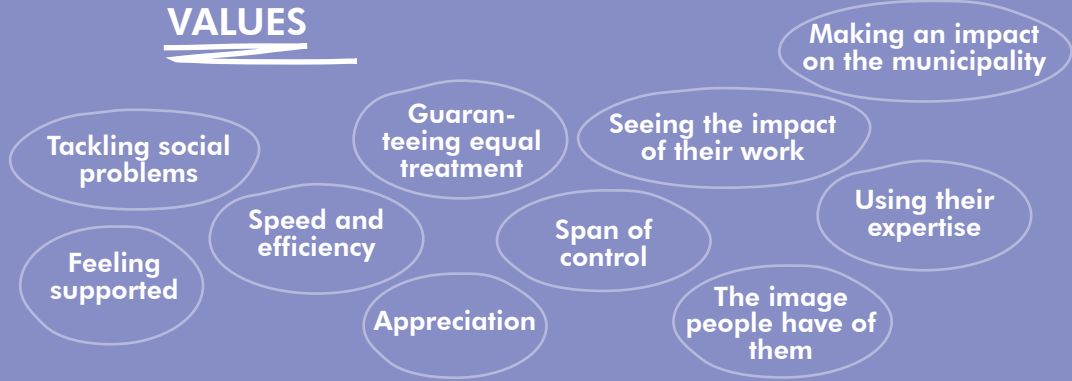


## Neighbourhood councils

Neighbourhood councils play a role in representing the interests of local communities, including youth. They serve as a grassroots level of governance, connected to the daily lives of residents (City Making Congress: E4). People within neighbourhood councils are often motivated citizens with a drive to make a change. They value community well-being and development and having a responsive and inclusive governance.

Influences: Local community needs and concerns, municipal policies and regulations, interaction with local organizations and schools

# VALUES







OTHER SECTORS

Parents/Guardians

Primary caregivers and influencers in young people’s lives. They influence young people’s values, perspectives, and initial forays into civic participation. They value family well-being, safety, and nurturing a successful next generation.

Influences: Family traditions, cultural values, and community norms.



Teachers

Teachers play a vital role in nurturing civic awareness and participation among young people, often acting as mentors and facilitators. They are shaping the next generation’s understanding of civic responsibility. They value educational excellence, nurturing critical thinking, and civic engagement.

Influences: Educational policies, pedagogical approaches, and student dynamics.



Youth Hubs

Youth hubs provide spaces for discussion, learning, and engagement, contributing significantly to the civic development of young individuals. Establishing a youth hub can be challenging. There have been instances where youth hubs had to be closed due to issues like drug use or disturbances, but the people at youth hubs are often very motivated (session Youth Hub: E1). They value a vibrant community, collaborations within the city and giving youth a voice.

Influences: Community needs and interests, funding, collaborations and partnerships, cultural and social trends.



Researchers

Researchers in this field focus on gaining a deep understanding of the context: this can range from youth behaviour, preferences, and needs to a focus on governance and systems within the municipality. Their work often involves conducting comprehensive studies and surveys to gather data. They value academic rigour and integrity.

Influences: Policy trends and social issues, funding sources and grants, other academics and researchers, institutional affiliation and policies.

VALUES





SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY GROUPS



Social Workers and Youth Workers

Social and youth workers provide direct support, guidance, and advocacy for young people, especially those facing challenges or in vulnerable situations. Their work is often hands-on, addressing the immediate needs and concerns of youth. They often work within community settings, developing and implementing programs and interventions that support youth engagement, well-being, and empowerment. They can act as a bridge between young individuals and policy realms. They value empathy, social justice, and empowering the youth.

Influences: Social work ethics, colleagues, community needs, and individual youth experiences.



Organisations that work on improving youth participation

These organisations - like Tienskip or Speaking Minds - champion the cause of youth engagement through various programs and initiatives, often advocating for policy changes at different levels. Their focus is on enhancing youth civic engagement through various programs. They value youth empowerment, civic responsibility, and social change.

Influences: Donor priorities, societal issues, and youth voices



NGO's

Think of organisations like Save the Children or UNICEF. These organizations are at the forefront of advocating for increased youth participation in societal matters. They often lead campaigns and initiatives to bring attention to youth needs and challenges. Sometimes they also engage in research activities. They value education, leadership, and community involvement and engagement.

Influences: Donor priorities, collaborations and partnerships (also with the government), societal issues, and youth voices and feedback.

VALUES





# PERSONAS

To ensure the themes and frames align well with stakeholders, it is important to get to know this target and the differences within the two main groups: youngsters and civil servants. Creating personas is not a standard component of the Frame Innovation method by Dorst. However, my research indicates that due to the significant diversity within the two main stakeholder groups of this project, mapping this out could prove beneficial. A lack of focus could lead to an ineffective or overly generalized solution that fails to meet the nuances of a diverse target group (Cooper, 1999). A point of attention is that care must be taken not to oversimplify the matters and the personas. They should contribute to the richness and understanding of the context, without omitting too many nuances.

The created personas are described based on the persona framework used by Muzus (2018). By answering eight questions we gain a better understanding of the stakeholder's specific needs and goals.

I have answered these questions to better map out the various beliefs in this context. The eight personas - four young people and four civil servants - derive from insights retrieved from several activities: the interviews with civil servants (IC1), the guerilla-style interviews at the Timmerhuis (CC1), the creative session with the soundingboard group and civil servants (CCY1), the Tienskip event (CY1), the activity at the Blaak library (CY2). These eight personas are written based on real stories, statements, and characteristics of civil servants and young people; the development of the personas draws upon the convictions and narratives shared by individuals participating in these activities. Additionally, paraphrased quotations from the same have been employed to enrich the personas' authenticity and depth. The personas are distributed over an axis system.

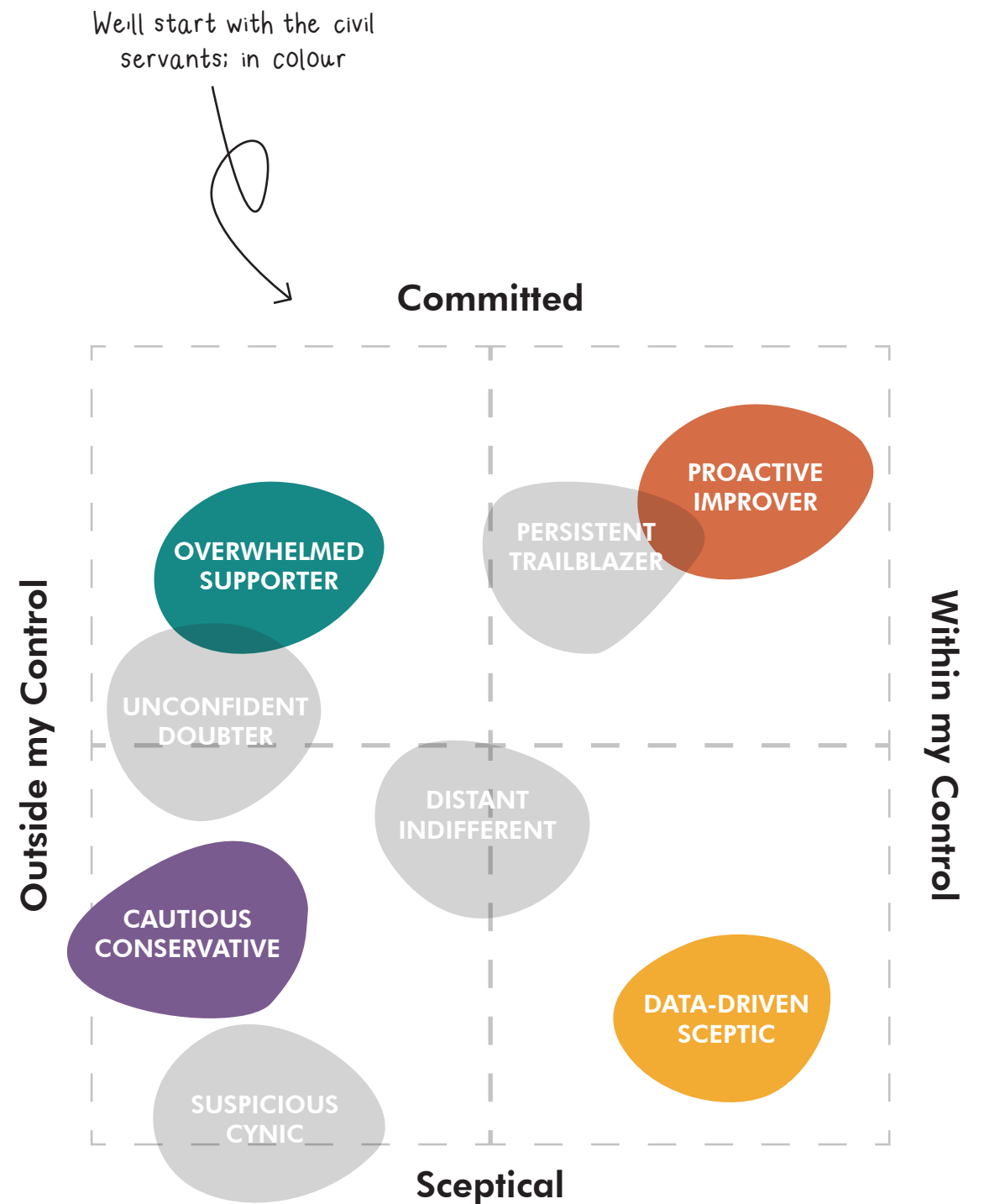
## The vertical axis

The first question is whether a stakeholder sees the importance of youth participation. Do they recognize its benefits, or are they sceptical about its effects? The vertical axis represents how committed they are to youth participation: from committed to sceptical.

## The horizontal axis

Additionally, it's crucial how capable stakeholders feel. Do they believe youth participation is something they could do/organize, or do they only see obstacles? On the horizontal axis, we spread out how they experience youth participation: from something outside of their control to something within their control.

This axis system thus contains eight different personas with different characteristics, beliefs, and ways of being convinced to make an effort for youth participation. We'll start with the civil servants; visualised in colour in the axis system on the right.





# THE OVERWHELMED SUPPORTER



### This is me

I do believe that effective policies for youngsters require a deep understanding of the challenges faced by young people. I'm passionate about youth participation, but I often feel overwhelmed by the complexities of the municipal system. Despite my best efforts, I sometimes find myself hindered by bureaucratic processes. I'm aware of my strengths and weaknesses, and while I excel in some areas, I acknowledge that there are aspects where I could use support and improvement. For example, how do we feed our results back to the young people? I see that we don't always organise this ideally. I sometimes see hiring external parties as a solution to involve young people.

**"YOU HAVE TO CAREFULLY CONSIDER WHETHER YOU CAN HANDLE THE WORK YOURSELF. OR IF YOU SHOULD EMPLOY EXPERTS IN THE FIELD."**

### This is what holds me back

I may hesitate to embark on new initiatives if I'm already dealing with pressing issues within the municipal system. I prefer it when individuals or organizations reach out to me with solutions rather than expecting me to initiate contact. If something is well-organized and efficient, I'm more likely to engage. Sometimes I don't know whether what I do really has an effect. It is such a large system in which I work. That sometimes makes me feel a little powerless.

**"WE ARE ULTIMATELY 'JUST' POLICYMAKERS. FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU HAD BEEN A MANAGER OR A DIRECTOR,**

**YOU WOULD HAVE GOTTEN THINGS DONE EVEN MORE EASILY, SO TO SPEAK. WE CAN'T CHANGE THE ENTIRE MUNICIPALITY."**

### This is how you seduce me

Persuade me by having a seasoned advocate or someone with relevant experience share their success stories in improving youth participation. Clearly demonstrate how honing my skills can directly contribute to achieving broader goals within the municipality.

### This is my goal

It's essential to acknowledge how difficult policymaking processes can be, how little time I have and how many actors are involved. Provide me with a compelling narrative backed by experts who have navigated similar challenges successfully. Give me the feeling that I am not facing these challenges alone. I need to be convinced and inspired by a well-informed and empathetic approach.

My primary goal is to facilitate meaningful youth participation within the municipality. To achieve this, I need to navigate the municipal system effectively and secure the necessary resources. I aim to prove the value of youth involvement by addressing challenges and reducing barriers.

**"IT OFTEN GOES LIKE THIS: GUYS, WE HAVE A PROBLEM. THIS HAD TO BE SOLVED YESTERDAY, SO LET'S DO IT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, THEN YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO GET A PARTICIPATION PROJECT OFF THE GROUND."**

### This is how I feel about it

I've encountered challenges and obstacles in my advocacy work that have occasionally left me feeling sceptical about the potential for change. However, I'm open to transformation if I see concrete evidence of its effectiveness. I can transition from being an Overwhelmed Supporter to being very involved and taking the lead when I'm convinced of the impact.

### This is what motivates me

I'm motivated by the prospect of diversity and fresh perspectives that youth bring to the table. Recognizing the importance of involving young people in decision-making processes, I find inspiration in the potential for positive change.

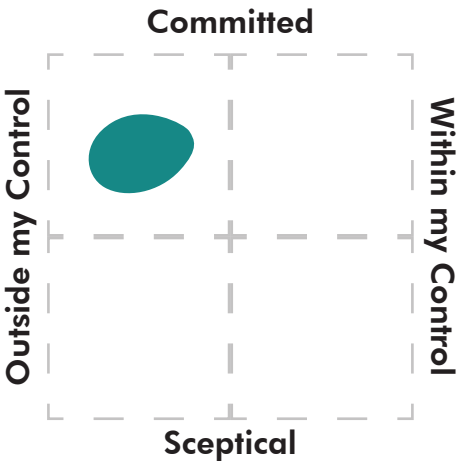
### This is when I disengage

Inexperience among fellow advocates or a lack of clarity in objectives can be discouraging. Additionally, if I have numerous ongoing responsibilities that demand my attention, I may become disengaged. Having a well-defined purpose and recognizing continuous learning opportunities are crucial to keeping me engaged.

### These are my conditions

There must be sufficient time, space and support within my environment to get started with participation.

**"OF COURSE IT'S IMPORTANT. HOWEVER..."**

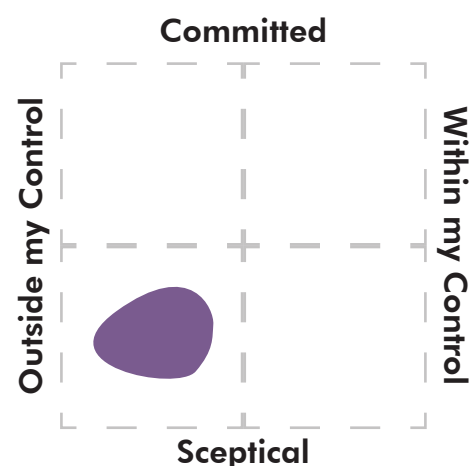




## THE CAUTIOUS CONSERVATIVE



**"IT'S NOT MY STRENGTH. AND BESIDES, I DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO DO IT."**



### **This is me**

I'm introverted and have never done what other (younger?) colleagues might find easy. I feel more confident behind the computer and in familiar tasks than when I have to do something new. Striking up a conversation with young people feels like a significant barrier; they can seem distant or uninterested to me.

**"I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO START IF I WERE TO TRY TO INSPIRE YOUNG PEOPLE TO BRAINSTORM WITH ME. IT'S NOT MY STRENGTH AND IT ALSO SEEMS LIKE IT TAKES A LOT OF TIME."**

### **This is what holds me back**

My hesitation often stems from my preference for familiar routines. If there are unfamiliar tasks or challenges, I may be reluctant to engage. Building a bridge between me and young people might require efforts to make the interaction less intimidating and more approachable.

**"IT DOES SEEM DIFFICULT TO ME. IT'S NOT SOMETHING WE USUALLY DO IN MY TEAM. IF I WERE TO ORGANISE SOMETHING I MIGHT THINK IT'S NOT ALLOWED, AND THERE REALLY ISN'T ANY TIME FOR IT."**

### **This is how you seduce me**

To persuade me, provide examples of colleagues who have successfully navigated similar situations with young people. Highlight how acquiring new skills and adapting to change can lead to positive outcomes. Show me that learning and growth can occur even within my comfort zone.

Provide clear guidance and reassurance when introducing new tasks or approaches. I need a structured and supportive environment that encourages me to grow. Demonstrating the value and potential outcomes of connecting with young people can be persuasive.

### **This is my goal**

My primary objective is to effectively fulfil my role while maintaining a sense of security. I aim to bridge the gap between my cautious approach and engaging with young people, even if it's unfamiliar territory. Convince me that this transformation can be beneficial for both me and the youth.

**"I AM QUITE GOOD AT THE WORK I DO NOW, AND I ENJOY IT. I DON'T NEED TO GO INTO THE CITY ALL THE TIME AND TALK TO A BUNCH OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO DO MY JOB WELL, RIGHT?"**

### **This is how I feel about it**

I am typically cautious about trying new things, and I may initially stand back when it comes to interacting with young people. I like feeling well-prepared. However, with the right guidance and assurance, I can evolve from being a Cautious Conservative to becoming more confident in engaging with youth.

**"PARTICIPATION IS ALSO DIFFICULT BECAUSE IT'S UNPREDICTABLE, AND BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT ENTIRELY SURE WHAT WILL HAPPEN, AND YOU DON'T**

**REALLY KNOW HOW TO DO IT ALL THAT WELL. SO YEAH, IT'S UNCOMFORTABLE AND ALSO COMPLICATED."**

### **This is what motivates me**

I find motivation in a supportive and nurturing environment that values my contributions and provides opportunities for growth. Encouragement and positive feedback play a significant role in motivating me to step out of my comfort zone.

### **This is when I disengage**

I may disengage if I feel overwhelmed by the unfamiliarity of a situation or if there is insufficient support and guidance. A lack of clarity about the benefits of a particular approach can also lead to disengagement. I'm more than happy to keep working the way I am now.

### **These are my conditions**

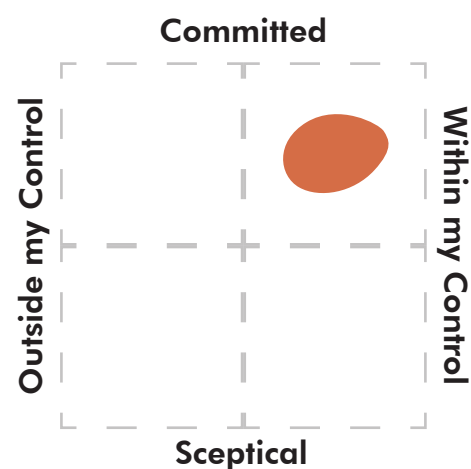
I prefer a learning approach that is gradual, structured, and tailored to my needs. Practical examples and guidance on applying new skills are essential for me to navigate unfamiliar situations effectively.



## THE PROACTIVE IMPROVER



**"YOU JUST HAVE TO DO IT! JUST GO TALK TO YOUNG PEOPLE"**



### This is me

I am a proactive individual, always ready to take action and make improvements. I am actively involved within the municipality and organize numerous activities related to youth participation. When people within the municipality think of the term "youth participation," my name immediately comes to mind.

**"WHAT DO I GIVE BACK TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE? WELL, I HOPE TO RESTORE SOME TRUST IN THE MUNICIPALITY. AND I ALSO HOPE TO BE SOMEONE THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH, SOMEONE THEY CAN ASK GENERAL QUESTIONS TO AS WELL."**

### This is what holds me back

While I am proactive, I may face obstacles when met with resistance to change or when bureaucratic processes slow down progress. Addressing these barriers and providing a platform for streamlined decision-making can help keep me engaged.

### This is how you seduce me

To persuade me, emphasize the power of collective action and the outcomes achieved through my proactive efforts. Showcase success stories and highlight how continuous improvement in youth participation can lead to lasting positive changes. I value creativity and enthusiasm. Highlighting the potential for positive impact and recognizing my proactive contributions can be particularly effective.

### This is my goal

My primary goal is to drive meaningful youth participation and improvement within the community. I aim to be a catalyst for change, making my name synonymous with effective youth engagement. Convince me that my proactive approach can bring about substantial positive transformation.

**"WHY DO I DO WHAT I DO? YOU JUST HAVE THE DRIVE TO MAKE THE VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE HEARD. AND IT'S ALSO TRUE THAT I CAN'T REALLY STAND INJUSTICE. OH, AND I ALSO GENUINELY ENJOY DOING THIS, TALKING TO PEOPLE, GETTING TO KNOW THEM."**

### This is how I feel about it

I approach my role with unwavering enthusiasm and a commitment to making a difference. I thrive on innovation and embrace change as a means to improve youth participation. I am a Proactive Improver, dedicated to fostering positive change.

**"I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT WHEN YOU'RE MAKING POLICIES, YOU SHOULD BE IN CONTACT WITH THE TARGET AUDIENCE AND UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THEIR WORLD, WHETHER IT'S YOUNG PEOPLE OR THE ELDERLY. I ALWAYS TELL COLLEAGUES TO JUST GO OUT THERE AND TALK TO PEOPLE!"**

### This is what motivates me

I find motivation in the recognition of my efforts

and their impact on youth participation. Seeing tangible improvements and the community's positive response drives me to continue taking action and making a difference.

### This is when I disengage

I may disengage if my proactive efforts face significant resistance, or if I perceive a lack of support and recognition for my contributions. A stagnation in progress or a decline in enthusiasm can also lead to disengagement.

### These are my conditions

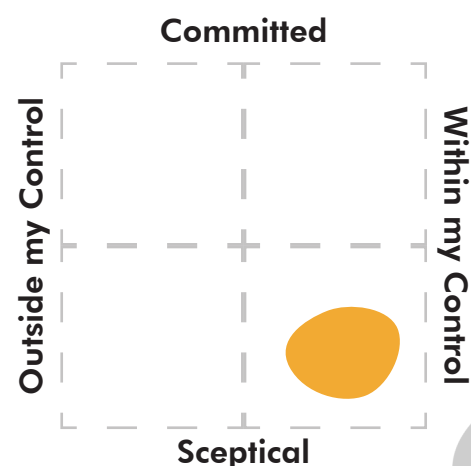
I prefer a collaborative and supportive environment that values innovation and encourages proactive approaches. Examples of how my actions can lead to improvements are essential for me to stay motivated and engaged.



## THE DATA-DRIVEN SCEPTIC



**"LET'S NOT GO OVERBOARD HERE!"**



### **This is me**

Don't get me wrong, I have my affairs in order, we have a lot of data at our disposal. Yet we are already busy enough within the municipality, I don't see why we should be focusing to this extent on youth participation. I prefer the formal setting. I believe that the opinions of a few youngsters are not representative of the entire group, and it's better to base decisions on data.

**"THE MUNICIPALITY IS A BIG AND COMPLEX ORGANIZATION, AND IT SHOULDN'T BECOME EVEN MORE DISORGANIZED THAN IT ALREADY IS. THE GOAL IS NOT TO HAVE EVERYONE RUNNING AROUND IN CONFUSION."**

### **This is what holds me back**

My scepticism is rooted in the belief that anecdotal experiences may not reflect the broader reality. If there is a lack of solid data to support the benefits of youth participation, I may be reluctant to engage.

**"WHO DOES THE PERSON PARTICIPATING REPRESENT? HOW CAN YOU TELL IF SOMEONE IS EXPRESSING THEIR INDIVIDUAL VIEWS OR SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF A LARGER GROUP? AND HOW MUCH IMPORTANCE SHOULD BE GIVEN TO AN INDIVIDUAL'S PERSPECTIVE WHEN THEY ARE SPEAKING AS AN INDIVIDUAL?"**

### **This is how you seduce me**

To persuade me, provide robust data and well-researched case studies that demonstrate the positive effects of youth participation in decision-making processes. I like concrete evidence of the impact of youth

participation on decision-making and outcomes. Convincing me requires a strong emphasis on empirical data.

**"YOU CAN'T DRAW CONCLUSIONS BASED ON A FEW CONVERSATIONS WITH PEOPLE FROM THE TARGET GROUP, CAN YOU?"**

### **This is my goal**

My primary goal is to ensure that decision-making processes are based on sound data and evidence rather than anecdotal experiences. I prioritize data-driven decision-making to achieve more effective and representative outcomes.

### **This is how I feel about it**

I approach the issue with a healthy dose of scepticism and prioritize data-driven approaches. While I may be sceptical about the impact of youth participation, I am open to changing my perspective if presented with compelling data.

### **This is what motivates me**

I find motivation in empirical evidence and data-driven approaches. Demonstrating the practical benefits of youth participation through data and research is key to keeping me engaged.

### **This is when I disengage**

I may disengage if the arguments for youth participation lack empirical support or if I perceive a focus on anecdotal experiences over data-driven decision-making. A lack of convincing evidence can lead to disengagement.

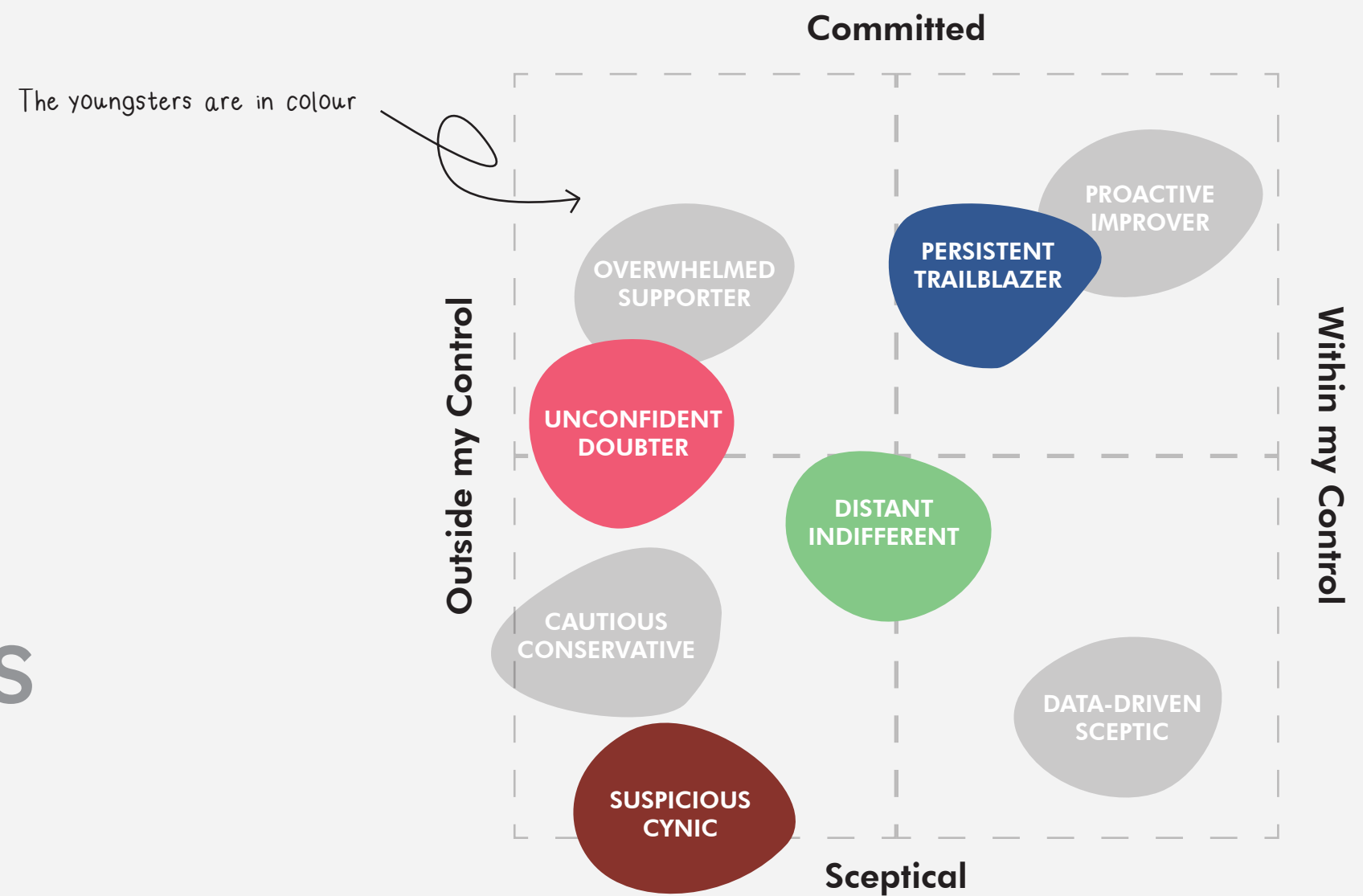
**"YES, OF COURSE, YOU DON'T WANT ANY MORE TROUBLE. AS A CIVIL SERVANT, YOU ALREADY HAVE ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH, AND THEN THESE RESIDENTS COME ALONG. WHAT'S THE USE OF LISTENING TO THE STORIES OF A FEW INDIVIDUALS?"**

### **These are my conditions**

I prefer a decision-making process that relies on solid data and research. Providing me with well-documented data and evidence is essential for me to support youth participation.



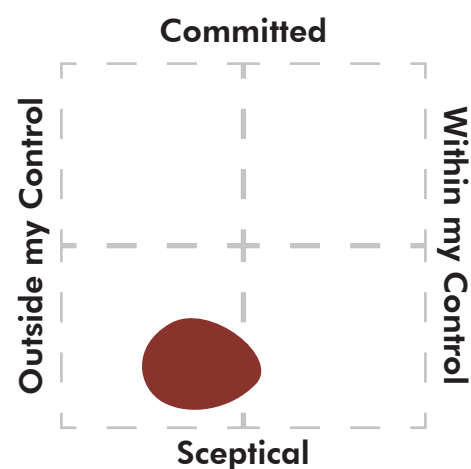
# YOUNGSTERS





## THE SUSPICIOUS CYNIC

**"THEY'RE ALL JUST LINING THEIR POCKETS."**



### **This is me**

I don't trust the municipality. At all. Partly because I don't have many positive experiences with 'those people'. I can perceive the municipality as a contributor to my challenges. I also have more important things to worry about than talking to government officials. When they want to know my opinion I feel that I am only used to demonstrate that the municipality has "talked to young people."

**"I WOULDN'T GO TO THE MUNICIPALITY TO TALK TO THEM. I HAVE NO CONNECTION WITH THE MUNICIPALITY, AND I DON'T TRUST THEM AT ALL."**

### **This is what holds me back**

If there are other problems in my life that require time, energy or attention I am not likely to engage with the municipality. My scepticism might be rooted in past experiences where the municipality did not effectively address my concerns. You can't win me over without convincing me that you can do something for me.

### **This is how you seduce me**

To engage me, and demonstrate genuine empathy and understanding of the challenges I face. Show that the municipality is committed to addressing my concerns and is not just seeking tokenistic participation. I might need to be convinced that you'll actually do what you say. Provide tangible solutions that directly improve my circumstances.

**"IF I WERE TO TALK TO THOSE PEOPLE FROM THE MUNICIPALITY, I WOULD WANT EVERYTHING IN WRITING. A SIGNATURE ON IT. THAT WAY, THEY CAN'T BACK OUT OF IT ANYMORE. THEY WOULD HAVE TO DO WHAT THEY PROMISED."**

### **This is my goal**

My primary goal is to see real improvements in my life and circumstances. I just want to be able to participate in society and for that, I need to have some sense of security. I want the municipality to play a positive role in addressing the challenges faced by young people. I want to prove myself by doing well, staying out of trouble or making money. Convince me that participation can serve as a means to a higher goal. And that engagement with the municipality can lead to meaningful change for me and for others in similar circumstances.

### **This is how I feel about it**

I approach the situation with scepticism, given past experiences. I am wary of the municipality's intentions and often feel that my concerns are not taken seriously. However, I might be open to engagement if I perceive a genuine commitment to addressing our needs.

**"I WANT MONEY. THEY WANT TO TALK TO ME, SO IF I GO, I WANT TO GET SOMETHING OUT OF IT. I DEFINITELY WOULDN'T DO IT FOR FREE."**

### **This is what motivates me**

I am motivated by the prospect of tangible improvements in my life and the lives of others in similar situations. Seeing concrete actions that lead to positive outcomes for vulnerable young people is what keeps me engaged.

### **This is when I disengage**

I may disengage if I feel that the municipality is insincere in its efforts or if my concerns are not addressed effectively. The inexperience of civil servants turns me off. Also, when I have too many other things roaming around in my head, I can be distracted and uninterested.

### **These are my conditions**

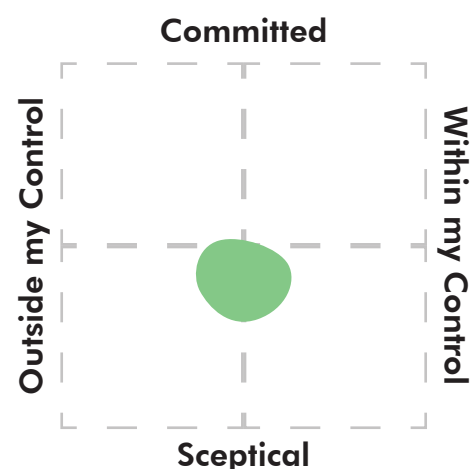
I require the municipality to deliver tangible solutions. My conditions for engagement include a focus on addressing the real challenges faced by young people. I also want to be compensated for my involvement. I might want money or a gift card.



# THE DISTANT INDIFFERENT



**"I REALLY DON'T HAVE  
AN OPINION ABOUT  
THE MUNICIPALITY"**



## This is me

I am absorbed in my own world. I have a neutral to slightly negative perspective on the municipality, and I'm simply present without actively engaging. I don't have much enthusiasm for getting involved, and I lack the energy for it.

**"WHAT DOES THE MUNICIPALITY DO AGAIN? HMM. I DON'T THINK IT'S REALLY MY THING."**

## This is what holds me back

My indifference stems from a lack of perceived relevance or benefit from engaging with the municipality. If I don't see a clear connection between my participation and my own interests or concerns, I'm unlikely to get involved.

**"I DON'T REALLY SEE WHY I SHOULD PARTICIPATE. IT ACTUALLY SEEMS QUITE BORING TO ME. WELL, MAYBE IF IT WERE AN INTERESTING OR IMPORTANT TOPIC, I WOULD BE WILLING TO JOIN THE CONVERSATION."**

## This is how you seduce me

To draw me in, you'll need to pique my curiosity or offer something that directly benefits me personally. Offer practical benefits or incentives that align with my interests and priorities. Show that my involvement can lead to positive outcomes or improvements in areas that matter to me. Make the engagement process straightforward and convenient.

## This is my goal

My goal is to maintain a balanced life that prioritizes my personal interests and well-

being. I want to live hassle-free. I focus on my personal pursuits and interests. I may engage with the municipality if I see a direct benefit or if it aligns with my priorities, but my overall goal is to prioritize my own activities and well-being.

## This is how I feel about it

I approach the municipality with a sense of detachment and indifference. I might not really know what it is they do and I don't really want to know either. I don't have strong feelings about their presence, and I'm not inclined to invest much energy in engaging with them unless there are tangible advantages for me.

**"I DON'T HAVE A STRONG OPINION ABOUT THE MUNICIPALITY. YEAH, THEY GIVE YOU A PASSPORT, RIGHT? THEY'RE JUST THERE. I GUESS WHAT THEY DO MUST BE USEFUL, I THINK..."**

## This is what motivates me

I am motivated by self-interest and personal benefits. If I perceive that engaging with the municipality can lead to improvements in my own life or can align with my interests, I may become more motivated to participate.

## This is when I disengage

I may disengage if I don't see any meaningful benefits or if the engagement process becomes overly complicated or time-consuming. A lack of personal relevance or tangible advantages can lead to disengagement. If I feel that my personal life is

being significantly disrupted - for example, I can't attend my part-time job - or that my energy is being drained excessively, I'll withdraw from any involvement.

**"I ALREADY HAVE SO MUCH HOMEWORK. NEXT WEEK IS THE TEST WEEK AND ALL THAT. PLUS, I'M CURRENTLY WORKING AT JUMBO. I REALLY DON'T HAVE THE TIME OR THE DESIRE FOR THIS."**

## These are my conditions

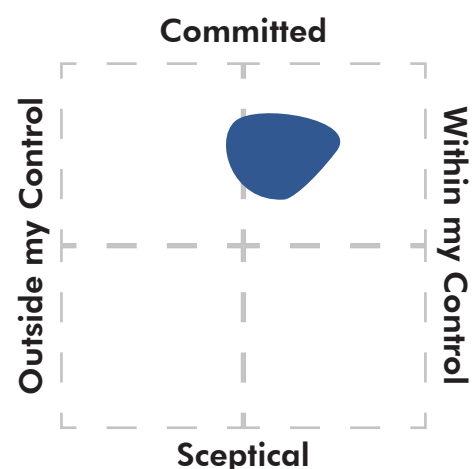
My conditions for participation are quite straightforward. Keep it simple, minimize conflicts, and make sure it doesn't interfere too much with my personal pursuits. If the effort required is reasonable and the benefits are apparent, I may be willing to contribute in a minimal way.



# THE PERSISTENT TRAILBLAZER



**"YOUTH ARE THE FUTURE!"**



## This is me

I am an active improver who advocates for other young people. You might find me participating in youth councils or engaging in street protests. I'm not afraid to voice my opinions. I may face setbacks at times and may not always be taken seriously, but I am highly motivated and committed. I am driven by activism and the belief that youth are the future.

**"OF COURSE I BELIEVE IT'S IMPORTANT FOR THE OPINIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT! AFTER ALL, YOUNG PEOPLE ARE THE FUTURE. AND YES, THEY DON'T ALWAYS LISTEN TO US, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE SHOULDN'T MAKE OUR VOICES HEARD."**

## This is what holds me back

I don't always feel connected to the municipality, working with some civil servants can be demotivating. It can feel like adults don't want to hear what I - and other youngsters have to say - setbacks and not being taken seriously can be obstacles, but they do not deter me for long. If I don't feel seen, heard or supported by the municipality, I might be more of a rebel, going to protests or using social media to share what I think is important.

## This is how you seduce me

To engage me, emphasize the potential for positive change and the importance of youth participation. Showcase examples of successful youth-led initiatives and demonstrate that my efforts can make a real difference. Recognize and support my passion for activism.

## This is my goal

My primary goal is to be a proactive force for positive change among young people. I believe that youth are the future, and I am committed to advocating for their voices to be heard and their concerns addressed.

**"NO, I'M NOT AFRAID TO VOICE MY OPINION. DO THEY ALWAYS LISTEN TO IT? WELL, SOMETIMES THEY DON'T, BUT THEN YOU HAVE TO INSIST HARDER."**

## This is how I feel about it

I understand that there may be hurdles and resistance, but I am resolute in my belief that youth activism is essential for a better future.

**"I THINK IT'S REALLY COOL TO SHARE MY EXPERIENCES AND CONTRIBUTE TO MAKING IMPROVEMENTS, ESPECIALLY IN AREAS LIKE MENTAL HEALTH. I ALSO REALLY LIKE WORKING TOGETHER WITH OTHER MOTIVATED YOUNGSTERS. IT'S NICE TO HAVE A TEAM."**

## This is what motivates me

I am motivated by the belief that youth have the power to shape a better world. Recognition and support for my efforts, as well as seeing tangible improvements in the lives of young people, drive me to persist in my activism.

## This is when I disengage

While setbacks and challenges may arise, for example, I don't like working with people who only see obstacles or don't take youngsters seriously, I do not easily disengage. My commitment keeps me

engaged, and I continue to advocate for positive change, even in the face of obstacles.

## These are my conditions

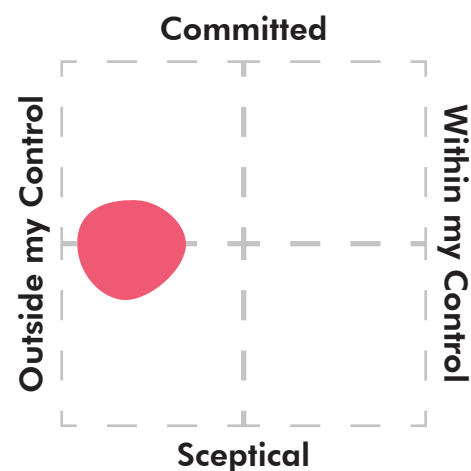
I prioritize a supportive environment that recognizes the value of youth activism and provides opportunities for young voices to be heard. My conditions for engagement include a focus on empowering youth to be active agents of change.



## THE UNCONFIDENT DOUBTER



**"THEY PROBABLY THINK I'M CHILDISH."**



### **This is me**

I doubt my own knowledge and abilities when it comes to politics. I have opinions, but I'm uncertain whether they will be taken seriously. I doubt whether I have enough intelligence or expertise to engage in these matters, and I may perceive politics as "not being for me".

### **This is what holds me back**

Self-doubt is a significant barrier for me. I question my own knowledge and abilities, and I fear that my opinions may not be respected or that I lack the intelligence to participate effectively. These doubts often hinder my engagement. You can seduce me by telling me that it's me you want to speak to and that I have all the knowledge necessary to participate.

**"POLITICS JUST ISN'T FOR ME. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT IT."**

### **This is how you seduce me**

To engage me, you must provide a supportive and inclusive environment where I feel valued and heard despite my self-doubts. Encourage me to express my opinions and reassure me that my input is valuable. Offer opportunities for learning and growth in a non-intimidating manner.

**"I WOULD FIND IT KIND OF SCARY TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH THE MUNICIPALITY. YOU REALLY NEED TO KNOW A LOT ABOUT THINGS TO DO THAT. WHAT IF THEY ASK DIFFICULT QUESTIONS I DON'T HAVE THE ANSWERS TO?"**

### **This is my goal**

My primary goal is to gain confidence in my abilities and to contribute meaningfully to discussions and decisions, despite my doubts. I want to feel important, seen and supported. Convince me that my voice matters and that I can make a valuable contribution. So don't ask me to talk about topics I don't have any valuable insights about just because you want to talk to young people, I actually need to feel like the expert in order to feel confident enough to speak.

### **This is how I feel about it**

I approach the situation with a sense of insecurity and self-doubt. While I may have opinions and concerns, I often question whether I am qualified to participate. I need reassurance and support to overcome these doubts.

**"THEY PROBABLY THINK I'M CHILDISH. OR, WELL, THAT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING."**

### **This is what motivates me**

If someone addresses me personally and seems genuinely interested in what I have to say, I may become more confident in voicing my opinions. Rewards and praise may also show me that you value my contributions.

### **This is when I disengage**

I may disengage if I continuously face situations where my doubts are not addressed or if I perceive a lack of support, interest and inclusion. If people talk over me or don't seem to listen I quickly turn quiet.

**"MAYBE IF THEY REALLY WANTED TO KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT A TOPIC I KNOW A LOT ABOUT, I MIGHT WANT TO JOIN THE CONVERSATION."**

### **These are my conditions**

I require a nurturing and inclusive environment that acknowledges and addresses my self-doubts. My conditions for engagement include opportunities for learning, support, and recognition of my potential.



## CONCLUSION OF THE PERSONAS

The employment of personas, though not inherently part of Dorst's Frame Innovation method, emerges as a potent tool in addressing the considerable diversity within these groups. The development of these personas has been a beneficial step in understanding the varied experiences and needs of both young people and civil servants. Each persona offers a distinct perspective, contributing to a comprehensive view of the stakeholder environment, which is vital for ensuring an inclusive approach to the project.

If we think outside of the scope of this project, for example in future design cycles that might build on the established frames that will be developed in this report, it might be practical to focus on specific personas for more clarity. This approach doesn't mean ignoring the broader stakeholder insights but rather selecting certain aspects to concentrate on, based on identified challenges or opportunities. This targeted focus can help in managing the project's scope, making the development of solutions more focused and achievable.

The personas have been valuable for a deeper examination of themes from the perspective of stakeholders, offering insights into various concerns and priorities that could be overlooked otherwise. They link the project's objectives with the real-life situations of those involved, grounding abstract goals in concrete experiences.



## CONCLUSION OF THE CONTEXT

In the third step of the frame innovation method, the identities and values of various stakeholders directly connected to the problem space have been examined. This understanding is important for the development of themes, frames and futures and any solution to the challenge. The main stakeholders are visualised on the right in the circle "context". The two main stakeholders "Youth" and "Civil servants" have also been explored through developing personas.

As mentioned before, the development of personas is not a standard step in Kees Dorst's Frame Innovation method. However, these eight personas assist in acquiring a deeper understanding of the context. Primarily, they serve as a tool for better comprehension of the most direct stakeholders: the youth and civil servants. These are diverse groups with a wide range of perspectives. Solutions or frames might be conceptualized for 'civil servants', but employing these personas allows for more targeted testing of solutions later on. For instance, 'the overwhelmed supporter' will benefit from different solutions than 'the data-driven sceptic'. These personas will reappear later in this report during the evaluation of frames and futures.

The most important aspect of the context is the values that have been uncovered in this chapter; these, along with the values that emerge in the next chapter 'Field', will be clustered into themes in Chapter 5 - Themes. These themes connect the stakeholders from this chapter with each other.

In summary, this chapter lays the groundwork for the subsequent steps in the frame innovation process. The examination of stakeholders' identities and values, enriched by the personas, sets the stage for a better understanding of the context. This understanding is important for developing themes that are both reflective of the stakeholders' realities and that can guide the creation of sustainable solutions.

In the next chapter, 'Field', we will build upon this foundation, We'll learn even more about the values surrounding this problem space, and prepare for the thematic synthesis that will drive the innovation process forward.



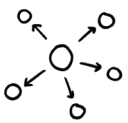
# FIELD

Looking at "Indirect" Stakeholders





# 4. FIELD

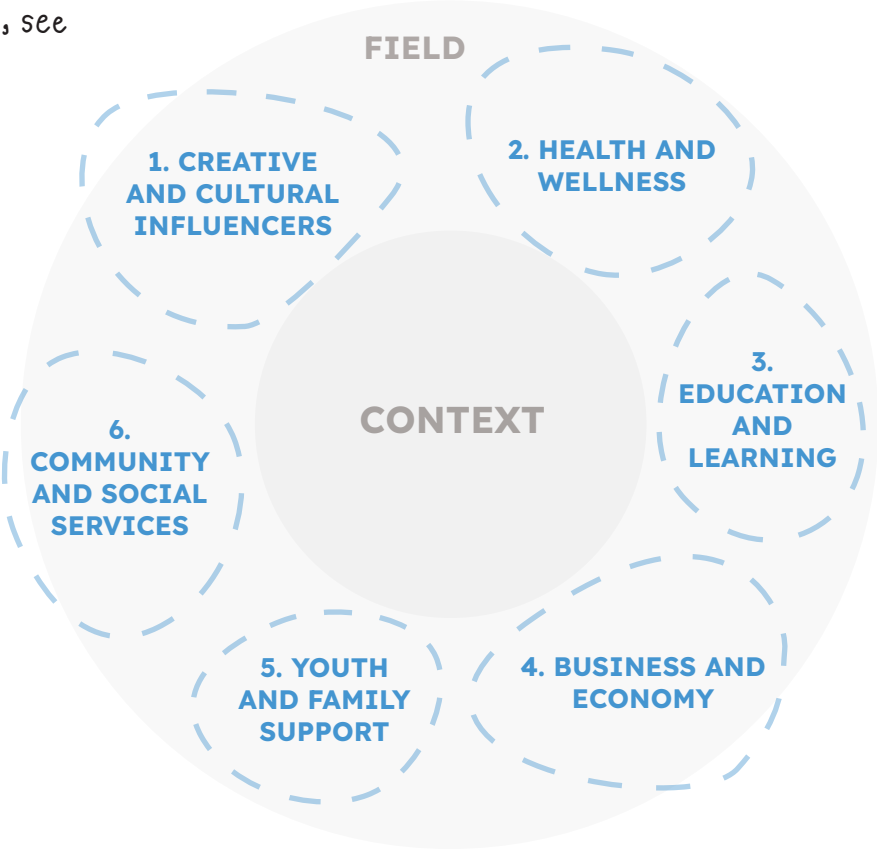


In the ‘field’ section, we step back to see who’s indirectly connected to youth participation. We map out what the people indirectly involved value, and what they are interested in. Looking at everyone involved helps to understand the bigger picture. In the chapter ‘Field,’ we’re not just looking at individuals but at the whole network around youth participation. This broader perspective also inspires the frame-creation process later on, encouraging us to discover solutions in places and with stakeholders who were previously unengaged. Essentially, we’re expanding the solution space, stretching it further, as it were; we’re zooming out even more!

The research questions of this section are: **Who is indirectly connected to the problem? And: What do the people indirectly involved value?**

In the ‘Field’ section, I have divided these ‘indirect stakeholders’ into six overarching categories based on their primary functions and roles in society. These groups and the entities within these groups are based on various research activities. The groundwork was established in the frame creation workshop (CD1), where a collaborative effort among researchers and designers marked the commencement of mapping the field relevant to this situation. The results of this session can be found in Appendix E. This preliminary overview was enriched through interviews with civil servants (IC1), a dialogue with a young individual (IY1), and a discussion with a school psychologist (IO1), aiming to deepen the understanding of the issue. The goal was to identify individuals who, though not currently engaged with or affected by the problem, might play a significant role in the future. The analysis of the values of these indirect stakeholders drew on online research to examine their engagements, complemented by creative efforts undertaken during CD1.

For the full figure, see Appendix D



Research question



Who is indirectly connected to the problem? What do the people indirectly involved value?

Activities

IC1

CD1

IY1

IO1





## 1 Creative and Cultural Influencers

Local Artists (also think graffiti or tattoo artists)  
Writers and Poets  
(Cultural) Festivals  
Musicians (and places where people make music together)  
Art clubs/workshops & Art Galleries  
Theatres  
Museums



### Values

Artistic expression, cultural heritage, creativity, and innovation.

### Interests

Cultivating the arts, preserving cultural practices, engaging the public in cultural activities, and fostering a vibrant community identity.

## 2 Health and wellness

General Practitioners (GPs)  
(School)psychologists  
Youth nurses (jeugdverpleegkundige)  
Sports associations (trainers/team members etc.)

### Values

Physical and mental health, wellness, preventative care, making a healthy live accessible, vibrancy and fun (for sport)

### Interests

Promoting healthy lifestyles, ensuring the availability of health services, and supporting public health initiatives



## 3 Education and Learning

Primary School Teachers  
Language Schools  
Influencers (as they often partake in educational or instructive content)  
Researchers  
Tutors  
Hackerspaces and Tech Communities (hackathons)  
Libraries

### Values

Physical & mental health, preventative care, making a healthy live accessible, vibrancy and fun

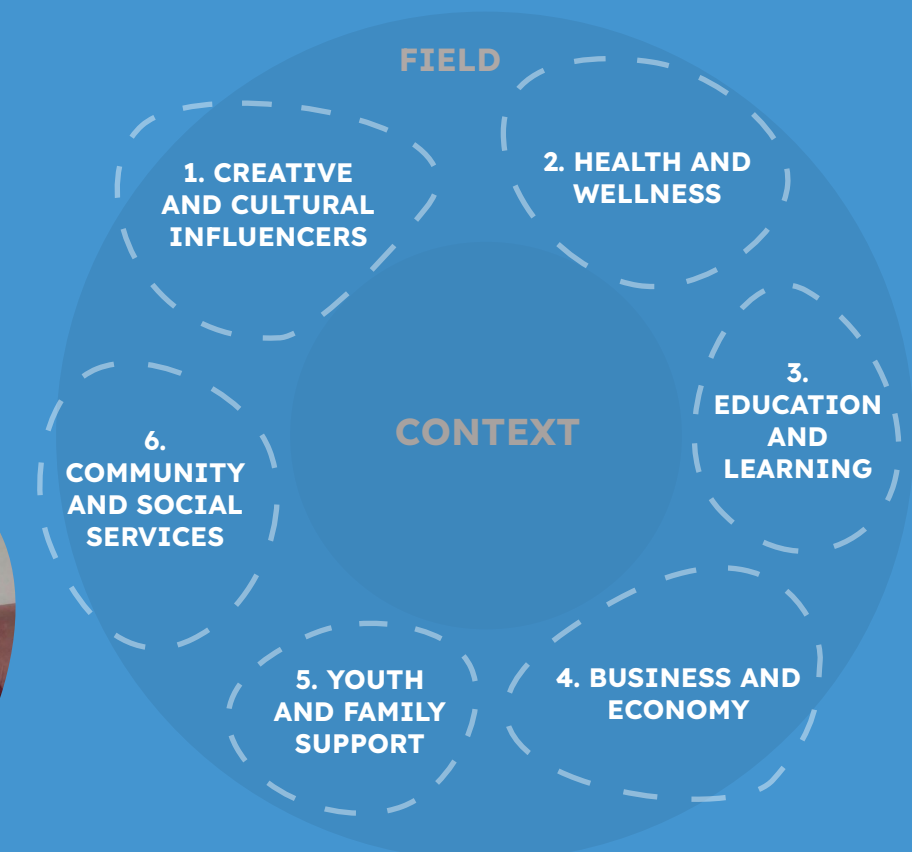
### Interests

Promoting healthy lifestyles, ensuring the availability of health services, and supporting public health initiatives



"Oh, what would be cool... In the music scene there are many places where young people gather, for example "kunstbende". Maybe that would be nice, if civil servants came to watch us play and talk or something."

- Lisa, youngster (CY1)







**The next step: finding themes that combine values and connect stakeholders!**



### Key insights from the Field:

This exercise of examining stakeholders and shared values in the field yields various insights:

- The field step helps to create an overview of other stakeholders who are not yet connected to the problem but could play a role in the future. In this chapter, various entities have been identified. They are divided into six overarching categories: Creative and Cultural Influencers, Health and Wellness, Education and Learning, Business and Economy, Youth and Family Support, & Community and Social Services.
- Values ranging from vibrancy to stability are recognized and carried forward to the next step: themes. These themes are built on the values found; both from the context and the field. The field can also be used as inspiration for the frames and futures - by looking outside the immediate scope of the problem space, more innovative solutions can be found.

## 4 Business and Economy

Companies with Famous Brands (e.g., Nike)  
Start-Up Incubators  
Local Restaurants & Cafés  
Local stores  
(People working in) local transportation  
Employers of Young People  
Game Developers  
Nightclubs and bars



### Values

Economic growth, entrepreneurship, consumer service, and workforce development, vibrancy, financial security and growth

### Interests

Fostering a strong local economy, creating job opportunities, and supporting sustainable business practices

## 5 Youth and Family Support

Foster Care Organizations  
Community Gardens (often serve as educational and family-friendly spaces)



### Values

Family integrity, child welfare, supportive parenting, and safe family environments

### Interests

Strengthening family units, stability, providing resources for effective parenting, and ensuring the wellbeing of children and adolescents

## 6 Community and Social Services

Police & Community Service Officers  
Foodbanks & Clothing Banks  
Environmental Groups  
Religious Institutions  
Volunteer Organizations that engage youth in community service



### Values

Community wellbeing, social justice, inclusivity, and support for vulnerable populations

### Interests

Developing safe and supportive environments, fostering community engagement



Zichtbaar-  
heid

bij participatie juist  
directere reactie  
dan juist ipv  
bijv papers

oersoep aan  
beleidsinitiatieven

als je stemt:  
er gebeurt iets  
mee, wordt  
geteld

bij beleidsmaken  
chain of effects  
is heel lang →  
geen directe reactie

keuzes maken

nu:  
20 x meer  
plannen dan ze  
kunnen uitvoeren

Kansen kaart  
binnen gemeente



direct iets  
maken

↳ prototypes

arts/chirurg →  
lichaam reageert  
direct

# THEMES

Discovering Deep Human Experiences

het ethos  
van ambtenaren →  
gebaseerd op  
eigen expertise

je taak =  
extrinsieke  
motivatie

dienen van  
een publieke  
zaak

kan extrinsieke  
intrinsieke  
motivatie  
opleveren?

nu ook: luisteren  
naar de samen-  
leving

is participatie  
een add-on?

waar jij zo  
gepassioneerd over  
was 'mag' jij niet  
meer doen

organ  
van

interessant zodra  
jij het wil zien

doen → ~~te~~  
nieuwe rol  
zien voor jezelf

"mensen als jij"  
doen het ook

maar: drempel  
is er toch



## 5. THEMES

Theme analysis is a critical step in the frame innovation method. After mapping out stakeholders' values, themes are sought. Dick Rijken states (2013):

*"A THEME IS A DYNAMIC PSYCHOLOGICAL OR SOCIAL CONSTRUCT (WITH STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS), THAT CAN PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN MOTIVATING PEOPLE TO ACT IN A SITUATION. THEREFORE, THEY CAN ALSO BE USED TO UNDERSTAND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WHEN LOOKING FOR THE DYNAMICS OF MEANING IN A CERTAIN PROBLEM FIELD."*

In this step, we try to understand the deeper factors that explain the needs, motivation, and experiences of the 'players'. These themes are present among various stakeholders and connect them to each other. The purpose of this chapter is to make these themes explicit and to explore them in various ways. The research question for this chapter is:

**Which deep human experiences can be recognised in the broader field?**

### METHOD

#### How did I arrive at the themes?

I started by looking for 'general research themes'; when conducting research, you can find all sorts of themes, not just about deep experiences. This was done by clustering the values from the context and field during a frame creation session (CD1). After this session, interviews and organized activities were combed through to delve into stakeholders' situations. The interviews with civil servants (IC1), Timmerhuis session (CC1), Guerilla session at Blaak Library (CY2), and Tienskip session (CY1) were all used. Eventually, ten general research themes emerged, these can be found in Appendix M.

Then, with these themes, the search began for what is called 'phenomenological themes': themes that deal with deep experiences and patterns of experiences. The transition from general research themes to phenomenological themes is a process of filtering, finding patterns, and filtering again (Dorst, 2015). With post-its and in discussions themes were clustered, critically examined, and then clustered again. This process can be found in Appendix N. Eventually, the four main themes which will be discussed in this chapter emerged. Throughout this process, decisions were strategically made to pinpoint themes that are universally relevant among various stakeholders and encapsulate human values that drive decision-making and behaviour.

#### How did I then investigate these themes?

Van Leeuwen et al. (2020) provide different perspectives from which to conduct a theme investigation.

- Stakeholder Perspective: Relevant feelings and emotions, experienced by stakeholders in the problem space
- Researcher Perspective: Personal experiences of researchers
- Scientific Perspective: Exploring the themes based on scientific literature
- Philosophic Perspective: Using philosophy to explain themes
- Cultural Perspective: Seeking interpretations of themes in poetry, popular literature, music, film, etc.

To better understand the four themes, it is beneficial to research them in various ways. The themes have been examined from a stakeholder perspective but also through scientific literature, researcher experience, and art:

1. From the Stakeholder Perspective: Viewing the theme from the perspective of stakeholders, their problems and values; based on (design) research activities.
2. From a Scientific Perspective: Primarily focusing on psychology and sociology to gain a deeper understanding of their underlying principles
3. From a Researcher Perspective: Questioning how I and other people experience this theme outside of the context of youth participation in municipal policymaking. What emotions do they evoke? What triggers a sense of responsibility in my father, or in my niece? I clustered these thoughts in a small collage and included some illustrative quotes.
4. From a Cultural Perspective: Using art to gain a new, deeper understanding of the themes. An array of artworks, songs, poems, and more have been collected to immerse further in these themes. A selection of these works is compiled in this report, some include a brief explanation. Some artworks directly correlate with the themes, while others evoke similar feelings in me as a designer.

The themes will be discussed in this order.

At the end of each theme, these four perspectives will be analysed and combined in one integration.

Research question



Which deep human motivations can be recognised in the broader field?

Activities

IC1

IY1

CD1

CC1

CO1

CY1

CY2

Literature review





## Short overview of the four themes

Open Hearts, Open Minds emphasizes the importance of sincere interactions and empathy and how prejudices can make this more difficult.

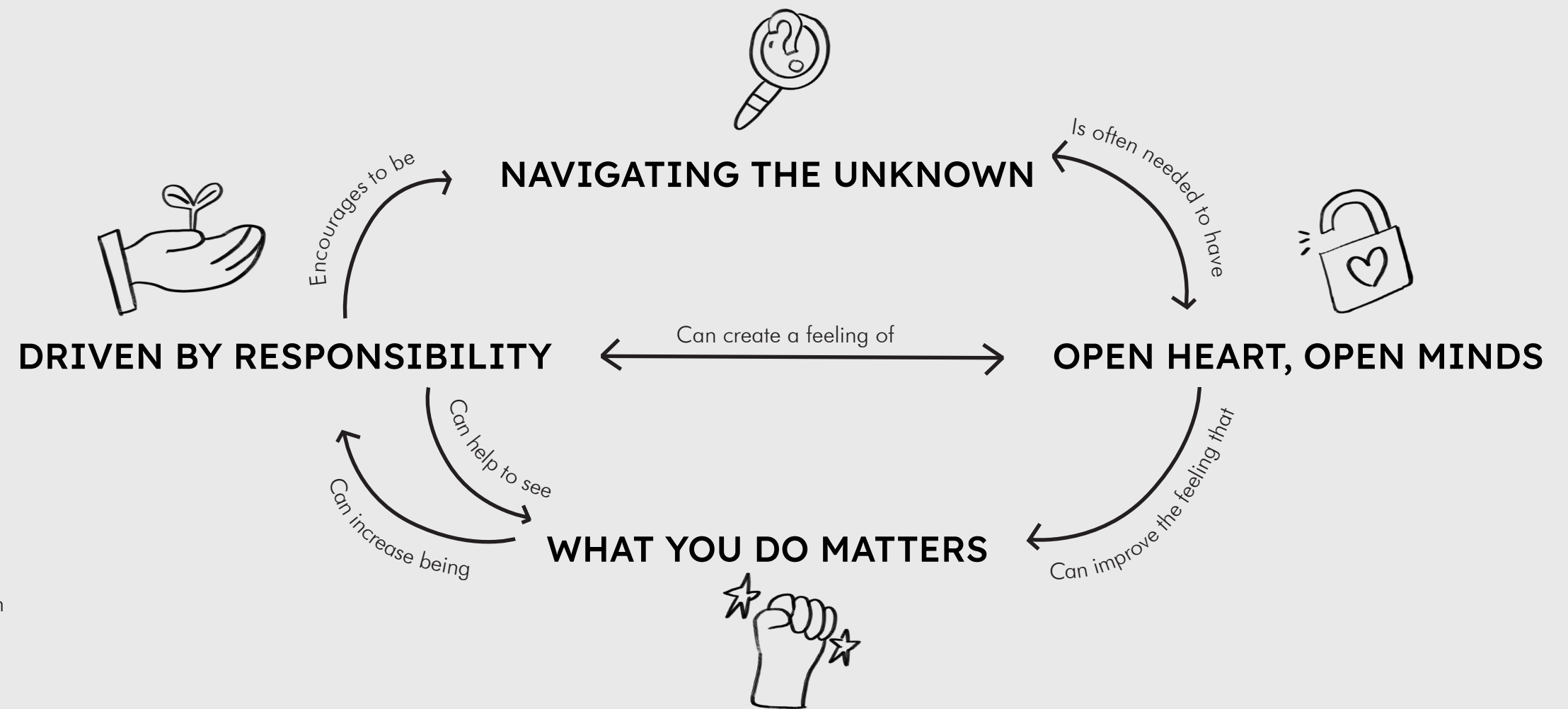
Navigating the Unknown is about the uncertainties that come with participation and the challenge of doing something new and still feeling in control.

Driven by Responsibility focuses on the idea of responsibility, of duty and how this influences engagement.

What you do matters shows how important it is to feel that your contribution matters and is about the influence of power and feeling empowered.

The identified themes are interconnected, with each theme not existing in isolation. There are occasional overlaps, and the various themes certainly influence each other, as we have also seen, for instance, in the scientific exploration of the theme 'Driven by Responsibility'. I have created a figure of a theme diagram that illustrates and names the interconnections as I have experienced them during the exploration of these themes.

Let's discuss these themes one by one.



## What is this theme about?

# OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS



In a world characterized by increasing diversity, the ability to open up and share a part of ourselves is essential for building meaningful, genuine connections. "Open Hearts, Open Minds" speaks to the core of this ideal, focusing on cultivating an attitude of openness towards people who may be different.

As humans, we sometimes find it easy to think in boxes: I might identify myself as a designer, a woman, and a Dutch person. But every person is much more than a single term. Openness is not just about accepting differences, but also about actively seeking and appreciating what makes each individual unique. It requires a willingness to look beyond our own biases and assumptions, to truly listen and learn from the other.

Openness is not merely a passive state of being but an active effort to broaden our own perspective. It encourages us to share not only our thoughts and opinions but also our vulnerabilities, laying the foundation for deeper human connections. However, opening up comes with its own challenges. It

requires courage to face uncertainties and fears, and to be authentic. Yet, the benefits of an open attitude can be great. Stepping outside the comfort zones of one's own experiences and perspectives can sometimes even help to understand oneself at deeper levels.





## Stakeholder perspective

In the context of participation in policymaking, stakeholders often have a broad range of perspectives, reflecting many different experiences and backgrounds. From the seasoned fifty-year-old civil servant to the vibrant sixteen-year-old youth, it is not only a matter of age or knowledge; it encompasses a wider spectrum of dreams, languages, interests, and modes of expression. Bridging the gap between these varied perspectives often requires engaging with those who do not necessarily mirror your own views or life experiences.

The saying “Birds of a feather flock together” highlights the human tendency to align with those who share our interests, expertise, and viewpoints. This inclination often limits interactions, especially in professional settings like policymaking. We might hesitate to reach out to those whose expertise or background differs from ours.

When discussing participation with stakeholders, the significance of “genuine interactions” often surfaces as something important. When speaking with a civil servant at the Timmerhuis (CC1), he shared an insightful story about his department’s interaction with concerned citizens. These residents were upset, believing that an excessive number of room rental permits had been issued in their neighbourhood, leading to disturbances from an influx of students. Intrigued, the civil servant investigated and discovered that only about five permits were actually issued that year, a surprisingly low number. Instead of responding with a standard, formal letter, he chose a more personal approach. Opting for a casual coffee meeting, he aimed to truly understand the residents’ concerns. This conversation revealed that the real issue was the nuisance of stray bicycles cluttering the streets, a problem with tangible solutions, rather than the previously assumed permit issue.

A similar example was shared in the podcast “Participatiepraat” (Participatiepraat, n.d.) by environment manager Elisa Bours. She was tasked to understand the impact of aircraft noise on residents for the evaluation of the Schipholwet. Elisa and her team decided to do something unconventional: they spent nights with citizens in their homes to experience the disturbance firsthand. Despite some initial reservations, this immersive approach yielded more positive and insightful results than standard public hearings. These two experiences underscore the importance of discarding assumptions in favour of direct, empathetic communication

It’s been noted in interviews (IC1) that people tend to respond more favourably to interactions that are genuine and personal. Opting for superficial means of communication, such as surveys or formal letters, might appear safer but can ironically lead to a more detached and less secure environment. What makes it so hard to open up?

### Prejudices and being part of a larger collective

Interactions between civil servants and young individuals currently seem to be heavily influenced by mutual prejudices and assumed biases. Both groups harbour specific preconceptions about each other, impacting their communication and collaborative efforts. Civil servants may sense that young people don’t see them as peers or individuals who understand their reality, feeling disconnected from the younger generation’s experiences. Conversely, young individuals often believe that civil servants view them as lacking in intelligence or experience, underestimating their contributions due to age. In some cases, these perceptions of prejudice are not unfounded, as they reflect actual beliefs held by the other group. These preconceived notions create a challenging environment for an open dialogue.

The creative session at the Timmerhuis (CC1) revealed an intriguing contrast between how civil servants perceive they are viewed by youth and how they wish to be perceived. One striking example is a civil servant who felt that young people saw them as lazy, while they aspired to be seen as successful. Similarly, a policy maker believed that youngsters perceived them as strict, yet their personal aim was to be approachable. These contradictions continue with other civil servants who feel they are seen as uninvolved or ‘the bad guys’ by youth, whereas they strive to be helpful and supportive. Additionally, some perceive a gap where they are viewed as invisible or detached, while their goal is to be accessible and present. These insights underscore a disconnect between self-perception and external perception among civil servants in their interactions with the younger generation.

**“IF YOU ARE NOT GENUINELY INTERESTED IN PEOPLE, THEN I THINK IT IS MORE DIFFICULT TO COME TO THE CONCLUSION: WE HAVE TO WORK ON PARTICIPATION. BECAUSE THEN YOU WOULD THINK WHY SHOULD I WORK ON PARTICIPATION? I HAVE SO MUCH DATA AT MY DISPOSAL ALREADY AND I HAVE A REPORT HERE FROM AN AGENCY THAT WE HIRED.”**

- KARIM, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

**“HAVING CONFIDENCE IN EACH OTHER, I THINK THAT’S ACTUALLY THE MOST IMPORTANT THING NEXT TO BEING TRANSPARENT AND JUST NORMAL, JUST BEING YOURSELF.”**

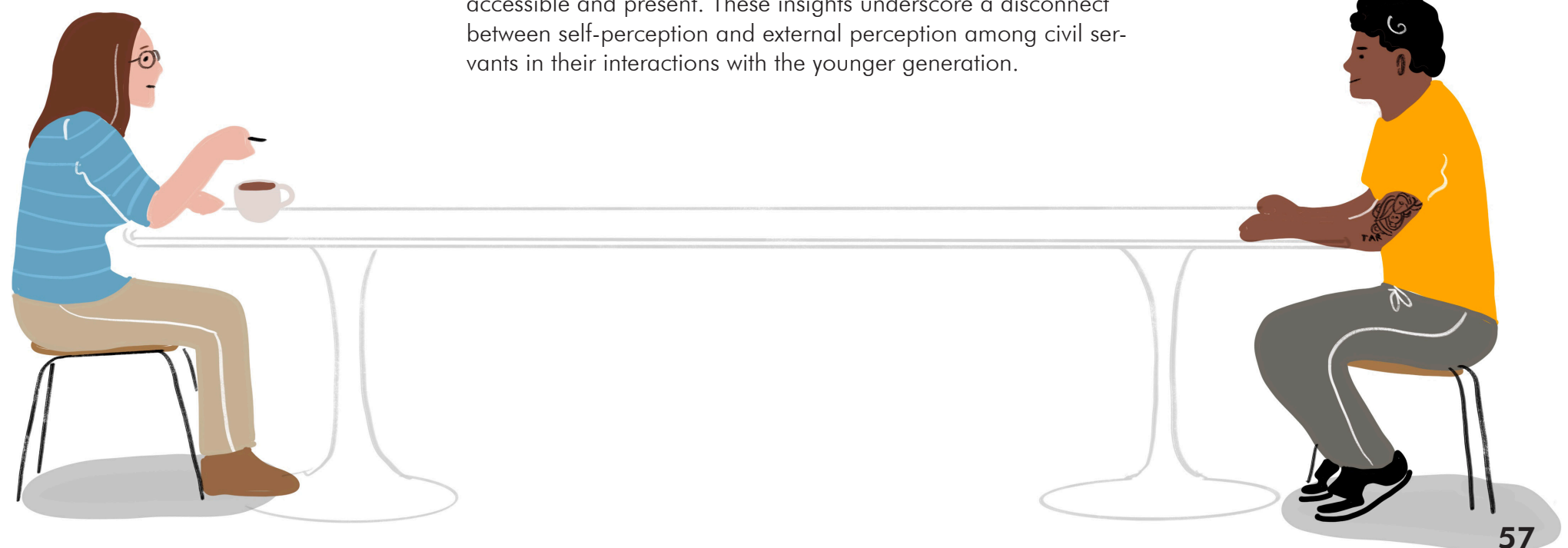
- LOÏS CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

**“WHEN I LOOK AT MYSELF, I DON’T IMMEDIATELY SEE MYSELF AS A SPARRING PARTNER FOR A YOUNG PERSON.’ [...] YOU CAN’T THINK, ALRIGHT, I’LL JUST WALK TO A YOUNG PERSON AND I HAVE A GOOD CONVERSATION WITH THEM.”**

- BENTHE, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

**“IK WEET NIET OF IK MET IEMAND VAN DE GEMEENTE ZOU GAAN PRATEN. [...] ZE VINDEN ME WAARSCHIJNLIJK KINDERACHTIG. OF JA, DAT IK ER NIETS VAN WEET.”**

- MEHMET YOUNGSTER (CY1)





These prejudices are related to the balance between maintaining one's individual identity and being part of a larger collective. For instance, civil servants often grapple with being perceived solely as representatives of a bureaucratic entity, such as "the municipality." This perception can overshadow their individual identities, sometimes even reducing them to a scapegoat in the eyes of citizens.

This theme revolves around open, sincere connections between people with quite different backgrounds. To achieve this, one must be willing to reveal a part of themselves and also be open to opinions that differ from their own. At the same time, this theme encompasses the prejudices that people may have towards each other. It also touches on the individual within a larger entity or group – being seen as someone from "that group" or for who you truly are. When are you seen for who you are?

**"I THINK MANY COLLEAGUES ALSO FIND IT SCARY. ONCE YOU ARE OUTSIDE, YOU ARE THE MUNICIPALITY!"**

- ELIAS, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

**"I'M A CIVIL SERVANT BUT I'M ALSO JUST A NICE MOTHER."**

- HANNAH, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

## Researcher perspective

Starting with personal stories and feelings instead of just looking at things in an analytical way gives us a base that's guided by emotions. This emotional starting point helps us in two ways: it gives us material to work with and a point to compare against when we study the theme using more detailed methods like science and philosophy. Real-life stories (from the viewpoint of people involved) are effective when they show true emotions (Van Leeuwen et al., 2020). They can remind us of our own experiences (from the researcher's viewpoint).

In this part of the research about themes, conversations with people close to me were held. They were willing to have open and relaxed conversations about their experiences, not about youth participation. There was a focus on how they feel or have felt about these themes in their lives. Some quotes from these chats were collected. A sketch of words and other themes that seemed to be linked to this main theme was also made. These steps help to understand the themes more deeply, outside of just the context of the research.

**"THEY ALSO NEED TO LOOK BEHIND OUR FACADES. I AM NOT THE MUNICIPALITY, I AM JUST A HUMAN BEING, I ALSO MAKE MISTAKES, I WORRY, I DO NOT ALWAYS AGREE WITH POLICY."**

- IRIS, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

"I often don't like people for all kinds of reasons. I don't have to be friends with everyone. There was an exchange student once and I already was a bit apprehensive, because I had to speak English but in the end, they added a lot to our team. Precisely because you are different. At first, it is just "someone" out of 7 billion. But as soon as you find things to talk about, common grounds, they quickly change in your mind to someone you are open to."

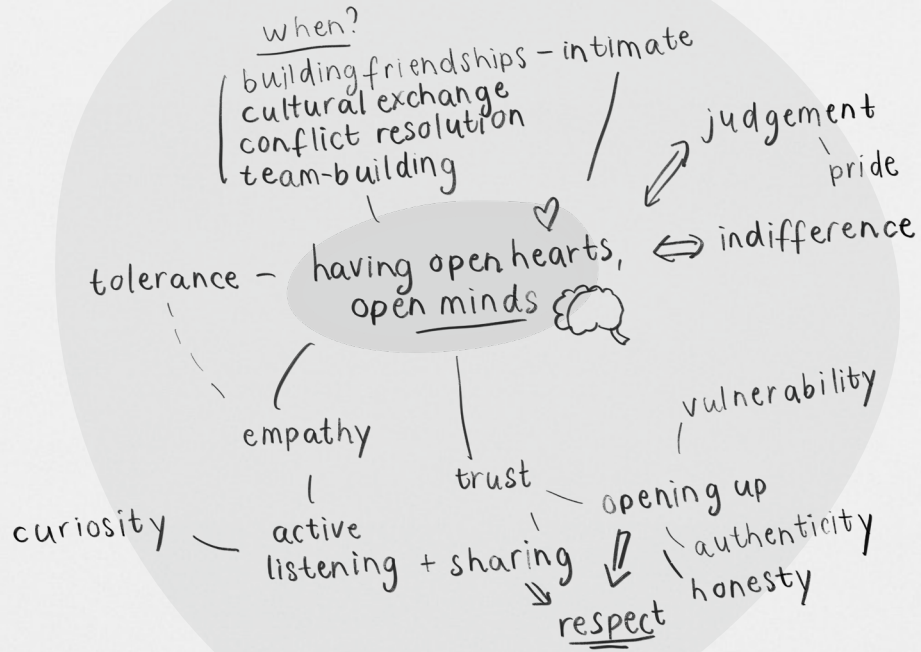
- Bastiaan, 22, university student

"I always try to open up to people who are really different and not be surprised. I had that happen once during a pub quiz, when I realized, wow, we really all add something different."

- Jasper, 54, programmer

"Every time I meet someone I have some prejudices even though this often happens unintentionally and unconsciously, but if you continue to open yourself up to social interaction with people despite these, in the end almost everyone turns out to be interesting."

- Hannah, 18, university student



Some opposing answers from the Timmerhuis session (Appendix I).  
Left: How do you think youngsters see civil servants? Right: how do you want to be seen?

Saai, iemand waar bedenken je waaraan maar niet hebt

ivoren toren  
K. Ambtenaren  
someone who cares  
mooi mens



## Scientific perspective

If we look at the literature, the theme Open hearts, Open minds is reflected in specific theories from the fields of psychology and sociology. I will highlight two theories that approach this theme from an interesting angle.

### Cognitive Dissonance Theory

First, we can think of the Cognitive Dissonance Theory developed by American psychologist Leon Festinger (1962). This theory suggests that individuals experience discomfort when they encounter conflicting beliefs or information. In policymaking, stakeholders encounter beliefs or convictions from others that can challenge their existing knowledge or assumptions.

To relate this to the theme of open hearts and open minds, it's crucial for policymakers and stakeholders to recognize that encountering conflicting viewpoints is a natural part of the policymaking process. If we take this even further, we can also look into cognitive restructuring: a core technique in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, that focuses on identifying and challenging irrational thoughts. Cognitive restructuring is a technique most often used for mental health disorders (Martin & Dahlen, 2005), so it's a bit of a jump to youth participation. The technique involves reevaluating one's thinking patterns to adjust perceptions and behaviours (Hope et al., 2007), it can be used to:

- Challenge Assumptions: Question pre-existing beliefs
- Enhance Empathy: Develop a more empathetic understanding of diverse perspectives.
- Foster Innovation: Encourage innovative thinking by redefining problems and solutions from different viewpoints.

Questions that one could ask oneself are:

Is this thought realistic? Do I base this thought on facts or feelings? What is the evidence for this thought? Can I misinterpret the evidence? Do I see this situation as black and white, when it is actually more complicated? Do I have this thought out of habit or do facts support this?

Asking these questions could also be very relevant in the field of participation as stakeholders can deal with prejudices and negative expectations of situations "I don't know enough to participate anyway"; "Why should I organize a participation session, young people do not want to participate anyway?"

### Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979), suggests that a part of an individual's self-concept comes from their affiliations with various social groups. This theory aims to understand how cognitive processes and social contexts contribute to behaviours between groups, especially those involving prejudice, bias, and discrimination. A person's social identity is shaped by their group memberships. An individual doesn't have just one personal "self," but rather multiple identities linked to the groups they are part of. Depending on the group they associate with, a person's behaviour can vary in different social settings. Tajfel and Turner (1979) argued that the groups people belong to - such as social class, family, or sports teams - are key to their pride and self-esteem.

One of the mental processes related to social identity is categorization. This is the method people use to sort themselves into social groups, helping them understand the social world, including their place in it. Typically, individuals are more inclined to define themselves by their social categories rather than by personal or individual traits.

In dialogues between officials and young people, these groups often split into distinct categories like old and young, or official and citizen. However, the theory also states that classification depends on the social situation. For instance, an official might identify themselves not just as an official but also as a sports enthusiast and a dedicated parent. Similarly, a young person might also identify as a sports enthusiast in a different context. This presents opportunities: a focus of this theme could be on creating situations where stakeholders, who initially seem different, might categorize themselves under a common identity. For example, finding common ground as sports enthusiasts can bridge the gap between seemingly disparate groups like officials and youth, fostering more inclusive and effective communication.

### Key takeaways:

- If we look at the Cognitive Dissonance Theory it makes sense that "birds of a feather flock together"; people experience discomfort when faced with beliefs that are different from their own. If we still want to connect people with different beliefs assumptions (about oneself) might need to be challenged.
- Social identity is shaped by group memberships, so to connect people we might need to think of different ways to categorise people that connect instead of dividing them into two different groups; think about hobbies, the neighbourhood that they live in or passions.





# OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS

1

*Where do I end and you begin*

**"Where do I end and you begin"**  
by Shilpa Gupta

2

**"The Sound of Silence"**  
by Simon & Garfunkel

And in the naked light I saw  
Ten thousand people, maybe more  
People talking without speaking  
People hearing without listening

5

**"Pan American Unity"**  
A Mural by Diego Rivera

In 1940 Rivera painted The Marriage of the Artistic Expression of the North and of the South on This Continent, commonly known as Pan American Unity. The fresco depicts a past, present, and future that the artist believed were shared across North America, calling for cultural solidarity and exchange during a time of global conflict

4

**"Mending Wall" by Robert Frost**

He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'  
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder  
If I could put a notion in his head:  
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it  
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.  
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out,  
And to whom I was like to give offense.  
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,  
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather  
He said it for himself. I see him there  
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top  
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.  
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,  
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.  
He will not go behind his father's saying,  
And he likes having thought of it so well  
He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'

3

**"Humans of New York" by Brandon Stanton**

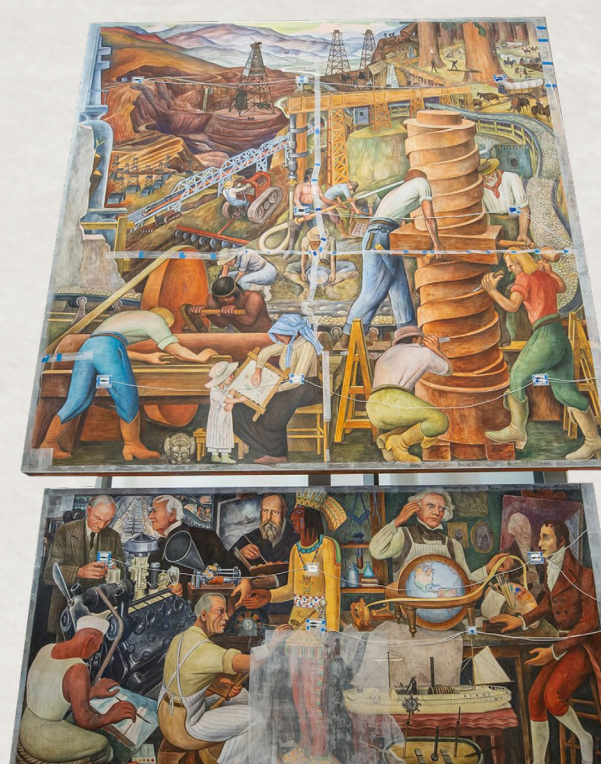
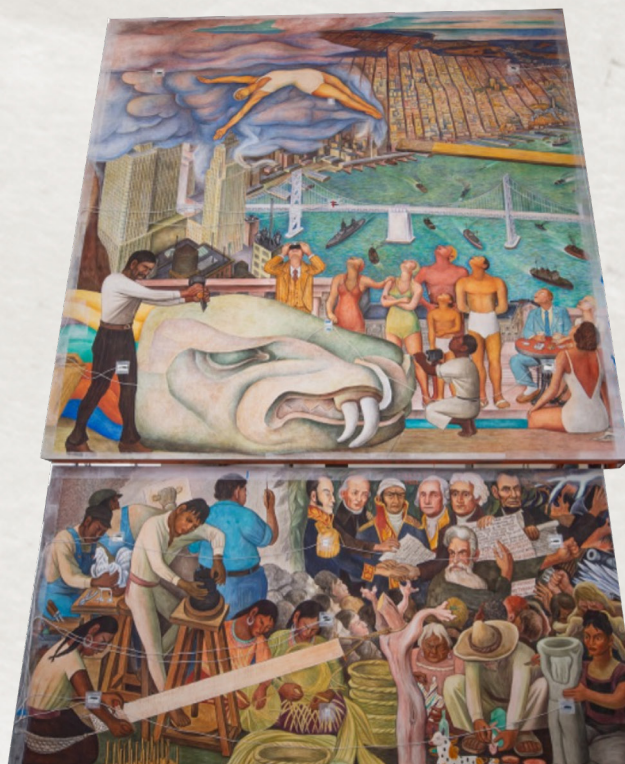
A photography project capturing the diverse stories of people in New York City, highlighting shared human experiences across various backgrounds.



6

**"De surprise en andere bizarre verhalen" Belcampo**  
(translated)

How is it possible, I thought, to know a city intimately, even if one has lived there for years. What does one know about his neighbor, his friends, his own children? They are strangers.  
As soon as someone does something you would never have done or says something you would never have said, he is a stranger, he is actually equivalent to a lunatic to you. And then a city full of such people, a network of a thousand kilometers of streets with a world behind every window.







## INTEGRATION OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS

When we bring all these perspectives together, what does it teach us? The concept of “Open Hearts, Open Minds” is a key belief that highlights the ability to approach others with kindness and a readiness to understand different views. This idea is especially relevant in the complex world of policymaking and public discussion. It points out the essential need for inclusion and welcoming a range of ideas in working together. It’s about curiosity and not judging too quickly and also about (the scarieness) of showing a part of who you really are. It seems natural to not immediately open up to people who don’t look like us or who are different from us, leading to shallow conversations. Or, as Simon & Garfunkel (2) said, “People talking without speaking. People hearing without listening.” Sometimes, judgment is involved. Robert Frost (4) wrote, “Good fences make good neighbors.” But to create real connections, those fences can be an obstacle. This is also seen in youth participation: the times it really seems to work are when people enter a conversation openly, though this can be challenging.

According to the Cognitive Dissonance Theory, it makes sense that “birds of a feather flock together”; people feel uncomfortable when confronted with beliefs that differ from their own. As Belcampo wrote (6), “As soon as someone does something you would never have done or says something you would never have said, he is a stranger, he is actually equivalent to a lunatic to you.” If we still want to connect people with different beliefs, assumptions (about oneself) might need to be challenged. Is what you believe true? Looking back at the context of municipal policymaking: Are young people really too naive to participate? Are officials lazy? Is the person sitting in front of you only interested in their own gain?

Social Identity Theory by Henri Tajfel and John Turner tells us about our identities tied to our group affiliations. Our social identity is shaped by our group memberships, so to connect people, we might need to find different ways to categorize people that bring them together instead of dividing them; think about hobbies, the neighbourhood they live in, or passions. Something similar is seen in “Humans of New York” by Brandon Stanton (3): people from different backgrounds share experiences. Waiting for the tram, drinking from a water fountain, living in an enormous city. “Pan American Unity” (5) is an ideal image: people who work together, exercise and create together. When we bring together all these different views, the theme of “Open Hearts, Open Minds” urges us to go beyond just tolerating others and move towards actively valuing the wide range of human experiences.



*What is this theme about?*

## NAVIGATING THE UNKNOWN

Entering unfamiliar territory is a fundamental aspect of the human experience, filled with both excitement and uncertainty. “Navigating the Unknown” is about widening comfort zones and growing as a person. To do this, one needs to let go of the safety of the known and embrace the unknown possibilities that lie ahead. This can feel scary! It’s very human to want to feel in control and not get lost. Centuries ago this apprehension is what kept us alive.

So why do people still try new things? Curiosity is a natural and powerful motivator. Curiosity drives people to ask questions, to look beyond the surface, and to experiment with new ideas and experiences. It can people to the edges of their limits and challenge them to grow their comfort zone.

Expanding a comfort zone is often not a one-time leap into the unknown, but a gradual process of learning and adapting. Each step outside usual boundaries not only enlarges one’s world but also strengthens one’s confidence and ability to deal with unfamiliar situations. This sense of control, even amid uncertainty, is important. It allows us to take risks and experiment while maintaining a foundation of self-confidence.

The value of navigating the unknown lies in the growth it brings. Each new experience, every risk we take, and every boundary we push contributes to our personal and professional development. It teaches us about our resilience, our capabilities, and our potentially limitless possibilities.





### Confidence in unpredictability

**"[YOUTH PARTICIPATION] IS UNPREDICTABLE AND YOU ARE NOT COMPLETELY SURE WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN AND YOU DO NOT KNOW VERY WELL HOW TO DO IT, SO THERE IS ALSO AN AWKWARDNESS AND IT IS COMPLICATED."**

- PAULA, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

The concept of participation inherently involves a certain degree of unpredictability. Let's refer back to an example discussed in the previous theme: the case of the civil servant addressing concerns about room rental permits. The local residents expressed frustration, believing their neighbourhood was overrun with students due to too many rental permits being issued. The civil servant, instead of resorting to a formal letter, chose to engage with the residents face-to-face. This uncovered that the actual issue was not the permits but the nuisance caused by stray bicycles. What happened here? The civil servant entered this dialogue without knowing what to expect, a common scenario in participatory processes where outcomes are not as clear-cut as data-driven decisions. This uncertainty can be unsettling, particularly for those used to more predictable, controlled environments. It often results in hesitation to engage in participatory methods where results aren't pre-defined, highlighting a broader challenge in embracing the unknown.

Many people feel uncomfortable when they have to deal with the unknown and face questions that don't have immediate answers. Not knowing the "right" way to get involved can be intimidating. Participatory processes are naturally unpredictable. For youngsters, oftentimes they don't have a clue what to expect: how does the municipality work? What will happen with their feedback? What kind of influence do they have? For civil servants, they might not know how a session will turn out: what kind of feedback will the youngsters give? Will they disagree with everything they came up with? Oftentimes both don't feel in control. There's a delicate balance between accepting that you can't control everything and still feeling like you have some influence. To achieve this balance, it's important to have a mindset that's open to growth.

This theme is closely related to the theory of creative confidence as described in design literature — "the natural ability to come up with new ideas and the courage to try them out" (Kelley & Kelley, 2012). It's also related to the "brave space" of the stake-

**"YOU KNOW, SOME COLLEAGUES JUST FIND IT DIFFICULT TO GO SOMEWHERE WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT. THAT QUESTIONS ARE THEN ASKED TO WHICH THEY HAVE NO ANSWERS."**

- KARIM, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

**"FOR THE MOST PART THIS [NOT ORGANISING PARTICIPATION] IS DUE TO PEOPLE THEMSELVES. AND THERE IS SOMETHING TO IT, IT IS RISKY, YES, IT CAN GO WRONG, IT IS ALL ELUSIVE."**

- MICHIEL, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)



holders navigating the unknown. Finding out where the comfort zone ends and the brave space or "growth zone" begins (Brown, 2008). It's also interesting to think about how this brave space can be stretched. When do people feel they are being pushed just enough without feeling panicked?

### Where are we going?

A second aspect of this theme of navigating the unknown is that there seems to be so much complexity within these processes that few seem to know where they are going and why.

The complexity inherent in governance processes can add to the uncertainty. The government can seem like a "black box" to the public, where actions and decision-making are mysterious. This lack of clarity is especially noticeable among young people who might have negative ideas or not fully understand the roles of government entities. During participation trajectories, there can be a lack of clarity between stakeholders. Ianniello et al. (2018) describe in a systematic review of citizen participation how citizens often have a limited understanding of the goals and constraints of other stakeholders, leading to challenges in effective participation. It all has to become visible. Young people don't see what we are doing here. Sometimes we don't even know where we are going.

**"I DON'T KNOW IF I WOULD GO TO THE MUNICIPALITY WITH MY IDEAS. I WOULDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. AND WHAT WOULD EVEN HAPPEN WITH MY IDEAS?"**

- JAKE, YOUNGSTER (CY1)

**"IT WOULD REALLY HELP IF WE HAD PEOPLE WHO COULD FINALLY PUT A DOT ON THE HORIZON. LIKE YES, THIS IS WHERE WE ARE GOING AND THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE TO DEVELOP. THAT IS WHAT OUR TOP SHOULD ACTUALLY DO, BUT YES THEY DON'T DO THAT, THAT IS JUST NOT GOING TO HAPPEN, BUT THAT WOULD HELP A LOT."**

- KARIM, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)



Officials themselves also struggle with this complexity and have difficulty understanding the many functions and structures within their own systems. Some still seem to figure out what role they themselves play within the municipality. In conversations, they also recognise the need for clarity in decision-making processes.

Concluding, the theme of “navigating the unknown” is about curiosity towards the unfamiliar and engaging without knowing what the outcomes might be. It’s about “unknown unknowns”. There’s uncertainty in not knowing what will happen or doing something new. It can feel a little scary. Therefore, it also relates to people’s ‘brave space’: how can they feel secure while venturing into the unknown? Additionally, complexity is a part of this theme. When you are completely unsure of your direction or how a system works, the unknown can feel overwhelmingly unfamiliar.

**“THE SYSTEM HAS SIMPLY BECOME TOO COMPLEX TO UNDERSTAND. FOR CITIZENS, BUT SOMETIMES FOR US TOO. I’VE BEEN WORKING HERE FOR 25 YEARS, BUT I STILL OCCASIONALLY COME ACROSS A POSITION AND THINK: EH, OKAY?”**

- LEO, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

## Researcher perspective



“I felt really lost when I had a blood test and I almost cried because of how scary it was, but I didn’t faint and it actually didn’t hurt at all. I achieved this by asking if I could lie down during the injection, holding my father’s hand and singing a silly song.”

- Kim, 16, high school student

“I oftentimes avoid doing new things because I am a perfectionist and I don’t like ‘failing’; what helps me is to have a safe space where I can try new things with people that won’t judge me if I turn out to be really bad at something.”

- Susanna, 24, university student

“Something is usually outside your comfort zone because you have never done it before. Then you have irrational fears, you always expect the worst: ‘I can’t do this, this isn’t fun’ and you convince yourself of these things. While 90% of the time it’s not that bad. It is also a kind of philosophy of life because you have to try things sometimes, right? It is easier to do if other people share their experiences or people you trust take you along. If you know clearly what to expect, it is also easier. Once you see a video on YouTube about what to expect, it becomes less scary.”

- Bastiaan, 22, university student

“I have a very big comfort zone, if I say so myself. When I started working for the tax authorities, I may have stepped out of this zone because it is a very formal organization, which is not really my thing. I still managed to function in this organisation because I just focused a lot on contact with people, which is my thing.”

- Richard, 52, product owner, writer



## Scientific perspective

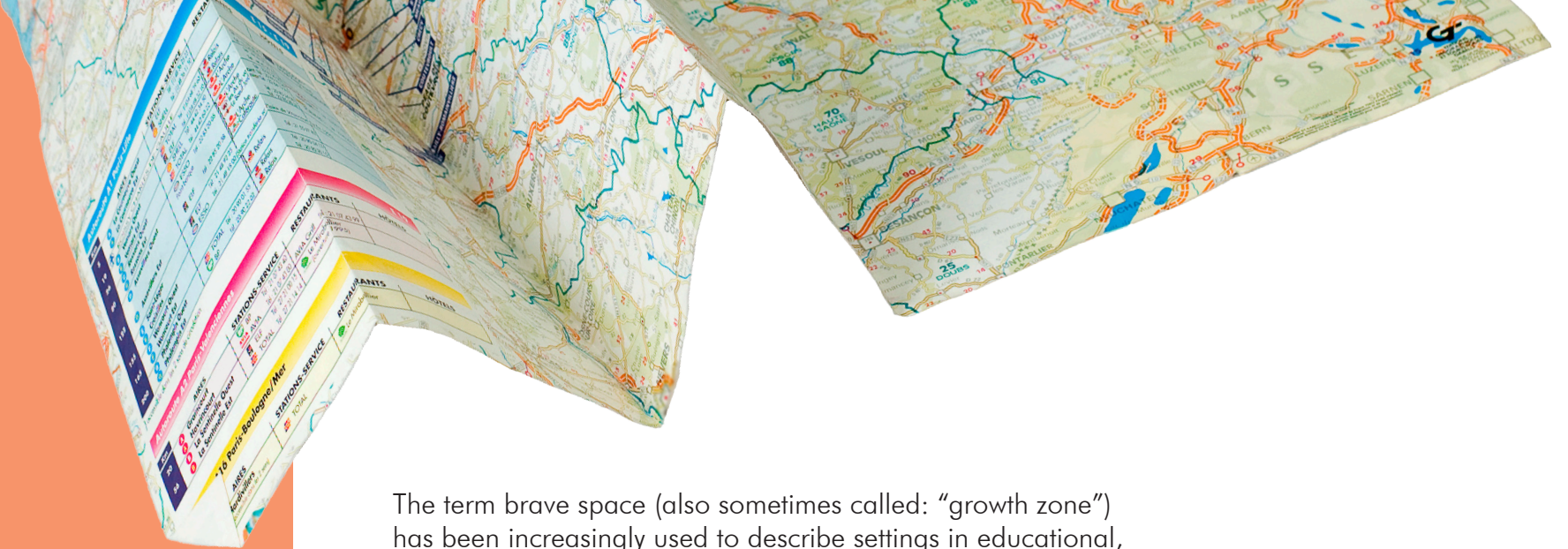
When talking about navigating the unknown, the term “comfort zone” comes to mind. The concept of a “comfort zone” became widely recognized through Dr. Judith Bardwick’s 1991 book in the field of psychology: “Danger in the Comfort Zone.” She described it as a state where people engage in activities that are familiar and safe, thereby reducing stress and risk.

This idea was not new at the time of Bardwick’s writing. The notion of a comfort zone has deep roots in psychology, specifically concerning the ideal balance of stress for peak performance. This balance, known as the zone of optimal performance, is where stress is neither too high nor too low. Discussions in psychology have long explored how this zone affects learning, performance, and anxiety. In simple terms, a comfort zone is where a person feels comfortable and in control, experiencing minimal stress.

Stepping beyond this comfort zone is believed to increase stress and anxiety. According to Maslow’s well-known hierarchy of needs (1943), the need for safety is fundamental, just above basic physiological needs. It’s natural for people to gravitate towards what feels safe and comfortable, as it’s essential for survival. Why would anyone choose to step outside of a comfort zone? Over a hundred years ago, psychologist Robert Yerkes (1908) explained that for optimal performance, a slightly higher level of stress than usual is beneficial. He referred to this as “Optimal Anxiety,” which lies just outside our comfort zone. Professor Robert Boost Rom (1998) elaborates on this in his paper on safe spaces, stating: “Learning necessarily involves not merely risk, but the pain of giving up a former condition in favour of a new way of seeing things.”

However, Yerkes noted that while a certain level of anxiety can boost performance, going beyond an optimal level leads to a decline in performance as anxiety levels become too high. There seems to be a fine line; once one goes too far out of their comfort zone, anxiety levels get too high and learning and growth are limited. The term “brave space” was coined by educators Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens in the context of facilitating discussions on diversity and social justice. In their 2013 article titled “From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces,” Arao and Clemens proposed the concept of brave spaces as an evolution of the idea of comfort zones or “safe spaces”.

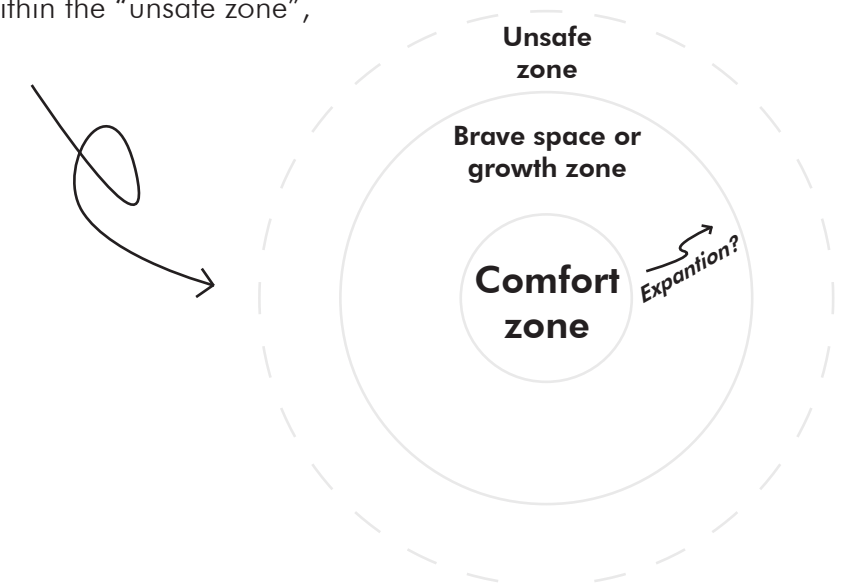
Unlike a safe space, which aims to be free of conflict and discomfort, a brave space acknowledges that discomfort is often a necessary part of growth and learning, especially in difficult discussions or situations.



The term brave space (also sometimes called: “growth zone”) has been increasingly used to describe settings in educational, professional, and personal development contexts where individuals are encouraged to step out of their comfort zones and engage in meaningful, growth-oriented dialogues and activities. The term is also very relevant to the field of design since brave spaces and creative confidence are intertwined concepts. Creative confidence refers to an individual’s self-assurance in their creative abilities, allowing them to take risks, explore new ideas, and produce innovative solutions. In the context of design, creative confidence is essential for both voicing one’s perspectives and ideas and also taking risks and trying new approaches.

### Key takeaways:

- It’s human to want to protect oneself by staying inside your comfort zone: avoiding difficult situations
- However, it is possible to find a place where one still feels comfortable enough to grow, while still challenging oneself: the “brave space” or “the growth zone”. And: this brave space can be stretched!
- For stakeholders within the context of youth participation in municipal policymaking, this means solutions should be sought that allow each individual stakeholder to find their brave space and seek how this space could be expanded.
- It might also be that current solutions either fall within the comfort zones of stakeholders or within the “unsafe zone”, making exploration feel scary.





# NAVIGATING THE UNKNOWN

**"Walking to the Sky" is an outdoor sculpture by Jonathan Borofsky**

1

The artist says the sculpture is "a celebration of the human potential for discovering who we are and where we need to go."



2

**"For My Young Friends Who Are Afraid"**  
By William Stafford

There is a country to cross you will find in the corner of your eye, in the quick slip of your foot—air far down, a snap that might have caught. And maybe for you, for me, a high, passing voice that finds its way by being afraid. That country is there, for us, carried as it is crossed. What you fear will not go away: it will take you into yourself and bless you and keep you. That's the world, and we all live there.

**"The Charged Uncertainty at the Tijuana Border"**  
by Omar Martinez

3

Omar Martinez's photo captures the uncertain moment when migrants at the border are never quite sure what will happen to them. Martinez freezes this fleeting, in-between space, where they face a choice of moving forward or getting stuck.



4

**"Man can learn nothing except by going from the known to the unknown." (Claude Bernard)**

(1813 – 1878) French physiologist

5

**"Landslide" by Fleetwood Mac**

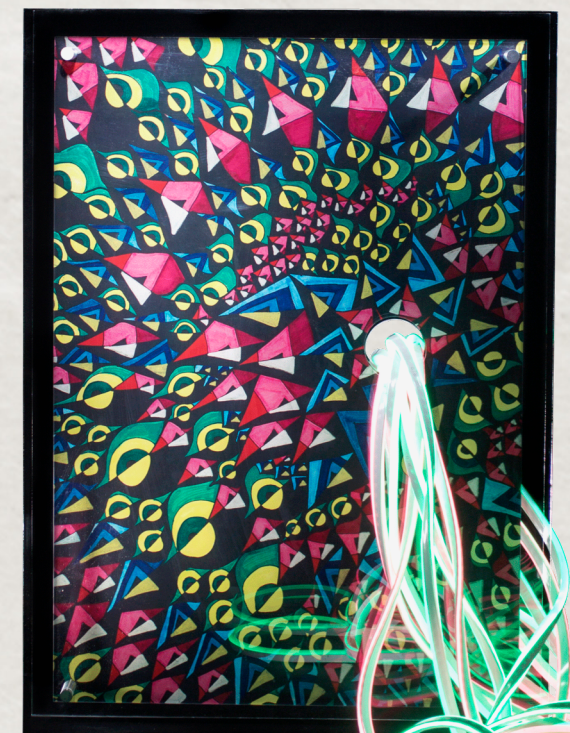
Can I sail through the changin' ocean tides?  
Can I handle the seasons of my life?  
Well, I've been afraid of changin'  
'Cause I've built my life around you



6

**"Open to Uncertainty"**  
by Arantxa Rodriguez

In this artwork, a printed drawing on a glass panel is lit up by glowing tubes that stick out from the surface and brighten the area around it. The artwork represents the idea of looking forward to a better future, even when we have doubts. Uncertainty can lead to opportunities. Who's to say the future won't bring us great and beautiful things?







## INTEGRATION NAVIGATING THE UNKNOWN

Navigating the unknown can feel like being lost: it can be scary and overwhelming. According to research, it's natural for humans to protect themselves by staying inside their comfort zones to avoid difficult situations. However, it's possible to find a "brave space" or "growth zone" where one can feel comfortable enough to grow while still challenging oneself. And this brave space can be expanded! This concept is visually represented in "Walking to the Sky" by Jonathan Borofsky (1). For those involved in youth participation in municipal policymaking, this means looking for solutions that allow each person to find and expand their brave space. Current solutions might either be too comfortable or too daunting, making exploration feel scary, as shown in Omar Martinez's photo (3).

William Stafford (2) beautifully wrote, "What you fear will not go away: it will take you into yourself and bless you and keep you. That's the world, and we all live there." What is scary can also help you grow. Uncertainty can be beautiful; it means anything can happen. This is abstractly shown in "Open to Uncertainty" by Arantxa Rodriguez (6).

Looking at people's experiences outside the context of policymaking and youth participation, having something that offers comfort—a father's hand, a YouTube video explaining what will happen—can help one be confident. This can also be applied to the original context: what could give stakeholders confidence (in themselves)? How can they see that small steps into the unknown can yield beautiful results?

*What is this theme about?*



## DRIVEN BY RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility could be described as a deeply rooted sense that gives us direction and purpose. "Being Driven by Responsibility" explores the power of intrinsic motivation and a sense of duty, and how these drive us to act based on what we truly find important. This theme invites us to delve deeper into the question of how and why we take on certain responsibilities, and the impact this has on our lives and the world around us.

Responsibility can be seen as a personal obligation, a promise to ourselves or others to care for something we value. It distinguishes itself from external obligations because it stems from our own values and beliefs, rather than from external pressure or expectations. This sense of duty is what drives people to move forward, even in the face of challenges and obstacles.

A well-developed sense of duty not only inspires one to take action but also to reflect on what one truly values. Being driven by responsibility means working with a clear direction towards contributing to something greater than oneself. It involves recognizing one's role in the community and working towards goals that have a positive impact on the world. This requires a continuous commitment to one's values and a willingness to take responsibility for actions and their consequences.





### It's important to me

When we talk about participation, the idea of “responsibility” often comes up. Feeling responsible to organise it or to participate. This feeling of responsibility is closely connected to your beliefs and emotions. People are more likely to participate when they deeply care about a cause, understanding that participation isn't always about having fun but about feeling a duty to make a positive difference. So, when do you personally feel a strong sense of responsibility for something? When does a task or a cause deeply resonate with you, making you want to invest your time and effort?

For many young individuals, especially when it comes to local government decisions, they often feel disengaged. Some are not interested; they're content with their lives and work, and they see participation as an unnecessary burden, believing they have better things to do with their time than engage with the municipality. Marion van der Voort provides a sobering perspective, describing participation as a “duty.” She suggests that whether you participate depends on how important you think it is. It comes down to whether you feel a sense of responsibility and believe in the cause.

This would mean we need to be cautious not to assume that lowering the barriers will automatically lead to more participation because people don't participate just for the fun of it; it can still feel like a bit of a chore. You can make it easier, but the key factor is whether people believe it's important enough.

Perhaps a large group of young people isn't concerned about participation because they're focused on their daily lives. However, when issues directly affect them negatively, they start to get involved. For example, if a skate park they use is demolished or if they're worried about the environment, they take action. When there's no strong sense of responsibility, people are less eager to participate. So, how do you engage people when the stakes don't seem that high yet?

“WELL, AT THE MUSEUMPARK THERE WERE A LOT OF SKATERS AND STUFF THERE. BECAUSE THE GROUND THERE IS VERY NICE FOR SKATEBOARDING. AND THEN THEY CHANGED IT. BUT THAT WAS ANNOYING BECAUSE THAT PLACE WAS WHERE A LOT OF PEOPLE COULD COME TOGETHER. [...] THERE WAS MAYBE A BIT OF A REBELLION THAT THEY [THE SKATERS] DIDN'T WANT THAT. THERE WASN'T REALLY ANY

DISCUSSION BEFOREHAND OF ‘WHAT DO YOU WANT?’.  
IT WAS MORE LIKE, WAIT, WE DON'T WANT THAT AT ALL.”  
- LISA, YOUNGSTER (IY1)

### The Motivation Gap: Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic (Imposed) Responsibility

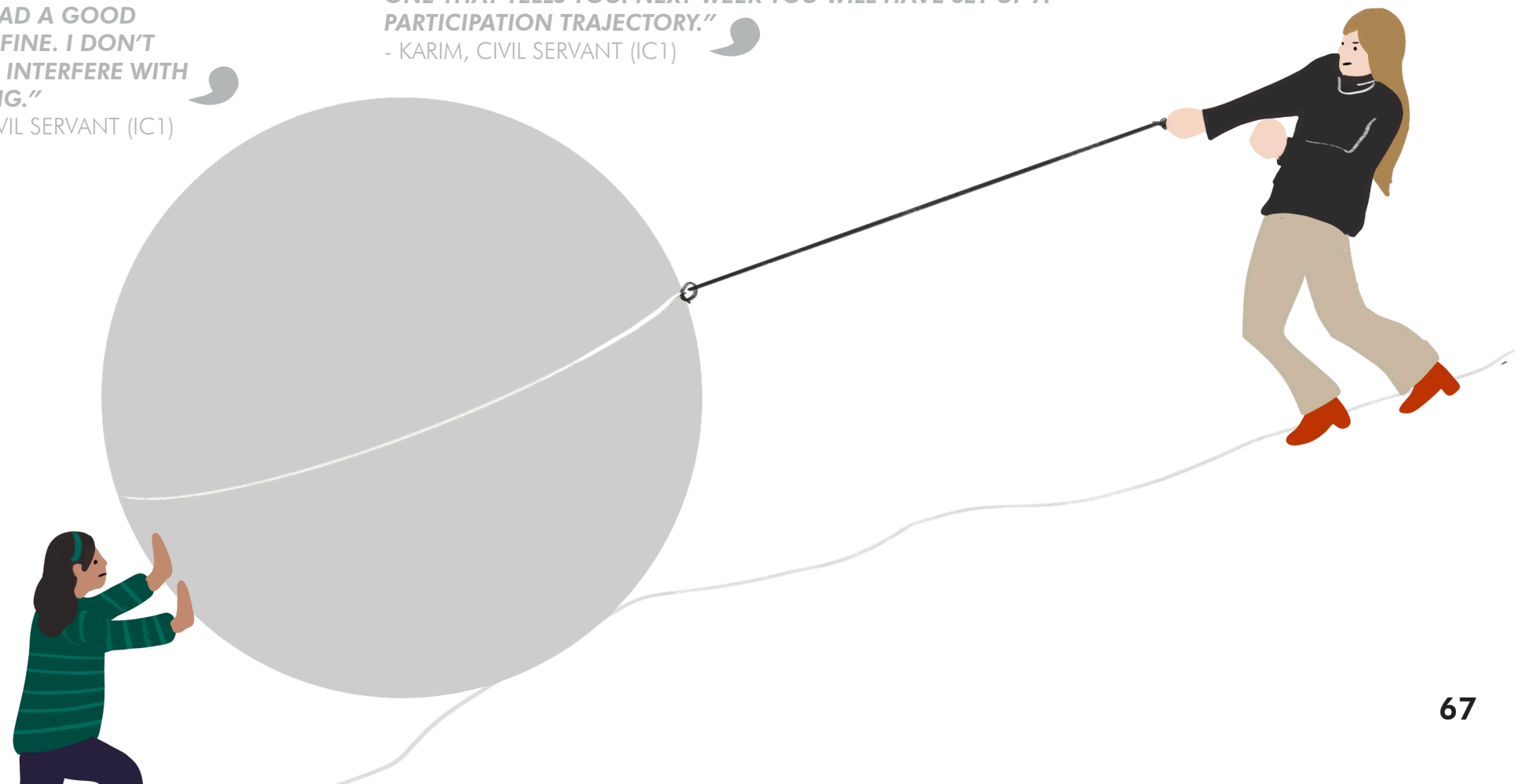
It's important to note that there is a difference between being accountable and feeling responsible. Sometimes, civil servants view participation as a mere formality or a response to external pressures, rather than a genuine effort to include others in decision-making. Their sense of responsibility might feel imposed, coming from a vision or directive rather than personal motivation. In some cases, they spend more time trying to convince people about the importance of participation than actually facilitating it. Within the municipality, there often seems to be no clear accountability for the success of youth participation initiatives. While they recognize the importance of participation, it sometimes becomes a task to check off rather than a genuine commitment. Discussions with managers during the Timmerhuis Session (CC1) reveal a tendency to delegate this responsibility to civil servants, who sometimes see it as the responsibility of external parties like Young010.

“NOT EVERYONE LIKES TO DO THIS, RIGHT? YES, THEY THINK TO THEMSELVES: WELL, NEVER MIND. I MAKE ENOUGH MONEY AND I LEAD A GOOD LIFE. I'M FINE. I DON'T HAVE TO INTERFERE WITH ANYTHING.”

- LOÏS, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

“A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK [PARTICIPATION] IS IMPORTANT, BUT THEY DON'T DO IT. HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK IT REALLY IS THEN? OBVIOUSLY, YOU DON'T THINK IT'S THAT IMPORTANT. YOU JUST FIND IT IMPORTANT THAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK THAT YOU FIND IT VERY IMPORTANT. WELL, WE ALL FIND IT VERY IMPORTANT TOGETHER. BUT THERE IS NO ONE THAT TELLS YOU: NEXT WEEK YOU WILL HAVE SET UP A PARTICIPATION TRAJECTORY.”

- KARIM, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)





The complexities of responsibility go further. Many acknowledge the importance of participation, but that doesn't always translate into action. It's a situation where understanding its importance doesn't always lead to tangible efforts. Who takes up the responsibility in the end? Oftentimes it seems to tie back again to personal convictions, a strong feeling that something is important and worth investing time and energy in.

**"IF IT WERE ABOUT MY NEIGHBORHOOD... IF IT WAS SOMETHING THAT I KNOW A LOT ABOUT AND THAT I FIND IMPORTANT, THEN YES, I WOULD WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DISCUSSION"**

- VEERLE, YOUNGSTER (CY1)

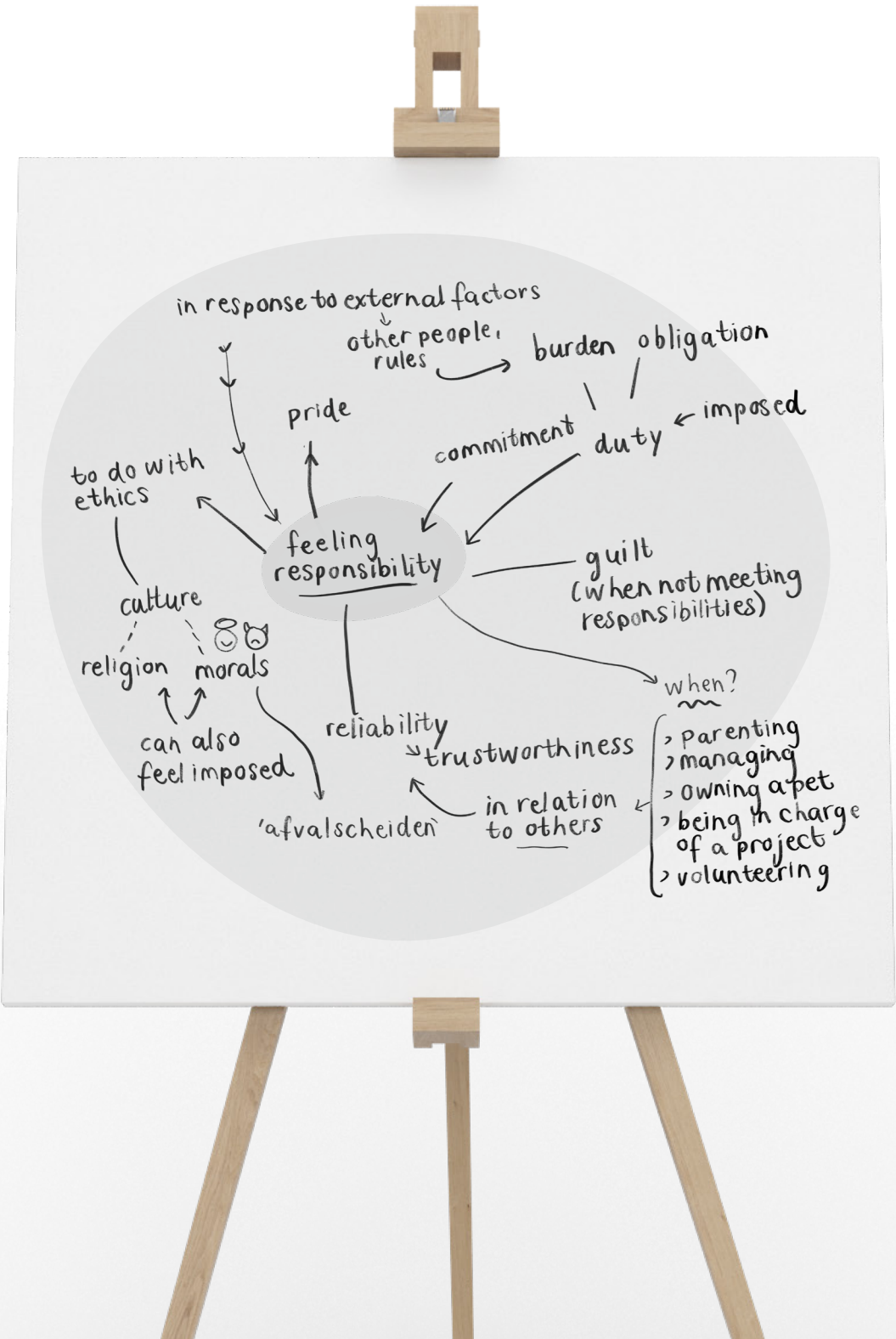
"When I feel responsible? When I go shopping and can choose what I buy every time and I still make healthy choices. It makes me feel good about myself."

- Hannah, 18, university student

"I recently read the book 'the day the world stops shopping' and that really made an impact. I saw how I was contributing to something I didn't support at all. Then I decided not to buy new clothes anymore, only second-hand. I've been doing that for some time now."

- Susanna, 24, university student

Researcher perspective



"I feel responsible when things go wrong when I'm not paying attention, for example a four-year-old child running around. And, a bit difficult to describe, if you get paid for it or something, if it is my responsibility, if others have expectations. If you are the designated person."

- Tom, 25, university student

"I feel the most responsible when I am at work. I like feeling useful and having a clear task I can complete."

- Lisa, 20, mbo student



## Scientific perspective

We can also further explore the theme of being “Driven by Responsibility,” through literature review. We will dissect two key theories - a psychological theory and a sociological theme - that give insight into what makes people feel responsible.

### Self-Determination

When looking at responsibility; the Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (2002), offers insights into the factors driving individuals’ engagement. This theory emphasizes the role of three psychological needs - autonomy, competence, and relatedness - in understanding human motivation and personality development. Autonomy refers to the need to feel in control of one’s actions. Competence entails feeling effective and capable of achieving desired outcomes. Relatedness involves feeling connected and valued in relationships with others.

The Self-Determination Theory differentiates between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: Intrinsic motivation is doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable. While extrinsic motivation is doing something because it leads to a separable outcome. The Self-Determination Theory posits that satisfying the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhances intrinsic motivation.

Municipal policymakers and civil servants often face challenges in feeling intrinsically motivated. The Self-Determination Theory would suggest improving:

- Autonomy: For example policies and work environments that promote individual freedom and the sense of self-determination can enhance the sense of responsibility → This relates to the theme What you do matters
- Competence: Training and resources to improve skills can increase the feeling of effectiveness → This relates to the theme Navigating the unknown
- Relatedness: Fostering a community spirit and teamwork can strengthen commitment → This relates to the Theme open hearts, Open minds

### Three pillars of organisations

Another way to look at this theme is from a sociology perspective. Sociologist Richard Scott has created an institutional framework (2008) in which he distinguishes three pillars that together form the social framework of organizations. We can view the municipality as an organization through this lens.

The Three Pillars of Scott are:

- Regulative Pillar: Think of this as the “rules and laws” pillar. In a municipality, this would include the official policies and regulations that affect how things are done.
- Normative Pillar: This is about “values and expectations.” It’s

what society and civil servants in the municipality believe is right or wrong, important or unimportant.

- Cultural-Cognitive Pillar: This pillar is about “shared beliefs and perceptions.” It’s about what people in the “culture” of the municipality believe. For example, what is the general belief in the municipality about youth and their role in policy-making? Do they see youth as capable and important contributors, or not?

Civil servants are influenced by these three pillars; it can change to what extent they feel responsible. If all three pillars support youth participation, civil servants are more likely to engage young people in policy development and decision-making processes. However, if these pillars are misaligned (for example, if there are supportive laws but societal beliefs are not in favour of youth participation), then civil servants might face challenges in effectively engaging youth in municipal matters.

### Key takeaways:

- If we want to promote a sense of responsibility and intrinsic motivation and look at the self-determination theory, we should focus on improving autonomy, competence and relatedness. It is striking that these three psychological needs can be connected to the other themes found in this research. The conclusion from this would be that in order to promote a sense of responsibility, we could delve even deeper into the other themes.
- If we look at Scott’s three Pillars, we come to the conclusion that a sense of responsibility is also strongly linked to culture (within an organization). There is indeed a social element to responsibility. This theory raises questions such as: How can we expose shared beliefs? (again connected to open hearts, open minds) But also: Which rules currently make it more difficult to work on participation? And, very important: What is expected (from above) of civil servants? Perhaps something should change about those expectations.





# DRIVEN BY RESPONSIBILITY

**"Oil Wells Firefighter, Greater Burhan, Kuwait"**  
by Sebastião Salgado



1

**"Atlas" by Gustav Herold**

3



4

**"Shoulders" by Naomi Shihab Nye**

A man crosses the street in rain,  
stepping gently, looking two times north and south,  
because his son is asleep on his shoulder.  
No car must splash him.  
No car drive too near to his shadow.

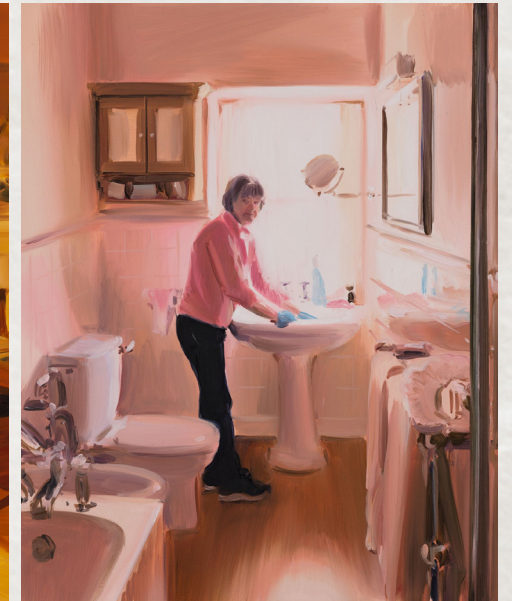
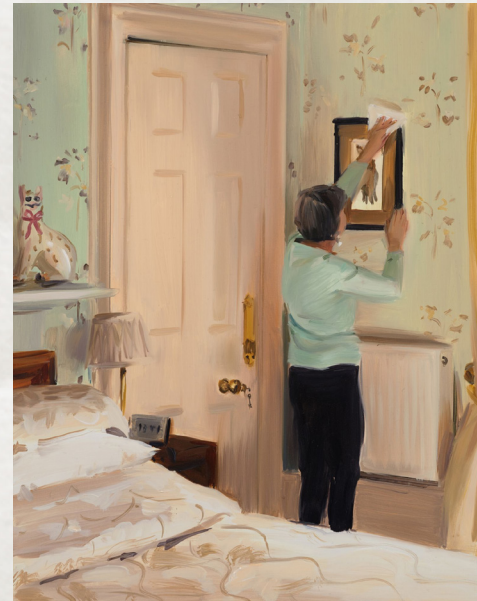
This man carries the world's most sensitive cargo  
but he's not marked.  
Nowhere does his jacket say FRAGILE,  
HANDLE WITH CARE.  
His ear fills up with breathing.  
He hears the hum of a boy's dream  
deep inside him.

We're not going to be able  
to live in this world  
if we're not willing to do what he's doing  
with one another.

2

**"responsibility, n. A detachable burden easily shifted to the shoulders of God, Fate, Fortune, Luck or one's neighbor. In the days of astrology it was customary to unload it upon a star." (Ambrose Bierce)**

The Devil's Dictionary (1911)



5

**Various paintings of her mother, as she goes about her daily tasks by Caroline Walker**

Caroline Walker, born in 1982 in Scotland, paints portraits of women who work behind the scenes, such as chambermaids, waitresses, tailors, hairdressers, and nail technicians. She has also created a series of paintings featuring her own mother. Even though her subjects engage in ordinary tasks, Caroline's artworks are about taking responsibility for the things that "need to be done".

6

**"Man in the mirror" by Michael Jackson**

I'm starting with the man in the mirror  
I'm asking him to change his ways  
And no message could have been any clearer  
If you wanna make the world a better place  
Take a look at yourself and then make a change





## INTEGRATION DRIVEN BY RESPONSIBILITY

Participation and responsibility are closely connected, usually influenced by personal beliefs and emotional commitment. People are motivated to participate when they feel a strong bond with a cause, acknowledging their role in bringing about positive change, even if it's not always pleasant. This concept is illustrated in Sebastião Salgado's photography (1), where responsibility is depicted as a duty.

A sense of responsibility is sparked when a task or cause deeply resonates with someone, inspiring them to invest their time and energy. For many stakeholders, there's a disconnect, resulting in a disinterest in participation, which is seen more as an additional burden. This attitude is often shaped by how directly relevant these issues are to their personal lives.

(2) "responsibility, n. A detachable burden easily shifted to the shoulders of God, Fate, Fortune, Luck or one's neighbor. In the days of astrology it was customary to unload it upon a star." (Ambrose Bierce)

Understanding the difference between intrinsic motivation—participation driven by personal fulfillment—and extrinsic motivation—participation motivated by outside pressures or expectations, as illustrated by the Atlas statue (3)—is key. Civil servants may find themselves in the latter category, viewing participation as a mere formality rather than meaningful involvement. This situation can lead to participation being treated as an item to tick off, rather than a sincere commitment.

This division of motivation can be explained using the Self-Determination Theory, which argues that meeting the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness encourages intrinsic motivation. This is supported by research indicating that people feel responsible when others rely on them and when they have the freedom to make their own choices. This concept is reflected in the artworks of Caroline Walker (5) and in Naomi Shihab Nye's poetry (4). For civil servants and youth, focusing on these elements could enhance the feeling of responsibility towards participation. Interestingly, these three psychological needs link back to other themes identified in this research, suggesting that exploring these themes further could promote a sense of responsibility.

Moreover, Richard Scott's sociological framework of the Three Pillars of Organizations shows that responsibility is also tied to culture. Discussions about responsibility reveal it has a social component. This framework prompts questions like: How can we bring to light shared values? (again linking to open hearts, open minds) But also: Which current rules hinder participation efforts? And importantly: What are the expectations placed on civil servants from higher up? Maybe these expectations need reevaluation.

In summary, the role of responsibility in participation is multifaceted, often resting on personal conviction and the presence of institutional structures that foster genuine involvement.



*What is this theme about?*

## WHAT YOU DO MATTERS

At the heart of human interaction and personal fulfillment lies a deep desire to be seen, recognized, and appreciated. The theme "What You Do Matters" speaks to this universal need, emphasizing how essential it is to acknowledge the impact of one's actions, not just for oneself but also for the community and the world around us. This awareness is a powerful engine for motivation, inspiration, and ultimately, transformation.

Recognition plays a crucial role in this process. Feeling seen and appreciated by others can not only strengthen interpersonal relationships but also affirm that our contributions are meaningful. Without this recognition, it's easy to feel powerless, and to feel unimportant.

Realizing that what you do matters can have a profound effect on how people see themselves and their place in the world. It goes beyond the superficial acknowledgement of successes; it's about appreciating the effort, dedication, and passion people put into their work and relationships. This realization nourishes a sense of self-worth and drives people to push further and to aim higher.





### Does every voice matter?

*"I THINK THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM IS ALSO SIMPLY THAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT A POWER RELATIONSHIP. THE POWERFUL, THE ONE WITH MONEY, THE ONE WHO WILL PAY AND THE ONE WHO MIGHT BE ABLE TO THINK ALONG OR PERHAPS HELP DECIDE, SO THERE IS NOT A BALANCED RELATIONSHIP THERE. I THINK THAT'S WHERE THINGS ARE ALREADY GOING A BIT WRONG."*

- NOOR, CIVIL SERVANT

Power is an important part of any discussion about participation. It is important to understand that there is often an imbalance of power between those who have money, authority, and decision-making power, and those who have opinions but limited authority. This power imbalance can make it difficult for everyone to participate equally.

The recognition of these power imbalances raises critical questions about equity and influence. One of the key challenges is that power imbalances can lead to some participants being able to dominate the conversation or set the agenda. Decision-making, financial resources, and the ability to voice opinions often remain predominantly within the municipality, creating an inherent imbalance within participatory processes.

Young people seek sincerity and authenticity in interactions, discerning whether someone is genuine or pursuing ulterior motives. While seeking recognition for their unique perspectives, they must also remain receptive to alternative viewpoints. Embracing open-mindedness becomes a reciprocal journey, where both parties contribute to the enrichment of the policymaking process. "Young people don't want a puppet show or double agendas. They sense whether someone is sincere, or whether someone is coming to get 'something'."

The term **Jongerensafari** illustrates the tendency for some participatory efforts to adopt a voyeuristic approach—observing and selecting only what suits their agenda. When looking at participation methods - for example, the one described in the Participatiewijzer (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken & Democratie in Actie, 2020) - the current approach of participation is quite linear — Methods are prone to selective extraction. So what is the essence of participation—is it solely about extracting desired information or is it about engaging in genuine dialogue?

*"IT'S EASY TO TALK OVER CHILDREN, OR TO JUST TO THINK, OH I ALREADY KNOW WHAT IS GOOD FOR THEM."*

- JANNIK, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

*"THERE ARE A NUMBER OF GENERALIST THINKING PATTERNS, BASIC ATTITUDES THAT INDEED HINDER US FROM SAYING, NO, BUT YOU [A YOUNG PERSON] ARE ALREADY GOOD ENOUGH AS YOU ARE AND WITH THE WAY YOU ARE YOU CAN ENRICH OR COMPLEMENT US [POLICY ADVISERS]. THAT IS NOT YET SUFFICIENTLY THE CASE, I THINK."*

- DANIËL, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

### Does what I say matter?

The theme of power also revolves around the fundamental need to feel that one's contributions make a difference. Young participants seek more than merely having their voices heard; they desire the assurance that their opinions are genuinely valued and actively considered in decision-making processes. Some individuals have become disengaged, feeling disappointed with politics and that their opinions go unheard and unheeded.

People want to be acknowledged, not just for their roles but as valuable contributors. They want to feel like they make a difference in others' lives. The desire for acknowledgement is not solely about having control over decisions but about being seen and acknowledged as valuable contributors.

Amongst some civil servant a similar sentiment is felt: a sense of powerlessness—in their case feeling overshadowed by higher decision-making bodies or by a complicated and bureaucratic system that works against them. There seems to be a perceived

*"IK HEB NIET GESTEMD EN BEN OOK NIET VAN PLAN TE GAAN STEMMEN, DE POLITIEK DOET TOCH NIETS VOOR MIJ. DE POLITIEK LUISTERT NIET NAAR JONGEREN, ZE DOEN NIETS MÉT JONGEREN EN SPREKEN JONGEREN NOOIT AAN."*

- YOUNGSTER (INHOLLAND, 2023)

*"I DON'T KNOW IF I WOULD TALK TO SOMEONE FROM THE MUNICIPALITY. MY OPINION WOULDN'T CHANGE ANYTHING ANYWAY."*

- JANNIK, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)





disconnection between their input and the overall decision-making process, fostering a sense of insignificance. Next to that, they might also feel that no matter their efforts they won't be recognised for their efforts.

**"WE ARE, ULTIMATELY, 'JUST' POLICYMAKERS. FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU HAD BEEN A MANAGER OR DIRECTOR, YOU WOULD HAVE GOTTEN THINGS DONE EVEN MORE EASILY, SO TO SPEAK. WE CAN'T CHANGE THE ENTIRE MUNICIPALITY."**

- KOEN, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

**"THE COUNCIL DECIDES, I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT THAT. SO WHAT DO I HAVE TO SAY AS A CIVIL SERVANT? WHAT CAN I DO IF I DON'T AGREE WITH THEIR DECISIONS?"**

- KIRSTEN, CIVIL SERVANT (CC1)

**"I ALSO DON'T FEEL LIKE MY INPUT MATTERS AT ALL. I'M NOT REALLY SEEN."**

- AZRA, CIVIL SERVANT (CC1)

**BUT I AM ALSO JUST PART OF THE BUBBLE, SO YOU KNOW, I HAVE NO ILLUSIONS [...] THAT I CAN BRING ABOUT ANY CHANGE IN THAT RESPECT. NO.**

- SOUFIAN, CIVIL SERVANT (IC1)

This theme explores the notion of feeling that what you do matters. It delves into the power to influence events and outcomes. Who holds this power? Who feels or experiences this power? Consequently, it also encompasses the concept of powerlessness. What impact does it have on people when they feel their contributions are meaningless or futile? A key aspect of "What You Do Matters" involves recognizing and acknowledging one's impact. It's about seeing the tangible results of your actions and understanding their significance in a broader context.

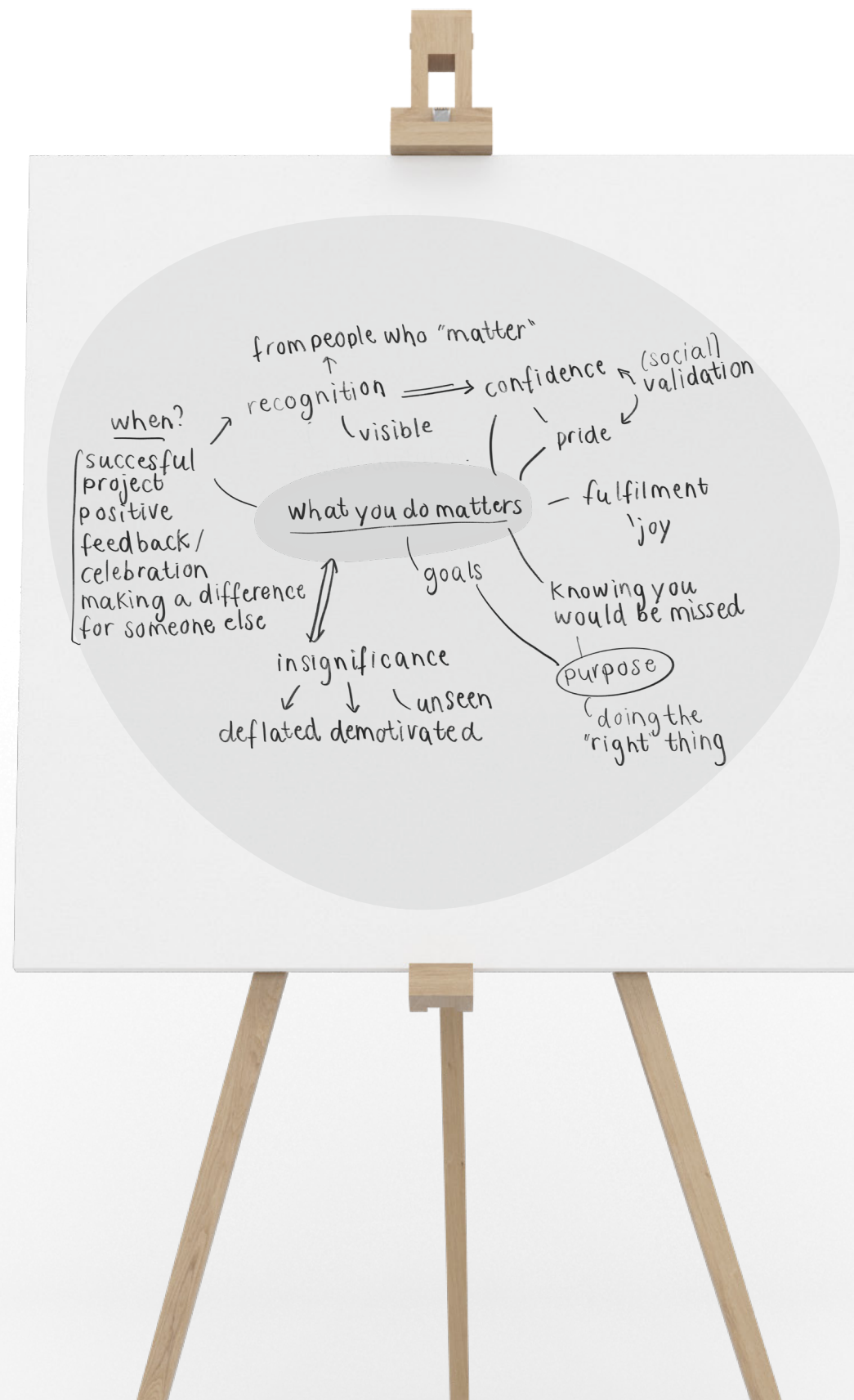
**"I THINK THAT MANY YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE VERY STRONG OPINIONS, BUT AT THE SAME TIME THEY THINK: NOTHING WILL CHANGE. I ALSO HEAR THAT FROM FRIENDS ABOUT VOTING. BUT IF YOU ADDRESS ME, I HAVE SO MANY OPINIONS."**

- MAYA, YOUNGSTER (CY2)

"I feel like what I do matters when others, like teachers or my parents, confirm this for me and also when I see clear results."

- Kim, 16, high school student

## Researcher perspective



"Something only matters to me if someone else is happy with it, if it's something only for me I usually don't care as much."

- Tom, 25, university student

"I feel the most important, or like what I do matters the most when I see that I am doing something that helps other people."

- Hannah, 18, university student



## Scientific perspective

In this exploration, we delve into the theme of “what you do matters” from a scientific lens. We will examine two theories that underscore this concept, providing a more nuanced understanding of the explored theme.

### On Power

The concept of “power” plays a crucial role in feeling that what you do matters, therefore power is an interesting concept to explore. Goodwill et al. (2019) outlined five forms of power found in design practice. These types of power are also highly relevant in participatory processes as stakeholders within these processes are often co-creating policies. Understanding different types of power can clarify the dynamics that are at play. The five types of power Goodwill et al. defined are:

- Privilege: This form of power is related to societal privileges: like being white, cis-gendered, male, and/or able-bodied
- Access Power: The power to influence who is included and who is not
- Goal power: The power to set the initial goals and frameworks. This shapes which issues are addressed.
- Role Power: The power to define roles in a project
- Rule Power: The ability to determine how people will work together.

Recognizing and understanding these power dynamics through reflexivity and power literacy is crucial. It allows for more equitable, inclusive design and policymaking processes.

### Mattering

Mattering is a psychological concept that refers to the feeling or belief that one is important, valued, and significant to others or within a specific context (Flett, 2021; Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). This sense of mattering can be divided into three key aspects:

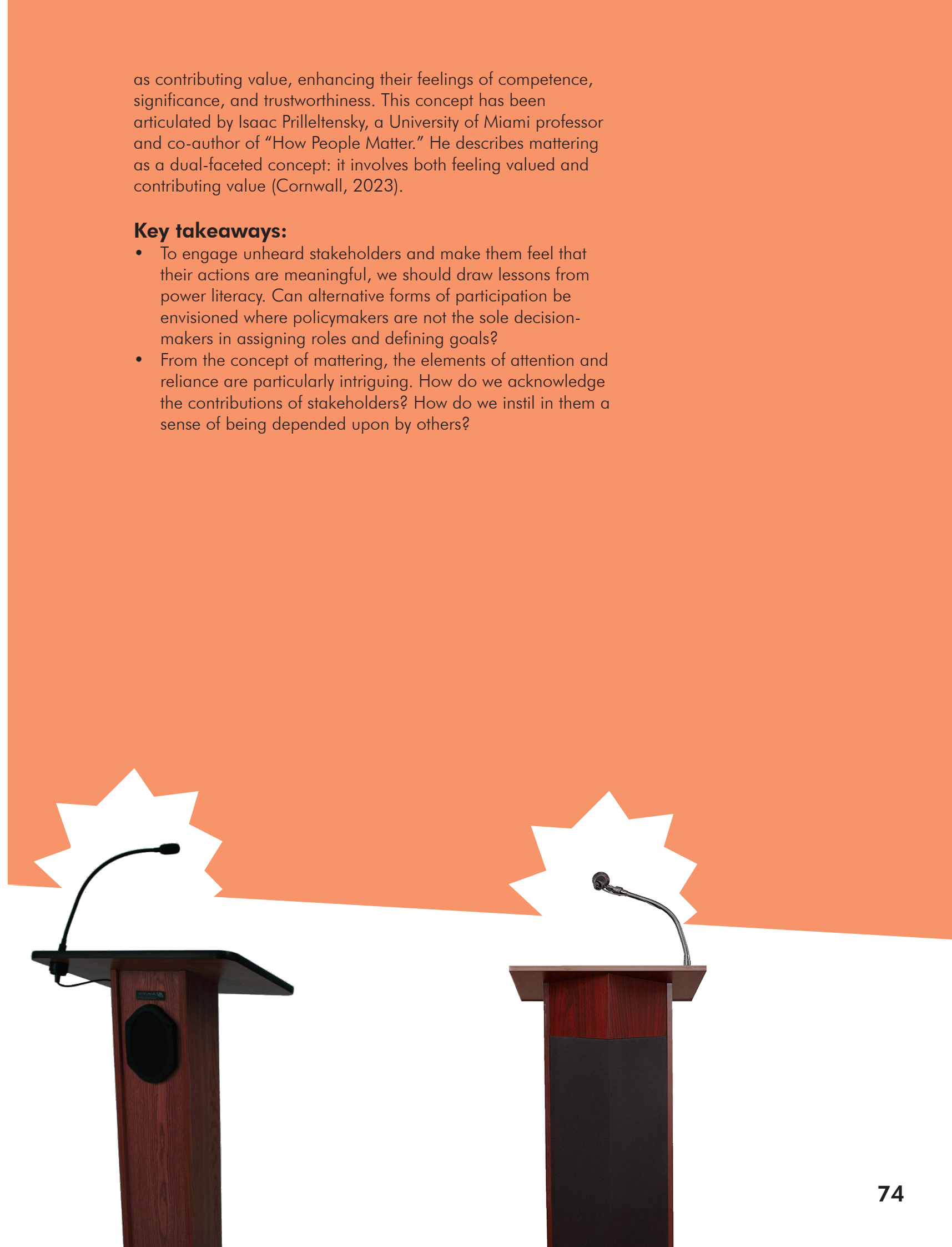
- Significance: The belief that one’s existence is meaningful.
- Attention: The feeling of being noticed and acknowledged.
- Reliance: The perception that others depend on one’s contributions.

Mattering is a fundamental and universal human need, essential for one’s well-being. It goes beyond simply feeling a sense of belonging within a group. It encompasses the notion of being noticeably absent and missed if one is not present (Flett, 2021). To truly matter, individuals need to experience a sense of being valued — this means being listened to, acknowledged, and cared about. Additionally, individuals must perceive themselves

as contributing value, enhancing their feelings of competence, significance, and trustworthiness. This concept has been articulated by Isaac Prilleltensky, a University of Miami professor and co-author of “How People Matter.” He describes mattering as a dual-faceted concept: it involves both feeling valued and contributing value (Cornwall, 2023).

### Key takeaways:

- To engage unheard stakeholders and make them feel that their actions are meaningful, we should draw lessons from power literacy. Can alternative forms of participation be envisioned where policymakers are not the sole decision-makers in assigning roles and defining goals?
- From the concept of mattering, the elements of attention and reliance are particularly intriguing. How do we acknowledge the contributions of stakeholders? How do we instill in them a sense of being depended upon by others?





# WHAT YOU DO MATTERS

## “We are the Champions” by Queen

1

I've paid my dues  
Time after time  
I've done my sentence  
But committed no crime  
And bad mistakes  
I've made a few  
I've had my share of sand kicked in my face  
But I've come through (And I mean to go on and  
on, and on, and on)  
We are the champions, my friends  
And we'll keep on fighting till the end  
We are the champions  
We are the champions  
No time for losers  
'Cause we are the champions  
Of the world

## “The Dinner Party” by Judy Chicago

3

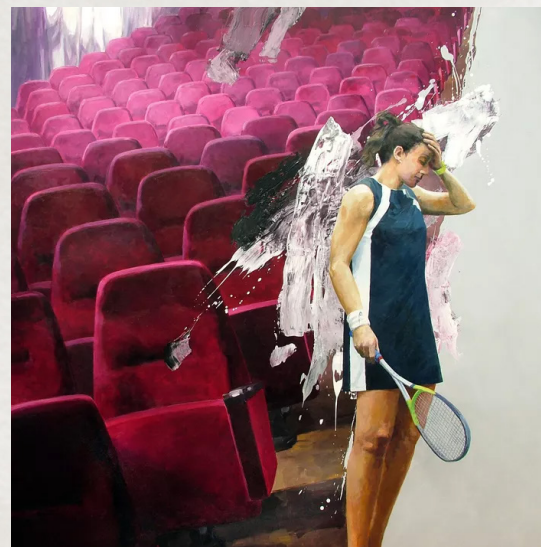


This feminist artwork features a triangular table with place settings for famous women throughout history, celebrating their achievements and the idea of women being "seen" in history.

2

“What horrifies me most is the idea of being useless: well-educated, brilliantly promising, and fading out into an indifferent middle age.” (Silvia Plath)

The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath



## “Applause” a series by Martinho Dias

4

The paintings in the APPLAUSE series aim to show how thin the line is between success, fear, or not being able to win. These works are full of different feelings. It doesn't matter if victory was achieved through time, personal judgment, a survival situation, or media influence.

## “I Took My Power In My Hand” by Emily Dickinson

I took my Power in my Hand—  
And went against the World—  
'Twas not so much as David—had—  
But I—was twice as bold—  
I aimed by Pebble—but Myself  
Was all the one that fell—  
Was it Goliath—was too large—  
Or was myself—too small?

6

## “Happy Birthday Miss Jones (School Teacher)” by Norman Rockwell

5

Saturday Evening Post cover March 17, 1956.  
Rockwell intended this painting to be a tribute to his own eighth-grade teacher who had encouraged him to draw.







## INTEGRATION WHAT YOU DO MATTERS

The question of whether every voice truly matters in the context of participation is closely linked to power dynamics. A fundamental power relationship exists, where those with financial resources and decision-making power often overshadow those with less influence. This imbalance can distort participatory processes, with the powerful possibly dominating discussions or directing agendas to fit their interests, leaving others feeling that their contributions are insignificant.

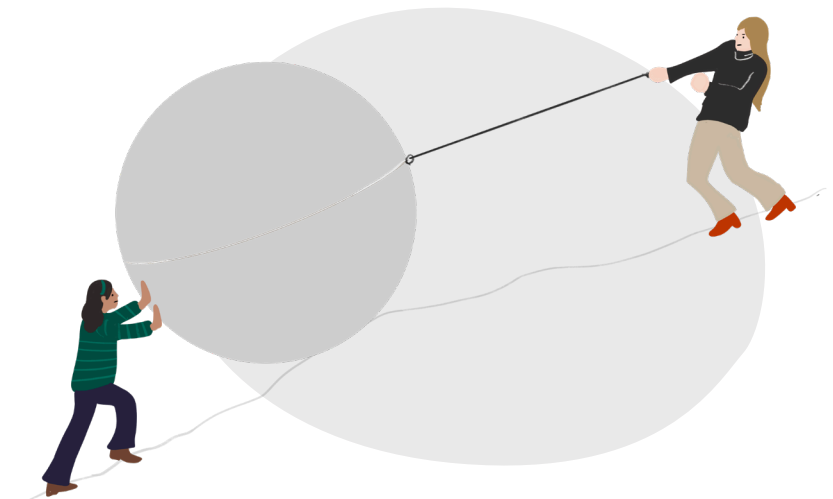
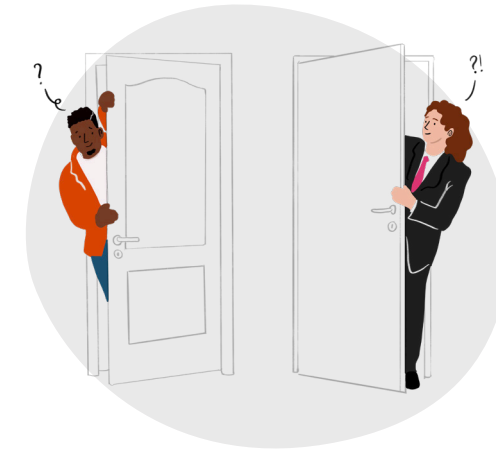
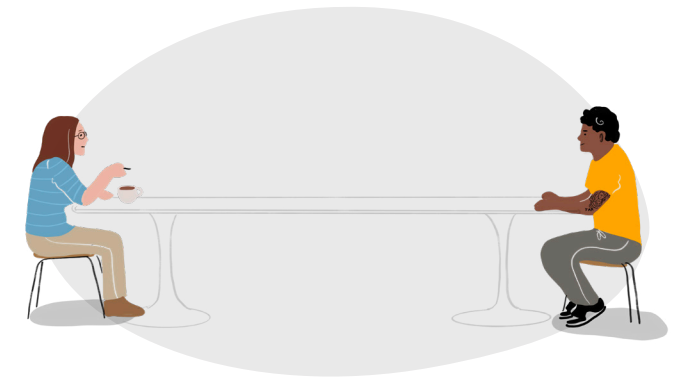
This imbalance is particularly felt by young people, who seek genuine engagement and want to ensure their voices lead to meaningful change. They are sharply aware of whether they are being listened to for tokenistic reasons or if their input truly affects outcomes. The exploration of power by Goodwill et al. (2019) highlights five types of power relevant to participatory processes. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for creating fair and inclusive policymaking environments. Can we imagine alternative forms of participation where policymakers are not the only ones in charge of assigning roles and defining goals?

“Was it Goliath—was too large— Or was myself—too small?” by Emily Dickinson (6) clearly illustrates this feeling of powerlessness.

Furthermore, feeling that one’s contributions are valued is crucial. It’s not just about having a voice but feeling recognized as an important part of the decision-making process. However, there’s a pervasive sense of powerlessness, felt both by young citizens who feel disconnected from the political realm and by civil servants who view themselves as just small parts of a larger bureaucratic system, doubting the significance of their roles.

How much influence do individuals think they have, compared to feelings of powerlessness? There’s a deep human need for recognition and the importance of seeing concrete results from one’s efforts. People want to witness the success of their actions; this was a key point in discussions from the research perspective. This recognition is visualized in “Applause” by Martinho Dias (4), in “Happy Birthday Miss Jones (School Teacher)” by Norman Rockwell (5) and featured in “The Dinner Party” by Judy Chicago (3). The psychological concept of mattering highlights the necessity for individuals to feel important, noticed, and depended upon within a community or process (Flett, 2021; Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). How do we acknowledge the contributions of stakeholders? How do we instill in them a sense of being depended on by others?

In conclusion, this theme stresses the significance of recognizing every voice and ensuring that participation is not merely about listening but about valuing and incorporating diverse perspectives into practical outcomes.





# CONCLUSION THEMES

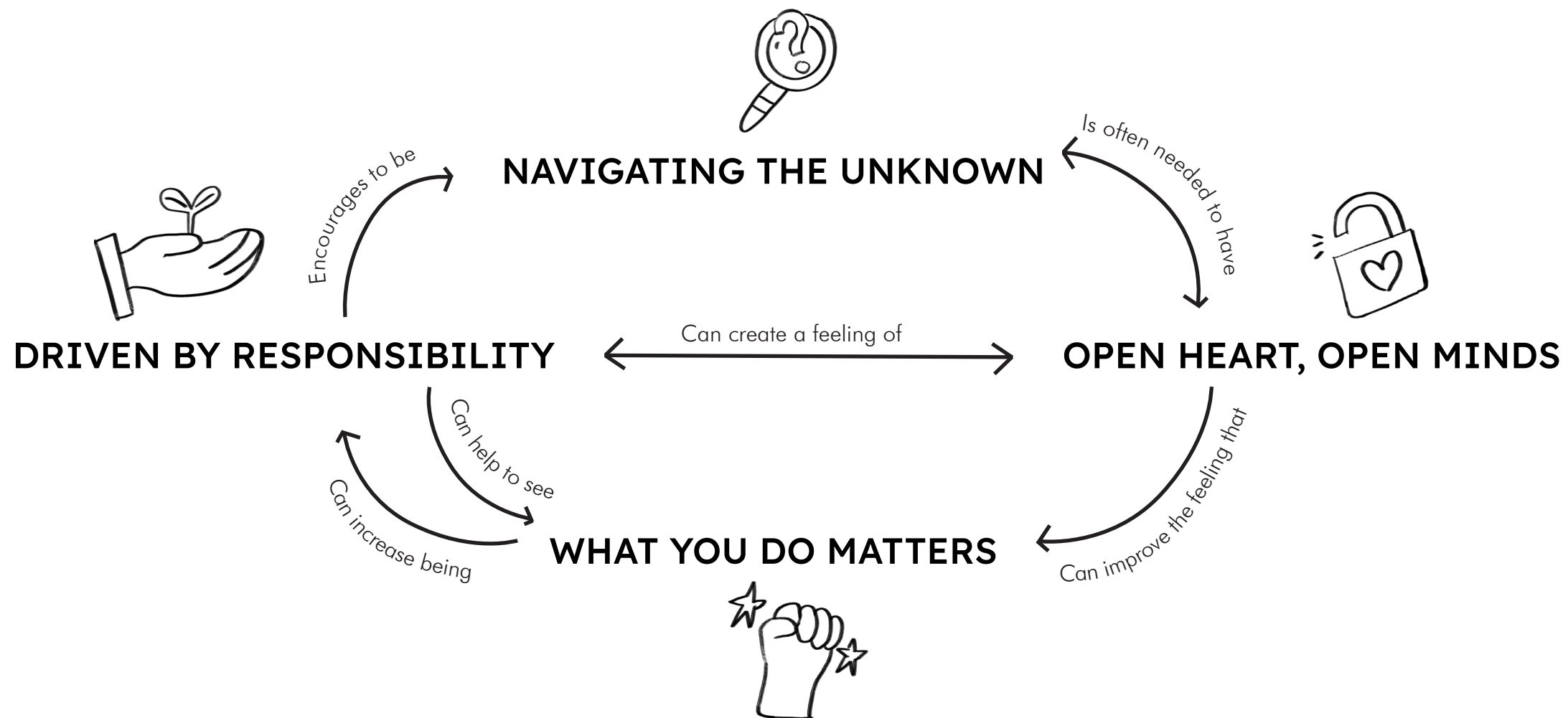


The research into theme analysis as part of the frame innovation method has uncovered multiple dimensions that significantly influence stakeholder engagement and participation in policymaking. These themes, derived from the values of stakeholders, offer a comprehensive look into the underlying dynamics of human motivations and interactions within the context of municipal policymaking.

The investigation followed a process of identifying general research themes (See Appendix M), which then evolved into phenomenological themes (See Appendix N). These were explored from various perspectives: stakeholder, scientific, personal, and cultural. This multifaceted approach has resulted in four main themes, shortly summarised:

- Open Hearts, Open Minds: This theme emphasized the importance of genuine interactions and empathy in bridging diverse stakeholder perspectives.
- Navigating the Unknown: This theme dealt with the uncertainties inherent in participatory processes and the challenge of embracing unpredictability.
- What You Do Matters: It highlighted the significance of feeling that one's contributions are valuable and the power dynamics within participation.
- Driven by Responsibility: Focused on the concept of responsibility and its influence on stakeholder engagement.

Themes form the backbone of new frames on youth participation in policymaking, which will be the next chapter of this report, but they can also spark new ideas on their own. This chapter can also serve as inspiration for approaches to improving youth participation in policymaking.





## Thinking of Transformative Approaches

## Thinking of Transformative Approaches



## 6. FRAMES

The frame innovation method's sixth step is centred around identifying and developing frames. This reframing process can improve comprehension of the issue by embracing its complexity and broadening the scope for potential solutions. A well-considered frame changes how you see a problem, how you think about it, and how you try to solve it. In complicated scenarios with numerous interwoven problems, it might be necessary to integrate multiple frames. This is because relying on one frame may not comprehensively address the entire situation (Dorst, 2015).

In the previous chapter, we found themes that are shared among various stakeholders:

- Open hearts, open minds,
- Navigating the unknown
- What you do matters
- Driven by responsibility

The resulting frame can be presented as an assumption that adopting a certain pattern of relationships, like a metaphor, will produce positive results. This assumption can be formulated as: If the problem situation is seen as if it is ..., then ...

So in this case:

If the lack of meaningful youth participation in municipal policymaking is approached as if it is a problem/challenge of [stakeholder] + [experiencing one of the themes], then ....

Creating a new frame based on previously found and explored themes is mainly a creative endeavour and a matter of iteration: looking back at the themes investigated, stepping back and looking at post-its on a large wall, and writing down something that doesn't quite fit yet. Eventually, this process led to several inspiring frames and many more that were less successful.

The research questions for this chapter are:

**How can we act upon the themes? & What new visions/ approaches to the problem space can be created?**

### About the process

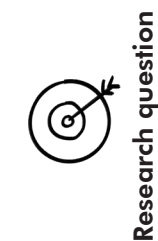
Integration of Themes into Frame Innovation: The initial step involved synthesizing the themes discovered across stakeholder groups into the frame innovation method. By mapping these themes onto the complex issue of youth participation in municipal policymaking, the study sought to uncover new perspectives that could redefine the problem in a manner that was both insightful and actionable.

Creative Reframing Sessions: The development of new frames was significantly influenced by two pivotal sessions: a frame creation session at the project's onset (CD1; Appendix E) and a frame ideation session conducted subsequently (CO1; Appendix L). These sessions, attended by stakeholders including designers from the Healthy Start community, TU Delft, and the Erasmus Governance Design Studio, facilitated a collaborative environment where participants could creatively engage with the themes. Through brainstorming and discussion, the collective insight of this diverse group was harnessed to reimagine the problem space.

Iterative Refinement of Frames: Creating effective frames was an iterative process that involved constant reflection on the themes identified. This included visual brainstorming techniques, such as arranging and rearranging post-its on a large wall, to physically map out the relationships between different concepts. This tactile approach allowed for the emergence of patterns and connections that might not have been immediately apparent, enabling the identification of frames that resonated with the problem at hand as well as those that did not. Notes that show iterations on frames can be found in Appendix P.

Development of Assumptions: Each frame was constructed around an assumption that reinterpreting the problem through a specific relationship—drawing on the identified themes—would yield positive outcomes. For example, reimagining the issue of youth participation through the prism of a theme such as "Navigating the unknown" could unlock new pathways for engagement and solution development.

Based on this process several frames were developed that will be elaborated on the next page. In the rest of the chapter, the three most promising frames will be explored even further.



Research question

How can we act upon the themes?  
What new visions on/ approaches to the problem space can be created?

Activities

CD1

CO1



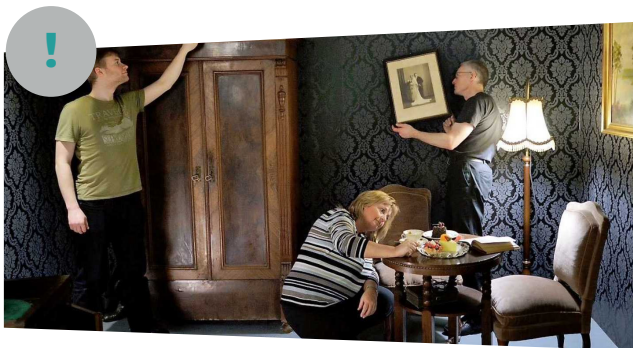




## Onboarding

Treating youth participation with officials like starting a new job can make it exciting. An onboarding team with a welcoming start is important. This helps newcomers learn and get feedback. Everyone should have chances to grow and improve, making sure all participants can develop in their roles.

**Themes:** Navigating the unknown, what you do matters



## Escape Room

Young people and civil servants working on city policies are like participants in a confusing escape room, working separately and lacking clear communication. This leads to frustration and a feeling of not achieving anything. We could focus on better, more direct communication, similar to clear progress signals in an escape room. Understanding the purpose and next steps, celebrating interim successes and providing feedback in other ways are needed to guide everyone's efforts.

**Themes:** Navigating the unknown, what you do matters



## A Place of Meaning

Imagine making the municipality a meaningful place. Officials work to improve Rotterdam, but the municipality feels distant, like an "Ivory Tower." It could be more like a church, community centre, or art studio, where the purpose and inspiration are really felt. Using objects and designs that match this vision can help. This way, everyone feels more responsible and connected to their work.

**Themes:** Driven by responsibility



## Theatre director

Imagine city officials and young people working together but unsure of their roles, like actors without lines. A leader, like a director, could really help by organizing the team. This person would oversee everything, understand everyone's role, and help them work together smoothly. They'd tell the 'actors' when to act and what to do, and give advice to improve for the future. This frame also contains some tensions: who gets to make the decisions about who is and is not heard?

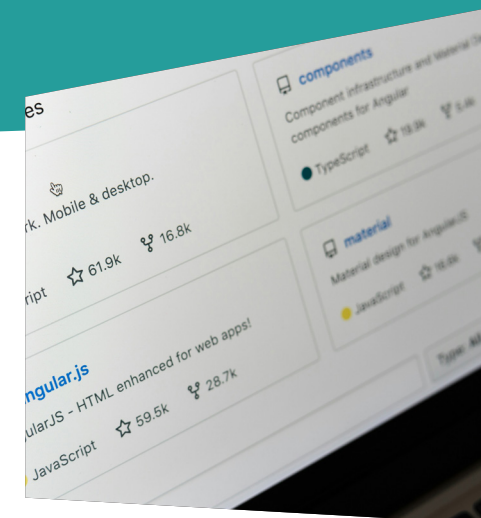
**Themes:** Navigating the unknown, what you do matters



## Open hearts, open minds

Young people and civil servants can struggle to communicate well if they're stuck in roles that don't allow real conversation—youths as passive and officials as rule enforcers. This frame, based on the theme, suggests connecting over common interests and breaking down formal barriers. By rethinking these roles to better fit everyone's wants and needs involvement shifts from obligation to enthusiasm.

**Themes:** Open heart, open minds



## Working open-source

Right now, it's unclear who does what in the municipality. We can think of it like Open Source Software Development, where everyone can see each other's work – like coding or designing – on platforms like GitHub. This shows who did what and why. Seeing the results of your work can be really satisfying and motivating. To do this in the municipality, we'd need to make everything clear and easy to follow, a big change from how things are usually done.

**Themes:** Driven by responsibility, what you do matters



## Travelling

Some civil servants and youngsters feel lost when it comes to participation: they are navigating unknowns, similar to travelling. If we frame it like travelling, they could be guided on a journey with various activities, suited for both beginners and experts. They should choose activities that interest them and be ready for challenges. There could be a focus on being well-informed and prepared for participation, including understanding expectations and sharing and interpreting their experiences.

**Themes:** Navigating the unknown



## SELECTION OF FRAMES

The decision-making process in selecting the most promising frames to further explore within this project was both strategic and methodical, guided by implicit requirements that aimed to balance the project's ambitions with practical constraints. Here's a deeper dive into how decisions were made, highlighting the considerations that informed the selection process:

### Decisions were made based on...

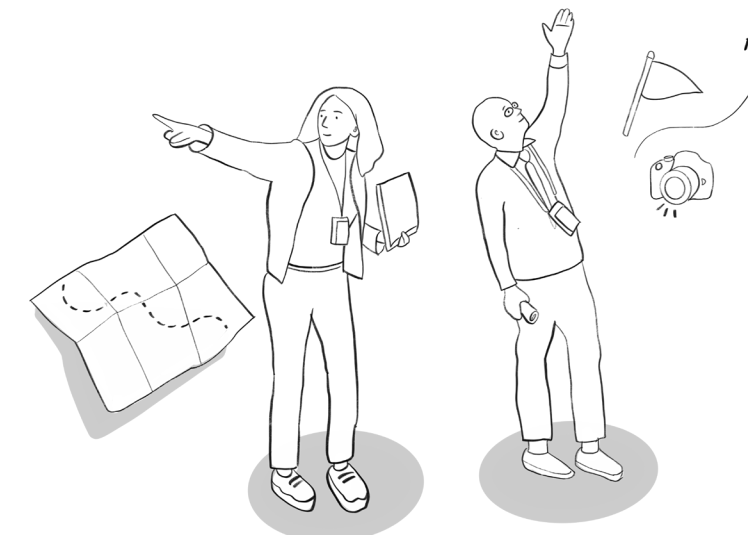
- **Alignment with Underlying Themes:** The initial criterion for frame selection was their rootedness in the identified themes. This ensured that each frame not only emerged from the research's foundational insights but also carried the depth of the thematic analysis forward.
- **Feasibility Consideration:** Recognizing the time constraints of the project, feasibility emerged as a filter in the decision-making process. This pragmatic lens required evaluating each frame's potential for development and implementation within the project's timeline, ensuring that ambitious ideas remained grounded in achievable objectives.
- **Potential for Idea Generation:** The chosen frames needed to demonstrate a strong capacity for sparking ideas. This meant selecting frames that not only offered new perspectives but also had the power to inspire creative thinking and solution development.
- **Comprehensibility to Stakeholders:** It was imperative that the selected frames be easily understandable by all parties involved. This accessibility criterion ensured that the frames could effectively facilitate communication across diverse stakeholder groups. This was tested by informally presenting the frames and talking about them with both researchers and designers.

### Selection of Frames

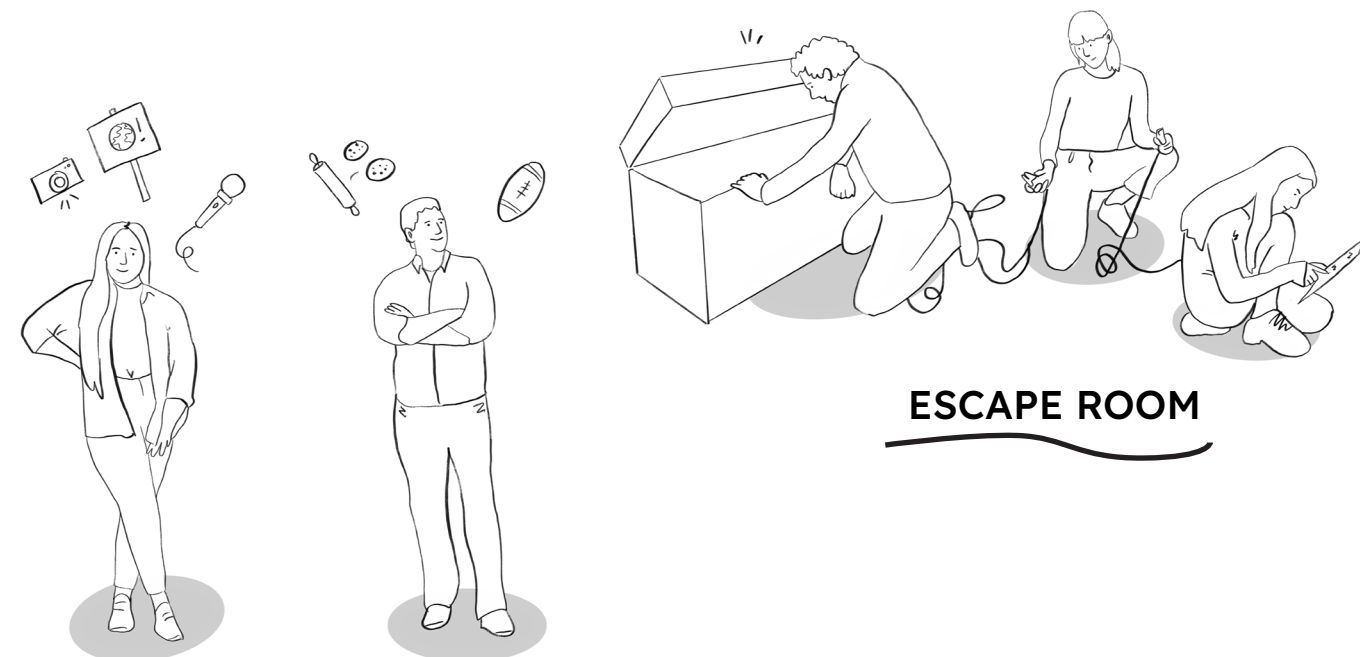
The frames of "travelling," "open hearts, open minds," and "escape room" were selected for further exploration based on their strong resonance and their alignment with the decision criteria. These frames stood out for their:

- **Clear connection to the underlying themes,** embodying the insights and values identified through research.
- **Innovativeness,** offering fresh avenues for approaching the problem space that diverged from conventional or previously explored strategies.
- **Untapped potential,** as these frames explored directions not previously investigated in projects explored in the Archaeology, promising new solutions and approaches.

The next pages will explore these three frames in more detail.



**TRAVELLING**



**ESCAPE ROOM**

**OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS**



# 1. TRAVEL GUIDANCE: NAVIGATING NEW UNKNOWNNS

If the lack of meaningful youth participation in municipal policymaking is approached as if it is a problem of **civil servants and youngsters navigating the unknown**, then they might need travel guidance.

## The problem

A recurring problem that was identified was a feeling of being lost among many stakeholders. Some civil servants working on policy don't know where to start when it comes to participation and end up choosing the old familiar methods: a public consultation evening or perhaps sending out a survey. This is despite the fact that so much more is possible, even within the safe space of these civil servants. There are people who can help guide them, such as those at the youth desk, youth hubs, teachers, and youth consultants. These civil servants lack the feeling of, 'Hey! I can do this!' And it might be fun too.

*"OR WHY, AS A POLICY ADVISOR, DON'T YOU JUST SPEND A DAY SHADOWING A YOUTH COUNSELLOR AND SEE WHAT KIND OF CASES ACTUALLY OCCUR OR WHAT CHALLENGES WE FACE? IT REALLY HAPPENS TOO INFREQUENTLY, AND WHY IS THAT?"*

- DEWI, YOUTH COUNSELLOR

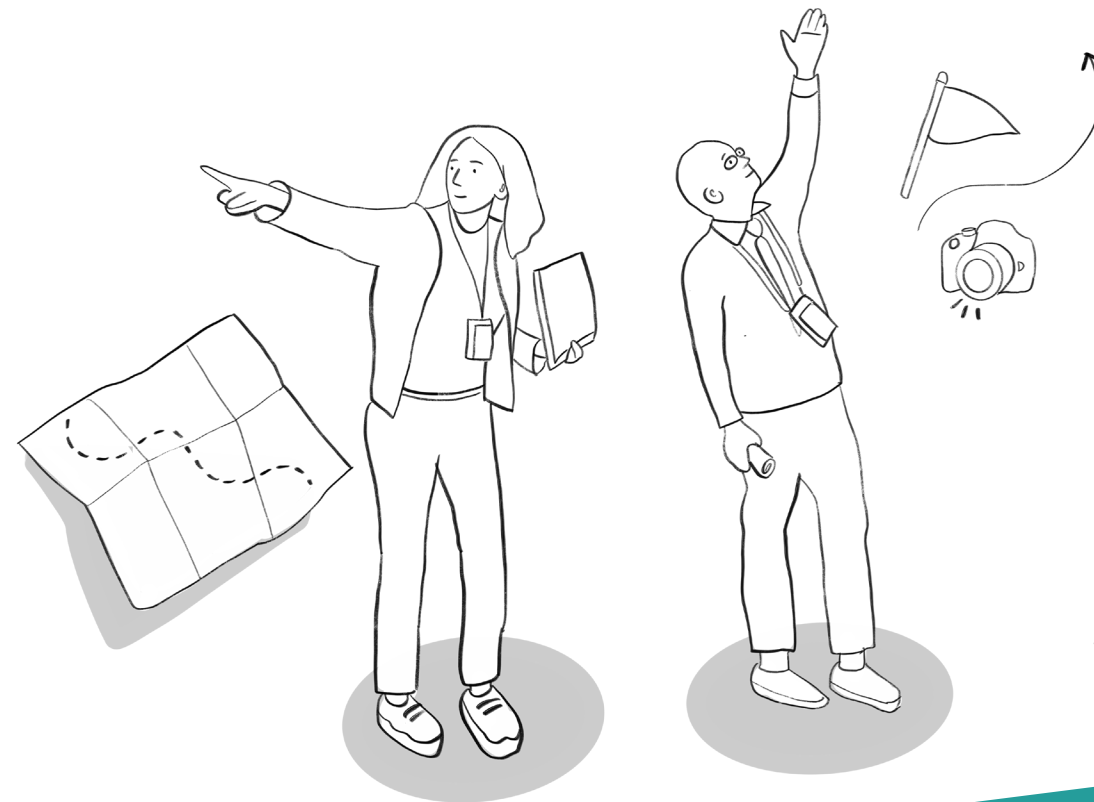
## The solution and frame

How is this theme connected to the frame? The underlying theme of this problem is civil servants 'navigating the unknown'. A pattern that can be recognized in this context is the feeling of being 'lost'; people want to develop within their 'growth zone' or 'brave space'. The sensation of being lost highlights a crucial aspect of navigating the unknown. It represents the initial discomfort and disorientation experienced when stepping out of familiar confines. This feeling is a natural response to the ambiguity and unpredictability that come with new challenges. We then framed the problem as going on a journey; they might need guidance. There is a difference in wants and needs between the civil servant that is just starting out with organising participation to activities for the seasoned 'traveller'. Or between the youngster who is already confident sharing their knowledge to the one who feels overwhelmed even talking to a civil servant. Stakeholders could choose their own adventure that resonates with their brave space, interests and aspirations. They should be encouraged to explore what's possible and anticipate potential challenges. Because things can go wrong, but there are also a lot of tips that they can take with them on the road. Bundling these tips could help them make informed decisions.

We can also think of easy ways to compare and share options stakeholders have - alternatives for information nights or participizza nights; something that is currently not really explored. What do young people like to do? What and how do civil servants need to prepare for these activities? What are things to keep in mind?

Think also about guidance along the way: Consider the youth themselves as guides next to fellow travellers, showcasing their unique perspectives. Alternatively, a youth worker, experienced colleague, or schoolteacher can act as a guide, offering support and direction. What would they need to fulfil this role? How can we connect these people so that we can explore new ways of youth participation?

The sounding board group session (CCY1) also showed that young people want information to prepare themselves. If they do not know the scope of what they can do and are unaware of their rights, there is an imbalance in discussions. Before they participate in a session, they might also benefit from a guide that tells them what to expect and what they can contribute.



## 2. OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS: GIVING THE STAGE TO THE PERSON BEHIND THE “ROLE”

If the lack of meaningful youth participation in municipal policymaking is approached as if it is a problem of civil servants and youngsters not having open hearts & open minds, then...

### The problem

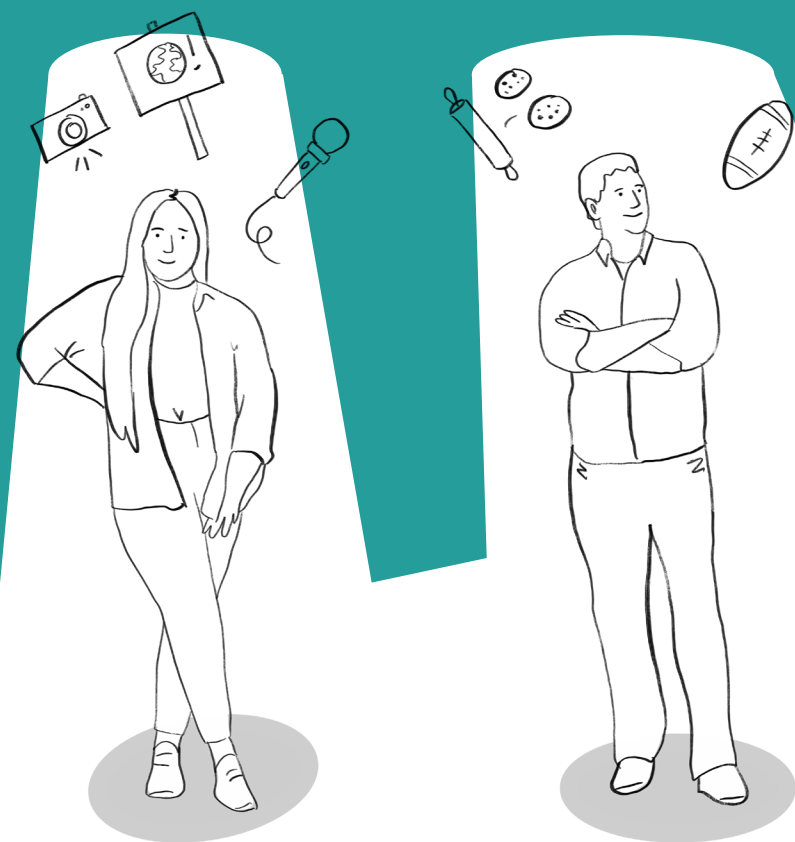
The present report has shown a significant issue: the existence of prejudicial attitudes between young individuals and civil servants. Moreover, it has been observed that there is a tendency for difficulty in adopting an open, and potentially vulnerable, stance in interactions. While superficial engagements may seem a safer route, they frequently result in less insightful exchanges and less enjoyable conversations, as previously demonstrated through conversations and scenarios. Both youths and officials often find themselves confined within predefined roles. Young individuals might see themselves as passive receivers of decisions made by authorities, while officials might view themselves solely as policymakers or enforcers. It might be important to acknowledge individuals beyond their professional capacities; this can pave the way for what might be termed a "professional friendship." This frame is thus based on the theme of the same name, "Open hearts, Open minds." Openness is an active pursuit of expanding perspectives, sharing thoughts, feelings, and vulnerabilities to foster deep connections. It demands courage to confront uncertainties and be genuine. The rewards, however, are substantial, enhancing our connections and understanding. We



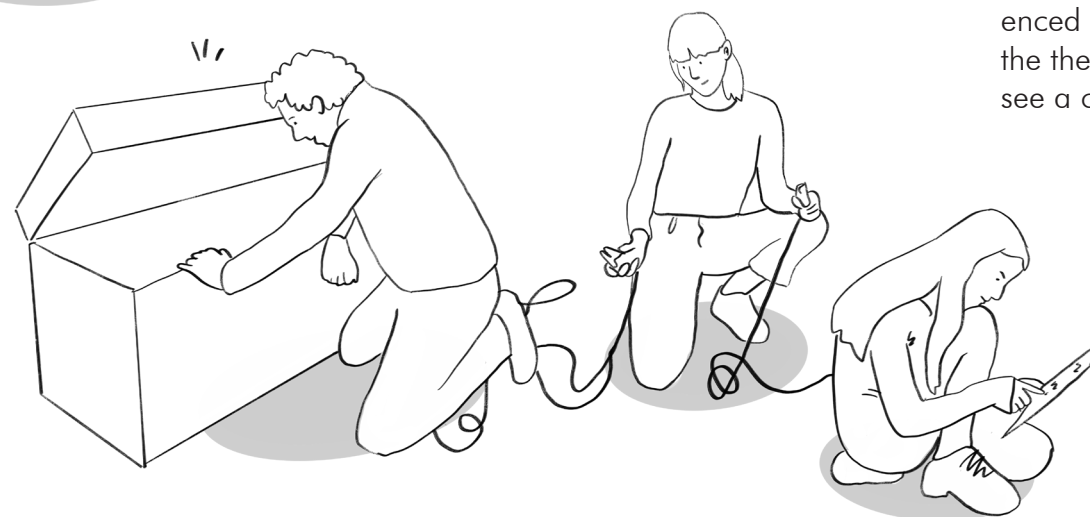
can also think back to the Social Identity Theory by Henri Tajfel and John Turner highlights how identities are linked to group affiliations. To unify rather than divide, we might focus on commonalities like hobbies or passions, transcending traditional group boundaries.

### The solution and frame

An approach to this role transformation is moving beyond the confines of strict professionalism. Engaging with individuals based on their hobbies and personal interests can create a more relatable and effective communication pathway. This approach breaks down formal barriers and fosters a more open and inclusive environment (even though this might feel scary). The solution also focuses on discovering what role people currently have and what role they would like to take. What do you need for that? These questions are relevant for both civil servants and youngsters. The session conducted at Blaak Library (CY2) highlighted that the passion or interest young people hold towards a topic can significantly influence their willingness to participate. When the subject matter, such as mental health, aligns with their interests, they are not only more likely to attend co-creation sessions but also to contribute valuable ideas. This can be the difference between a room filled with motivated individuals and one with participants who are there out of obligation or because they get paid.



“Well, this colleague had been doing the same work for a long time and found a certain topic really interesting and always said: these are my ideas, we could do this and this and this, he had a whole plan in mind. And then he discussed it with my team leader and got told that it had to be discussed first with other team leaders who all had a certain portfolio, which also had to be discussed. And well, at one point he was like, never mind, it's not going to work. I can't get through this.”  
- Dewi, civil servant (IC1)



## 3. ESCAPE ROOM: SHOWING (SM)ALL SUCCESSES

If the lack of meaningful youth participation in municipal policymaking is approached as if it is a problem of **both civil servants and youngsters feeling that what they do matters while navigating the unknown**, then they might need **feedback mechanisms to celebrate (sm)all successes**, similar to an escape room.

### The problem

When looking at the municipality and their plans, it seems that everyone is busy with their own individual tasks, and there's also a prevailing sense of futility. Let's compare successful youth engagement in municipal policymaking—a challenging task—to a large escape room; the municipality is trying to find a way out, and youths are occasionally participating. One team might be cracking a code while another searches for a key in a grab bag. However, it appears no one knows what the others are working on. Youths don't hear what's happening, colleagues are unaware of each other's actions. Experiences about youth participation are not shared, and successes are rarely reflected upon. Where are we heading? Does anyone have the answer? It seems like the escape room is inescapable, and everyone feels like they're putting in effort for nothing. It can feel like a Sisyphean task. It also relates to The 'Black Box' Period (E4) where plans are being formulated and municipalities usually do not communicate their actions can add to the feeling that people contributed for nothing. What's happening in the other room? Are they still working on the puzzle?

### The solution and frame

The system has become so complex that communication has become crucial. If we look back at the metaphor of the escape room, people want to know what their teammates are working on. And, maybe just as important, they want to know when a task has been completed. A satisfying clicking sound, a light that goes on, a chest opening up. When we link this back to participation in the municipality, it's not about sharing big success stories on a large screen in the lobby. We need to find ways to communicate directly and in a satisfying manner to all stakeholders when progress is made, so stakeholders - both youngsters and civil servants - know they are on the right track and information isn't lost. What have you contributed to? Which box opened due to your input? It's about collective learning.

Young people also see recognition for their work as important (Session sounding board group: CCY1); what are they participating for? A top-down vision is essential for this. Where are we going? We have your back. We want to see your results.

This frame merges two distinct patterns: the satisfaction derived from collaborative efforts - as experienced in escape rooms - and the principle of “recognition & reward” which we have clearly seen in the theme of What you do matters. One could look back to the cultural perspective of this theme to see a clear vision of this second pattern.



This chapter on Frames provides an initial exploration of the selected frames, setting the groundwork for a deeper investigation. The following chapter, Futures, will build upon this foundation, further illustrating the future scenarios that emerge from these frames.





# FUTURES

*Envisioning the Outcomes*



## 7. FUTURES

Thinking about the future based on the frames is the seventh step of the Frame Innovation method. In this step, the frames from the previous chapter are applied to the problem situation to explore possible solutions. This represents a notably creative step: considering possible directions that could be pursued based on the established frames. It's crucial to highlight that, when employing the frame innovation method, creating a frame essentially constitutes a new design brief; devising solutions is not the objective of this project. The exploration in this chapter aims to determine which frames are fruitful. Dorst (2015) articulates, "Experts tend to discuss this process of proposing and trying out frame ideas in terms of 'fruitfulness': will a frame guide us toward a promising direction, enabling the generation of multiple sensible solutions or not?"

A preliminary step toward the future was taken during an ideation session with Multidisciplinary Researchers in Psychology, Governance Innovation, and Sociology (CO1). As for other activities, this step primarily builds upon previous work; all insights previously gained about the system, and the boundaries and desires of the stakeholders, are incorporated during this creative exploration. These ideation steps involve encouraging the generation of a broad array of ideas without judgment. This phase is about expanding the field of possibilities, using the techniques of brainstorming and sketching to explore various directions the frame could take.

This future exploration is based on the three potential frames:

- Travelling: Viewing participation as going on a journey, which requires guidance, preparation, recording and tools to make the adventure of navigating the unknown vibrant and manageable.
- Open hearts, open minds: Evaluating roles that don't allow real conversation; rethinking these roles to better fit everyone's wants and needs. Making connections across common interests, breaking down formal barriers while staying professional.
- Escape room: Viewing the problem as stakeholders in an escape room, working apart without communicating. This leads to frustration and a feeling of not achieving anything. Focusing on communication, with progress signals and on understanding the purpose and next steps of tasks.

These three frames are applied to the problem situation with all relevant information, including previous insights on the stakeholders; their boundaries, and desires. These frames then lead to futures in this chapter.

This chapter concludes with a comprehensive overview of the potential values associated with these envisioned futures, compiled from insights acquired earlier in the process. This compilation sets the stage for the critical phase of stakeholder engagement that follows in the next chapter: Transformation. The identified values serve as a foundation for the forthcoming discussions and evaluations, aiming to ensure that the projected futures align with stakeholder aspirations and needs.

The research question that will be addressed in this chapter is:

**"What could be outcomes and value propositions for the stakeholders based on the frames?"**



Research question

What could be outcomes and value propositions for the stakeholders based on the frames?

Activities

CO1



# 1. Travel guidance: navigating new unknowns

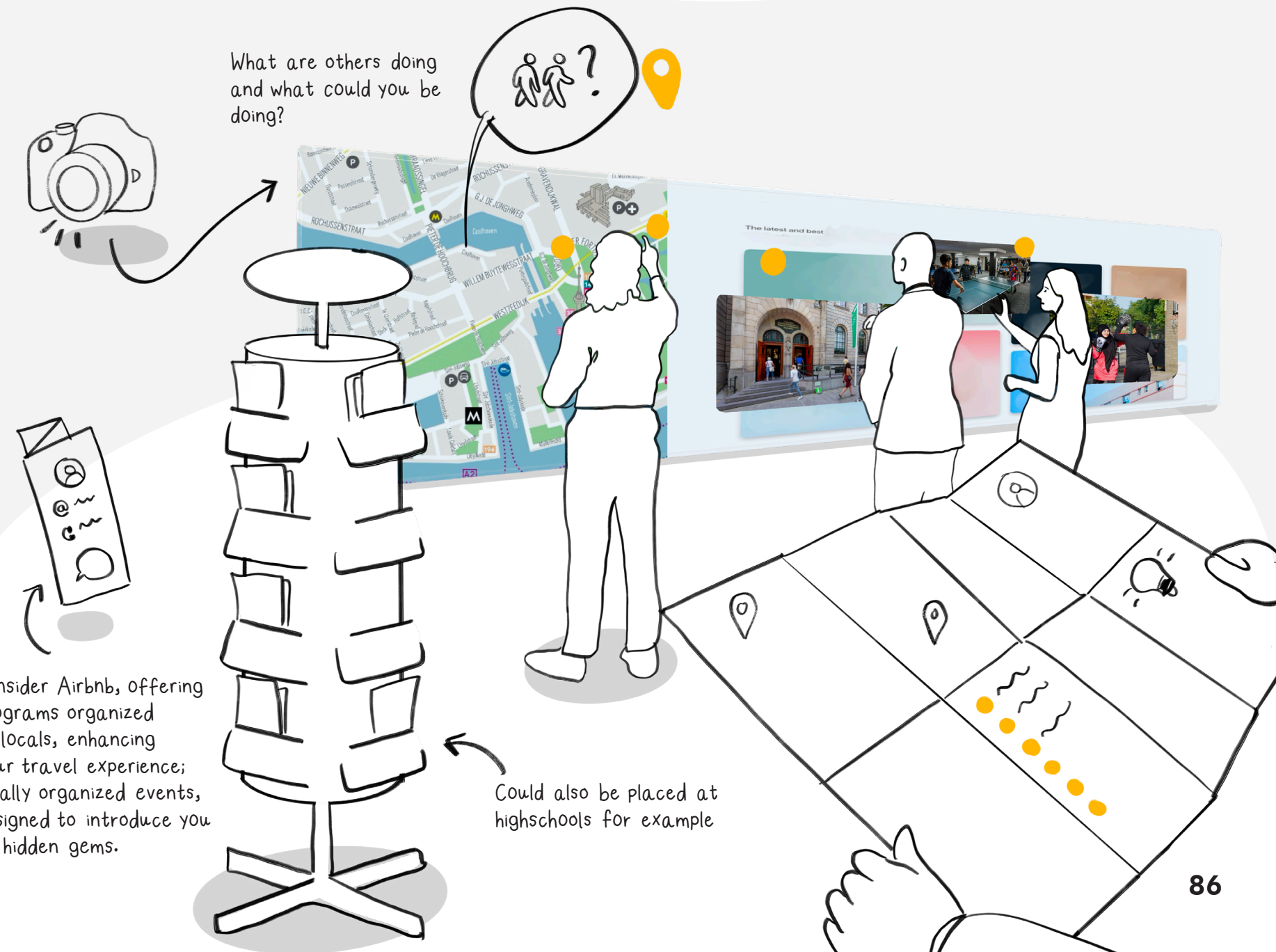
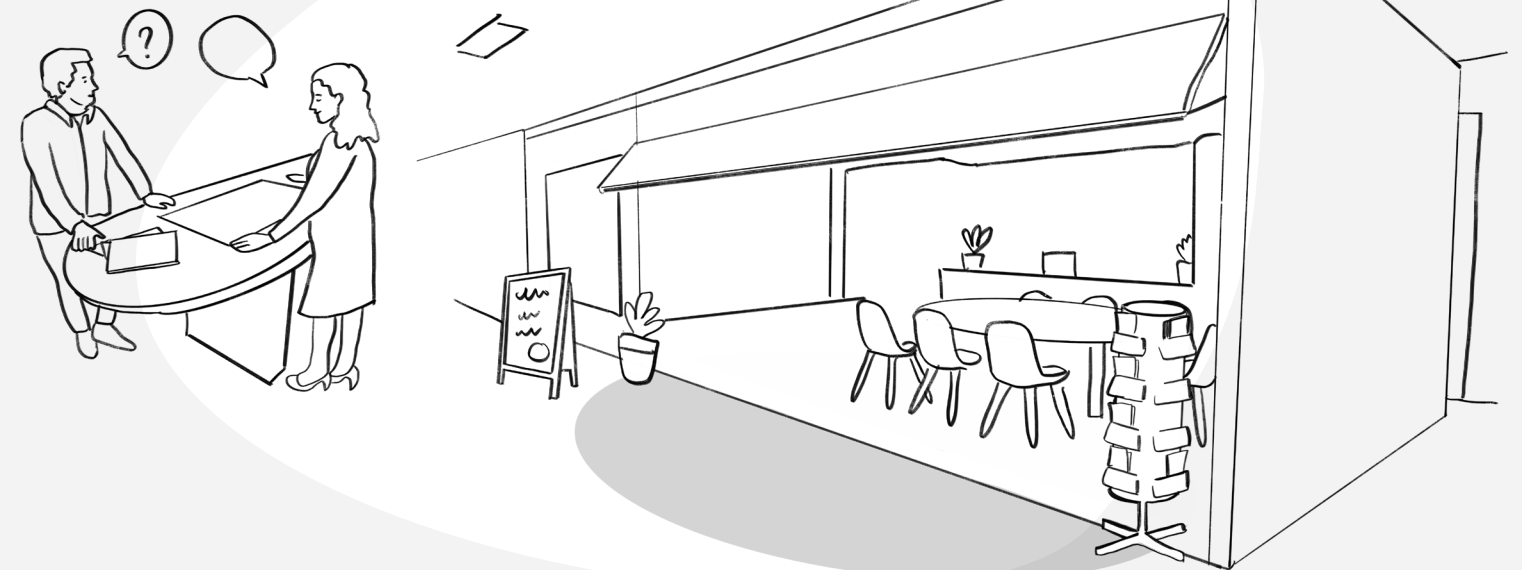
Starting from the concept of a journey, one can envision tools that would assist civil servants if they choose to initiate a participation process. These tools could range from simple flyers (featuring places they can turn to, tips, and tricks) to interactive digital platforms where they can plan their journey and compare different options. Currently, there exists a participation guide (Ministry of the Interior & Democracy in Action, 2020), but it seems to mainly focus on formal actions, lacking practical tips or guidance on where to begin. In this vision of the future, such a guide should be envisioned to be more vibrant with photos and videos illustrating what each option entails. It should also cater to both "novice travellers" and "seasoned adventurers." For instance, a session like the one conducted at the Blaak library for this project could be an option for a civil servant, but it would require more preparation or knowledge than simply making a phone call to a relative or visiting the youth office in Rotterdam (which could also be options to start a participation project).

Alternatively (or additionally), there could be a "travel agency" within the municipality staffed by individuals who assist in setting up and guiding participation processes. Typically, these responsibilities are outsourced within the municipality. Sometimes, it feels safer when an external research firm takes the responsibility, as it allows using someone else to justify choices. However, if the municipality provides all the expertise and assistance needed to construct a participation process, including post-process support, questions can be answered about the data collected and lessons learned. Travel agencies traditionally offer a range of services tailored to the diverse needs of travellers. Their primary role is to provide personalized assistance, ensuring that each client's travel experience is as seamless and enjoyable as possible. Some people want to book an all-inclusive package, while others just need a brochure. The agency helps generate excitement and provides a sense of certainty, of trust. Establishing such a "travel agency" within the municipality would transform how the municipality currently supports civil servants and youngsters during participation processes. Currently, there are general workshops for civil servants who want to "improve in participation", but now they would assist in planning projects and navigating the uncertainties of participation. Youth could also seek guidance from such an agency to find suitable opportunities and help them feel confident. This approach could make the process feel less overwhelming.

## Envisioned possibilities for the future

- Offering a step-by-step guide tailored to different levels of experience in participation.
- Enhancing the existing participation guide with interactive content like photos and videos.
- Creating a dynamic, user-friendly guide that appeals to both beginners and experienced individuals.
- Establishing a dedicated team within the municipality to assist in planning and guiding participation processes.
- Offering in-house expertise, consultation, and post-process support for civil servants and youngsters.

A department within the municipality working as a "travel agency"; youth and civil servants as travellers





## 2. Open hearts, open minds: Giving the stage to the person behind the “role”

Within this framework, one could consider exploring and designing ways to openly discuss current roles. What role am I currently playing within the municipality when it comes to participation, and what role would I like to assume? What do I need for that transition? A preliminary physical design could involve using cards with personas, perhaps similar to the personas created in the context chapter. The book “De Ideale Ambtenaar” - The Ideal Civil Servant - (Derks & Van Leeuwen, 2022) also describes archetypes for civil servants. He talks about their core qualities and suggests a mini-coaching session with questions such as: “Which strengths from the different ideal types do you see in yourself?” And: “Which ones would you like to see more of in the future?” Something similar could be focused on participation: in guided sessions, stakeholders could engage in discussions about biases, including their own, and express what they require to take on their preferred roles. Topics like: How do you deal with tensions? would also be part of this conversation. When people become aware of the behaviours they sometimes exhibit unconsciously, they can decide which attitude they want to actively adopt.

Another direction could be inspired by the Dutch concept of “vriendenboekjes” (friendship booklets). A platform (digital, on social media?) or pre-session activity (fill-in sheets?) could provide a quick way to discover commonalities and get to know someone beyond their role. This could serve as a starting point for open conversations.

Additionally, young people who want to collaborate with the municipality (online?) could clearly indicate their passions and preferences individuals might want to contribute to discussions about mental health, while others may prefer not to. Finding a way to visually represent this information in an organized and engaging manner could enable young people to engage in conversations about the topics they are passionate about.

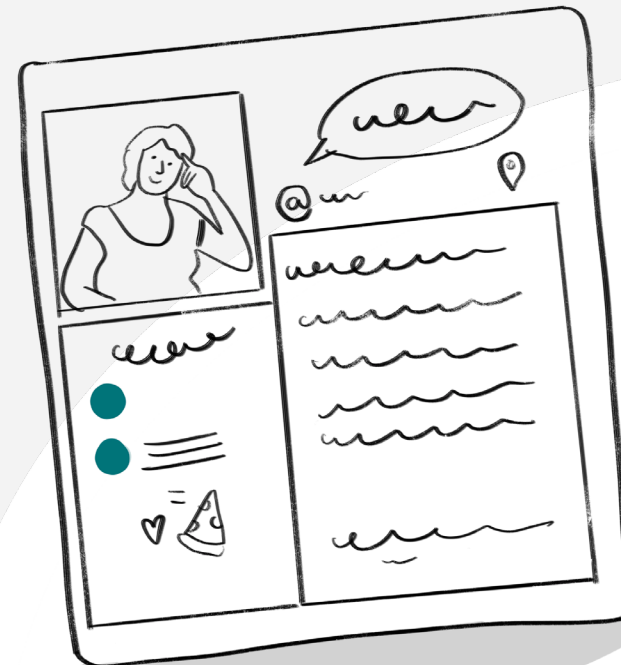
### Envisioned possibilities for the future

- Facilitating open discussions with persona cards that allow stakeholders to explore and express their current and desired roles within the municipality.
- Encouraging stakeholders to discover common grounds and build genuine connections beyond professional roles.
- Developing a system (platform? intake conversation?) where young stakeholders can clearly articulate their areas of interest and preferences for engagement with the municipality.

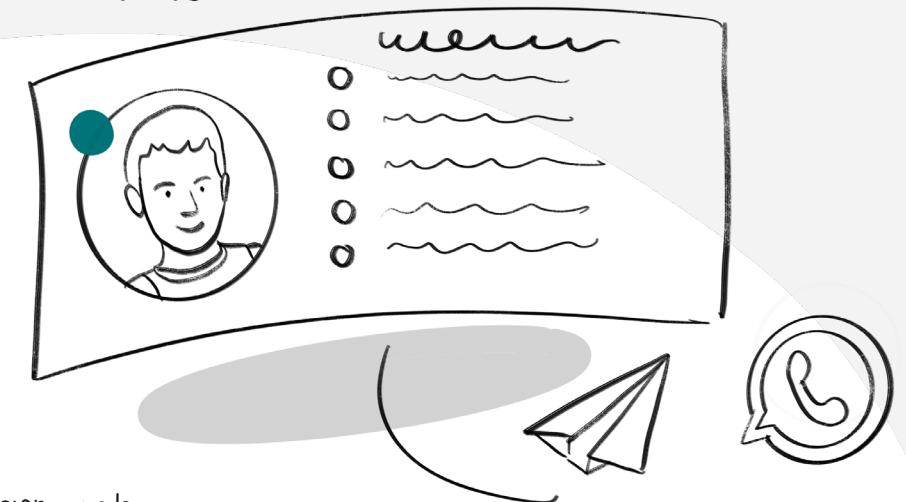
Designing the training for discussing roles could also be a concept, a training for the facilitator



Information outside of a formal role



What topics are youngsters interested in? What do they like to talk about?



Discussion cards based on personas





### 3. Escape room: showing (sm)all successes

A first direction to consider within this frame is the development of alternative ways of receiving feedback in a lively and engaging manner for your actions. If we look at escape rooms, they often use lights, sounds, and things that change right in front of you (open or close, change colour, start moving, etc.). It's a gamified way of indicating that you are on the right path. In participation processes, both young people and civil servants need that kind of signal. How could this be implemented in this context? Perhaps a tool could be created where the steps taken are visually represented. This could be a digital platform where all stakeholders are (friendly) prompted to write down their goals, and for instance, balloons appear when a goal is achieved. If we think of products it could be a table with light and sound effects to use during meetings.

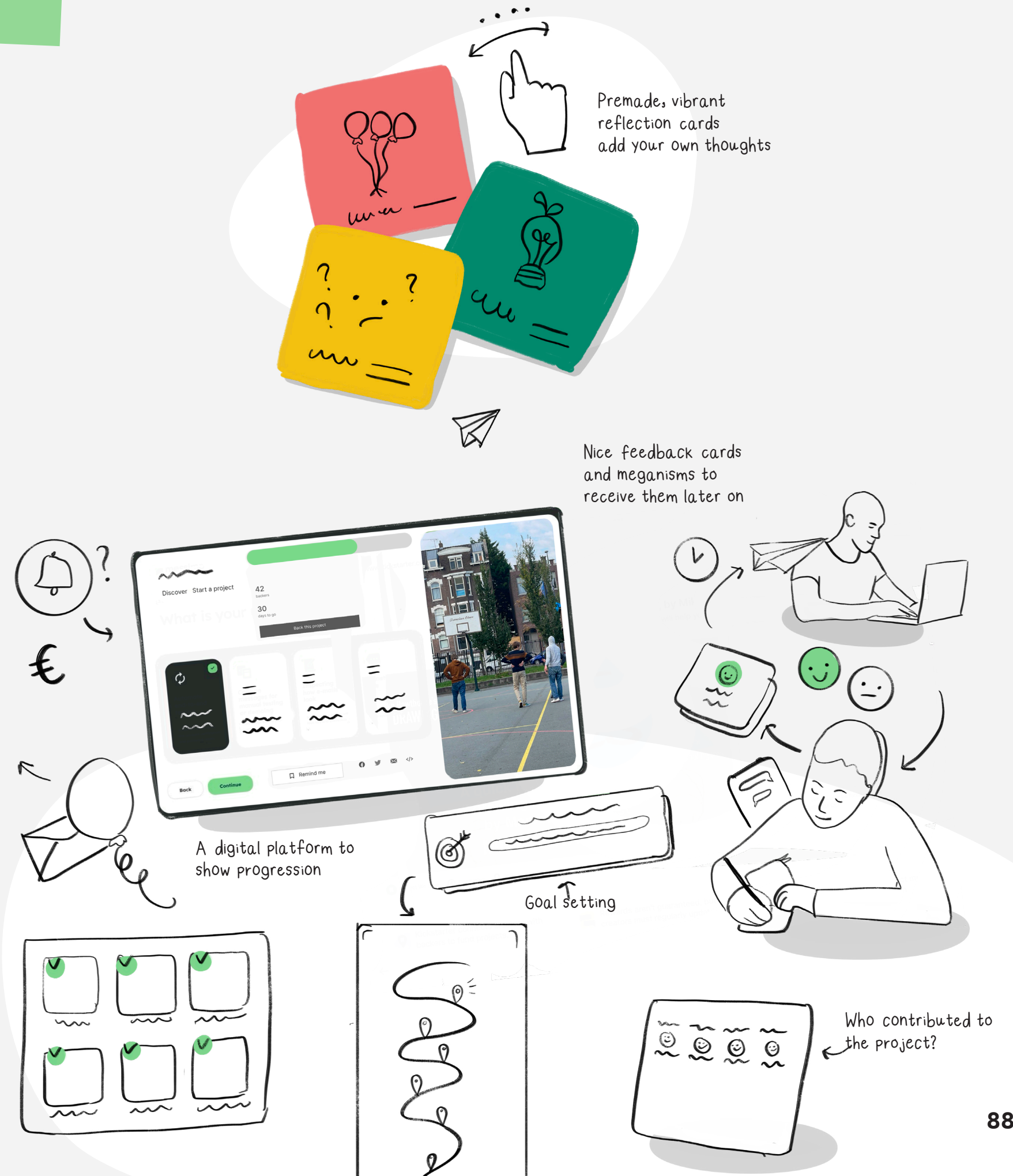
We could also think simpler, such as feedback cards: creatively designed (digital, with animations?) cards on which people can write, draw, or even record their feedback in a brief and personal way. Instead of clicking stars, it's about sharing something short and personalized. These cards could be sent randomly to other stakeholders, so that, for example, young people receive a message three days after the sessions expressing how much their participation was appreciated.

Furthermore, we can explore ways to clearly indicate who has contributed to a project. If you have collaborated on solving a municipal issue, you should receive credit for it. A simple approach could be a project page (digital) where all participants are credited in a fun way. This could include photos, drawings, and quotes.

If we take the frame very literally, we can also envision a concept where students at school receive a set, a box containing a current municipal problem to work on. This way, they can contribute to solving it. However, this should be a well-guided project. Just presenting the issues to young people and then passing them on to civil servants would likely result in young people hearing nothing more about it, and civil servants not knowing how to use the data. There needs to be an owner of this process who ensures, for instance, that the previously mentioned feedback cards are utilized, and that civil servants take the time to review the solutions proposed by young people.

#### Envisioned possibilities for the future

- Developing tools that use gamification elements (like lights, sounds, changing colours) to provide lively, interesting feedback.
- Creating digital platforms where progress is visually represented, enhances the sense of achievement (e.g., balloons appearing when a goal is achieved).
- Designing appealing feedback cards (digital or physical) for personal expressions of feedback, rather than generic ratings.
- Ensuring participants feel valued and see the tangible impact of their involvement.
- Distributing problem-solving kits to schools, allowing students to engage with current municipal challenges.





Now that we have explored various directions, ranging from introducing new products to altering the operational methods of the municipality, we are in a position to conceptualize the potential value these different futures may offer to various stakeholders. This phase can also utilize the created personas to gain an initial understanding of the experiences, needs, and challenges of stakeholders. They serve as a creative exercise in contemplating the future.

Thinking of these possible added values acts as a creative exercise, enabling a broader and more imaginative consideration of what the future could look like. This process not only aids in clarifying and organizing our thoughts but also prepares us for the subsequent phase of practical validation with stakeholders: the Transformation. By articulating the benefits and opportunities each future might offer, we can more effectively communicate these concepts to stakeholders.

## POSSIBLE ADDED VALUE OF THESE FUTURES

### Travel Guidance

- Gaining a sense of accomplishment and confidence in managing participation processes.
- Feeling reassured and capable when engaging with either young stakeholders or the municipality.
- Providing tools that offer a sense of control and mastery over the participation process and ensure feedback.
- Providing a sense of community and collaboration, reducing the emotional burden of carrying responsibility.

### Open hearts, Open minds

- Achieving a sense of authenticity and openness in professional roles and interactions.
- Feeling understood and valued for one's true self and aspirations.
- Gaining a sense of community and connection with others based on shared interests and passions.

### Escape room

- Experiencing a sense of satisfaction from visible progress and achievements.
- Feeling valued and acknowledged for individual contributions.
- Enjoying a sense of connection and engagement through interactive feedback mechanisms.

Possible reactions, synthesized based on the personas



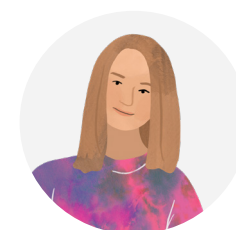
**"HAVING A STRUCTURED APPROACH WOULD HELP ME. IT'S A STEP-BY-STEP JOURNEY THAT MAKES IT MORE MANAGEABLE."**

OVERWHELMED SUPPORTER



**"DISCUSSING ROLES OPENLY? MAYBE IT COULD HELP IN MAKING SURE MY VOICE IS HEARD AND NOT JUST USED FOR SHOW."**

SUSPICIOUS CYNIC



**"MAYBE IT COULD HELP ME SEE WHERE I'M CONTRIBUTING AND FEEL MORE ASSURED ABOUT PARTICIPATING."**

UNCONFIDENT DOUBTER

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have applied three distinct frames - Travelling, Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Escape Room - to the context of youth participation in policymaking. These frames, rooted in the themes of open hearts, open minds, navigating the unknown, what you do matters, and driven by responsibility, offer innovative perspectives for addressing the challenges and opportunities in this field.

The application of these frames to the problem situation of youth participation in policymaking reveals a future with certain possibilities to add value for stakeholders. This page is not an evaluation but an exploration of the value these frames might add. As we move forward, the potential outcomes and value propositions for stakeholders based on these futures will be further explored and more critically evaluated. In the next chapter called "Transformation" the frames and corresponding futures will be discussed with stakeholders to make necessary changes and decide which frame and future holds the most value. This inquiry will help to refine these frames, futures, ideas and possible added value to ensure their relevance.



# TRANSFORMATION

*Evaluating & Transforming Solutions*



## 8. TRANSFORMATION

In the next phase, we carefully consider the frames and futures that have been developed and decide if they can be put into action right away or need more time to develop. During this stage, there is a focus on explaining these ideas well and having conversations with different stakeholders. The goal here is not to evaluate the ideas themselves but to explore and identify necessary changes both in the concepts and within the practices of the municipality and other organisations and stakeholders involved (Dorst, 2015). This is meant to make sure the solutions fit with the realities of the stakeholders.

For this purpose, the NADI model has also been utilized. To devise solutions that genuinely address people's needs, it's crucial to deeply understand these needs. The model of human Needs and Aspirations for Design and Innovation - the NADI model, developed by Van der Bijl-Brouwer & Dorst (2014), facilitates the exploration of these needs across four distinct levels. This model will be elaborated on the following page.

In total, two sessions were conducted to examine and transform the frames and futures. One session involved two policy officials (CC3), during which an extensive discussion about the frames, futures, and ideas took place. Another session was held with the municipality's sounding board group, consisting of three youths eager to share their feedback.

These discussions with stakeholders aimed to ascertain the feasibility, desirability and viability of these frames.

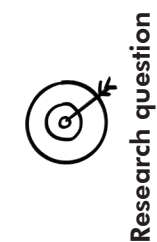
- Feasibility: Can it be implemented?
- Desirability: Does it fulfil the users' values and needs?
- Viability: Will it be sustainable in the long term?

This was not just important for the solutions emerging from the frames but also for the underlying values and goals related to the frame.

These insights and feedback have been documented in this chapter, and have been enriched with quotes from the sessions. The chapter concludes with a summary of recommendations for future actions, building on the insights gained in this chapter. These next steps include suggestions on how to further develop these frames and futures, which could be used by researchers, the municipality and designers alike.

The main question of this chapter is:

**“How do stakeholders assess the suggested frameworks and future scenarios, and what recommendations can be made for the next steps?”**



Research question

How do stakeholders assess the suggested frameworks and future scenarios, and what recommendations can be made for the next steps?

Activities

CC3

CY3

Literature review



# FEEDBACK

To gather feedback from stakeholders on the established frames and futures, the NADI model was employed, as previously mentioned. During the sessions, the frames were presented, followed by extensive discussions on what was effective and what might have been less so.

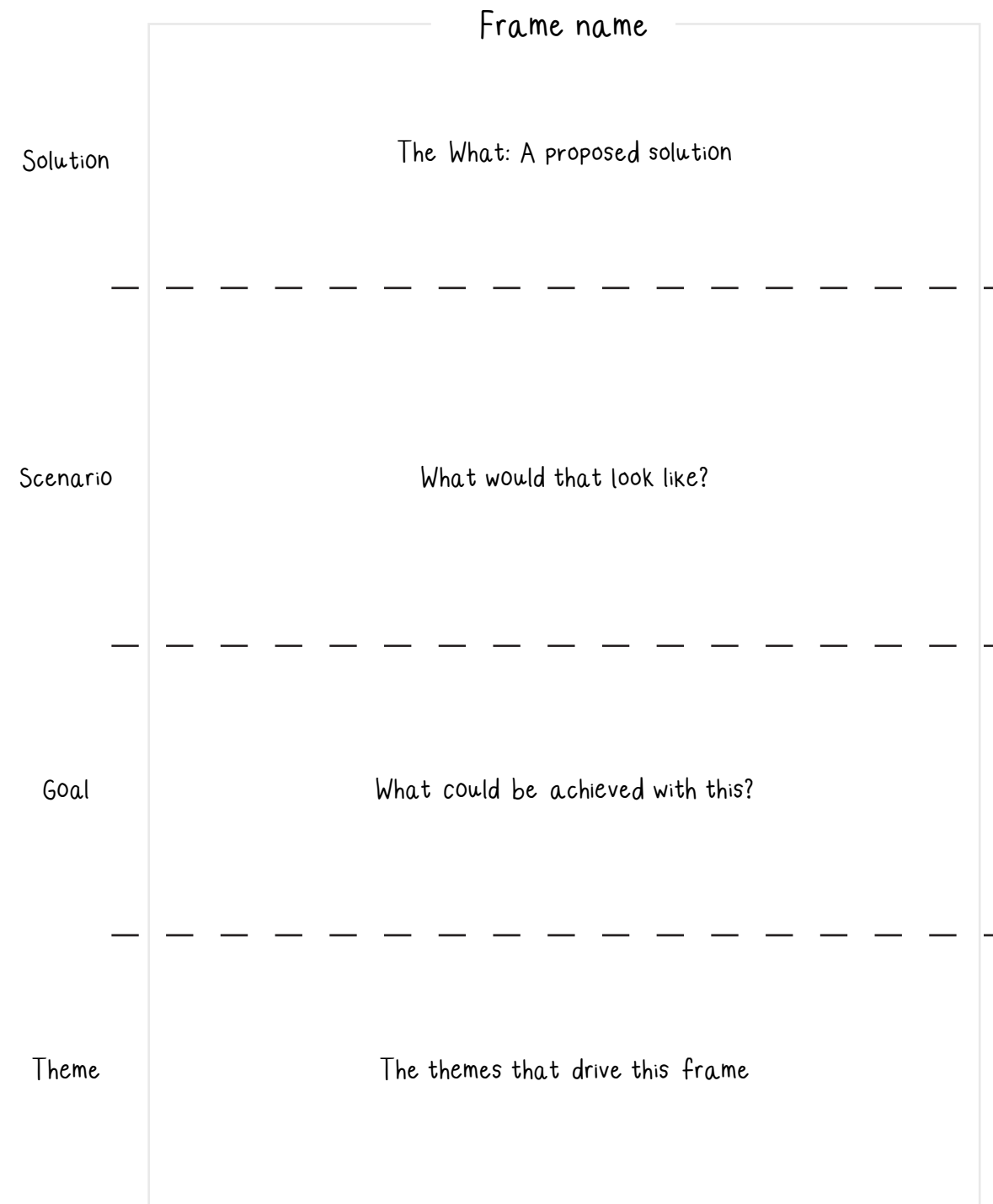
How the NADI Model Works (Van Der Bijl-Brouwer & Dorst, 2014):

- Solutions Level: At the top, we identify the specific solutions people desire.
- Scenario Level: The next level focuses on how people wish to use these solutions.
- Goal Level: Centers on the objectives people aim to achieve with the solution.
- Themes Level: The deepest level digs into the fundamental needs and values driving these desires; these are the themes we previously identified.

Why is this useful? Understanding these core themes is crucial for problem reframing. However, when discussing solutions with stakeholders, it's more effective to focus on the scenario and goal levels, as the deepest themes are often more challenging to discuss.

The NADI models of the frames can be found filled in in Appendix O.

This chapter primarily consists of feedback from the problem owners. The points raised during the sessions are categorized into four groups: To keep, to iterate on, to be cautious of, and to keep in mind. Together, these points reflect on the frames and the potential for further development. This chapter will compile these points with a section on recommendations for follow-up steps.



The NADI Model, based on (UTS Design Innovation Research Centre et al., 2015)

feedback



To keep



To iterate on



To be cautious of



To keep in mind





## feedback

### 1. Travel guidance: navigating new unknowns

"WE ALWAYS HAVE TO SORT OF SCRAPE SOMETHING TOGETHER FROM NOTHING, AND NOW, YOU ACTUALLY GET QUITE A SOLID FOUNDATION TO START THIS OFF RIGHT, TO KICK THINGS OFF PROPERLY AND KEEP DOING IT WELL."

- AISHA, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)



The need for guidance while navigating the unknown is recognised and desired.

"I DO THINK WE WANT A SORT OF PARTICIPATION DEPARTMENT WHICH DOESN'T EXIST YET."

- JANNEKE, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)

"SOME PEOPLE ALSO DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START. BECAUSE THE FEAR OF TALKING TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE IS QUITE PRESENT. [...] IT WOULD BE GOOD TO HAVE GUIDANCE ON HOW TO ENGAGE IN SUCH A CONVERSATION? FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT IS EXPECTATION MANAGEMENT AND HOW DO YOU ENSURE THAT EXPECTATIONS ARE CLEARLY COMMUNICATED BOTH WAYS?"

- AISHA, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)

"THAT'S QUITE FUNNY, I ALSO IMAGINED SUCH A TRAVEL AGENCY IN THE IDEAL FUTURE OF PARTICIPATION, WHERE EVERYONE CAN GO. AND IF YOU WANT TO DO SOMETHING YOURSELF, YOU KNOW WHERE AND WHAT YOU CAN DO. THE INTENTION IS THAT YOU DO IT YOURSELF AND GO ON YOUR OWN, BUT THAT SOMEONE IS THERE IF NEEDED."

- TANNE, YOUNGSTER (CY3)



The term travel agency worked well as a metaphor to describe what the stakeholders were looking for and missing. Throughout the entire conversation this term was referenced.



A future with a central place that would offer support both resonates with the stakeholders and is deemed feasible. It was also mentioned in the conversation that this could also be incorporated into the policy framework on participation.

"I THINK THIS FRAME IS GREAT AND VERY RECOGNIZABLE. AND I ALSO THINK IT IS DOABLE." - JANNEKE, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)

"I THINK THIS IS INDEED A VERY NICE OUTCOME OR SOMETHING THAT WE COULD START USING OR INCLUDE IN OUR POLICY FRAMEWORK; AS AN IDEA TO PROCEED IN SUCH A WAY." - AISHA, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)



Creating a physical place within the municipality with people actively working there to provide this guidance would be helpful.

"AND MAYBE EVEN TRAINEES COULD ALSO BE INVOLVED IN IT? BUT ALSO PEOPLE WITH FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE, OR PERHAPS EVEN YOUNG PEOPLE THEMSELVES WHO ARE PART OF THAT DEPARTMENT. AND THAT EVERYONE CAN JUST WALK IN WITH THEIR POLICY DOCUMENT OR WITH THEIR QUESTION LIKE, HEY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO." - AISHA, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)

"YES, I THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA. IT IS ALSO AN OPTION, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT YOU INVOLVE US WHEN YOU TALK TO YOUNG PEOPLE, [...] IT IS POSSIBLE THAT WE WILL AT LEAST BE THERE AS SUPPORT OR SOMETHING."

- ANNELOU, YOUNGSTER (CY3)

A physical space at  
Het Timmerhuis







There was a discussion about whether there should be a guide for each department. However, the need for one central location where knowledge converges turned out to be more important. The danger of scattered knowledge and departments not communicating with each other seemed too great if this were to be organized by department.



Youngsters should also be able to walk into this department if they are dissatisfied or have ideas. There might also be some youngsters permanently working with or connected to the department.

**"I THINK THE IDEA OF THE TRAVEL AGENCY WOULD WORK. NOW YOU HAVE ALL KINDS OF SEPARATE ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS EXPEX AND OTHERS. BUT IT WOULD ALSO BE NICE IF YOU COULD GET INFORMATION ABOUT THIS FROM THE MUNICIPALITY; OF WHAT IS AVAILABLE. I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING WITH MY EXPERIENCES FOR YEARS, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW THAT THESE TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS EXISTED OTHERWISE I WOULD HAVE STARTED THIS MUCH EARLIER. SO THAT'S JUST A SHAME."**

- ANNELOU, YOUNGSTER (CY3)



It might be linked to Obie, the research department of the municipality to connect data-driven decision-making to participation.

**"FOR THE PEOPLE WHO ARE REALLY INTO DATA, IT COULD BE A COMBINATION OF EFFORTS FROM PRACTICE, BUT ALSO FROM RESEARCH, AND THAT IT CAN COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER? [...] AND THEN, OF COURSE, YOU CAN ALSO SUBSTANTIATE YOUR ADVICE MUCH BETTER."**

- AISHA, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)



Related to feasibility: It would be necessary to carefully consider who will be responsible for this and where this physical space would be located. Also, funding might initially seem like an obstacle.



However, it also emerged that it could lead to less outsourcing within the municipality, something that often happens now and costs a lot of money.

**"WE RECENTLY OUTSOURCED A RESEARCH, AND IT WAS VERY POORLY EXECUTED. THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO SPENT A YEAR ON IT, BUT NOBODY WAS HAPPY WITH IT, AND IT COST A LOT OF MONEY. SO MAYBE WE COULD ALSO INCLUDE SOMEWHERE IN THE POLICY FRAMEWORK THAT THIS IS COST-SAVING."**

- AISHA, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)

feedback

## 2. Open hearts, open minds: Giving the stage to the person behind the "role"



The fact that you need to be seen beyond your role is recognized as overlooked and important.

**"THEN IT FINALLY BECOMES A BIT HUMAN, DOESN'T IT? WE'RE HUMAN, RIGHT? IN THE WORKPLACE YOU ALSO TELL EACH OTHER WHAT YOU LIKE AND WHAT YOU HAVE DONE OVER THE WEEKEND? THAT ALSO MAKES IT MUCH MORE FUN. FOR EXAMPLE, IF A PERSON TELLS ME THAT HE OR SHE HAS CHILDREN, I ALSO KNOW MORE ABOUT HIM OR HER."**

- TANNE, YOUNGSTER (CY3)

**"WELL, THE FIRST THING THAT COMES TO MIND IS THAT IT'S VERY RECOGNIZABLE. [...] THAT INTERACTION, IT'S JUST NOT THERE, AND THERE'S NO CONNECTION AND NO COMMON GROUND TO BE FOUND. YES, I'M ALSO A RESIDENT OF THIS NEIGHBORHOOD, OR I ALSO HAVE CHILDREN WHO VISIT THE YOUTH HUB, YOU KNOW? I THINK THAT'S VERY IMPORTANT [...] THAT THEY ALSO HAVE SOME SORT OF RECOGNITION OF, THIS IS SOMEONE FROM THE MUNICIPALITY, BUT BESIDES THAT, IT'S JUST A PERSON."**

- JANNEKE, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)



In addition, this can also contribute to a sense of ownership: the realization of why something - a topic or participation process - is also relevant to you as an individual.

**"ACTUALLY, IT'S ALSO VERY IMPORTANT FOR US, FOR CIVIL SERVANTS, TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF A TOPIC BY ALSO TRANSLATING IT INTO HOW, FOR EXAMPLE, MY CHILDREN WOULD REACT."**

- JANNEKE, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)





The reflective preliminary research of oneself - who am I and what do I think about this - is seen as necessary to start a project well, but this is not yet done often enough within the municipality and in the process of policymaking.

**"WHAT I WOULD FIND NICE, SUPPOSE I WOULD BE THE CHIEF OF THIS MUNICIPAL TRAVEL AGENCY. I WOULD REALLY APPRECIATE IT IF WE COULD INCORPORATE THIS REFLECTION INTO A SORT OF INTAKE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE OFFICIALS WHEN THEY WANT TO WORK WITH YOUNGSTERS. SO THAT THEY FIRST THINK ABOUT IT. FROM THE PPMO FRONTLINE, SO TO SPEAK, YOU ALSO GET ASSIGNMENTS. THERE'S ALWAYS AN INTAKE TEAM THAT THEN FULLY ARTICULATES THOSE ASSIGNMENTS, TALKS THEM THROUGH COMPLETELY, AND REALLY SQUEEZES OUT, LIKE, WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT? WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU WANT TO DO WITH THIS EXPERT BY EXPERIENCE [...] HOW DO YOU, YOURSELF, LOOK AT THAT NOW?"**

- AISHA, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)



Reflections on these things and opening up are considered feasible, but they would almost have to be enforced by supervisors or an external party. This could also be done at the municipal travel agency, linking the two frames to each other.

An intake conversation



It could work in the form of a sort of intake conversation for the official who is going to start a participation trajectory. Discussing assumptions about the target group they will be working with, their own motivations, beliefs, and connections with the topic could then be discussed.

**HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT IT? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO GET OUT OF IT? YES, WHAT EXPECTATIONS DO YOU HAVE?**

- JANNEKE, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)



Young people also think that some form of introductory exercises can help, so that conversations arise in which civil servants can also be more vulnerable. Now conversations sometimes remain superficial and sometimes there is no feeling of connection.

**"I RECENTLY ALSO WAS INTERVIEWED BY SOMEONE FROM THE MUNICIPALITY [...] AND I THOUGHT THAT MADE NO SENSE. HE DIDN'T EVEN RESPOND TO WHAT I SAID. HE ASKED ABOUT MY STORY, BUT HE WAS JUST TYPING ALONG. AND I THOUGHT: YOU CAN ALSO JUST RESPOND A LITTLE TO WHAT I SAY EVERY NOW AND THEN! [...] IT REALLY FELT LIKE HE WAS JUST COMING TO GET SOMETHING. AND I REALLY DON'T NEED TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT HIM, BUT HE ASKED HIS QUESTIONS AND LEFT. THEN I REALLY THOUGHT: WELL, I FELT NO CONNECTION AT ALL."**

- ANNELOU, YOUNGSTER (CY3)



The youngsters proposed an example where all residents, both young and old, receive a letter accompanied by a survey. This survey enables them to express the topics they are passionate about discussing and contemplating. Consequently, when officials are in search of participants, they can identify those who are genuinely enthusiastic and effectively reach out to them.

**"WITH A REGISTRATION LINK AT THE END OF THE LETTER!"**

- DEMI, YOUNGSTER (CY3)



## feedback

### 3. Escape room: showing (sm)all successes



The metaphor of working in an escape room where no one communicates with each other is recognizable; especially the celebration of small successes and providing feedback on them resonates and adds value.

**"YES, IT'S RECOGNIZABLE, BECAUSE SOMETIMES YOU'RE IN SUCH A LONG PROJECT THAT YOU NEED TO OCCASIONALLY CELEBRATE THE SMALL SUCCESSES TOO, TO SEE WHERE YOU STAND AND WHAT YOU'VE ACHIEVED. BECAUSE WE'RE IN A SORT OF ROLLERCOASTER AND IT JUST DOESN'T STOP AND IT KEEPS GOING AND FROM ONE PROJECT COMES ANOTHER."**

- JANNEKE, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)

**"YEAH, THOSE ARE THINGS WE NORMALLY DON'T PAUSE TO CONSIDER. NO, BUT I REALLY LIKE THE IDEA WITH THE CARDS TOO."**

- AISHA, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)



Sharing this feedback with, for example, digital cards with which you can send your thanks or say that it went well would actually be done. There is also a need for this among some officials.

**YES, I DO BELIEVE THAT [CIVIL SERVANTS WOULD ACTUALLY SEND THESE CARDS], YES.**

- JANNEKE, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)

**Y: YES, YOU NEED TO HAVE A FEW PEOPLE WHO WILL STANDARDIZE DOING THIS WHO ALREADY REALLY LOVE IT. WELL, THEN PEOPLE WILL START TO DO THE SAME THING.**

- AISHA, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)

**S: I THINK YOU HAVE TO MAKE IT EXPLICIT IN YOUR PROJECT PLAN. IT'S PART OF YOUR PROJECT TO INCLUDE THAT FEEDBACK. THAT IT'S MADE EXPLICIT. BECAUSE OTHERWISE, YOU'LL OVERLOOK IT.**

- JANNEKE, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)



These cards are mentioned as a point with potential for further development: something that would be easy to implement (feasible) and for which there is a need.

**AND I THINK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT. OTHERWISE, YOU DON'T SEE PROGRESS. IF YOU DON'T SEE PROGRESS, THEY GET THE FEELING THAT IT'S ENDLESS OR THAT NOTHING IS HAPPENING. WE FEEL THAT OURSELVES AS WELL. LET ALONE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE. I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO GIVE THAT FEEDBACK AND OCCASIONALLY CELEBRATE THOSE SUCCESSES.**

- JANNEKE, CIVIL SERVANT (CC3)



Providing feedback in this way could (and perhaps should) be included in the planning of a project. It should become a standard to communicate more with each other when successes are achieved.

**"IT WOULD BE NICE TO RECEIVE A CARD WHEN A PROJECT IS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED."**

- DEMI, YOUNGSTER (CY3)

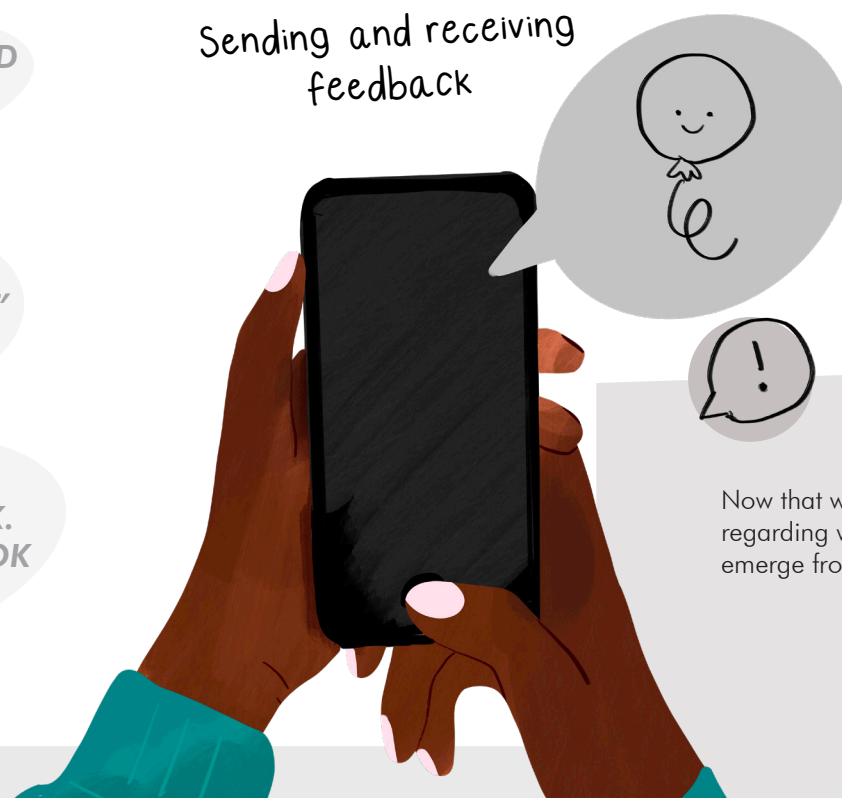


Giving feedback is sometimes already done well, some young people indicate, but not always.

**"IT DOES HAPPEN THAT YOU HEAR VIA EMAIL; WE ARE WORKING ON THIS AND THIS. BUT IT ALSO HAPPENS THAT YOU NO LONGER HEAR BACK ABOUT A PROJECT YOU CONTRIBUTED TO."**

- ANNELOU, YOUNGSTER (CY3)

Sending and receiving  
feedback

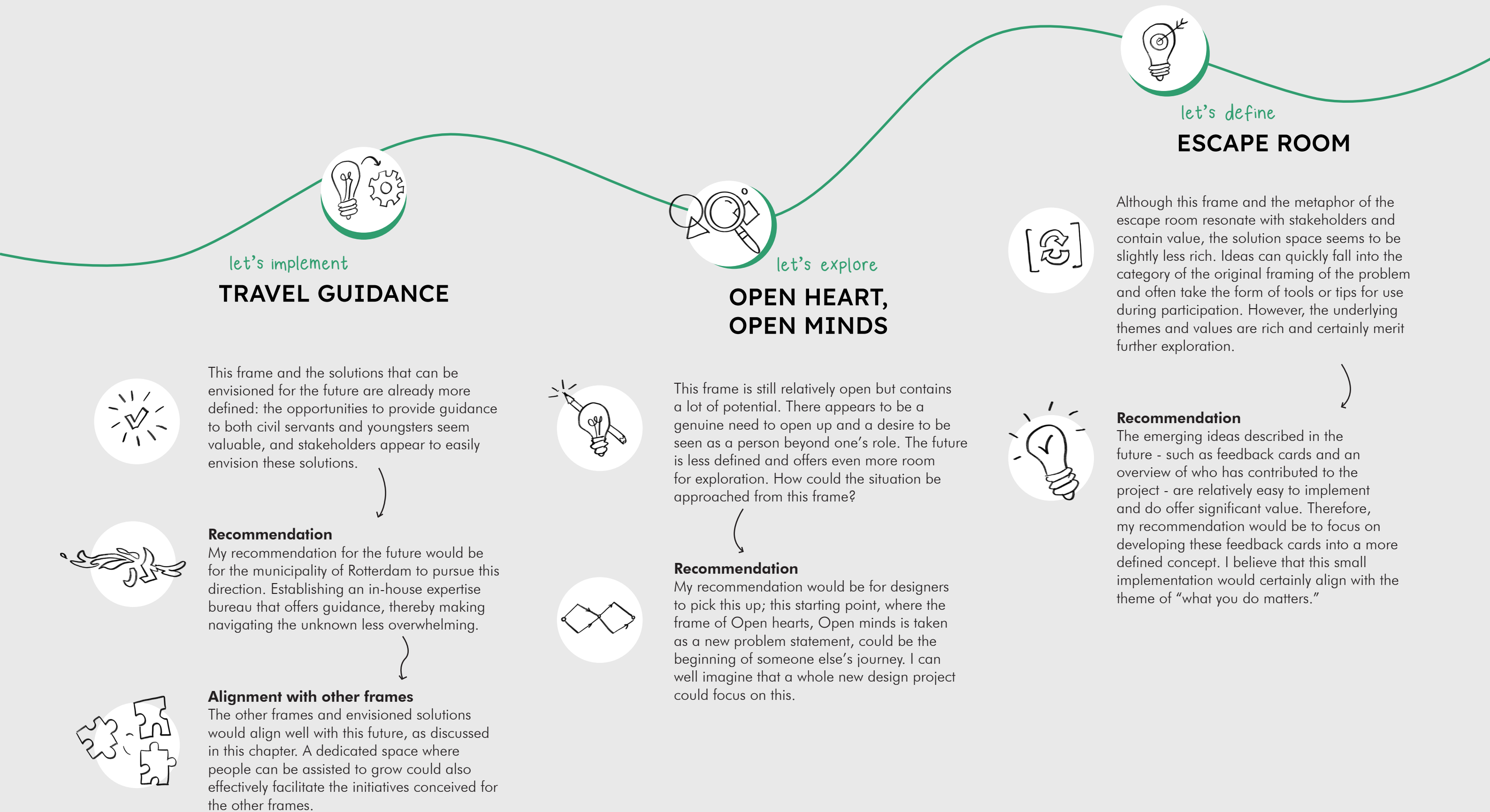


Now that we have gathered all this feedback, it's crucial to outline specific points regarding what can now be done with these frames. What recommendations for the future emerge from this chapter?





# Recommendations for the Future





# REFLECTION

Examining the Frame Innovation Method & my Process

dog -  
day care

receiving  
home-made  
pie

Caring for  
Sick person

informal  
care

Soccer  
rotation

feeling an  
appreciated member  
of society

feeling seen  
for who you  
are?

en people  
to hardship

birthdays

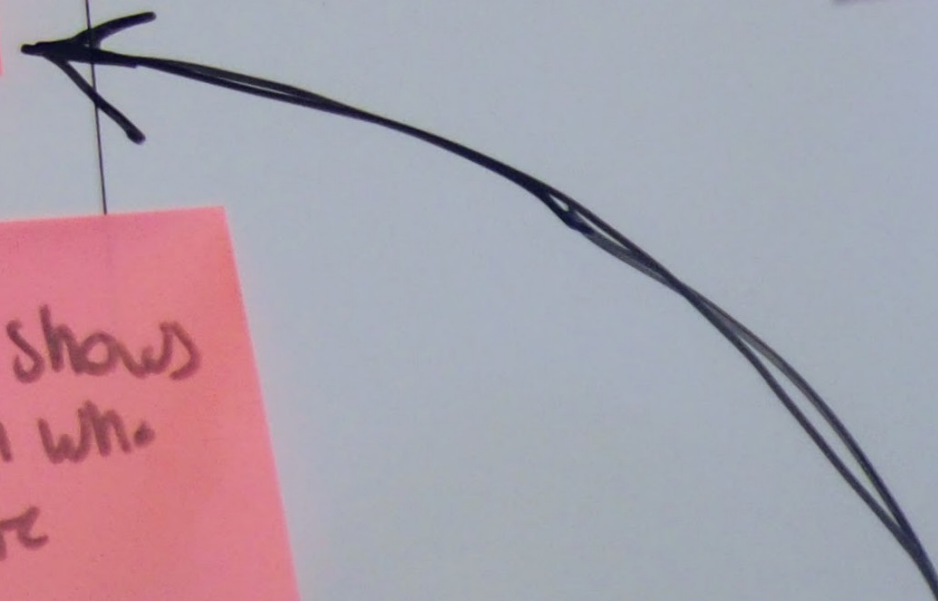
well - functioning  
family

feeling  
you belong

transdisciplinary  
School

see that people  
are happy that  
you are there.

someone shows  
interest in who  
you are





## 9. REFLECTION

In this final chapter, we will reflect on everything I have learned over the past five months. This reflection will focus on two main areas:

We'll start with a methodological reflection on Frame Innovation: This section will delve into the frame innovation method developed by Kees Dorst (2015), reflecting on the insights I have gained from applying this method within the context of youth participation in policy-making. I will offer tips and share the enriched insights discussed during:

- A conversation with Kees Dorst about the method, reflecting on its various steps, objectives, and potential pitfalls.
- Reflections after sessions with a multidisciplinary group of researchers and some concrete insights from Irene Fierloos, my client and collaborator, who has been closely involved in this project as a researcher.
- Interviews with four IDE alumni who utilized the frame innovation method in their graduation projects, exploring their perspectives on the method, what they found effective, and how they might have approached it differently.

This part of the report adopts a meta-perspective on the problem and the method and is intended for individuals interested in applying the frame innovation method in the future or those curious about the application of design methods to complex social issues.

The research question of this last chapter is: **"What lessons can be learned from the application of frame innovation, particularly in the context of youth participation in municipal policymaking?"**

Additionally, this chapter includes a reflection on my personal learning objectives throughout the process. I will conclude the chapter with this reflection.

Kees Dorst



Research question

What lessons can be learned from the application of frame innovation, particularly in the context of youth participation in municipal policymaking?

Activities

ID1

ID2

Literature review



## Archaeology + Paradoxes

Innovation through framing can often feel ambiguous; it's not always clear what the next step should be. This approach is exploratory and creative. Therefore, the initial phase of "archaeology" may seem like a safe starting point. It involves identifying the current issues and reviewing past events. However, this phase harbours a potential pitfall: dwelling too long on this analysis and allowing it to influence the rest of the process overly.

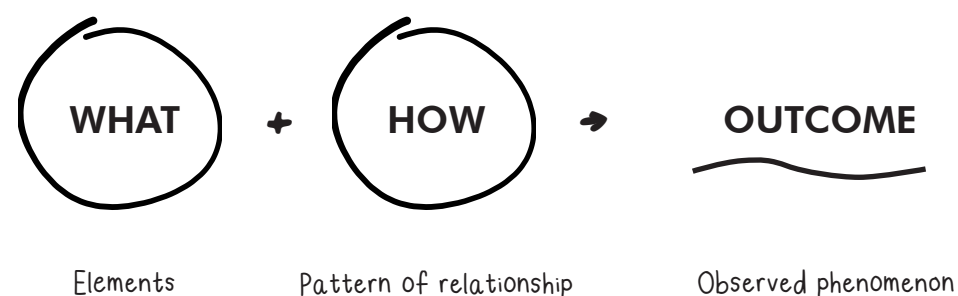
Kees Dorst discussed this during the meeting, noting,

*"THIS IS ANALYSIS, SOMETHING WE'RE COMFORTABLE WITH AND EAGER TO DIVE DEEP INTO. ARCHAEOLOGY IS INTENDED TO REFLECT ON THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS, MAINTAINING A CERTAIN DISTANCE. INSTEAD OF AN EXHAUSTIVE INVESTIGATION, IT'S CRUCIAL TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENING AND WHAT HAS PREVIOUSLY FAILED. THESE OBSERVATIONS SHOULD BE ACKNOWLEDGED, BUT NOT DWELLED UPON OR JUDGED EXCESSIVELY. WHILE ANALYSIS CAN BE COMFORTING, LEADING SOME TO IMMERSE THEMSELVES IN IT, THIS CAN INADVERTENTLY FIXATE THEM FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE PROCESS."*

- KEES DORST (ID2)

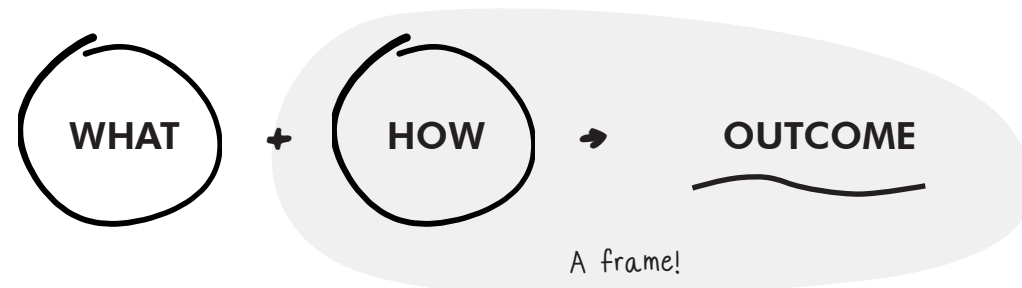
So, what have I experienced to be crucial in this step? The frame innovation method often involves examining a longstanding problem for which solutions have been unsuccessfully attempted. Stakeholders might become too accustomed to the existing framing of the problem, mistakenly accepting it as the sole truth. For a more thorough exploration of this subject, let's embark on a short side journey.

Drawing from Kees Dorst (2015), design is seen as a form of reasoning. At its simplest, the world consists of elements (like people and objects) and the connections between them, forming a pattern of relationships observable through their interactions and the outcomes of these processes.



For instance, consider the design challenge of people sitting too long at work, which is harmful to their health. The design goal is to offer a healthier working environment (outcome). Sometimes, the 'how' is also presumed, like a new ergonomic desk chair (it can be a ball or a bike chair; you name it), without considering alternative approaches. Occasionally, designers begin with a vague sense of the outcome they wish to achieve, without a clear path to getting there. So they need to figure out "what" new elements to create, without a concrete strategy or a known 'how.' How will they be healthier at work: it can be a desk chair but also a music alarm that goes off and urges everyone to do a silly dance and stretch their legs. Or perhaps they need to look at the snacks the workplace offers.

In frame innovation, we reconsider both the 'how' and the 'outcome', including the entire problem space's framing and the relationship pattern. However, as experience shows, stakeholders often have preconceived notions of the desired outcomes, leading to a narrow search for solutions. If we look at this report, it makes sense to seek solutions for this problem: "Youth not being adequately heard in policy discussions affecting their lives." Right? It is a problem that needs solving. Solutions tend to gravitate towards previously attempted approaches. It's crucial to avoid retracing these steps.



Therefore, it's beneficial to 'deframe' the problem before re-framing it. This could be the archaeology phase's conclusion: keep track of how stakeholders have previously (and perhaps unconsciously) framed and attempted to solve the problem. Clearly articulate this for yourself, it helped me to note it down with a bold marker, and periodically revisit it to ensure you don't fall into the same 'trap'.

In discussions with alumni, the subsequent phase, focusing on paradoxes, was deemed the least useful. Although it may not directly advance the design process, it's vital for convincing oneself and other stakeholders to move beyond the previous frame, you might have written down with a bold marker by now, serving as an extension of the archaeology phase.





In Kees Dorst's book, the "Archaeology" step also discusses 'barriers'—documenting actions stakeholders would never undertake to explore their limits and possibilities. I chose to skip this step, noticing it potentially restricts the process while a new frame might shift or establish entirely new barriers. Kees Dorst responded that in a new book, he approaches the archaeology step differently. He mentioned the concept of social space in our conversation:

*"EVERYTHING PEOPLE ACTUALLY WANT, BUT ARE SLIGHTLY WILLING TO SET ASIDE FOR OTHERS. THAT IS THE SOCIAL SPACE PEOPLE HAVE. AND IF YOU WANT TO MAKE CHANGES, IN SOCIAL DESIGN AND SUCH; THEN THE SOCIAL SPACE IS WHAT YOU HAVE TO WORK WITH."* - KEES DORST (ID2)

This seems to align with the concept of barriers as described in the book. I personally believe that this social space is indeed significant but is more useful to consider and analyze deeper later in the process. At that point, it's possible to assess what stakeholders are still willing to engage in.

## Context

Kees Dorst mentioned that he deliberately provides few guidelines in his book on how to execute the steps of the frame innovation method, particularly when it comes to uncovering the values of direct stakeholders. He explains his reasoning as follows:

*"THE INITIAL VERSION OF THE FRAME INNOVATION BOOK WAS QUITE COMPREHENSIVE, FILLED WITH VARIOUS METHODS AND APPROACHES. HOWEVER, I DECIDED TO REMOVE MANY OF THESE ELEMENTS INTENTIONALLY. MY GOAL WAS FOR READERS TO THINK INDEPENDENTLY ABOUT HOW THEY WOULD IMPLEMENT THESE CONCEPTS. THUS, THE BOOK INTENTIONALLY CONTAINS A CERTAIN LEVEL OF AMBIGUITY. I BELIEVE THAT PRESCRIBING MY METHODS MIGHT NOT NECESSARILY SUIT EVERYONE OR BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE APPROACH FOR EVERY SITUATION. INDIVIDUALS MUST DEVISE THEIR OWN STRATEGIES."* - KEES DORST (ID2)

For this phase, I chose to create personas because they outlined the diversity among key stakeholders. It worked well for me to map the context. However, I wouldn't claim this method is universally effective. My recommendation is to deeply understand the underlying values of individuals; keep in mind that their initial responses in discussions likely align with the conventional framing of the problem. To gain insight into what lies behind those responses one should opt for an approach that resonates with you as a designer. Dorst prefers engaging directly with individuals since he believes co-creation sessions might not delve deeply enough.

## Tips

- For the archaeology: acknowledge past efforts without getting overly fixated on them, avoid dwelling too long on analysis to prevent limiting innovative thinking.
- Engage deeply with stakeholders to uncover underlying values and perspectives, how you do and document this is up to you and can be context-specific.
- Spend some time with your themes; look at them from different angles.
- Be prepared to iterate on your problem frames and don't focus too much on finding the 'perfect' metafore, a deep understanding of the themes will often lead to interesting insights if you give it time.
- Recognize the iterative and non-linear nature of the process, allowing for flexibility in application.

*"I TEND TO INDIVIDUALLY GATHER STAKEHOLDERS' VALUES BEFORE ANY WORKSHOP. WORKSHOPS CAN TRANSFORM THIS INTO A GOAL-ORIENTED PROCESS, POTENTIALLY GLOSSING OVER THE DEPTH OF INDIVIDUAL VALUES. [...] LESSER DESIGN EDUCATION OFTEN EQUATES DESIGNING TO MERELY 'DOING' THINGS. FOR ME, DESIGN ALSO ENCOMPASSES THINKING, PONDERING, REFLECTING, AND ENGAGING DEEPLY WITH CONCEPTS. CONSTANTLY 'DOING' DOESN'T NECESSARILY LEAD TO BETTER DESIGNS. CO-CREATION SOMETIMES FALLS INTO THIS TRAP, ASSUMING THAT HAVING EVERYONE IN THE ROOM AND ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING WILL YIELD THE BEST OUTCOMES. UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE'S UNDERLYING VALUES ALLOWS FOR THOUGHTFUL CONSIDERATION AND FINDING BALANCES, ENGAGING WITH THE ESSENCE OF THEIR PERSPECTIVES RATHER THAN JUST THEIR ARTICULATED THOUGHTS."* - KEES DORST (ID2)

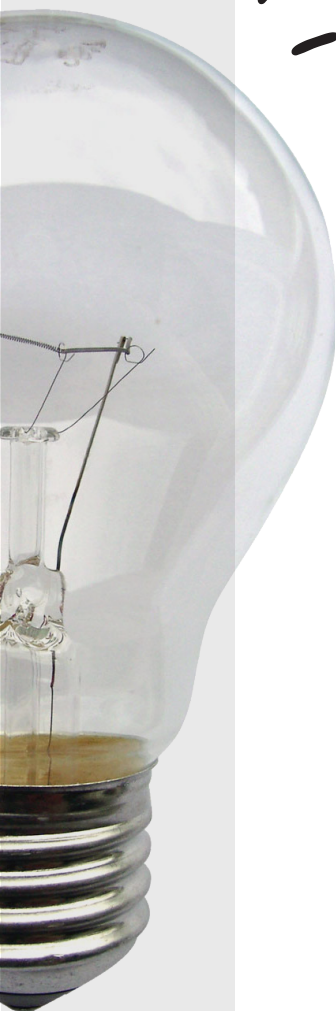
Engaging deeply with individuals, and moving beyond surface-level values and problems, is essential. Observations, discussions about their lives outside the immediate problem, and probing questions can reveal much. I've had positive experiences using cultural probes to uncover latent and tacit needs—needs stakeholders are not consciously aware of or find hard to articulate. For example, a timeline of experiences with the municipality adorned with symbolic images can serve as an intriguing conversation starter. Yet, as Kees Dorst asserts, the specific approach you take is up to you. Betsie Loeffen's method of shadowing within the municipality provided her with profound insights into the target group. I also believe co-creation can yield interesting insights as long as you don't organise it with the intention of 'finding the solution'; if it is approached as a research through design activity the results could be quotes during the sessions and attendant's reactions to each other's creations.

## Field

When reviewing past reports from Industrial Design Engineering (IDE) alumni, it's evident that the "Field" step within the frame innovation process is tackled in a myriad of ways. From analyzing competitors and trends to exploring frontrunners in the problem area or interviewing previously identified stakeholders, there seems to be a unique interpretation for executing this step. What purpose does this step serve?

Throughout my graduation project, my perspective on this step evolved. Initially, I wondered, If you already have a deep understanding of the key stakeholders, why look beyond the immediate context to identify valuable themes? I still find merit in this reasoning. However, without stepping outside the context to consider who might not yet be connected to the problem but could be in the future, there's a risk of reverting to the original problem framing.





*"I TEND TO TAKE A BROAD APPROACH, GIVING EQUAL CONSIDERATION TO ALL VALUES AT PLAY. ESPECIALLY SINCE THE VALUES YOU MIGHT NOT ANTICIPATE, OR THOSE THAT SEEM ODD, COULD LEAD TO RECOGNIZING NEW PATTERNS. I'M CONCERNED THAT STAYING TOO CLOSE TO THE FAMILIAR PREVENTS US FROM ADOPTING NEW PERSPECTIVES."* - KEES DORST (ID2)

Viewing this step as a quest for less obvious values can be beneficial: it serves as inspiration, prompting a different way of thinking.

*"WELL, YOU'RE SEEKING INSPIRATION. YOU'RE ALSO LOOKING TO DISRUPT THE PROBLEM FIELD BY IDENTIFYING PARTIES THAT COULD BECOME MORE ACTIVE. YOU'RE EXPLORING WHETHER THERE ARE VALUES NOT CURRENTLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROBLEM SYSTEM BUT COULD BE INTEGRATED. THIS CAN SET THINGS IN MOTION."* - KEES DORST (ID2)

This leads to the question: When should this inspiration be utilized? Integrating the values identified in this step into your theme analysis can be particularly insightful, suggesting that the "Field" step indeed should be placed between context and themes. However, frame innovation should not be approached as a linear process. Personally, I believe it's also valuable in later phases, possibly between themes and frames or between frames and futures, to inspire considerations of which stakeholders might become relevant to the problem in the future.

## Themes

In my view, the "Themes" step is the most critical phase, even more so than the "Frames" step. I presented this perspective to Kees Dorst and inquired why it's called frame innovation.

*"I AGREE WITH YOU THAT THE WAY SOMEONE HANDLES THEMES DETERMINES THE OVERALL QUALITY OF THE PROCESS. THIS INVOLVES A SPECIFIC WAY OF CONCEPTUAL THINKING, THE ABILITY TO PLAY WITH CONCEPTS PLAYFULLY, AND CREATING NETWORKS TO ENRICH CONCEPTS RATHER THAN REDUCING THEM. THAT IS INDEED THE CORE OF THE ENTIRE PROCESS. HOWEVER, PEOPLE WERE FAMILIAR WITH THE PROCESS OR WERE SEEKING NEW FRAMES. SO, THE FRAMES ARE WHAT YOU PRODUCE. BUT DELVING DEEPLY INTO THE THEMES IS INDEED WHERE THE VALUE OF THE PROCESS LIES."*

- KEES DORST (ID2)

If you're relatively new to the method, the first themes you identify are likely 'general research themes'; there's already much value in these, but they can be further developed. Giving themes evocative names can be helpful; 'power' is an interesting theme, but 'what you do matters' adds a certain depth within this context. I would also recommend spending ample time exploring and delving into these themes, preferably in a team. This can make the themes richer and likely more fruitful.

*"THE INSIGHT INTO UNDERLYING THEMES IS VERY VALUABLE. WHAT EMERGES FROM THIS IS QUITE UNIVERSAL. IN THIS PROJECT, THIS ANALYSIS GAVE US THE INSIGHT THAT YOUNG PEOPLE AND CIVIL SERVANTS OFTEN ENCOUNTER SIMILAR THEMES. THIS CAN RESULT IN MORE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING."*

- IRENE FIERLOOS

## Frames + Futures + Transformation

*"THE FRAMES HELP TO DISCUSS WHAT IS NEEDED, REGARDLESS OF DISCIPLINE, PERSPECTIVE OR BACKGROUND, YOU USE FRAMES TO SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE WHEN IT COMES TO THE CHANGE THAT IS NEEDED. THE USE OF MULTIPLE FRAMES CAN MAKE A COMPLEX ISSUE MANAGEABLE: BY TACKLING A SMALL PART IT SUDDENLY SEEMS A LOT MORE FEASIBLE THAN WHEN YOU SEE THE THEME AS A WHOLE."* - IRENE FIERLOOS

When adopting the method; it can feel as if everything is leading to the framing step. I have experienced this step as interesting and useful; by capturing themes in frames - new ways of looking at the situation can yield interesting insights. It can make it easier to talk about sometimes abstract themes, as Irene Fierloos also indicates. However, searching for the perfect 'frame' can be somewhat paralyzing. Some alumni recognize this too.

*"I BELIEVE THAT THE INITIAL AND FINAL PHASES ARE VERY HELPFUL, BUT THE MIDDLE PART, WHERE YOU HAVE TO LINK EVERYTHING WITH A SINGLE IDEA, IS THE MOST DIFFICULT,"* - EVA PEET, IDE ALUMNUS (ID2)

It can be tempting to rush to apply metaphors such as a community garden, a new job, or raising a child. Kees Dorst's classic example of reframing alcohol-related issues in King's Cross as a festival, positioning the municipality not as enforcers but as event managers, might encourage the search for such metaphors. Since in this classic example the metaphor fits so well it can seem like such a metaphor is needed to create a successful frame.

*"THE FESTIVAL EXAMPLE IS INDEED MY OWN DOING. IT'S TRUE THAT WE HAVE UNDERTAKEN MUCH BETTER PROJECTS THAN THE ONE WITH THIS FRAME IN KINGS CROSS, BUT THIS EXAMPLE IS EASILY EXPLAINED. UNDERSTANDING THE FULL CONTEXT IS NECESSARY TO APPRECIATE THE VALUE OF OUR MORE COMPLEX PROJECTS. THE KINGS CROSS EXAMPLE PROVIDES A SHORTCUT FOR EXPLANATION, LEVERAGING THE FAMILIAR SETTING OF A NIGHTLIFE AREA. HOWEVER, IT SIMPLIFIES THE COMPLEXITY INHERENT IN SUCH SITUATIONS."*

- KEES DORST (ID2)

Choosing a metaphor because it is 'flashy' and easily explained to outsiders can be a pitfall; its value may not be fully appreciated when elaborated upon or presented to stakeholders. It might not always be necessary to apply a metaphor; a robust frame can directly build upon previously explored themes, such as 'Learning to handle responsibility.' Some frames may overlap, leading to similar futures. It's advisable to keep frames rich and avoid narrowing down to a single theme or frame for the sake of simplicity. One can also choose to create a more vague frame, something that makes stakeholders think.

*"THAT FESTIVAL METAPHOR WORKED VERY WELL BECAUSE ALL KINDS OF DIFFERENT PARTIES UNDERSTOOD IT AND COULD ALSO IMAGINE ACTIONS THEY WOULD HAVE TO TAKE. THAT'S ABSOLUTELY FINE, BUT IF IT'S NOT SO CLEAR, IT'S BETTER TO HAVE A MORE VAGUE FRAME THAT PEOPLE HAVE TO FIGURE OUT FOR THEMSELVES: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?"* - KEES DORST (ID2)



When one does opt for a metaphor to describe a frame, it's insightful to consider that fitting metaphors often reside within the scope of the original setting; they tend to feel more appropriate. For example, alcohol-related issues and a festival are contextually related. Another example from Dorst's book involves retail stores experiencing sales drops and thefts from fitting rooms, with the chosen frame being a catwalk (making it open and vibrant), here the metaphor also overlaps with the original setting. While not always matching exactly, people might intuitively sense when a metaphor fits better, an interesting aspect to keep in mind.

It's also crucial to recognize that a frame represents a new design challenge. From this point, the search for the 'What' begins anew. Alumni graduation reports from industrial design engineering often show a keen interest in moving on to solution development, where the concept is directly derived from frame innovation. However, this might not be the most realistic expectation; theoretically, one could start a new double diamond process upon establishing a frame, seeking solutions in a more traditional manner. You could pick up the Delft Design Guide. Thus, when employing this method, you're essentially designing a frame and, consequently, a new design brief.

However, this leads to the cautionary point that if no physical product is created, one must ensure the results don't merely end up filed away and forgotten. Reframing a problem situation remains somewhat abstract. This holds true even when there are enthusiastic stakeholders who can fully relate to the reframed narrative. Therefore, the integration and assurance of the outcomes are critical areas to focus on with this method. Frames still have to be 'translated' into the implementation: into concrete steps and goals that can be implemented.

**"I ALSO SEE A CHALLENGE IN THE LONG-TERM IMPLEMENTATION AND DISSEMINATION OF THE INSIGHTS. IT'S IMPORTANT NOT TO STOP AT JUST A REPORT. FOR EXAMPLE, IT WOULD BE NICE TO PROCESS THE YIELDS OF THE FRAME INNOVATION METHOD INTO SMALL TOOLS THAT STAKEHOLDERS CAN WORK WITH THEMSELVES, SUCH AS CONVERSATION CARDS TO REFLECT ON UNDERLYING THEMES. THIS IS A WAY TO ALSO TRANSLATE THE INSIGHTS TO OTHER CONTEXTS, LIKE OTHER MUNICIPALITIES OR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS THAT WANT TO ENGAGE IN YOUTH PARTICIPATION."** - IRENE FIERLOOS

### Working with the Frame Innovation Method

First of all, the Frame Innovation method is not the most straightforward for beginners. Conversations with alumni sometimes reveal this challenge:

**"IT'S QUITE DIFFICULT TO APPLY THIS METHOD FOR THE FIRST TIME DURING YOUR GRADUATION PROJECT. THE PROCESS DEMANDS A HIGH LEVEL OF ABSTRACTION AND CREATIVE THINKING, WHICH EVEN OTHER GRADUATES FOUND CHALLENGING IN WORKSHOPS."** - EVA PEET, IDE ALUMNUS (ID2)

**"IN MY OPINION, A METHOD SHOULD GUIDE US, BUT FRAME INNOVATION BECOMES APPROACHABLE ONLY AFTER REPEATED PRACTICE."** - PRIYANKA SHAH, IDE ALUMNUS (ID2)

However, a common reflection often follows:

**"YET, IT'S AN INTRIGUING AND VALUABLE METHOD BECAUSE IT TEACHES YOU TO VIEW PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS DIFFERENTLY."** - EVA PEET, IDE ALUMNUS (ID2)

This sentiment was echoed by stakeholders involved in my process. After a frame ideation session, participants found value in stepping back. However abstract thinking to this extent can be daunting not just for non-designers but for designers as well. Just when you think you're making progress, you realize you're not, which can make sessions feel somewhat unsatisfying. This also complicates making the design process participatory; it's not easy for others to contribute to your thought process or even to understand exactly what you're doing.

### WHAT DID ALUMNI APPRECIATE ABOUT WORKING WITH THE FRAME INNOVATION METHOD? (ID2)

"I actually switched my method for my design project partway through and I liked that the Frame Innovation method helped me provide a bit of structure to my thinking with the steps and the vocabulary to talk about the different stages of my project that were not just the 'design double diamond'."

- Josephine Chan

"Frame Innovation is still very relevant. Also in my work as a transformation consultant. Problems are becoming more complex, often interconnected in chains, and thus applicable to many stakeholders. [...] I found frame innovation a good method in practice at Schiphol. It helped to move away from emotion with stakeholders. People often worked in the Schiphol context for a long time, and innovation always leads to resistance. It's easier to talk about queues at the Efteling than those of security."

- Evelien Habing

"Initially, I was stuck with a paradox at the end of my discovery and definition phase, but Frame innovation came into play and helped me overcome this challenge."

- Priyanka Shah

"You learn to look at problems and solutions in a different way."

- Eva Peet



Irene Fierloos also recognised this challenge:

*“A CHALLENGE I SEE FOR THE FRAME INNOVATION APPROACH IS IN THE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO DEVELOPING AND ELABORATING FRAMES. IT IS A FAIRLY ABSTRACT PROCESS, WHICH MIGHT MEAN IT QUICKLY ENDS UP WITH THE DESIGNER. IT WOULD BE GREAT IF THIS COULD BE DONE EVEN MORE IN COLLABORATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND POLICYMAKERS SO THAT YOU ARRIVE AT A WIDELY SUPPORTED APPROACH. METHODS COULD BE DEVELOPED FOR THIS.”*

It would be useful to see if methods can be developed to help people formulate and test frames in a more accessible way, including for non-designers. If we look at the process overall, the various steps of the process do provide a structure to explain what you’re working on to others and sometimes also to yourself. Yet, as mentioned, it’s not a linear process or a recipe.

That being said, based on what I learned during the entire process, talks with alumni and these reflections I created a visualisation of how working with the frame innovation method might be approached, combining steps and proposing relationships between them. Again, this is not a recipe, it merely indicates how I perceive the phases to be influencing each other.

I have initially segmented the methodology into five overarching phases: Deframing, Discovering Underlying Values, Exploring Unifying Themes, Reframing, and Evaluating & Transforming. These phases articulate my understanding of the core aspects of the method. For example: from my perspective, the concepts of archaeology and paradoxes are associated with Deframing, whereas Context and the Field are linked to Discovering Underlying Values.

On the right, one can observe how I perceive the interplay between the established steps of the method. Archaeology and paradoxes guide us towards the Original Framing—the former perspective on the issue. It is advisable to consistently refer back to this during the method’s progression, although a deliberate separation has been introduced between the subsequent steps. We temporarily set aside this framing to embark on a journey aimed at Reframing.

I’ve delineated the Field outside the sequential order, suggesting that it can influence the Themes—though the Context may also directly impact—and serve as inspiration for Reframing. The terms Original Framing and New Framing have been specifically chosen to underscore the importance of maintaining a clear focus on these concepts throughout the process. The ultimate objective is to develop a New Framing; a fresh strategic approach to encapsulate the problems distinctly from the previous methodology.

A feedback loop from Transformation points back to the pre-framing stage. This indicates that if certain frames fail to resonate, a reassessment based on the previously established themes could be necessary to identify the required adjustments.

This diagram is not a static representation or the sole methodological approach but rather illustrates my evolving perspective on the methodology over time. This explanation underscores the dynamic and iterative nature of the methodology, emphasizing the importance of flexibility, continuous assessment, and adaptation in pursuit of effective problem-solving and innovation strategies.

## DEFRAMING

Observing and clearly articulating how stakeholders currently perceive and attempt to solve the problem. This can be supported by identifying paradoxes that explain why current approaches are unsuccessful

## DISCOVERING UNDERLYING VALUES

Engaging with stakeholders, including those not directly affected by the problem, to understand their values, needs, and life circumstances. Think about exploring values that seem unrelated as they might bring new inspiration.

## EXPLORING UNIFYING THEMES

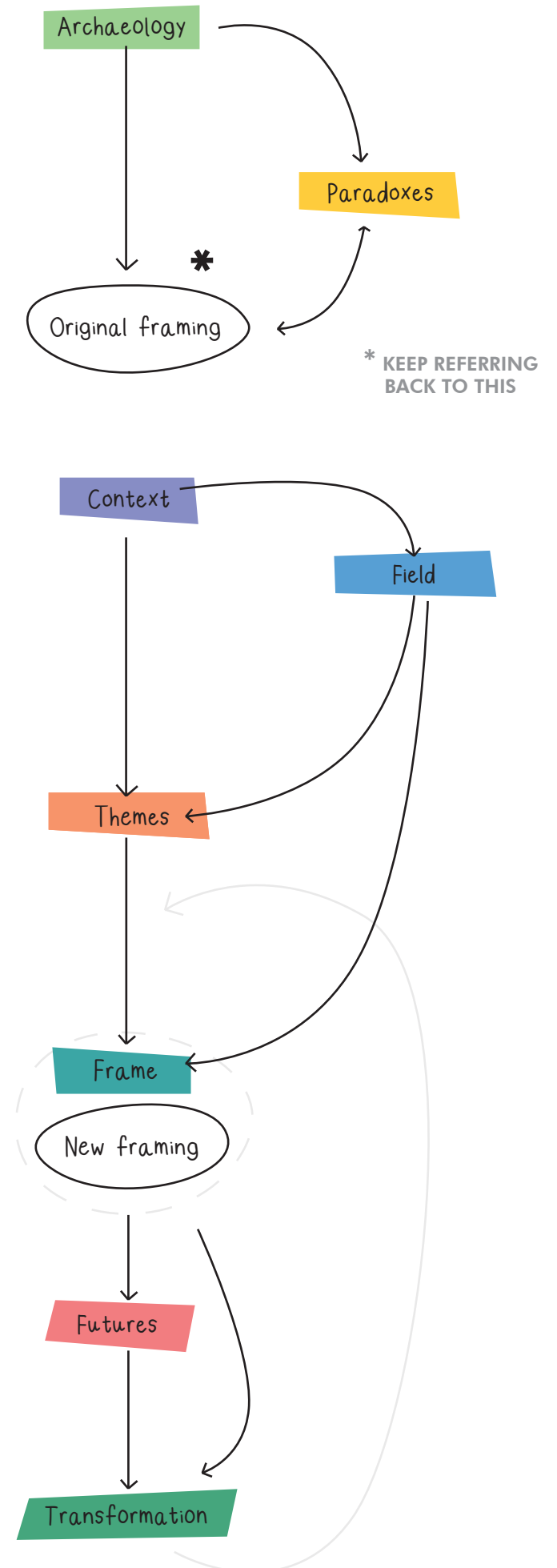
Collating these values without initially linking them back to the original stakeholders and clustering them into themes (and re-clustering). These themes are then enriched by examining them from various perspectives. Don’t be afraid to use personal experience as a designer in this step.

## REFRAMING

Connecting these themes back to the original problem: “What if we look at it from this angle?” And framing it as: “Now, it’s a problem of... And could be approached this way.”

## EVALUATING & TRANSFORMING

Checking if this aligns with stakeholder values. How can themes and frames be merged or adjusted to add more value? What modifications are necessary within the current way stakeholders operate?





## REFLECTION ON PERSONAL AMBITIONS



After finishing my master's graduation project, I took some time to think about my experience and how well I met the goals I set at the start in my project brief Appendix B. This project wasn't just an important step in my studies but also a chance to use and improve the skills I learned in my Master of Science (MSc) program, during an elective semester, and through extracurricular activities. I'm going to talk about each goal and how I worked to achieve them.

### Frame Innovation

I aimed to better understand and use the frame creation method. During the project, I used the structure of the frame innovation method and its ideas to break down and make sense of a complex issue. As has become clear in this chapter, I have made this method my own and have learned which aspects of this method I find useful in my work as a designer and what I would pay attention to in the future. The most important lesson the method has taught me is how strongly we as designers (and people) are inclined to immediately look for solutions, often tangible ones. However, one of the strengths of designers is to determine how we approach the problem and not just what turns out to be a solution. I always knew I was interested in the fuzzy front end of innovation as a designer. Working with this method has helped me realize that I especially want to delve into the "fuzzy front end of the fuzzy front end": finding the problem.

### Exploring Complex Social Problems

The project was a great chance to dive into complex social issues, the kind of "wicked problems" that are hard to define and solve due to their complexity and the many people involved. Through talking to stakeholders, and refining themes and frames, I gained valuable practical experience. Not only has it given me more experience, but it has also given me more confidence in myself.

### Effective Information Visualization & Practical Application of Graphic Design

I'm very interested in graphic design, so I took this opportunity to incorporate visual elements into the project's outcomes. I wanted to get better at sharing information in a way that's clear, inspiring, and leads to action. I worked on my information visualization skills to make complex ideas easier to understand. I do believe this approach made the information more appealing to a wider audience and helped spark interesting discussions with stakeholders. I got positive feedback on illustrations and visuals that

made complicated ideas easier to understand than if I had tried to convey the same things with words. I often get the impression that graphic design and illustrations are viewed as separate from strategic design and social design. Designers do indeed create drawings of products—showing what this toaster, that heart monitor, or the electric bike might look like—but drawings that convey abstract ideas are not always produced in-house. In many companies, this task is outsourced to graphic designers. This experience strengthened my belief in the importance of visuals in both academic and professional settings. I hope to further develop the skill to quickly translate ideas into compelling visuals.

### Engaging Multiple Stakeholders

The project's complex setting was perfect for improving my skills in engaging with different stakeholders. I organised several sessions with different stakeholders and attended more events than I have during the entirety of my master's and bachelor's to make sure everyone's views were considered. Being able to navigate these interactions has boosted my confidence in working with diverse groups. It also made me realize how much I enjoy interacting with a wide variety of stakeholders; you always learn something new from talking to someone. Moreover, almost everyone is open and helpful if you are too.

### Conclusion

Looking back on this experience, I'm proud of how much I've achieved towards the goals I set at the beginning. Each goal presented its own challenges, encouraging me to grow in personal and professional ways. This project allowed me to apply and further develop my skills, preparing me for future challenges in my field.







## CONCLUSION

This graduation project's goal was to rethink youth participation in policymaking within the Municipality of Rotterdam, employing a frame innovation approach. Through analysis and engagement with stakeholders, it has highlighted the intricate dynamics between young citizens and the policymaking process, unveiling both challenges and opportunities for more inclusive participation.

The central methodology used throughout the report is the Frame Innovation Approach developed by Kees Dorst. By 'reframing' the problem, unique insights and solutions can be discovered that might otherwise be overlooked. This approach allows for a fresh perspective that can unveil innovative paths forward.

An exploration of past and current efforts highlighted a trend: the issue that youth voices are underrepresented in policy decisions is somewhat tackled by focusing on civil servants' attitudes. The problem space is currently framed as "Young people are not sufficiently heard in policymaking for issues that affect their lives." Solutions also include communication aids and interactive platforms (e.g., digital tools, card games) to boost engagement and accessibility. Yet, these methods often don't fully solve the issues, as the challenge of initiating meaningful participation continues to persist, which suggests a need to rethink our approach to the problem.

This emerged from four paradoxes:

- To bridge the existing gap between the municipality and youngsters, there must already be a bridge: a certain connection between the two.
- Youngster's lack of experience and abilities prevent them from acquiring expertise and ability
- Participation requires trust that either you will be heard or that investing time in it has added value, but without participation, you won't earn this trust
- Making the way the municipality works more flexible to accommodate a diverse group, increases the desire for standardisation and equal treatment

The report then delved deep into the main stakeholders involved in youth participation, including direct stakeholders like youth and civil servants, as well as indirect stakeholders such as educators, social workers, and cultural influencers. Eight personas were created based on interactions with stakeholders to show the diversity of perspectives. These four youngsters and four civil servants have different beliefs and ways of being convinced to make an effort for youth participation. With a commitment to youth participation ranging from committed to sceptical and how they experience youth participation ranging from something outside of their control to something within their control.



Through this analysis, four main themes were identified: Open Hearts Open Minds, Navigating the Unknown, Driven by Responsibility and What You Do Matters. These themes served as the foundation for developing new frames of thinking and solutions for enhancing youth participation in policymaking.

- “Open hearts, open minds” emphasizes the need for stakeholders to collaborate openly and empathetically, despite stereotypes and prejudices. For instance, officials might fear being perceived negatively by the public once they engage in discussions, seen as ‘the municipality’, which isn’t always positive. Youth may worry about being viewed as inexperienced. Overcoming mutual stereotypes is crucial for establishing genuine connections.
- “Navigating the Unknown” suggests that participation often leads both youths and officials to venture into the unfamiliar, with unclear expectations about outcomes, like the results of a participation session.
- “Driven by Responsibility” questions if participation is seen as a duty. Are stakeholders intrinsically motivated, or do they view organizing and participating as an imposed responsibility? Currently, this is often the case for both youths and officials. What triggers a sense of responsibility? When do youths and officials consider something important?
- “What You Do Matters” shows how sometimes, participation can feel like a “youth safari,” where civil servants pick what information suits them, creating a power imbalance. Interestingly, civil servants can also feel powerless, feeling their efforts have little impact within the complex municipal system. This is partly because stakeholders often don’t see the outcomes of the long and complicated processes they contribute to. How can we make them feel that their contributions are significant?

The report envisioned potential futures and outcomes based on the identified frames. It emphasized the need for a strategic, inclusive, and adaptable approach to transform youth participation in policymaking.

Some examples are:

- Exploring ways for transparent discussions about roles in participation within the municipality or introducing a platform to find common ground and forge connections beyond professional roles is suggested. What interests youth? What are officials passionate about?
- Viewing this as exploring the unknown, stakeholders may need something similar to travel guidance; a municipal “travel agency” for participation could provide guidance and resources for both groups, connecting them with the right people and offering tools and tips suited to their needs, making the participation process less daunting.



## Key Findings and Contributions

- Enhanced Understanding of Youth Participation: The research has contributed to a deeper understanding of the barriers to and facilitators for youth involvement in policy decisions that impact their lives showing both the side of the youngsters and the civil servants.
- Innovative Frames for Engagement: By applying the frame innovation method, this study has proposed novel frames that are poised to rethink the traditional paradigms of youth participation in policymaking.
- Strategic Recommendations: Based on insights gained, strategic recommendations have been put forth to policymakers and stakeholders. These recommendations aim to make all stakeholders feel seen, in control, and ready to actively contribute to youth participation within the municipality.
- Analysis of Frame Innovation within a New Context: This thesis contributed to the field of design by detailing the use of the Frame Innovation Approach in enhancing youth participation in policymaking. It examined and reflected on the methodology, also illustrating its flexibility and applicability to complex societal issues. Furthermore, it offered a comprehensive case study on extending design thinking to public engagement and policy development. Through this, the work showcased the potential of adapting design methodologies to a variety of challenges.

## DISCUSSION

### Reflection on results

This thesis proposes a novel method for enhancing youth engagement in municipal policy-making by exploring themes relevant to various stakeholders, both directly and indirectly involved with this issue. This approach aims to navigate through the paradoxes apparent in this interconnected problem. The evaluation of these conceptual frameworks and the emerging directions indicate the potential value of these new approaches to the problem space, although further research is needed to substantiate these findings.

A risk associated with this project is that the proposed concepts, derived from the futures of the frameworks, might be perceived as the project’s outcomes. These concepts are meant to showcase potential strategic directions based on the frames but do not capture the richness of the frameworks and related themes. As such, they should be approached with caution; actual solutions may differ. The true value resides in the new approach to addressing this issue.



## Subsequent Steps

The themes identified could be integrated into Irene Fierloos' broader research within Healthy Start, potentially incorporating various frameworks and future scenarios along with their strategic implications into recommendations. These could also be introduced in co-creation sessions within this project that are planned for this project.

Moreover, translating the developments from this project into 'products' usable by policy officials, such as discussion cards for reflection, would be beneficial. I might continue working within Healthy Start for an additional two months to contribute further to these co-creation sessions and the development of a concept.

Furthermore, Betsie Loeffen, pursuing a degree in Design For Interaction, will incorporate my insights into her research. She will be focusing on a pragmatic approach to engaging policymakers in youth policy development through small-scale experiments. This practical focus will enable her to apply the results towards more concrete solutions.

Outside of the academic realm, I intend to share the findings within the Rotterdam municipality to influence the upcoming youth participation policy framework. My goal is for my insights to enrich this framework, bringing to light facets of youth participation that might otherwise remain unexplored.

Finally, I plan to host an event at the youth hub, Hefhouse, to share the insights acquired during this project with interested stakeholders, continuing the dialogue and engagement beyond the project's conclusion.

## Validity, reliability and generalisability

The report's validity is supported by its methodology, including interviews and creative sessions, reflecting on youth participation's complexities. Its reliability is strengthened by diverse data sources and triangulation: different groups of stakeholders have been interviewed, different methods have been employed and results have been based on findings of both me, Irene Fierloos and Betsie Loeffen. However, its generalizability might be limited due to the unique context of Rotterdam, though its themes and challenges may have broader relevance. The report is solid in validity and reliability, with some limitations in general applicability beyond Rotterdam. Future research could expand on this work by exploring youth participation in more diverse contexts.



## Recommendations

The initial recommendation entails conducting more in-depth (design) research on the identified themes and frameworks. These frameworks should be considered as a new formulation of the problem; a fresh lens through which to examine the problem space. Thus, I believe they provide a solid starting point for new design cycles or other research endeavours. Although I have proposed a range of possible concepts that could derive from these frameworks, these concepts are merely preliminary directions and do not represent the full potential of the frames. For instance, a Design For Interaction or Strategic Product Design graduation project could explore how the "Open Hearts, Open Minds" framework could be practically transformed into more concrete product-service systems. Moreover, this area presents opportunities for research by public administration or sociology scholars.

Furthermore, I think it would be valuable to extend my insights beyond the municipality of Rotterdam. Although conducting this research within such a specific context proved beneficial, it would be worthwhile to assess whether the insights also apply outside this municipality, to a large extent. My research and participation in various activities have given me some insight into issues within other Dutch municipalities, suggesting that some findings might be broadly applicable. However, this would undoubtedly require further investigation.

Finally, I have made several recommendations regarding the frame innovation method based on insights gained during this period. My proposals and insights could be subjected to more intensive scrutiny to develop even more substantial recommendations for those who will work with the frame innovation method in the future.



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