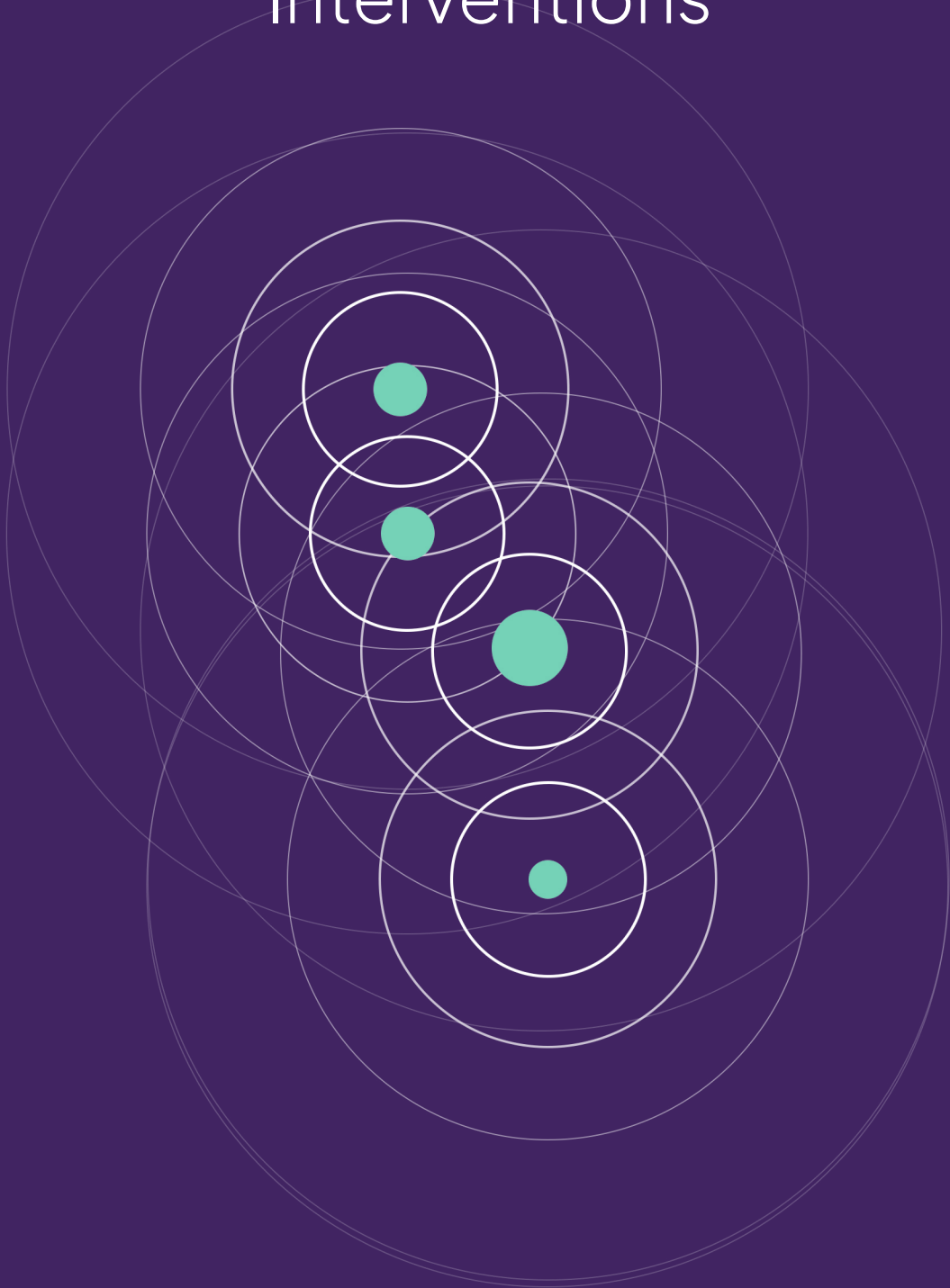


Enhancing Participatory Policy-Making Processes on a Ministerial Level through Multiple Design Interventions



Noortje Duijzer, July 2024

PREFACE

Dear reader,

This thesis aims to enhance participatory policy-making processes within the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment through multiple design interventions. Multiple interventions, because both the explorative study insights regarding the current processes and the recommendations for improving these processes evolved using design experiments. Qualitative research approaches have been used to gather insights. Qualitative research can provide a sense of what is going on, but is not necessarily representative for the entire Ministry, especially as this is a large organisation with different policy sections and individuals.

Analyses, evaluations, and design interventions are based on research conducted during this study over the course of five months. The results provide an indication and advisory direction for interventions that may give the system a push towards the desired direction.

The ministerial context was completely new to me. I remember taking my first step inside for the job interview and thinking: "Wow. I am in a Ministry....." I had started looking for an internship in the public sector out of curiosity; what is it like to work in this sector as a strategic designer? It was valuable that I started this project with little experience because I did not have any preconceptions/biases. At the same time, it was difficult because, especially in the beginning, it took time to process new insights or ask the right questions because I did not yet have a good overall picture of policymaking. Within a ministry, there are so many different departments and topics, that I am sure with more time there is much more to discover. Systemic research has helped with visualizing the actors in the system and the information flows between them.

Looking back on this project, I can say that the journey has been incredible. Starting from a small understanding of the context of policymaking at the Ministry, to learning so much about the government, policymaking, and my added value as a designer. But more importantly, and what could not have predicted beforehand, how welcome I felt and how important these personal connections were for the evolvement of my project. Many people have enthusiastically shared their experiences, wishes and doubts with me. People reconnected with me when they had experienced something that they thought to be relevant to my research and were very curious about what results my product design background would produce. I was invited for relevant events and meetings and people put in a lot of effort to provide me with information about (participatory) policymaking. This has had an enormous impact on the course of my graduation project as well as the depth and richness of information

given to me by employees of the Ministry. It made conducting research fun at the same time.

I would like to thank all the people, inside and outside the Ministry, for their contributions, time, effort and making this research result possible. For informing me about relevant events, letting me participate in meetings and organized research sessions.

Additionally, I would like to thank my supervisory team: Peter, Thomas, and Anne. They have been incredibly supportive in taking me through this process by meeting regularly, engaging in fruitful discussions, recommending literature, sparring and providing me with constructive feedback.

Finally, this would not have been possible without the immense support of my social environment, who have pre-read my thesis, brainstormed about ideas, and encouraged me.

I hope this thesis gives you, dear reader, an insight in participatory policy-making processes on a ministerial level: the importance, hurdles, opportunities and motivations and the complex interconnectedness of the system in which participation needs to take place. I hope I have been able to convey how design interventions can both expose processes, engage people along the way and steer the system in the desired direction.

Noortje

Delft, 24th of July 2024

Executive Summary

Participatory policymaking is a way of creating policy together with the people who are affected by it. In this research, participatory policymaking aims to include citizens who are affected by a specific policy, in the process of policymaking. Especially after the so called 'Childcare Allowance Affair', participatory policymaking within the Central Government has gained momentum due to its potential to create more fair and improved policy as well as improved trust in the government. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (the MSAE) acknowledges its value and importance; efforts to integrate participatory policymaking into the policy processes have increased over the past two years. The Ministry has set the following ambitious goal for its employees (the SAE'ers) which started in 2022: "Within three years (2025), every SAE'er places the end-user at the center of every stage of the policy-making process".

Expressions of dissatisfaction with participatory practices (not specific to the Ministry but all participatory policy-making processes) in the media has inspired this research project; participants do not feel heard or taken seriously as they rarely see their input reflected in policy outcomes.

Through design sprints, resulting in multiple small design interventions, I explored the system of the MSAE. The following metaphor is used to make the strategy tangible: Dropping multiple pebbles in a pond to create a ripple effect (see Figure A1). The Ministry is seen as a complex social system, where different stakeholders and actors have a considerable influence on the creation and adjustments of policies. Because of this, the likelihood of finding a single problem with a single solution is small. Therefore, a Co-Evolutionary Approach (Van der Bijl-Brouwer et al., 2021) has been adopted to steer the system towards the desired situation over time using safe-to-fail design experiments.

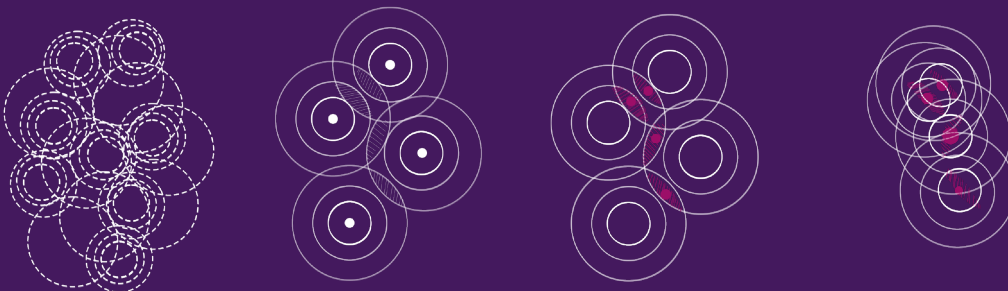


Figure A1: Visualisation of dropping pebbles in the pond to create a ripple effect and discover the system of participatory policymaking at the MSAE.

Four 'obstruction areas' have been defined based on discovered challenges. Corresponding design interventions have been created. These are combined in one portfolio. These obstruction areas might discourage policymakers from engaging in impactful participatory work. The areas are defined as follows:

1. Unevaluated Assumptions: The assumptions policymakers may have about the people affected by the policy withhold policymakers from starting the conversation or being open enough during the conversation.
2. Faulty Frameworks: The frameworks have not always changed according to the changing way of working that is required for participatory policymaking.
3. Task Overload: Too many tasks and contradicting expectations may discourage policymakers from creating flexibility to engage in participatory policymaking.
4. Lack of a Relationship: A relationship with the people affected by policy is not always there, which leads to participants not feeling taken seriously.

Based on the areas of obstruction, four interventions are designed. One of them is created and evaluated in collaboration with policymakers: 'Het Veronderstel Spel' (see Figure A2). 'Het Veronderstel Spel' initiates awareness about the assumptions policymakers might have on the collaboration with people affected by the policy and how they influence the trajectory of policy development, if unaccounted for.

Finally, it is proposed that uncovering and dealing with obstruction areas through safe-to-fail design interventions is a useful method to deal with the variety of participatory policy-making challenges the MSAE is facing.

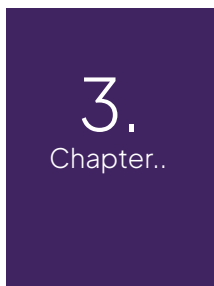


Figure A2: 'Het Veronderstel Spel', the final design for the obstruction area 'Unevaluated Assumptions'.

Reading Guide.

This reading guide is intended to provide the reader with information about the structure of the report.

Chapters



A single number refers to the beginning of the chapter. Each page is entirely in one colour. For instance, 3. is Chapter 3.



A chapter concludes with a full page in the same colour.

Additionally, all chapters include some form of takeaways, except for the introduction chapters (Chapters 1 and 2) and the concluding chapters (Chapters 6 and 7). To avoid repetition, Chapter 3 features a visual takeaway .

Subchapters

Subchapters are indicated with one or two additional numbers. For instance, 4.1 or 4.1.1.



Chapter 3 is a large chapter composed of a series of smaller studies. These subchapters are distinguished by a narrow purple subchapter page and also have a concluding page in the same color, with takeaways.

Quotes


I chose quotes that seemed relevant to me from interviews. Be aware that context might be missing and that I have done my own analysis. To ensure the confidentiality of the people spoken to in this research, they will be referred to by disciplinary category. This has been divided into 'policymakers' (PM) and policy supporters (PS). Policy supporters do not create policy themselves, but are, for example, people from an innovation or participation background. In the case of the policy department, these are people who guide the formation of policy in different ways. The number behind PM or PS shows whether it was the same person who quoted or someone else. For instance:

PM6: ... refers to policymaker number six

PS 6:refers to policy supporter number 6

In subchapter 3.x, interviews are conducted with individuals external to the Ministry. These individuals are referenced according to their respective roles: CB = Community Builder, M = Municipality, AC = Active Citizen, PC = Participation Consultant, and NCC = National Client Council.

Icons Chapter 3

To avoid repetition, I have added symbols to the insights in Chapter 3 that are directly used for forming or supporting one of the 'obstruction areas' in Chapter 4. This symbol is then prominently repeated in Chapter 4. The symbols are green and part of the text used is green as well. For instance: PM 6: "This is a test quote." 



"Faulty Frameworks"



"Lacking Relationship"



"Task Overload"



"Unevaluated Assumptions"

Additionally, during the first three-week design sprint, I was still working within a smaller scope. Some insights from that (mainly literature) research can be considered early indicators of one of my obstruction areas. The symbols are colored red. The parts of the text identified as early indicators are highlighted in red. For instance, This is a **test insight**. 



"Faulty Frameworks"



"Lacking Relationship"



"Task Overload"



"Unevaluated Assumptions"

Jargon

In the research, jargon is used. These types of words are *italicized* and can be found in the glossary at the back of this report. Additionally, at the end of Chapter 1, there is a frequently used word list, with some terms having modified definitions based on the scope of this research. For instance, *decision memos*.

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1

Project Introduction

In this chapter presents the research topic, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the initial brief, the approach and important definitions.

1.1 Introduction

"Citizens' trust in the government is increasingly in the spotlight. This concerns not only the trust citizens have in other people, but especially in politics and other institutions." (Schmeets, 2023). About 20% of Dutch citizens believe the government's poor performance justifies complete system overhaul (Multenburg et al., 2023). The Childcare Allowance Affair has led to an overall decrease in confidence in the government (Kanne & Driessen, 2021). Other affairs contributed to this as well, however the Childcare Allowance Affair had a very direct connection to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment who creates policy concerning childcare. In fear of making mistakes and consequently having to repay amounts of money, it is estimated by The Department for Surcharges of the Ministry of Finance that approximately 10 percent of citizens eligible for allowances, no longer apply for them (Bajja, 2023). According to the recently published *WRR report*, the government should intensify its efforts to enhance 'grip' (personal control) on the citizens when formulating and executing policies (Bovens et al., 2023). Citizens should be equipped with the necessary resources, opportunities and rights to pursue their life aspirations. Insufficient control over one's life can precipitate health issues, premature mortality, heightened social unease and potentially foster inclinations towards conspiracy theories (Bovens et al., 2023). The loss of trust can consequently lead to citizens disengaging and no longer wanting to be part of the democratic rule of law (Bisschops, 2022). Trust is seen as the essential glue in the democratic political climate; democracies need trust to thrive; if citizens question every act of government or doubt every policy government is executing, this may impede democratic consensus" (Bovens & Wille, 2008).

The Childcare Allowance Affair illustrated those comparable governmental actions could result in substantial problems for citizens, making it imperative to engage and listen to them at an earlier stage of policy formation (Kalverboer et al., 2020). Due to the call for a human perspective after the Childcare Allowance Affair, participatory policymaking on a national level gained momentum (Huiting et al., 2023). It has the potential to lead to more fair and improved decision making as more perspectives are included (Blok & Visser, 2023). The involvement of citizens in policymaking is sometimes seen as a response to social unease (Bovens et al., 2023) and according to Blok and Visser (2023), it may increase trust in the government as well. Citizens can become more involved in the process of policymaking via forums, deliberation, panels, interviews, focus groups and more (Blok et al., 2023).

Participation is often criticized when there is little attention for potential downsides (Bisschops, 2022). For example, people that participate who do not feel heard,

seen or taken seriously, may in turn lead to an even further decrease in trust in the government (Peeters et al., 2020). Already, various studies reflect such expressions of dissatisfaction regarding the influence citizens feel they have on government actions (De Bruijn & Noordewier, 2023) (Rijksoverheid, n.d.) (Wagemans & Peters, 2023).

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (The MSAE) recognises the value of participatory policymaking in tailoring policies to the living experience of the people it is made for. Nonetheless, signs of discontent from people affected by the policy reach them still. Policymakers experience challenges on how to create policy together with the people affected by the policy in an effective way. Not effectively engaging in participatory processes is counterproductive: policies may not be tailored to those affected, and these individuals may feel unheard, leading to a loss of trust.

Therefore, this research is conducted with people involved in participatory policy-making processes within the system of the MSAE. By means of safe-to-fail experiments through multiple design sprints within the Ministry, small ripples are created to explore the current participatory processes, discover hurdles and intervene.

This report is structured along six chapters. Chapter 1 presents an introduction to the project and the methodology employed. Chapter 2 provides background information on participatory policymaking and the project's relevance. In Chapter 3, the extensive research conducted is described, which involves literature reviews, interviews, brainstorming, co-creation sessions and design interventions. This section discusses the initial project direction and how preliminary research led to expanding the scope and approach. It is organized through various lenses and levels at which different stakeholders were engaged. In Chapter 4, the areas of obstruction are identified and defined. In Chapter 5, strategic design interventions are displayed in a portfolio, aligned with the aforementioned areas of obstruction. In Chapter 6, the development of one of these designs is described. The last chapter contains a conclusion and reflection on the project as a whole.

1.2 The MSAE

In 1933, the department known as Social Affairs was established (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken: 1933 – 1976, n.d.). The establishment of this Ministry at that time demonstrated the government's recognition of the severity of the wave of unemployment caused by the economic crisis of 1929, as well as their hope that the Ministry would only be a temporary necessity (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken: 1933 – 1976, n.d.). In 1981, this department formally received the title of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, when it became responsible for policies related to employment and social security (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid: 1981, n.d.).

“The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment has the aim to contribute to equal, healthy and safe employment in The Netherlands. The ministers' responsibilities include labour market policy, including migration and free movement of workers, benefits and reintegration, income policy, combining work and care, working conditions policy and inspection thereof” (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, n.d.).

The Innovation Support Team

The Innovation Support team, which is the client of this project, facilitates connections between the MSAE staff and (external) sources of inspiration and knowledge. Its objective is to address emerging developments and enhance its influence on societal challenges. Their role includes supporting colleagues in effectively implementing new perspectives and methods in their work. People with different expertise and backgrounds form the Support Team Innovation. Backgrounds range from innovation to participation and behavioural sciences.

The team is part of the section 'Board Support and Advisory', within the MSAE. Therefore, they are closely connected to the people who advise the board of the Ministry. As a result, the innovation team can help to navigate innovation from top-down as well as bottom-up. Through various expertise within the team, innovation is stimulated within the MSAE by including behavioural insights in policymaking and supporting policymakers in how to include the people who are affected by a (new) policy.

Stakeholders

This project takes place at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, within the Innovation Support team. The project is supervised by Delft University of Technology within the faculty of Industrial Design Engineering.

1.3 Initial Brief

The assignment for this thesis project stems from the MSAE's investigation into a way to act upon decreasing trust, what trust between the Ministry and citizens means and how they can contribute to it. Together with The Innovation Support Team, the communication, or lack of a structured form of communication between the Ministry and participating citizens, had been defined as the initial problem area and scope for this project.

Transparent decision making when forming a policy is considered an essential element in building trust (Bisschops, 2022). Therefore, *decision memos* have been made publicly available. These memos disclose the decisions and argumentations behind a policy is a form of communication between the Ministry and the members of the *House of Representatives*. By making these memo's publicly available, anyone interested can read it and thereby monitor the *National Government's* actions. However, these memos contain complex information, which requires background knowledge. Most citizens who participate in developing the policy may not have the accurate background knowledge to make sense of the provided information. This leaves them with no insight into the effect of their input. Therefore, *decision memos* may not actually provide transparency for everyone and subsequently may not increase trust. Moreover, Sociaal Werk Nederland argues that merely providing active information to citizens is inadequate, as they are increasingly resistant to receiving the message (Bajja, 2023). Experiments of municipal governments showed that these interactively created policies are only accepted if citizens can find their contributions reflected (Schram et al., 2018).

Initial Problem Definition

Potential risks arise when attempting to involve those affected by a specific policy in the policy-making process. These risks become evident when participants do not feel heard, undermining the goals of the process.

Initial Design Goal

Designing a feedback loop to enable truly equal collaboration between MSAE and citizens of the Netherlands, as a condition for better tailoring policy to people affected by policy and thus increasing trust between government and society.

Initial Research Questions

- In what way are citizens being provided with information regarding the impact of their input?
- What are hurdles and opportunities in this information feedback loop?

Initial System Visualisation

My initial impression of what the challenge are in participatory policymaking is visualised below (see Figure 1). The impression is: a feedback loop is missing in participatory policymaking.

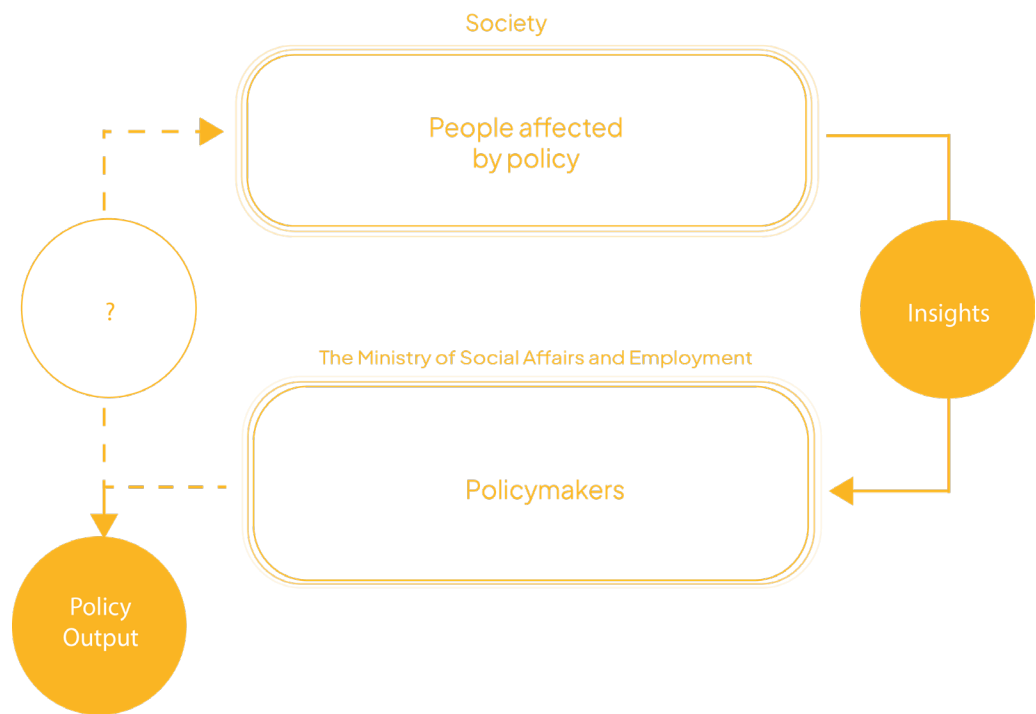


Figure 1: Initial impression of the problem area in the policymaking system where input is gathered but outcomes are not communicated back

1.4 Project Approach

The overall approach: Abductive Approach through Design

Over the course of five months, from March to July, I attended the Ministry as a graduate intern. The approach for the project was abductive research through design sprints. Abductive reasoning involves forming hypotheses and making imaginative leaps from incomplete evidence, followed by evaluating these hypotheses based on their plausibility before applying deductive and inductive methods (Kimbell, 2015). Design sprints are especially well-suited for an abductive process due to their iterative and exploratory nature. The design sprint process, developed within Google Ventures, aims to rapidly validate an idea with users prior to initiating a strategic process (Bordin, 2022) (Knapp et al., 2016). In this research, design sprints can help ascertain whether a direction merits the investment of time or if the original project brief fails to capture the actual underlying issue. Typically, design sprints are conducted over five days with a team of stakeholders involved throughout the process. However, due to my unfamiliarity with the public sector, I factored in additional time for immersion prior to the active commencement of the sprints. Consequently, sprints of multiple weeks are chosen.

Participatory Design

This research on participatory policymaking has been approached in a highly participatory manner itself. Participatory design “was based on the democratic ideal that those destined to use systems or artifacts should have a say in their design” (Van der Bijl-Brouwer et al., 2021). It involved researching together, generating ideas and experimenting with policymakers (in most cases). Thereby fostering a positive momentum that could drive the project forward through increasing visibility and early feedback.

Systemic Design

Policymaking is widely recognized as complex, where most of the major problems do not have a clear definition (Blomkamp, 2020). These types of problems are in (among others) the design context referred to as wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973). The use of systemic design has been recognised as a fitting approach for addressing such wicked problems (Zivkovic, 2018). Systemic design “integrates dialogue, design and co-creation for sensemaking and decision making” (Blomkamp, 2020). Systemic design is used to create a broader understanding of the MSAE’s participatory policy-making system, visualising relations of bottlenecks and complexities.

Research

Literature Research

Literature is consulted regularly throughout the process: to immerse myself in the existing literature on participatory policymaking and to evaluate and test (design) theories in practice. On top of scientific research, additional sources such as (governmental) research reports, news articles, books, opinion pieces and public sector websites are employed. While an opinion piece is not scientific, it provides a guide for this type of social research because it reflects what is going on among certain groups within society.

Qualitative Research

Informal, semi-structured interviews (see ‘Setup of the semi-structured interviews’ below) are used to understand the experiences, opinions, attitudes, frustrations and perspectives of individuals both inside and outside the Ministry. The insights retrieved play a significant role in mapping the context of this research and support the abductive approach. Particularly when interviewees refer to additional contacts within their networks.

Setup of the semi-structured interviews

I developed interview questions and asked them during the natural flow of a broader/more informal conversation, while taking notes in a notebook (see Appendix B). These are called semi-structured interviews. The aim behind this method is to create an open ambiance within the conversation. People from diverse backgrounds within the MSAE are interviewed in this manner (board advisory, communication, the legal team and different other policy sections). Throughout the process, the scope of the project narrowed, and more structured interviews took place with employees from one section. The objective of this evolving strategy is to facilitate the asking of more specific questions about experiences within a particular section.

Co-creation sessions

Co-creation sessions are held to gather research insights, evaluate design ideas or gather input for designs. Co-creation sessions are also useful for engaging people in the project.

Fieldwork

“Ethnographers strive to take the participants’ point of view ... [and] see what would otherwise be invisible”, Sam Ladner in *Applying Design Approaches to Policy Making: Discovering Policy Lab* (Kimbrell, 2015). To form a strong network and to hear what is happening informally at the MSAE, I considered it beneficial to work at the Ministry most days of the week, take part in team activities and join extra events. The aim of this ethnographic research was to get a better understanding of the experiences of the policymakers.

Research through Design

Research through Design (RtD); design activities are used to generate knowledge, framing and developing prototypes (Stappers & Giaccardi, 2014). Within different design sprints, some interviewees are asked to either sketch their work process, evaluate one of the maps created with insights from previous interviews or assess initial design ideas. This makes insights tangible, allowing for further reflection.

For more specifications regarding the qualitative research, see Table 1.

Table 1: Overview of the qualitative research details in this project

Interviews	Setup	People	Time	Co-creation	Setup	People	Time	Fieldwork	Setup	Time
Internal	Semi structured & informal	21	30–60 min	Internal (innovation team)	Evaluation designs	4	60 min	Focus group	3 researchers 7 participants	2 h
External	Semi structured	6	60 min	Internal (broad)	Collecting input	7	90 min	Congress	-	Full day
Policy Section	Semi structured	5	60 min	Policy section	Collecting input	5	30 min	Internal sessions (creative/strategy)	-	60–120 min

Analysis

All research methods combined lead to an increasing amount of insight. During the research phase, many analyses were done, leading for example to system maps and to defining leverage points. After all the relevant data is collected, a comprehensive analysis of all the gathered insights is initiated. The analysis of insights was conducted by transcribing individual observations from the interview notes onto Post-it notes. These insights were then grouped into clusters and common themes were identified. This process was performed twice: initially after the research encompassing Ministry-wide and external data, and subsequently after insights obtained from one specific policy section.

Final Design Creation

Throughout the process, individual brainstorming sessions are held to turn thoughts or insights quickly into design ideas. Several designs are conceived and collected in a portfolio. After brainstorming with three peers at the Industrial Design Engineering faculty, one of the designs is developed in detail. Thereafter, RtD is used to retrieve design requirements and validate prototypes.

Final Evaluations

The final design is evaluated by means of three sessions with different policy sections within the Ministry. People tried out the design in three diverse ways and filled out an evaluation form. The other designs in the portfolio are validated with my supervisors from the TU and the Ministry, as well as a participation expert at the Ministry. The overall story is validated by the team manager and the director of the Board Support and Advisory section. For more specifications regarding the evaluations see Table 2.

Table 2: Overview of the design evaluations for the final design

Evaluation	Setup	People	Time
Brainstorm with peers	3 Sheets of paper for brainstorming	3	60 min
Design evaluation with Innovation Support team	Verbal and through evaluation forms	6	20 min
Design evaluation with one policy section	Verbal and through evaluation forms	7	60 min
Final design evaluation with behavioural experts, participation experts and one external researcher	Verbal	2 1 1	60 min 60 min 60 min

Project Visualisation

Below, a visualisation of the project approach can be found (see Figure 2). While scoping, I formulated research questions in different phases of the project.

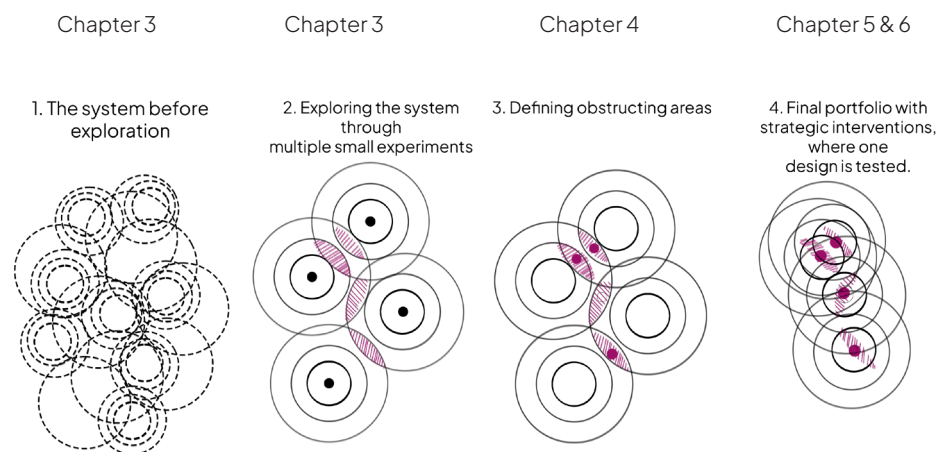


Figure 2: Visual overview of "Creating Ripples" across different chapters.

1. Initial Research question: In what way are citizens being provided with information regarding the impact of their input? What are hurdles and opportunities in this information feedback loop?
2. New Research Question: What are possible obstacles and opportunities in the participatory policy-making processes within the MSAE?
3. Main Research Question: How can interventions in the system of the MSAE enhance participatory policy-making processes?
4. Final Design Research Question: In what way can designs interventions help enhancing participatory policy-making practices?

1.5 Frequently Used Terminology

Participatory policymaking: In this research, I define participatory policymaking to the same way as BZK and Prodemos do: “Citizen participation is a way of making policy in which residents, individually or organized, directly or indirectly, have the opportunity to influence the preparation, implementation or evaluation of policy.” (Blok et al., 2023). The focus of this research is on policymaking with individual citizens. Implementation organisations and companies are left out of this definition because there has not been enough time to conduct extensive research on these parties as well.

The people affected by policy: Avoiding the term ‘citizens’ has been challenging because, while it initially seems clear, it is inaccurate as not everyone involved is ‘a citizen,’ and policymakers are citizens as well. Thus, referring to the group as ‘the person affected by policy’ is more appropriate, acknowledging the diversity within the group. Within the Ministry, various terms are used interchangeably, including ‘the end user’ or ‘the target group’. The ‘person affected by policy’ is used as well, but often it refers to a broader scope, for example, the implementing organisation or social partners are affected likewise. However, my scope is on citizens. An exception is in quotes, in which case the terminology of that person is used. If one of the other parties mentioned above is also involved (such as the implementing organisation), they are referred to separately. When sources refer to ‘citizens’, this is in most cases also retained.

Praktijkgericht werken: My definition of participatory policymaking is not to the same as the definition the MSAE uses. Within the MSAE, the term ‘praktijkgericht werken’ is used. ‘Praktijkgericht werken’ is working in collaboration with citizens, social partners, businesses, implementation organisations, municipalities and more. It differs per policy section who is included.

Token Participation: When people engage in participatory activities but their input does not have a significant influence on the result. In such cases, participation is often perceived as a box-ticking exercise (Asgharian, 2022).

De Lijn: Refers to the hierarchy within the Ministry. The people between the policymaker and the minister.

Policy Section or ‘section’ (Beleidsafdeling): I use ‘policy section’ instead of ‘policy department’ to refer to a specific policy area, to prevent confusion as a department can also refer to a ministry as a whole.

2

Background

In this chapter presents the context history, considering the changing dynamics between the Dutch government and citizens regarding trust and participatory practices. This chapter concludes with the project's relevance.

2.1 Context History

To better understand the current context of participatory policymaking at the MSAE, it is important to also look at the context history. *Signals* of distrust between society and the government were one of the starting points for this research (see Initial Project Brief, Appendix A). The context history describes the development of trust between the government and citizens of The Netherlands, the importance of trust between the two and how it relates to the rise of participatory policymaking.

Trust between the Dutch Government and its citizens

Over the past thirty years, the dynamics between the government and its citizens has undergone a substantial transformation. In an essay published in the NRC (a Dutch newspaper), three distinct phases reflecting shifts in governmental perceptions of their citizens, are discussed (Valk, 2021).

Citizens as customers

Approximately between 1992 and 2002, citizens were perceived as customers. Within a market-driven framework, where the government operated similarly to a business. This period saw an increasing division between the government and its citizens, as politicians maintained an optimistic view of the educated, articulate and emancipated citizen (Valk, 2021).

Citizens as responsible individuals

Approximately between 2002 and 2013, the government's perception of citizens shifted towards seeing them as individuals responsible for their self-reliance. Amidst rapid digitization of government services, those who were disinterested, illiterate or not digitally adept were marginalized (Van Thiel, as cited by Valk, 2021).

Citizens as fraudsters

Post-2013, the perception further shifted to viewing citizens as potential fraudsters. This was influenced by political scandals and growing distrust in the citizenry. Policy decisions at that time increasingly distanced officials from the populace (Willink, as cited by Valk, 2021).

Events leading up to distrust in the government

Punitive approaches in legislation

In his book “Zo hadden we het niet bedoeld”, Jesse Frederik (2021) discusses how the Childcare Allowance Affair reveals a deeper systemic issue: a government corrupted by New Public Management principles. These principles emphasize performance metrics, efficiency and market mechanisms in public services (Van Stokkom, 2023) (Frederik, 2021). There is also an obsession with strict enforcement of rules, even to the detriment of innocent individuals, under the belief that anti-fraud measures must be cost-effective. These trends have compromised good governance and eroded public trust (Van Stokkom, 2023). In his article Van Stokkom (2023) identifies several new laws that contributed to the Childcare Allowance Affair.

- The General Income-Dependent Schemes Act (2006).
Required full repayment of incorrectly issued benefits.
- The Anti-Fraud Act (2013).
Politicians and journalists perceived widespread fraud by Bulgarian gangs, allegedly stealing large sums of taxpayer money.

This led to new anti-fraud legislation that imposed severe repayment demands, causing citizens to lose their livelihoods or face imprisonment.

This punitive approach backfired, undermining public trust and morality. Despite warnings, the crackdown on fraud persisted (Van Stokkom, 2023) (Frederik, 2021). The result was devastating, with many lives disrupted and families plunged into poverty for many years (Van Stokkom, 2023) (Frederik, 2021).

Assumptions about citizens

Van Stokkom (2023) argues that it is essential to scrutinize the one-sided assumptions in fraud legislation, particularly the notion that imposing heavy fines is justified because a self-reliant citizen should have known their choice was wrong. Self-reliance of vulnerable citizens is systematically overestimated (Van Gool, et al., 2022). Not understanding the situation of people affected by the policy, may not only lead to ineffective policies, but chosen solutions may potentially increase the issues (Putters, 2022).

Distrust in the government

The Childcare Allowance Affair has eroded trust in the government, having more impact on public trust than both the COVID-19 crisis and the issues surrounding gas extraction, according to the report ‘Vertrouwen in de overheid na drie grote kwesties’, commissioned by NRC (Kanne & Driessen, 2021).

Importance of trust in policymaking

Trust is a complex psychological phenomenon, influenced by varying perspectives depending on the subject and the individuals’ current emotional state. This variability is particularly pronounced when considering “trust in the democratic rule of law,” as perceptions of this concept are highly subjective (Peeters et al., 2020). “Political trust thus functions as the glue that keeps the system together and as the oil that lubricates the policy machine. Mistrust, or rather political skepticism, plays an equally significant role in representative democracy. Critical citizens are more likely to

engage in political activities and to keep government officials accountable. When mistrust turns into widespread distrust and cynicism, then the quality of democratic representation itself may change.” (Van der Meer & Zmerli, 2016). The argument is that political trust makes good governance possible. Mistrust, in the right measure, supports good governance by driving accountability. Distrust is viewed as a threat to good governance, as it risks disengagement and disorder (Devine et al., 2020). Mistrust can be described as “a cautious attitude towards others; a mistrustful person will approach interactions with others with a careful and questioning mindset’ and distrust as ‘a suspicious or cynical attitude towards others” (Lenard, 2007).

The rise of participatory policymaking

The involvement of citizens in policymaking is sometimes seen as a response to social unease (Bovens et al., 2023). The Childcare Allowance Affair has resulted in an increased demand for participatory policymaking. This is due to its potential to lead to more fair and improved decision making, as more perspectives are included and trust potentially increases (Blok & Visser, 2023).

The importance of participatory policymaking

Participation involves citizens, companies and societal organisations influencing governmental decisions, leveraging their expertise derived from their own experiences. By giving people a voice, their relationship with the government might strengthen (Waarom participatie?, 2022). Involving citizens affected by policy issues can help frame the problem more accurately than professionals could achieve on their own (Fung, 2015). Creating a better understanding of public issues could save time, money and energy on trying to solve the wrong problem (Sørensen & Torfing, 2016). Particularly, due to the risk of policies encountering significant challenges and needing to be revisited if citizens are not consulted in later stages (Minstrom & Luetjens, 2016). Both the European Commission and the Dutch government stress the importance of increased collaboration among scientists, policymakers and the public as a necessary condition for more effective policy and research (Duijsens & Hengst, 2022). The Netherlands is confronted with complex challenges of change, entailing significant consequences for both citizens and businesses. To successfully navigate these challenges and ensure the future resilience of the Netherlands, active engagement, input, innovative ideas and commitment of its citizens and businesses are necessities (The Kenniscentrum voor Beleid en Regelgeving n.d.). Divergent perspectives among participants do not necessarily pose a problem. On the contrary, citizen participation initiatives, such as citizen assemblies, are often valued for this reason: when individuals with differing views manage to reach a consensus, the resulting recommendations are more thoroughly deliberated and robust (Morris & Rovers, 2020). Moreover, when people participating in policymaking feel as if there is a true search for the best solution, they are more willing to accept the outcome even if it is not in line with their personal vision (Bleijenbergh, 2021).

2.2 Project Relevance

In summary, the dynamics of trust between the government and the citizens of the Netherlands have evolved significantly over time. In short, the government began to distrust its citizens (e.g. the Bulgari affair), which led to extremely strict regulations. People affected by these regulations tried to communicate that mistakes were being made inadvertently. Nonetheless, despite civil servants' intentions of doing the right thing, these people were punished as if mistakes had been made on purpose. This has led to increased distrust the government. These developments, coupled with indications that the policy remains inadequately tailored to those affected by it, have sparked a movement toward participatory policymaking. The MASE formulated the following ambitious goal two years ago:

“Within three years (2025), every SAE’er places the end-user at the center of every stage of the policy-making process”

However, there are risks involved when not fully engaging in participatory policymaking:

Less trust

If people are involved but their input does not have a real influence (“Token Participation”), they may again not feel heard. This potentially leads to an even bigger reduction of trust than before.

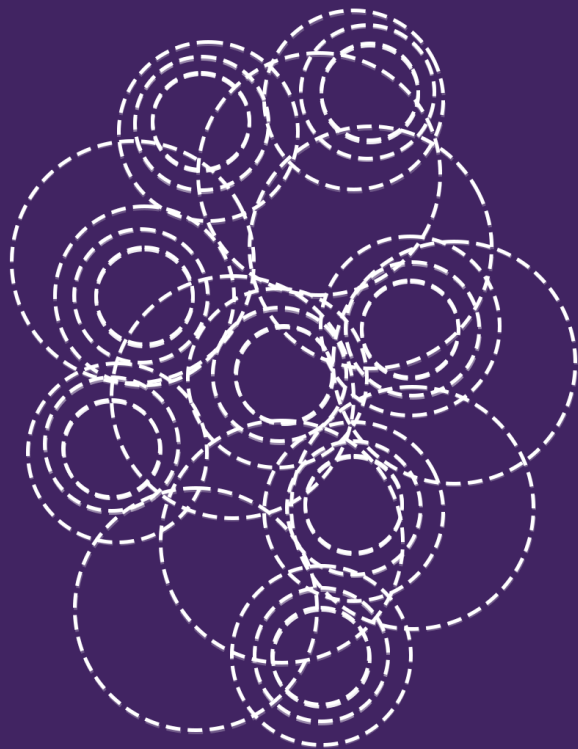
Policy not tailored to the people it is made for

“it can happen again tomorrow”, the outcome of a recent report of the *Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry* about the Childcare Allowance Affaire (Maatoug, et al., 2024). Their suggestions: The government should see people and the government should have a face.

3

Analysis

In this chapter presents the research conducted to discover the policymaking system at the MSAE. Presented is the the initial orientation and the broadening of the scope to explore participatory policymaking on various levels; the MSAE level, the system level and the policy level. Moreover, paradoxal expectations are described. Finally, the direction for intervention development is described



3.1 Approach

For this research, a considerable amount of information needs to be discovered and learned regarding both participatory policymaking and the Ministry. Design sprints enabled me to intensively focus on specific topics over short periods of time. The objective of this method was to conduct research through practical engagement. By engaging in conversations with numerous individuals, participating in events and creating and testing designs, I was able to progressively intervene in the Ministry's participatory policy-making system. With each new design sprint (consisting of conversations, co-creation sessions and designs), the understanding of potential new research areas grows, providing a better insight into the system. It is impossible to predict how a system will react to an intervention, but through safe-to-fail experiments, one can progressively observe the responses to interventions. As understanding into the current way of working grows, it becomes possible to develop strategic interventions that can enhance participatory policymaking. To be able to develop strategic interventions that can enhance participatory policymaking, it is vital to first gain a deeper understanding of the working methods employed in this system and the inner workings of this system itself.

Disclaimer: From the interviews, I extracted quotes that I deemed important for this thesis. The quotes may lack the context of the conversation and were taken from a number of conversations that are not necessarily representative of everyone. In addition, quotes from different people have been brought together and I have done my own analysis on them. This does not mean that these insights are factually true.

3.2 Initial Orientation



Initial Research Questions

- In which way is the MSAE currently conducting participatory policy-making practices with the people affected by policy?
- In what way are people affected by policy being provided with information regarding the impact of their input?
- What are hurdles and opportunities in this information feedback loop?

3.2.1 Literature Research

Hurdles in participatory policy-making processes

Based on the initial design brief, literature research is conducted to explore the interaction between policymakers and people affected by policy within the first three-week design sprint. The scope of this study is centered on understanding the current feedback loop from the perspective of individuals affected by a specific policy, aiming to identify expressions of discontent found in reports and newspapers. These sources encompass not only interactions between central government policymakers but also those involving local government policymakers, including municipalities. During this research I encountered a couple of unexpected hurdles.

In 2023, The National Ombudsman issued a report addressing complaints about citizens' perceived lack of influence, which lead to various issues (Jonquière et al., 2023). In an opinion piece for NRC, it is described how citizen participation has declined in deprived neighbourhoods over the past years, (Lub, 2014). Lub (2014) argues that this perceived decline in citizen participation is due to the fact that governments often struggling to effectively engage with citizens. This may also result in resistance and a disconnection between citizens and public officials, particularly when their citizenship ideals are formulated by a select group of highly educated individuals who **impose their vision** onto vulnerable citizens. 🗨️

This disconnect between individuals and the government is recognised in the results from *the State Committee on the Parliamentary System* (Remkes, 2018); 70% of the members of the parliament imply they are losing touch with the 'general public'. The committee has cautioned the government that a segment of the Netherlands has either already disengaged from or is at risk of disengaging from the democratic system. This phenomenon can be attributed to several factors, including the **failure of governments to fulfil promises and provide adequate feedback** (De Voogd & Cuperus, 2021). 🗨️ ❤️ Krista van Mourik from Movisie, who followed one of the participation projects of the Municipality of Amsterdam in the Bijlmer, describes participatory policymaking as a "cuckoo clock", in her interview with EenVandaag; "The municipal system comes up with all kinds of plans, then the cuckoo comes out for a moment and the citizen is allowed to have a say. After that, the cuckoo quickly goes back into the clock and the plans are all completed. People have **no idea what is happening and what is being done with their advice**" (Reijman, 2022). ❤️

Many officials do not engage directly with the citizens for whom they are formulating policy. ❤️ Consequently, these officials remain unaware about which specific areas within their policy content require additional attention (Van den Berg, 2021). Losing touch, with the people affected by policies, is not without risks; the latest report from the Fraud Committee (Maatoug et al., 2024) highlighted that if the government remains blind for people and their rights, there is an increasing risk of future scandals like the Childcare Allowance Affair. The Committee attributes part of the problem to poor decisions made during the introduction and execution of social security benefits and laws. Due to new regulations and exceptions, citizens, particularly those experiencing multiple concurrent challenges, often find themselves in financial difficulty (Pelgrim, 2024)

The involvement of people affected by policies in decision making remains limited (Blijleven et al., 2022). Policymakers experience difficulties with understanding their ministries' point of view on participation: "Often, there seems to be little room for influential participation and participation is given little priority over other dossiers." (Blok et al., 2023). 🏠

According to Blok et al. (2023), current participation methods primarily serve to provide citizens with a sense of being heard rather than significantly influencing policymaking. If people affected by a certain policy are included in participatory policymaking, outcomes frequently fail to influence policy formulation, (Edelenbos, et al., 2001). Consequently, there is a risk that the initial objectives of participation may not be fully realized, potentially increasing the sentiment of citizens feeling unheard compared to prior to their involvement (Blok et al., 2023)

3.2.2 Acting Upon Insights

Reflecting on insights

Based on the literature review, my first impression was that there is indeed a malfunctioning feedback loop, this is due to policymakers who are losing touch with the people they make policy for. Even if insights are retrieved from the people affected by policy, these insights just seem to evaporate as they often do not end up in the final policy documents. These documents are published but not actively communicated back to the people who provided input on it.

Design Interventions

To promote the communication with people who participated in participatory policy-making processes, I created four designs with the aim to remind policymakers of the people who they create the policy for. The idea is that if the connection is restored through active communication, people can find and see their input reflected in the resulting policy. The ideas differed in how radical they are and are displayed in Figure 3.

- A. A one-sided mirror in the meeting room of policymakers; keep in mind that it is always possible that people affected by your policy are on the other side watching and listening to the process without you knowing.
- B. All meeting room tables have a participatory policy-making journey map printed on them, to constantly remind policymakers where in the process to include the people you make the policy for.
- C. A visualisation of the policy is sent back to the people who participated, forcing policymakers to be clear about how their input is considered.
- D. To remind policymakers of the people they make policy for, insights from participatory sessions are printed on tiles and clearly visible on the wall of meeting rooms.

Together with team members of the innovation team, we discussed and validated the ideas (see Appendix C). This session showed me that a design focussed on the output of a policy product (such as a memo) would not take into account challenges which emerge earlier in the process. This was identified during our team discussion on the "pitfalls" of the designs. For instance, the lack of flexibility experienced by policymakers, or in the case of a one-sided mirror, input only goes in one-way and policymakers may feel vulnerable. People affected by policy may not feel heard.

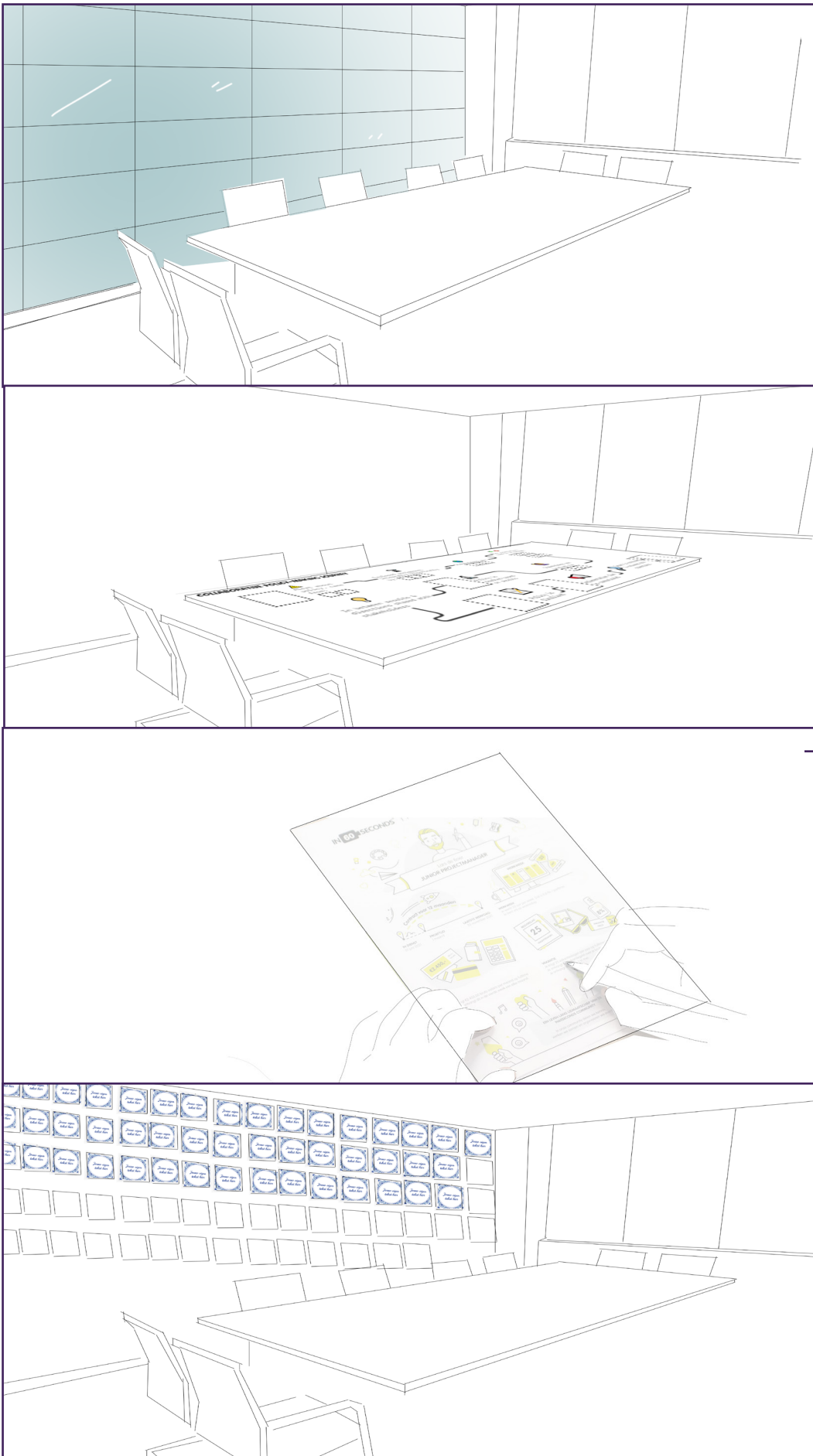


Figure 3: Sketches used to showcase and evaluate initial design concepts after Sprint 1
 Images based on visuals of (Pennekamp, n.d.) (Tegeltjesfabriek, n.d.) (Tagvenue, n.d.)

3.2.3 Changing the Scope

During the literature research, I aim to understand the feedback loop introduced in the previous section. However, the most important outcome of this research phase is the insight that the root problem is not in the output of the policy product, but that the cause seems to occur earlier on in the process. When multiple challenges emerged during the literature research and the design validation session with the support team, I realised that many of these issues were embedded in the policy-making process itself, rather than in the feedback of outcomes afterwards. At this stage of the research, the connection between these various challenges and the policymaking process itself remained unclear to me. My first impression of discovered challenges in the system are visualised below (see Figure 4).

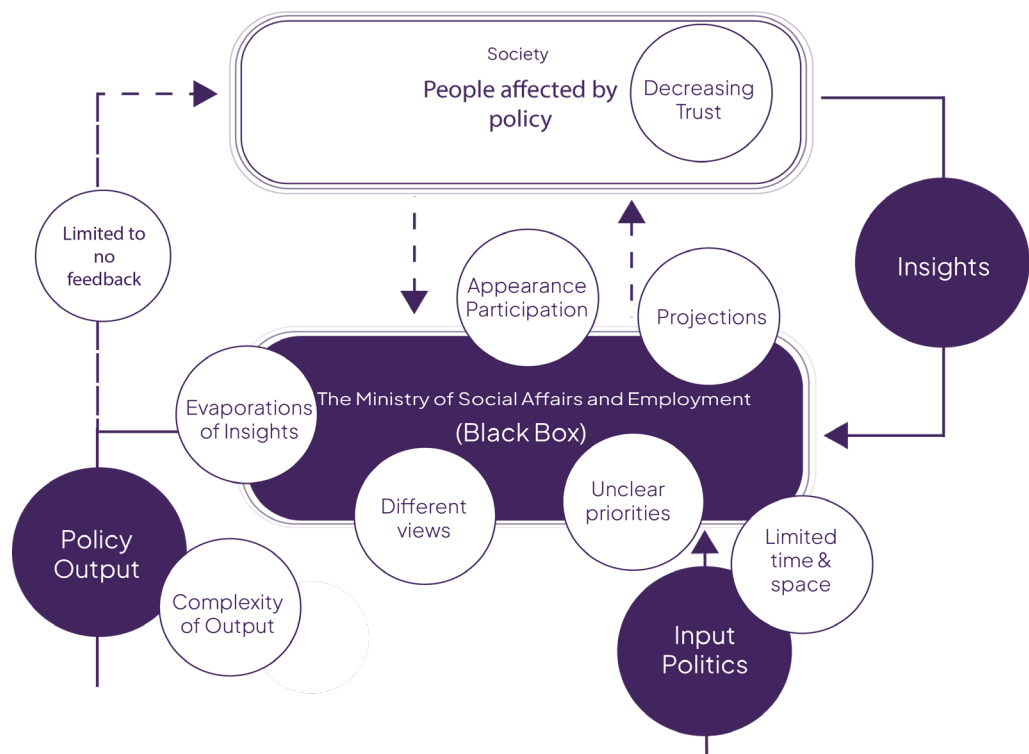


Figure 4: Revised impression of the problem area where multiple challenges cannot be identified

After reviewing the literature, I found more information is required to find the relation between the different challenges and discover the policy-making process.

Therefore, the initial assignment is too narrowly focused to allow for further investigation into the hurdles within the policymaking process, as it concentrates on communication about the outcome. For the next research sprints, I have decided to focus on the process of policymaking. According to Boedeltje (2009), the process has an influence on the acceptance of a policy. Before trying to frame a design goal, it is essential for me to first understand the system and process of participatory policymaking at the MSAE.



3.2.4 Take Aways



Formulating problem areas is influenced by the personal opinions and assumptions of the one who formulates them.



Participation that does not lead to any form of influence, increases the sentiment of participants feeling unheard.



The point of view of a ministry on participation is not always clear to its policymakers.



This project will become more exploratory towards understanding the process of participatory policymaking as opposed to focussing on the feedback loop.

3.3 The MSAE Level



Research Questions

- In which way is the MSAE currently creating policy participatorily with the people affected by this?
- What are the hurdles and opportunities in participatory policymaking from the perspective of employees of the MSAE?

3.3.1 Participatory

Polymaking at the MSAE

The context of (participatory) polymaking at MSAE. This includes the polym cycle, which describes the stages polymmakers go through to create a polym product. It briefly mentions the different situations in which a polym is initiated, in which stakeholders are supposed to be always involved. Finally, an organisational chart is included which illustrates the relation between these stakeholders.

There are different phases defined in polymmaking. Figure 5 gives an overview of the different steps in the cycle. The scope of this project is limited to the “Exploring” and “Developing” phase, as these are the stages where polymmakers at the MSAE primarily focus their efforts (PS3).

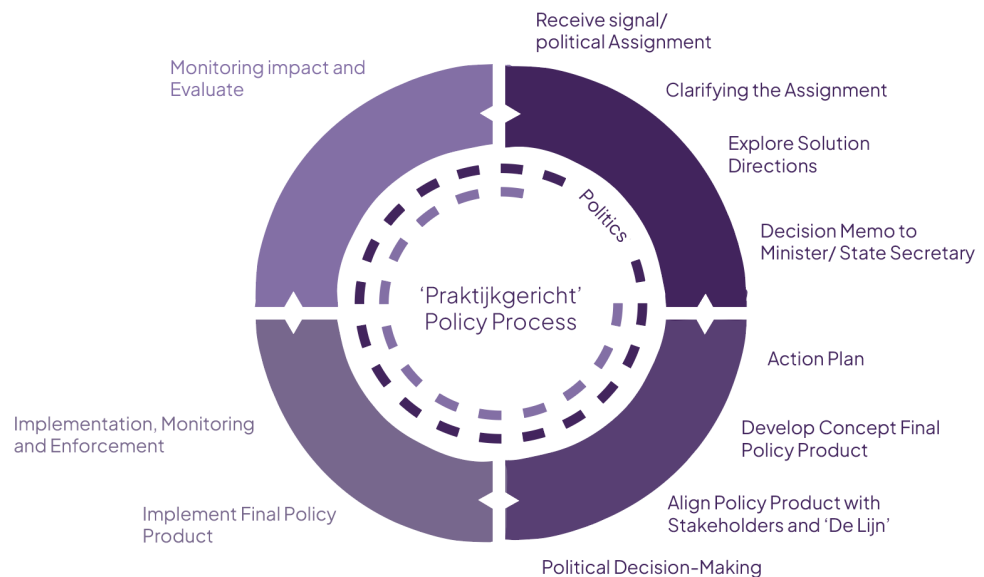


Figure 5: Policy journey, created by Design Agency Snijboon in collaboration with polymmakers at the MSAE.

There are multiple ways for a polym process to start. A political request, often based on a *parliamentary question* or on the *coalition agreement* between the governing political parties, is most common. The *coalition agreement* is what the government sets out to achieve in their cabinet period. Leaders of parliamentary groups negotiate on a draft when they want to make up a new *cabinet*, it is a compromise between different parties (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Another starting point of the polym process is when a polym section uncovers an issue in their polym area and requests

permission to conduct extra research on that topic. In general, a policy trajectory can take about six years. A policymaker does not go through this cycle alone, internal stakeholders all play a different role. The most common stakeholders involved in the policy-making process at the MSAE are listed below:

- Policymakers
- Directors on various levels
- Ministers/ States Secretaries
- Implementation organisations
- People affected by policy
- Internal/external research organisations

A schematic overview of my impression of the interaction between the stakeholders within participatory policymaking is depicted in Figure 6. This image has been co-created and validated by three interviewees. The MSAE (highlighted by the purple plane in the bottom part of the visual) coincides with the first half of the policy-making cycle of Figure 5 and its connection to *De Lijn*. *De Lijn* is the official route a policy proposition takes to officially find their way to politics. It is a term frequently used within the Ministry. Moreover, diverse ways for *signals* to travel from society to the policymaker are observed. What is particularly important about this picture is the discovery that policymaking at the MSAE is quite complex.

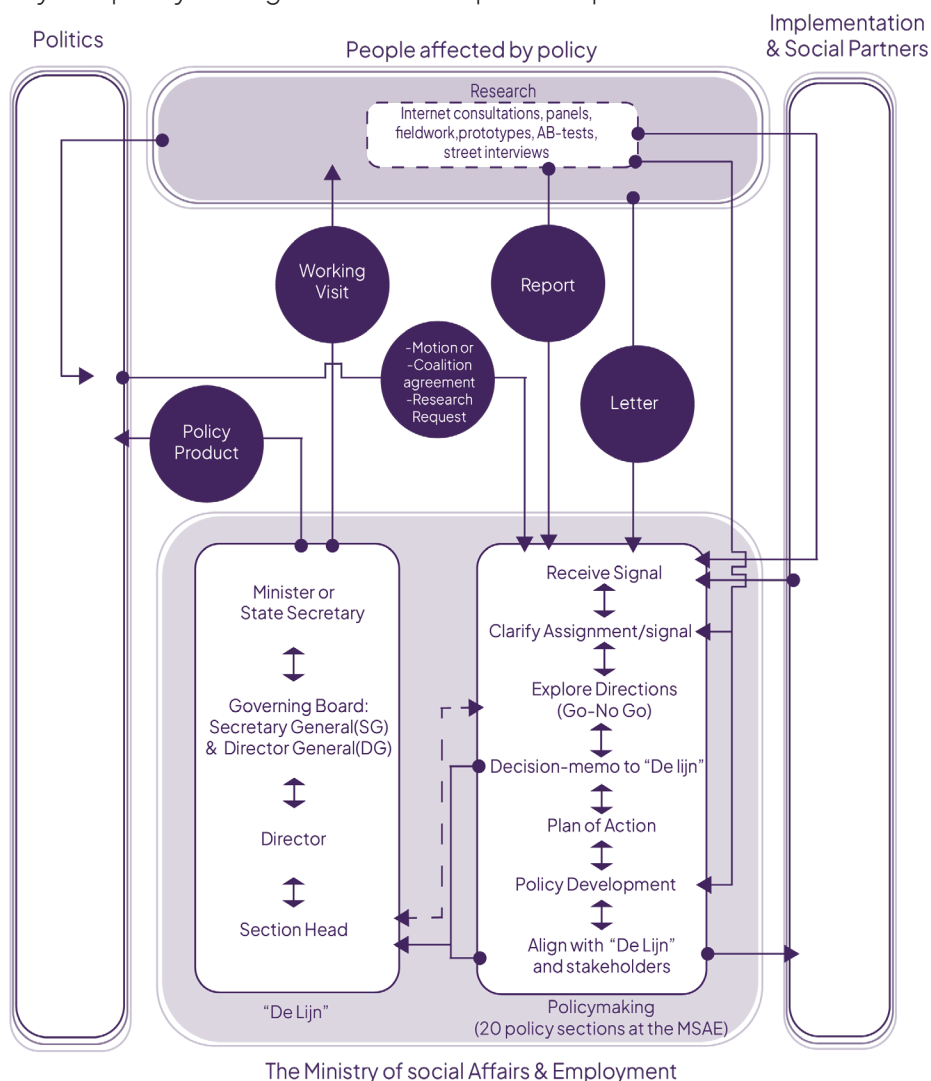


Figure 6: My impression of the policymaking system's structure and function

3.3.2 Hurdles and Opportunities in Participatory Policymaking

In this subchapter, I discuss the broader insights retrieved from informal interviews and a co-creation session with individuals from diverse professional backgrounds within the MSAE. This outcome shows a comprehensive overview of the hurdles and opportunities officials could identify concerning participatory policymaking. More information about the setup can be found in Appendix D.

Widely shared vision on importance of participatory policymaking

The importance of participatory policymaking is widely recognised in many governmental institutions. Within the MSAE, this is the case as well. In a conversation with one of the directors within the Ministry, it is mentioned that the Childcare Allowance Affair had increased the overall shared vision of the importance of participatory policymaking (PS7). This is confirmed in my interviews:

PS4: “There are a lot of policymakers who would like to work more participatorily; the realisation and awareness is there”.

However, during the interviews, I also noticed that not all policymakers share the same sense of urgency to apply participation in every phase of policymaking.

PM3: “The way we make policy now, [without including insights from those affected by the policy in every phase] is efficient”.

Complexity in policymaking due to balancing stakeholder interests

When creating policy participatorily, there are multiple interests and expectations to consider. Policymakers serve as the link between various stakeholders, such as the people affected by the policy, managers, politicians, implementing organisations and municipalities. Balancing their different interests is considered very complex. Below are some examples of the perceived complexity as emerged from the interviews:



PM5 “The biggest issue, people have too many different stakes”. 

PM5 “If we involve citizens, the [policy] proposition must be able to be adjusted as well.”.  


Political interference leads to time and performance pressures

Political expectations about policy topics influence the work of policymakers. The policymakers are pressured to show progression within limited time. This pressure

can have a negative influence on the involvement of people affected by policy, as can be seen in the quote below.

PM5: “In every phase, there **must be space for it**. If we want this, **processes need to be different**. The **political process has priority**, there is always a hurry and political pressure”.  


During the interviews, I discovered that instead of asking for time, there is often a tendency to directly dive into the solution space. This depended on the assignment: is there already a proposition retrieved from the **coalition agreement** of the governing political parties or is the assignment open for research? See the quotes below:


PS3: “In the previous **coalition agreement**, there was already a wish to include more citizens, and clarify the assignment, but **most solution directions were already decided**”. 

Tied Hands

Participatory practices can be challenging for policymakers when they feel limited in their actions. This can be frustrating. As confirmed by the statements belows:


PM9: “As a civil servant, you don’t always **have the power** to do what you would like to do”. 



PM6 “If you make policy then it is often about **already defined frameworks**, from which you cannot deviate. And you would like to do something for small target groups, for the citizens, but as soon **as you start tampering with the frames they fall over**”. 

PS2: “The problem I experience is that while certain theories are held to, there is **no testing of whether something is actually this way in any given context**”. 

Policymakers’ uncertainties about collaborating with people affected by policy

Due to the limited time and flexibility in the policy process, policymakers struggle to hand over the content of the policy to people affected by it. Nevertheless, there are more obstructing factors; some policymakers are scared to initiate the conversation with people affected by policy in fear of negative reactions.

PM5 “What we find scary, **handing over the control over the content**. The solution has already been figured out; it is scary that we do not know where it will end”. 

PS4: “Another element in this is the reaction, where people blame them for all actions of the government or have **high expectations** of what one policymaker, representing the government, can do”.  

PM9: “My colleague found it complicated, **we have nothing to bring to this**. A listening ear maybe... If you have nothing to bring, **how do you go into the conversation?**”. 

3.3.3 Acting Upon Insights

Reflecting on the interviews

The various conversations showed me that the general consensus is favourable for participatory policymaking; the necessity is widely supported. As could be seen in the quote of PS7: “There are a lot of policymakers who would like to work more participatorily; the realisation and awareness is there”. Challenges remain in the areas of managing expectations, political influence and individual uncertainties such as handing over control of the process or dealing with expectations. A new question arose: Does aiming for participatory policymaking in every phase of the policy-making cycle mean every step, or are there leverage points where it is more effective and influential? Given the constraints of limited time and flexibility in policymaking, I considered this a key aspect of my further in this phase.

Mapping Leverage Points

The aim of the MSAE is to work participatively in every phase of the policy cycle. However, this goal does not define which points exactly require more attention to work more effectively in a participatory manner in each phase. I was curious to see what people within the Ministry consider the most impactful moments. During the co-creation session mentioned in the beginning of this section, I retrieved insights from a group compiled from a sample of the people I previously interviewed within the Ministry. Areas pinpointed in Figure 7 show the steps where the impact is currently least visible.

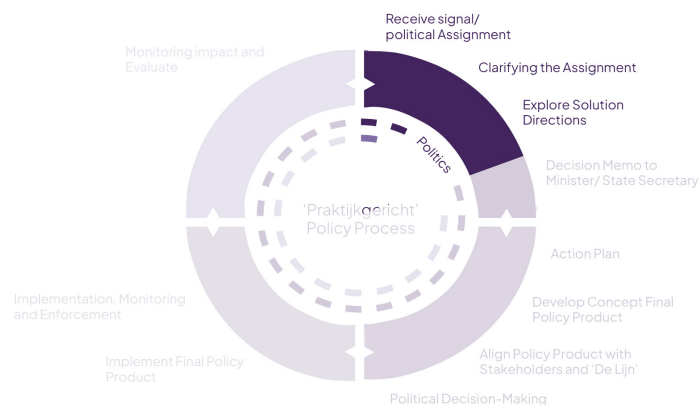



Figure 7: The steps in the highlighted area is where currently the least impact is visible. Visual based on the policy journey of Snijboon and policymakers of the MSAE.

Based on this assessment, an intervention seems the most needed in the early phases of the policy-making cycle.

Mapping the System

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is a complex system. A complex context involves interconnected actors and components, including individuals, infrastructures, organisations, and environments (Van der Bijl-Brouwer et al., 2021). Each of these components encompasses distinct values, beliefs, meanings, and rules. If integration within the system is not taken into account, interventions may be seen as superficial or even ineffective if solutions fail to take all parts of the system into account (Van der Bijl-Brouwer et al., 2021).

Map 1

It has become evident from interviews that policymakers are not always able to influence the extent to which the insights of those affected by policy can influence decision making. My attempt to map this out led to significant insights (see Figure 8). My impression of the issues regarding the [dynamics between policymakers, politics and people affected by policy](#) is as follows: political actors incorporate perspectives of people affected by a policy domain. These insights are used by political parties to make [political promises about assumed problems and solutions](#) to tie voters to their party. These promises then form the basis of coalition agreements, which sets rigid frameworks for policymaking. At the same time, ministries are expected to gather further insights from those impacted by policies, yet there is little room for modification as this might lead to unfulfilled promises. Consequently, people affected by policy feel unheard, as their input collected by ministries fails to influence actual policy. Additionally, policymakers are also expected to show results in time, resulting in pressure from *de lijn*. Herold (2017) writes in his thesis on Dealing with Unwritten Rules: “Realise, we are serving the minister (and the line) here. This unwritten rule shows that the [focus is primarily 'upward'](#). [A policy official should realise that he is a representative of the minister](#). The unwritten rule expresses authority and hierarchical loyalty.”. 

Map 2

During the interviews at the MSAE level, I noticed that the connection between the actors in the system is complex. That is why I started to create a system map during the interviews with policymakers, which I continued to expand during the interviews. No such overview is currently available within the Ministry. This map can show entry-level staff how different actors exchange information to each other. However, the purpose of the image is not to clarify the system, but rather to show the complexity immediately. This system map can be seen in Figure 9.

What is immediately noticeable are the intersections with the policymaker and those who are influenced by the policy. There may also be all kinds of other parties in between these people and the Ministry, some of which conduct similar research for policymaking but have a different relationship with the people affected by policy. For example, a municipal agency that conducts research for the municipal implementation of national policy has a quite different relationship to the citizens concerned than researchers from a ministry. In the next phase, these parties will be interviewed to see what their experiences and insights can yield.

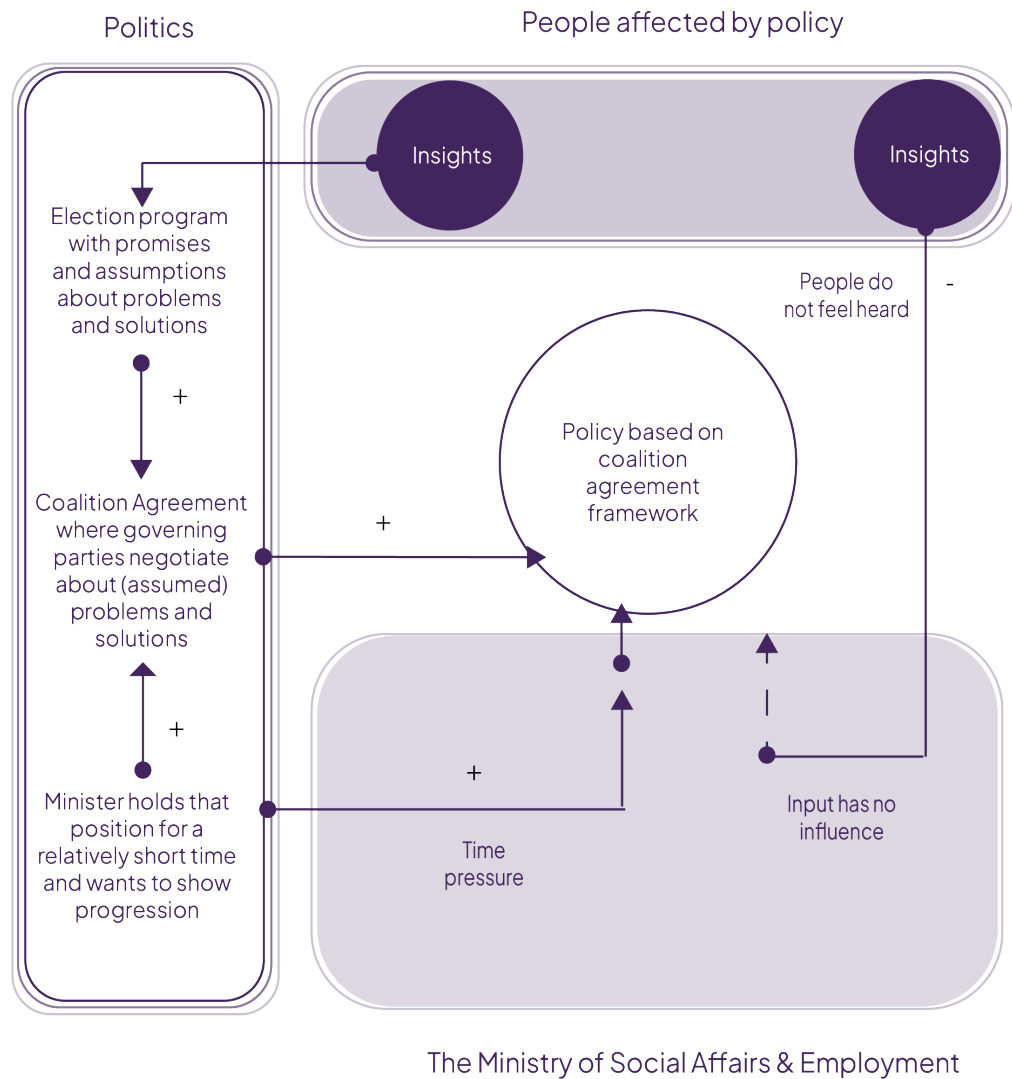


Figure 8: My impression of the dynamics between politicians, people affected by policy and policymakers concerning the (im)possibilities of creating participatory policy

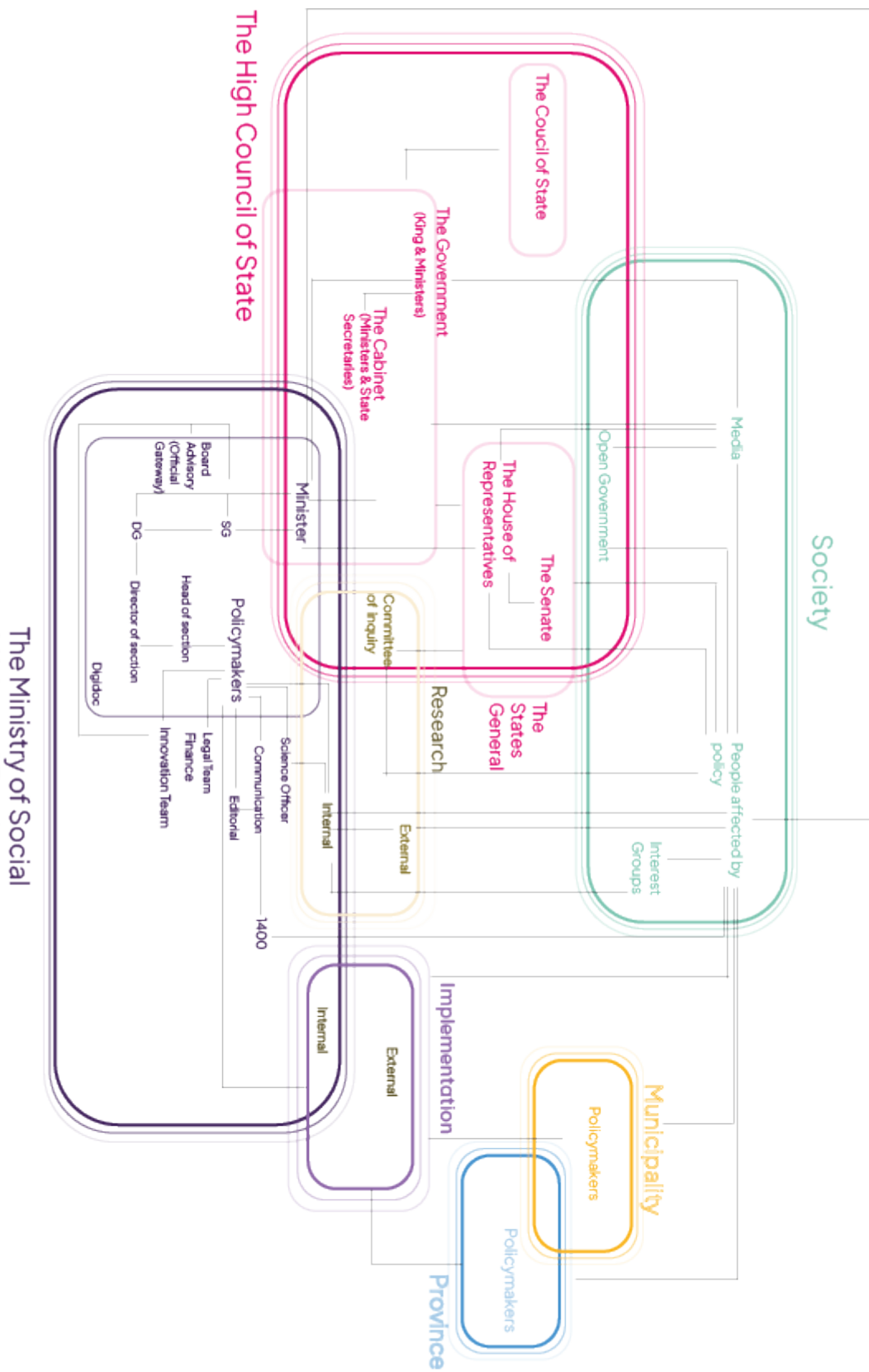


Figure 9: Showcase of the complexity of the complete participatory policymaking system of the MSAE. This is not meant as an infographic, but to show my evolving knowledge about the complexity of the system



3.3.4 Take Aways



The necessity for participatory policymaking is now more widely supported within the MSAE.



Challenges: Balancing interests, (political) pressure leading to limited flexibility and individual uncertainties .



There are important leverage points in the cycle.



System appears larger and more complex than initially expected.

3.4 System Level (External Parties)



Research Questions

- What are the experiences of external stakeholders who are involved in participatory policymaking with the people affected by this?
- What are the hurdles these stakeholders notice in participatory policymaking?

3.4.1 Participatory

Policymaking on a System

Level

As mentioned earlier, several parties within the MSAE system are in contact with people affected by specific policies. These parties influence each other and should learn from each other as well. When multiple decision-making centres are present and operate with a certain degree of autonomy, this is a form of complexity within governance called polycentricity (Ostrom et al, 1961) (Carlisle & Gruby, 2019). Often, these centres overlap in governing and decisionmaking, as they act on various levels, such as national, state or local. A decision on one of these levels could impact all other levels and the other way around (Carlisle & Gruby, 2019).

A ministry is not an island which only has to figure out their own way of working. To understand what plays a role in this context outside of the Ministry and what obstacles are experienced there, I interviewed several external parties. The insights I gathered from these interviews with these organisations and individuals reflect their experiences with the impacts of participatory policymaking from diverse perspectives.

Through semi-structured interviews, I had conversations with people from a provincial governance level, an employee of a municipality who conducted participatory practices in different neighbourhoods, a participation consultant who consults the public sector on different governance levels, a community builder who is part of a municipality and has a specific neighbourhood as focus area, someone from the national client council and an active citizen. I considered interviewing these people important as they all had a different connection to participation, the governance level and people affected by policy. Additionally, fieldwork by means of joining an external research session and a conference has led to new insights.

3.4.2 Experiences of External Stakeholders

Participation as a tool instead of a way of working



Policymakers' opinions on the importance of participation differ per person. This is the case at the Ministry, but is also confirmed by the interviewees in the other governance levels. Some are advocates of participatory policymaking. Others consider it bad for your career prospects or as merely a check on their to-do list, as evidenced by the statements below:



M: "I know from colleagues, roughly, that some of the civil servants have never really had a real interest in participation."

PC: "Much more to tick a box than that it is really about end-user needs." 

Making assumptions about people affected by policy


As can be seen in the quotes below, it is important that people from the Ministry organize themselves to be able to safely investigate what their assumptions are regarding people affected by a policy. Subsequently, to investigate whether some of their assumptions are incorrect and use these insights to improve the participation process. See the quotes below:


NCC: "Knowledge about the other person is often where it goes wrong." 
NCC: "In policy we think in too much in a one-sided manner about the citizen". 

CB: "We don't speak out what we think." 
CB: "Realize that people do not live your life." 

Overlooked constraints and expectations

The interviewees suggest that policymakers should clearly outline the frameworks and constraints within which they operate and specify the extent of influence that those affected by the policy can have on the process by participating in policymaking. Mutual expectation management in an early stage, before "retrieving input" is important to avoid disappointment and loss of trust.

CB: "You have to communicate clearly what you have come to do, that's where things go wrong." 

CB: "Residents also need to collaborate better with officials, also empathise with the official's world. That means we should also include residents in the things we encounter." 


People affected by policy do not always feel taken seriously

Individuals affected by policy frequently perceive that their input will not lead to any concrete action and that their concerns are not taken into consideration. They perceive a lack of genuine influence and a significant disconnect between the government and society. The feeling of not being truly involved emerges due to the lack of reciprocity. Participation often remains rather a one-sided manner of information retrieval than a reoccurring interaction.

AC: “a simple update would be appreciated... To know you are being taken seriously.”. 

PC: “...there is so little trust, people are fed up with the government as too much input was being retrieved... ‘there we have another researcher.’”. 

For policymakers at the *national government level*, it can be difficult to build a relationship with people in a specific area, as they create policy affecting the whole country. Therefore, they often utilize external research organisations for the development of knowledge, relationships, and discussions. However, leaving the conversation entirely to others is not the right solution either. This can be concluded from the following paragraph, based on a conversation with such an external researcher, when I took part in their research session at a market (See Figure 10):

Occasionally, policymakers collaborate with external researchers to conduct field inquiries. When policymakers are physically present, people’s personal stories often come across better. This has a positive effect on advancing research insights within their policy domain. Nonetheless, this type of collaboration is not quite common yet and the approach requires a change in mindset. For instance, when participating in street conversations, some policymakers can be concerned to share that they are from a governmental institution. They worry that this is not received well by the people affected by their policy. This mental barrier affects the desire of policymakers to go out on the street themselves. Even though this fear is often reduced during these conversations. People often express that they appreciate talking to an actual policymaker, as it gives them a sense that their story is reaching the right person. 

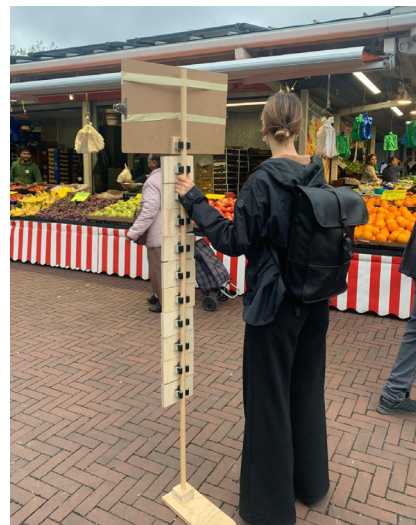


Figure 10: In this image, I joined a research team that was conducting street interviews at a market. I did this to experience the interaction between people on the street and researchers/policymakers asking questions.

3.4.3 Acting Upon Insights

Reflecting on the Interviews

What became clear to me is that the various external stakeholders shared similar experiences, visions and recommendations. If policy makers view the conversation with those affected by their policies as merely a check mark on a checklist of demands rather than as a need to create broadly supported policies that hit the target, this could lead to a decline in the willingness on both sides to work together. Entering into a mutually cooperative relationship promotes a sense of shared responsibility, including discussions about mutual possibilities and limitations. The fact that participatory work is considered important all over, not only by the MSAE, is shown by the various events organised, such as the ‘Wijs naar de Wet’ conference I attended.

Designs

In this phase of the research, I compiled the information obtained from the interviews into designs. The designs focused on relationship building and reducing the feeling of “the ivory tower” by really going to people in an approachable way. After discussion, it emerged that the designs in themselves raised interesting issues, but more research at a less abstract level is needed to understand properly what policymakers are up against daily. This forms the basis for the next research session within a policy section. One of these designs is visualised below (see Figure 11), the others can be found in Appendix E.

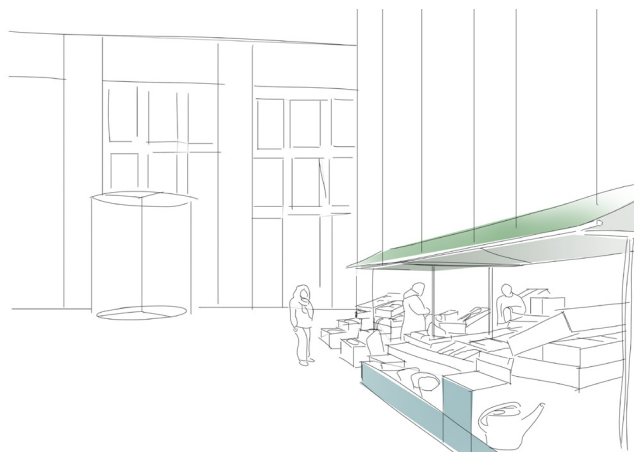


Figure 11: Idea for a market inside the Ministry as a design intervention. The thought behind it was to reduce the feeling and perception of a “ivory tower”.

3.4.4 Take Aways



Checking in time what assumptions policymakers have and whether they are correct.



Expectation management is important

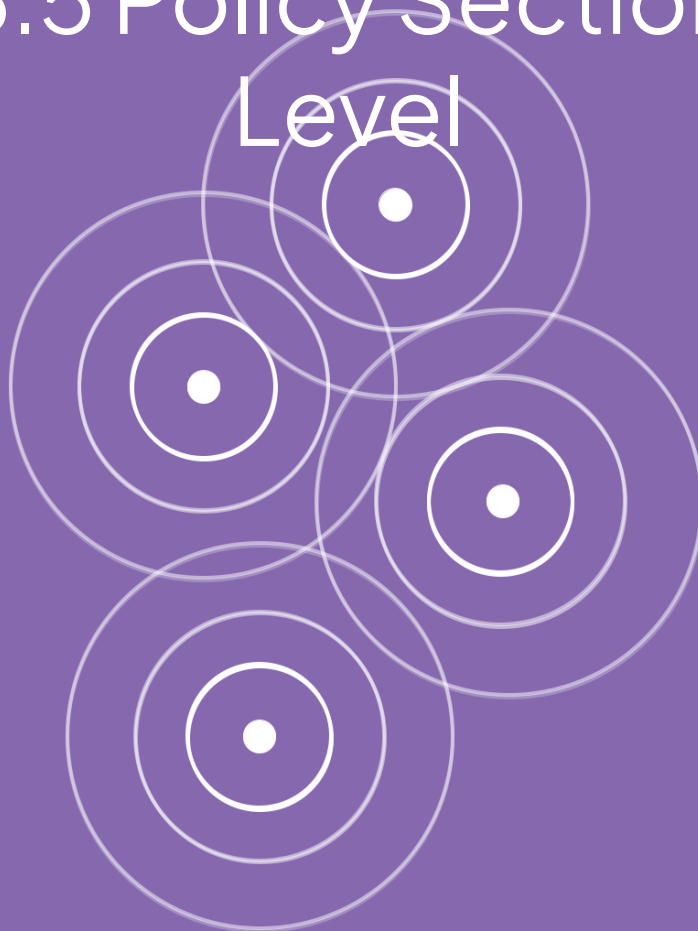


People experience no reciprocity.



Personal connections can bring insights further.

3.5 Policy Section Level



Initial Research Questions

- In which way do policymakers within one policy section currently create policy participatorily with the people affected by this?
- What are the hurdles and opportunities policymakers experience in participatory policymaking?

3.5.1 Participatory

Policymaking at the Policy

Section Level

After examining the context at the ministerial and system levels, I considered it relevant to also conduct this analysis at the policy section level. This is because the insights at higher levels remain abstract. To design practical interventions, I deemed it necessary to understand the concrete issues within one of the policy sections. This understanding allows me to determine if the insights on a policy section level can be translated into a design which is at the same time applicable ministry-wide.

Many of the challenges and perceptions I retrieved in earlier interviews with policymakers, turned out accurate in this policy section as well. Therefore, in this chapter, I will mainly explain the nuances of what hurdles are specifically experienced within this policy section. Key insights that correspond to my previous research and are especially important for the result are named in a separate subheading. Based on the questions I formulated in the subchapter's introduction, I conducted research within a policy department through semi-structured interviews with five people.

3.5.2 Hurdles and Opportunities in Participatory Policymaking

More emphasis on collaboration with implementing organisations

Policymakers in the researched section consider participatory policymaking to encompass implementation organisations as well. The scope of this project on considering individuals affected policy, does not do justice to the practice. In practice, policymakers must also deal with the constraints and capabilities of implementing organisations.

PM10: “What you can see is that the way of working has become different. Involving from the start... **especially implementation**. How it is perceived there, what is suitable.”. 

PM12: “I find it impressive, **hearing people’s stories**, it makes you think, is this actually how we have meant it”. 

Involving all stakeholders early in the process requires more coordination between partners. Whether it concerns a stakeholder, a social partner, colleagues involved in policy or people from an implementation organisation, it can still be quite difficult to identify the needs, expectations and wishes for good coordination.


PM11: “We need to have **conversations about requirements**” 

PM11: “We are never all together at the same table. With the target group only, that already takes a day.”.

Involving people affected by the policy


Involving people affected by policy in the early phases is expected but turns out difficult in practice. There is not one homogenous group, therefore, it can be difficult to find one solution that works for everyone. Additionally, it is not always clear whether one story reflects a bigger situation or whether it is just one story.

PM11: “The idea is to talk to the target groups at an early stage. In our section, they are sometimes difficult to find.”.

PM12: “I benefit most from experience experts: people who have heard 50–100 other stories and know who is up against something. Own experience is also fine, but **I cannot make policy based on one story**.”. 

Policymakers at the centre of all participating stakeholders

For policymakers, it can feel as if they are standing in the middle of 'turbulent waters' and are solely responsible for properly bringing together all the different flows. When learning and mastering something new it can be difficult to internalise the skills and develop confidence. In all the commotion and need to make rapid progress, what do you fall back on?


PM10: "As well with citizens, it is very good, I support it. But I am the centre point, I have to make sure it all comes together. But how should I do it. This leads to insecurity which leads to resistance." 

Confirmed insights

Pressure due to politics


Pressure from politics seriously affects cooperation and mutual understanding, especially when a policy topic is more politically sensitive. The openness or restrictiveness of the assignment significantly impacts the use of time and possibility to be transparent in a policy trajectory, consequently affecting the potential for input from other parties.

PS11: "The more politically sensitive the issue, the more difficult the cooperation." 

PS10: "It is because there is thinking from political mandate, the minister says this, so we are going to run. Then you are making policy from the top down. The reversal is tricky." 

Assumptions about people affected by policy


It is difficult to assess each other's strengths, expectations, as well as limitations. This sometimes creates doubt about whether the people affected by the policy can provide input that can be acted upon.

PM10: "With a group like this, the question is, can you think conceptual enough. They talk from their own experience, which is good. At the same time, it is not the individual's issue. Can a citizen look beyond that, it depends on the group." 

PM11: "They find it difficult to think in alternatives, because then everyone starts thinking from their own favourable alternatives instead of looking at what is good for the whole target group."  

Dealing with expectations

Not every stakeholder can be satisfied with the outcomes of a policy process, and balancing interests can be overly complex. If stakeholders are not adequately involved and decision making is not conducted with maximum transparency, managing expectations can become a significant challenge.

PM12: "It is always scary to engage with people. Especially if you have already read that people are very angry for example, and if you have nothing to offer them." 

3.5.3 Acting Upon Insights

Reflecting on the Interviews

Conducting research within a policy section has helped to clarify the challenges faced by policymakers in participatory policymaking. Whereas I focus on “citizen” participation, in practice, participatory policymaking is much broader. Policymakers are a middle ground, between people affected by policy, internal expectations within the Ministry, the implementing organisation, social partners and other stakeholders. *Signals* of dissatisfaction with a policy product can come from all these different directions. The lack of time makes it difficult for policymakers to internalise the new skills needed to deal with the interaction with people affected by policy or discover which participatory methods are well suited to a specific policymaking situation. Furthermore, I noticed for the first time personally in this study, that assumptions are regularly made about other parties. A positive outcome of the interviews that I observed during the conversations is how driven these policymakers are to make policy which is tailored to the people affected by it. However, as easy as it sounds, it is not so easy in practice. This manifests itself in a number of paradoxes which I address in the next subchapter.

Designs

Following the initial conversations, I explored the possibility of designing a tool or framework that could enhance empathy among policymakers and other stakeholders involved in the policy-making process, not just among people affected by policy. I then discussed first drafts with the people from the policy section. People were enthusiastic about this tool as it could potentially serve as a conflict mediation tool or a tool in which multiple stakeholders need to put in effort to empathise with the situation of another party. The idea can be found in Appendix F. Additionally, this concept eventually formed the basis for one of the final design interventions in Chapter 5.

3.5.4 Take Aways



Aligning stakeholders; emphasis on involving the implementation organisations



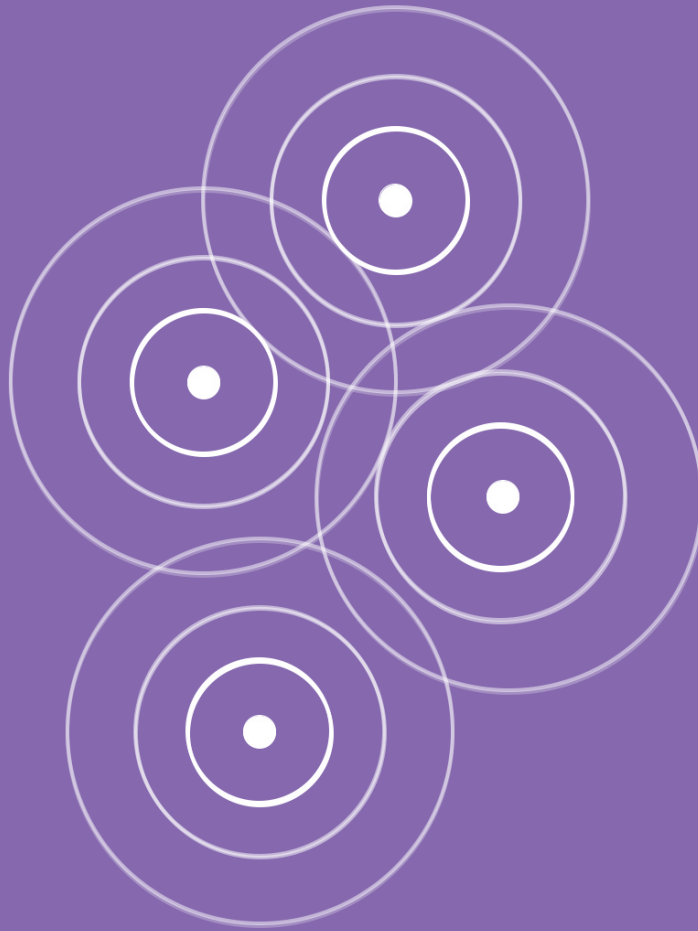
Internalising a new method takes time.



Earlier insights were confirmed about:

- Political influence
- Assumptions about people affected by policy
- Dealing with expectations of people affected by policy

3.6 The Paradoxes



Initial Research Questions

- What are some of the paradoxes policymakers within the MSAE currently experience in participatory policymaking?


3.6.1 Paradoxes in Participatory Policymaking

The importance of involving people affected by the policy is clear to policymakers, but the assignments (given by politicians) sometimes lead to paradoxical situations. Insights I gained from conversations with policy makers and co-creation sessions reveal the many of the internal conflicts that policymakers can face.

Examples of paradoxes experienced during participatory policymaking are discussed in this subchapter.

3.6.2 The Paradoxes

You must be transparent yet cover all the risks

The need to be open and honest but at the same time be aware of the necessity to protect against potential negative outcomes. Being fully transparent can sometimes expose vulnerabilities and increase risks, while covering risks often involves withholding certain information, thereby reducing transparency, which in turn creates suspicion. 


The desire for mutual trust is restricted by conflicting interests

There is a contradiction between the aspiration for complete trust and the reality that different parties have different interests that do not all align. Not all interests can always be discussed openly because that may interfere with a well-run process. This complexity makes absolute trust challenging to achieve, even though mutual trust is desired. 

Policy is created for the entire nation, while it is individuals with different circumstances who are affected

The broad scope of national policymaking and the often-varied effects it has on individual lives is another contradiction policymakers encounter. The paradox highlights the challenge of addressing diverse individual needs and circumstances through a one-size-fits-all approach. There are a lot of complications when there is a need for more simple policy, as citizens are getting lost in too many rules and exceptions, while at the same time they need to provide tailor-made policies that are adaptable to individual situations.

Politicians and citizens desire quick actions and solutions, while careful inclusive policymaking takes time

Various actors in the system, in this case people affected by policy, politicians and policymakers, seem to have a chokehold on each other. people affected by policy expect the government to act quickly, to solve problems and want to be heard and involved in the process. The government expects policymakers to quickly create policies and include citizens. However, policymakers need time to effectively involve people affected by policy in the process, which hinders rapid policymaking. 

The people willing to engage in the conversations about policy are not necessarily the ones impacted by the outcomes the most

The generally shared opinion of the individual will come easier to a policymaker, the opinion of the silent majority is the one which take more time. Creating policy which is representative of the entire nation is not always representative for the people who

will be impacted most, this group may not express themselves as much but that does not mean the impact on them is smaller than the impact on the big middle. This can lead to a disconnect between the input policymakers receive and the actual needs and experiences of the most affected groups.

You must involve people to determine the direction, yet the direction has already been determined

In a lot of cases, [politics determines the problem and solution within a coalition agreement](#), the Ministry must make it work together with the implementation organisations and citizens. However, sometimes, it is discovered that the presented problem is not actually the problem, or the presented solution will not solve the problem, or it turns out it is not implementable. [Adjusting policy or implementation based on such an outcome, however, is limited by the frameworks that have already been established by politicians](#). If politicians go back on their promise, it might undermine citizens confidence in the government. If, however, the policy does not solve the problem, it can also have a significant negative impact on their trust. 📖

Policymakers develop policy compartmentalised, yet citizens are impacted by the coherence and interaction of different policy sections

While policymakers focus on specific segments, people affected by policy experience the combined effects of different policies, which often unintentionally interact with each other. This shows there should be more overarching communication between the different policy compartments.

A single story can sometimes capture the essence of many individuals' experiences, while a collection of stories might fail to accurately represent the essence

[In participatory policymaking, it can be difficult to estimate the value of the story](#); is it a bigger *signal* which needs action, or it just one person's experience. 📖

The paradoxes are visualised in Figure 12

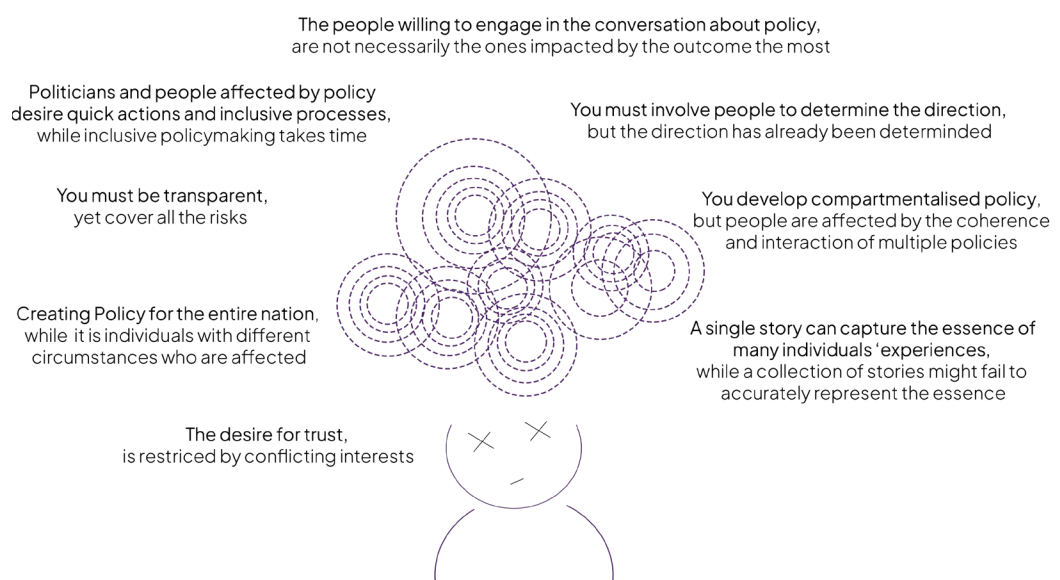


Figure 12: The paradoxes experienced by policymakers, based on conversations at the MSAE

3.7 Intervening

Based on my acquired insights and analyses in this chapter, I conclude that there is currently no full engagement possible within in participatory policy-making processes the MSAE.

In general, this is not so much because of unwillingness from policymakers, but because of obstacles they face, both in processes and mentally. Not fully being able to engage in participatory practices may pose a risk; leading to undesirable consequences such as an even further reduction in trust or unexpected situations.

The outcomes of my research so far, have indicated two possible directions to focus on when intervening in the system in order to increase this engagement. It is structured along two lines: a focus on the 'how' or a focus on the 'when':

How: Removing internal obstructions at the Ministry to prepare the ground for influential participation. If the problem is identified as policies not being tailored to those they affect, and the solution is to make policymaking more participatory, then engaging in this process without thoroughly investigating internal obstacles to participation—such as entering open discussions, allowing insightful contributions, and ensuring good communication—risks merely creating the sense of token participation. This could significantly erode trust in the government even further.

When: Defining leverage points for effective collaborative policymaking. If you require participatory policymaking in every phase of the policy-making cycle, look for leverage points to do it right through participation that profoundly influences the process instead of trying to do it everywhere and only partly succeeding.

To enhance the current participatory processes, more time and effort must be put into removing internal obstacles and defining leverage points. Due to time constraints, I decided to focus on the removing internal obstructions in the beginning of the policy-making process for further intervention development as most data was gathered on this area. These challenges, in relation to each other, can be found in Figure 13. Figure 13 is not meant as a self-explanatory visual, but to show the high complexity of the system and the challenges.

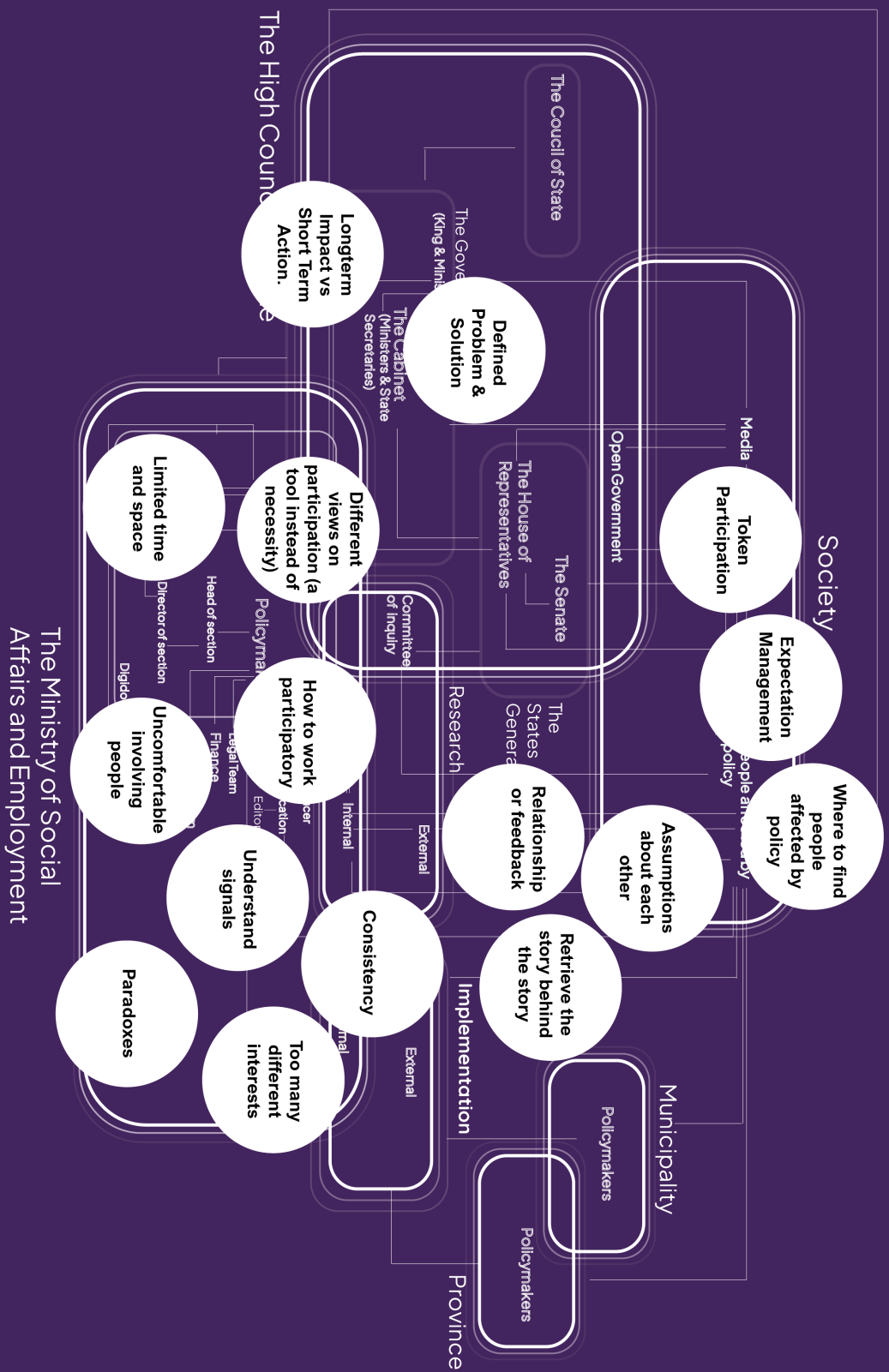
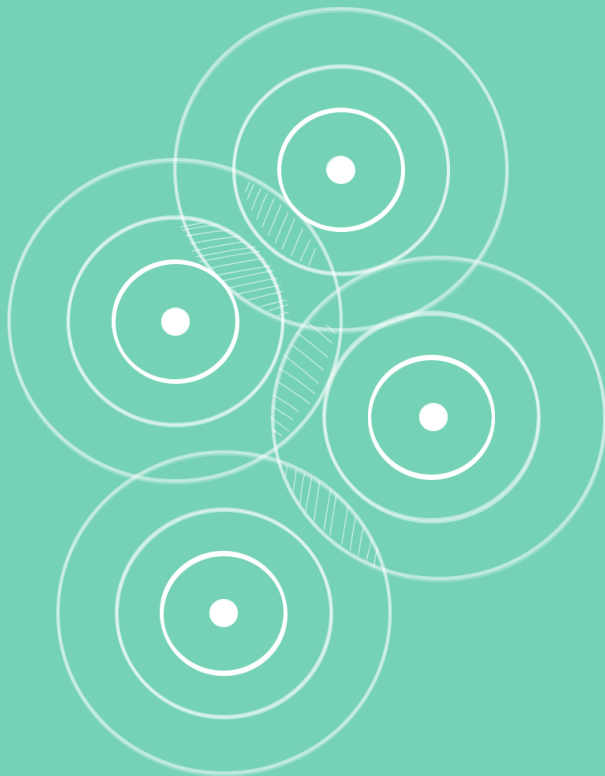


Figure 13: Showcasing the complexity of the system and mapping challenges on top of it. This visual is meant to show the different discovered challenges in relation to each other.

4

Obstruction Areas

In this chapter presents the approach designing for multiple challenges and provides the four identified obstruction areas.



4.1 Approach

After systemically exploring the system of policymaking at the MSAE, diverse challenges emerged. It became clear to me that one single solution would not be sufficient to solve all these challenges and steer the system towards the desired goal of the MSAE. Based on my previous research, I therefore define four obstruction areas which hinder influential participation processes: Faulty Frameworks, Task Overload, Lacking Relationships and Unevaluated Assumptions. The identified “challenges and consequences” in this chapter are summarized from the insights presented in Chapter 3.

To determine where an intervention in the system is necessary, I compiled all insights from the conversations I had within the Ministry. Subsequently, I examined whether there were any recurring themes or common threads among the statements and identified challenges. Based on this analysis, I named and created clusters. The next step was to examine whether there were logical connections between the clusters, such as whether one was a consequence of another or if one cluster reinforced another. I gave interconnected clusters the same colour, and looked at what exactly their relationship was. For instance, the clusters “People’s expertise is difficult to estimate” and “Mistrust in each other’s capabilities”, formed challenges, and were combined with the clusters “Transparency and trust” and “Managing/dealing with expectations” as a potential intervention area. These clusters can be found in Appendix G. By visualizing the data for myself in this way, the four areas of obstruction I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that hinder participation became very clear. The findings of this analysis are described in this chapter.

Disclaimer: In some cases, insights have been magnified to show a pattern or make a point. This does not mean that these insights are exclusively the truth or always valid. The obstructions described are my interpretations and analyses. It is not necessarily true for everyone or in all cases.

4.2 Co-Evolutionary Approach

The outcomes of Chapter 3 show the complexity of the system of the MSAE and its diverse (interconnected) challenges. In complex contexts, such dynamic challenges are unpredictable (Van der Bijl-Brouwer et al., 2021). Complex systems require a more continuous approach to innovation requirements (Van der Bijl-Brouwer., 2021). To address the unpredictability of the impact of desired actions (in overcoming challenges), safe-to-fail experiments enable to reveal system dynamics through retrospective analysis of responses induced (Snowden & Boone, 2007). These experiments can illuminate the actions needed to achieve desired systemic changes.

The co-evolutionary design approach

An example of such a continuous approach which consists of multiple experiments is the “co-evolutionary design approach”. This collaborative approach allows the entire system to be steered towards a desired direction by employing iterative cycles of regular reassessment and adjustments over time (Van der Bijl-Brouwer & Malcolm, 2020). The visualisation of this approach can be seen in Figure 13 (visual based on the visual by Van der Bijl-Brouwer et al. (2021)).

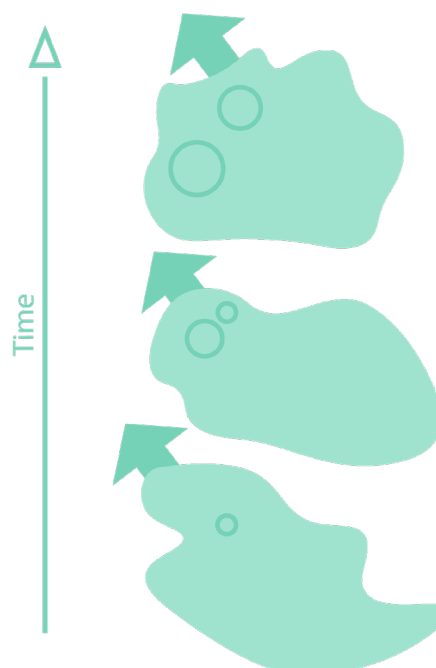


Figure 13: how a complex system moves towards its desired situation through multiple experiments

Within an evolutionary approach, a portfolio of problem frames and design interventions can be selected and run over time to look for traction in the system (Van der Bijl-Brouwer & Malcolm, 2020). To find the problem frames within this co-evolutionary approach, I have clustered the challenges into the four obstructing areas. Here, interventions are needed to steer the system towards the desired goal. In the following subchapters the obstruction areas are described. In Chapter 5, corresponding interventions are displayed in a portfolio.

4.2.1 Faulty Frameworks

There are not always shared visions, approaches and agreements that are established in the (fuzzy) front end of the policy-making trajectory. Consequently, individuals assess their work practices against various requirements that may not be feasible for every stakeholder and are sensitive to political fluctuations.

Challenge

Policymakers can experience a lack of time and freedom to experiment in their work, which may have a negative impact on participatory policymaking, as concluded in Chapter 3. Some policymakers feel that they cannot simply frame the policy process differently, by, for example, asking for more liberty to do something for a small group. Moreover, this perceived lack of time and freedom to experiment is amplified by my impression that not everyone has the same understanding of what constitutes 'good' participatory work. These requirements are not always discussed and recorded among stakeholders. The combination of this perceived lack of time and freedom to experiment shows that the existing frameworks for policymaking at the MSAE have not changed as standard, according to the way of working that is required for successful participatory policymaking. A clear shared vision and approach, on which processes and actions can be evaluated, is lacking in some cases.

Consequence

When a framework does not fit, various challenges may arise. One of such challenges is the difficulty of evaluating the importance of received signals, which can make it hard to distinguish between primary and secondary effects or to gauge the level of support an issue will receive. Additionally, if there is a lack of discussion about requirements in the early stages of the policymaking process, this can lead to problems. For instance, when individuals affected by a policy are unaware of the constraints within which the policy was created. Limitations in the form of political expectations or, for example, what the system constraints are of the executive organisation involved. Examples of these constraints may include forms of political pressure or systemic constraints that arise when an implementation organisation gets involved. When these constraints (which must be considered in the participation process) are unclear or not discussed with the people affected by the policy, this can result in unfulfilled expectations among them. Consequently, effective participation becomes difficult. This also happens when working with outdated and faulty frameworks, which are often predetermined, leaving little time and opportunity for effective collaboration with those affected by the policy.

4.2.2 Task Overload

Policymakers may experience an overload in tasks, partly caused by paradoxical expectations from different stakeholders in the system, making it difficult to create room for a new way of working and not fall back on old processes.

Challenge

The work environment is complicated at MSAE, including hierarchy and (switching) internal and external (politics) power dynamics. Making a good impression on the people that sit above you in the hierarchy often entails a quick and accurate response to a policy request into *De Lijn*. This is not only based on my own research, but it is also confirmed by Herold (2017), stating in his thesis 'Dealing with unwritten rules': "Realize, we are serving the minister (and the line) here. This unwritten rule shows that the focus is primarily 'upward'. A policy official should realize that he is a representative of the minister. The unwritten rule expresses authority and hierarchical loyalty." (Herold, 2017). At the same time, there is internal and external pressure regarding the need to increase trust in the government and to create policy, which is tailored to the people affected by it, by making use of participatory processes. For policymakers, these two influences can put extra pressure on the way they work, and the desires seem almost paradoxical. Policymakers must consider the interests of all stakeholders to achieve a well-functioning policy but feel that they are given little room to do so.

Consequence

This environment makes it challenging to request additional time to internalise skills needed for participatory policymaking and turn it into action. The consequence is a risk of token participation, where individuals are expected to engage in policy creation without the necessary freedom of acting and adequate skills to do so effectively. For example, there is often an expectation for the government to resolve issues quickly. In the political arena, grand promises are made to address problems with specific solutions, without first adequately assessing whether these solutions really resolve the relevant issues or whether the identified issues are indeed the true problems. These big promises serve to quickly give the people the feeling that they are being listened to and thereby bind them to political parties. Because of this common approach by politicians, people also expect such commitments from politicians. As a result of this dynamic, political assignments given to ministries may be set up for failure as expectations regarding promised solutions leave little room for genuine engagement with people affected by policy.

4.2.3 Lacking

Relationship

There is not always a reciprocal relationship in functioning participatory policymaking on a national level between the policymakers and the people affected by the policy. Insights are collected in a one-sided manner, which results in a lack of repeated contact and the absence of a feedback loop. Consequently, participants may feel that they are not taken seriously.

Challenge

In several cases, participation is seen as more of a mandatory tool than as a necessary collaboration. Even when there is a desire to organise the process from a participatory perspective, the relationship proves difficult to create and maintain. According to multiple participation experts, it would be beneficial for policymakers and the people affected by the policy to also occasionally interact informally. However, within the context of a national government, this proves more challenging since policies are designed for the entire country, making it difficult to gather input and maintain relationships in all these different locations.

Consequence

As a result, participation processes are often still a one-way street of information retrieval instead of a reoccurring interaction and actual collaboration. Consequently, people involved often feel not taken seriously. Moreover, a relationship should go both ways, but policymakers experience a pressure of always having to be able to offer something to start a conversation with people affected by policy while participants only have to show up and give their opinions. This increases the already existing disconnection between the government and people affected by policy.

4.2.4 Unevaluated

Assumptions

Policymakers are not always aware of the (unconscious) assumptions they make that may unintentionally influence the trajectory, process and outcomes of participatory policymaking. This in turn can lead to obstacles to entering the conversation, keeping it open and extracting important insights.

Challenge

In Chapter 3, I have discovered that people unconsciously have assumptions about their collaboration partners, for instance about the people affected by policy. Ideally, such collaborative efforts involve the participation of diverse stakeholders, who may be impacted by the policies under consideration. In these dialogues between policymakers and affected individuals, no one enters the discussion without preconceptions. Each of the participants brings with them their own set of assumptions. Assumptions can enrich discussions and the effectiveness of collaborative processes; “assumptions are one of the important components of the mental model that affects the identification, prioritization, and definition of the problem by affecting the type and amount of information received from the problem and also by influencing the model of analysis, analysis, solution identification, and prioritization.” (Saryazdi, 2022). In order for assumptions to be productive, one must be aware of them in an early stage of the participation process, be willing to test them for reality and possibly be prepared to take identified sensitivities into account in the relationship the policy and or implementation.

Consequence

Yet, the absence of deliberate efforts to uncover and critically reflect on these assumptions can pose risks. It can deliberately put a filter over research conducted in the policy process. Unsubstantiated assumptions can lead to all sorts of wrong steps being taken, such as people affected by the policy being approached with unjustified suspicion, certain groups not being involved, the possible real problem behind the imposed policy brief not being detected and, as a result, possibly not asking the right research questions and so on. When assumptions cannot be investigated in a safe setting, there is a good chance that stakeholders involved in the policy process cannot or dare not be open and honest with each other. As a result, not every assumption is validated, which carries the same risks as if assumptions had not been investigated at all. Risking that a feeling of token participation is maintained, when policymakers claim that assumptions are examined before entering the participation process, when this is not fully the case. Unverified assumptions about the expectations and behaviour of people dealing with policy hinder cooperation.

4.3 Take Aways



By intervening in the obstruction areas, the barriers for involving people affected by the policy in policymaking can be lowered.

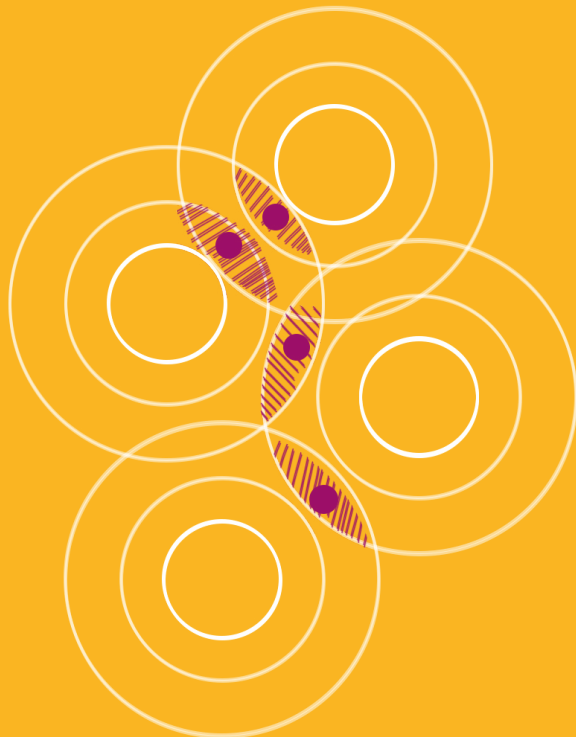


By adopting a co-evolutionary approach, I conducted experiments to evaluate the system's response and assessed the extent to which these interventions steer the system towards the desired direction.

5

Portfolio

In this chapter, four designs are presented and substantiated four each of the obstruction areas described in chapter four.



5.1 Portfolio

Within an evolutionary approach, a portfolio of problem frames and design interventions can be selected and run over time to look for traction in the system (Van der Bijl-Brouwer & Malcolm, 2020). As I have identified four obstruction areas, this portfolio is also comprised of four corresponding interventions. The results and underlying thoughts are detailed in this chapter. For every design, a small reflection is added. The end of this chapter discusses an anticipatory roadmap with suggestions on when to implement the different designs.

Approach

For the 'Unevaluated Assumptions' obstruction area, I organised an extensive brainstorming process. I will elaborate on this process in Chapter 6. The intervention for 'Faulty Frameworks' already emerged during interviews with policymakers from one policy section (described in subchapter 3.6.3). To identify suitable designs for 'Task Overload' and for 'Lacking Relationships', I had multiple brainstorm sessions on my own. To facilitate this, I attached large sheets of paper on a wall, allowing me to collect ideas over time (See Figure 14). The goal was to create a balance between radical and implementable designs in the portfolio. The radical designs might initiate discussions and inspire policymakers, even if they are not immediately implementable.

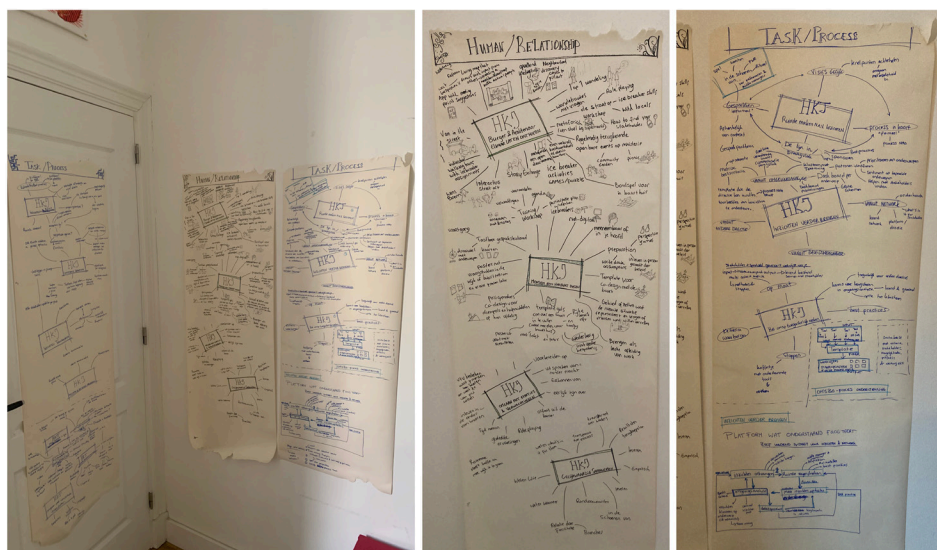


Figure 14: The designs for the two remaining obstruction areas is explored through brainstorming about several intervention directions.

5.1.1 Approach Alignment

There are not always shared visions, approaches and agreements established in the (fuzzy) front end of the policy-making trajectory. Therefore, this intervention is created to align the approach of various involved stakeholders.

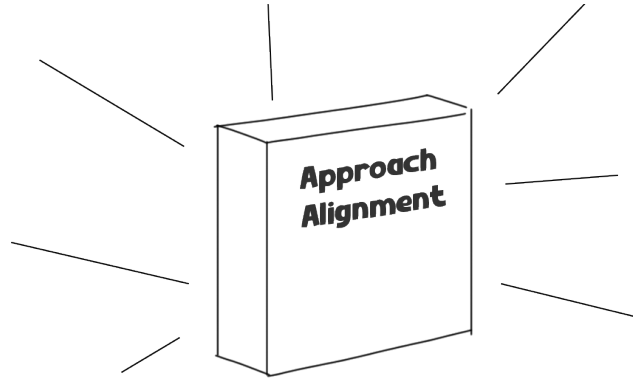
Internal support for a participatory approach is needed, as it requires more time. Likewise, this applies to collaboration partners, as policymaking is not an isolated endeavour. Approach Alignment is a promotional gift game. Different stakeholders involved in policymaking, such as policymakers, legal teams, implementation organisations and people affected by policy, can receive such a gift. The aim for this intervention is to align collaboration partners by creating a framework together. It is a statement indicating that the Ministry aims to collaborate transparently and consider each other's interests, to establish a methodology for evaluating actions and insights. The design intervention consists of a tangible game. It is important that this intervention ensures that the different parties create a framework in advance, while considering the different involved parties. This way, when they come together, the requirements of the collaboration can be discussed effectively and efficiently. In this manner, a backbone for the policy process can be formed, and each party can create their ideal version. By overlapping those ideal frameworks, it becomes possible to take each other's perspective into account, discuss them and make decisions collectively. After creating the most suitable framework, it becomes possible to evaluate together whether the activities conducted the policy-making process are suitable according to the frame. This also establishes, for instance, the policymakers' procedure for handling *signals*.

The principles behind this intervention are as follow: the more (opposing) views that find consensus to reach an outcome, the more well-considered the recommendations (Morris & Rovers, 2020). This is a principle which works well in citizen's assemblies as well. The more people affected by policy feel as if there is truly a search for the best solution, they are more willing to accept if the outcome is not in line with their perspective (Bleijenbergh, 2021). These principles have been mentioned in Chapter 2 of this project as well. The use scenario is visualised in Figure 15. The visualisation of the design intervention can be seen in Figure 16.

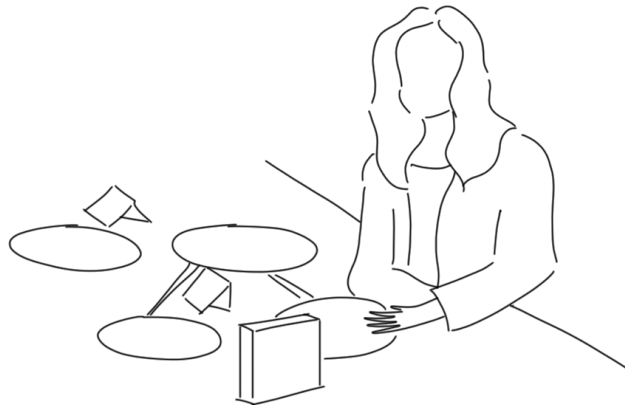
Reflection

My interviews highlighted that the current frameworks do not always allow for flexibility. This framework would be instrumental in accommodating more diverse viewpoints and facilitating a more inclusive decision-making process. By extending a promotional gift and signalling goodwill, I aim to foster a collaborative atmosphere among stakeholders to positively contribute to this process. During the interviews,

I noticed that assembling all parties involved is an exceedingly challenging task. The adoption of a digital format, which could facilitate the gathering of participants could be a solution. Moreover, a digital game might be easier to integrate in the mainly digital policy processes. Nevertheless, face-to-face interactions may play an important role in fostering consensus. An optimal version of this game requires further elaboration.



A promotional gift is sent by the policy section to all involved stakeholders. The box contains elements for creating a tangible framework.



Individual parties consider the framework they deem most suitable. On the big circles, they write down the stakeholders they consider important. On the line this individual describes the interaction, and the potential obstructions can be placed on top of it by means of a folded card.



During one joint meeting, the stakeholders discuss the frames and reach consensus over the final frame which will be used by all of them.

Figure 15: The scenario showcasing the use of Approach Alignment

Approach



Figure 16: The poster showcasing the game Approach Alignment

Alignment



5.1.2 Dilemma Debate

Policymakers may experience an overload in tasks partly caused by paradoxical expectations from different parties in the policymaking system of the MSAE. Pressure reduces the time and flexibility for policymakers to conduct elaborate research or experiments. This results in limited opportunities for policymakers to create situations in which they can create effective participatory policy. The interactions between citizens, policymakers, and politicians also have a direct impact on this policy-making process, as each group has specific expectations regarding time and participation. This way they can create, a mutually constraining dynamic.

A more radical design that I created is a game like the 'Telltale game series'. Telltale is a game developer focussing on a narrative-directed approach where players have to make difficult choices effecting future events (Nesterenko, 2019). These choices often have to be made without players knowing the exact consequences. The aim of this design is to create awareness about the constraints political promises put on the participatory policy-making practices of policymakers. During a big television debate, politicians play this game live, as an intermezzo in the bigger debate. The answers politicians give concerning the provided dilemmas show the effect of certain decisions or promises have on the work of policymakers. This shows for example whether there is time for participatory policymaking. Just as in the existing game series, politicians must choose which answer to give. Additionally, just like in the game, not giving an answer is also a valid answer. Not answering will, however, have its own implications and will push the politicians in the game not to choose that option too often. As the implications of choices become clear in the game, policymakers as well as the people watching at home, will gain a better insight on what happens behind closed doors at the Ministry and become aware of how their promises or votes may influence the created policy. Politicians end up with a character (avatar) which represents them, and their answers will move them over a map to make the game attractive and exciting to watch. For people who do not watch debates, the game element might attract them to watch fragments of the broadcast on social media.

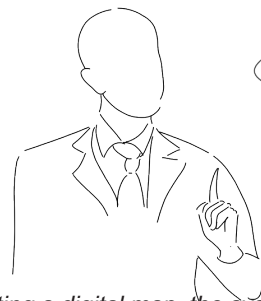
This game is designed to address the challenge of shortsighted predefined solutions promised by politicians to those affected by policies, which may often appear unfeasible or ineffective due to a lack of understanding of the complexity of the issue at hand. The impact of these policies on the work within the ministry is not always evident, as policymakers do not express their views as publicly as ministers. The use scenario is visualised in Figure 17. The visualisation of the design intervention can be seen in Figure 18.

Reflection

Developing such a game and requesting broadcasting time on television takes a lot of time and costs a lot of money. However, what makes this design radical lies beneath the surface of the game. When people see problems, they often expect solutions from politicians. Politicians respond to this by tying voters to their party through political promises. When a policymaker gets to work on such a task, problems in feasibility or desirability regularly surface. Trust is undermined when political promises are repeatedly unfulfilled. An open objective would allow the Ministry to participatively determine the best actions to determine and resolve an issue, which could positively impact both the policy formulated and the level of public trust. However, this way of making policy also requires people affected by policies to no longer expect short-term promises. Politicians need to engage voters in a different way and effective participatory policymaking will take more time.

You entered the city:

Dilemma



A. Make universities free, right away

B. Take 2 years to ask University staff, students and policymakers

While navigating a digital map, the avatars of politicians encounter various dilemmas. They must decide, for instance, whether to promise immediate action if they govern the country or to acknowledge that addressing the issue will take significantly more time.

That means, there is no opportunity to investigate the feasibility of this promise



Subsequently, the game concisely reveals the consequences of these choices for policymaking.



Viewers at home, as well as the politicians playing the game, become more aware of how their promises influence the ability of people affected by policy to have a say in policymaking.

Figure 17: The scenario showcasing the use of Dilemma Debate



Figure 18: The poster showcasing the Dilemma Debate game

ILEMMA DEBATE



5.1.3 Policy-Possible-Maker

Postcard

The absence of relationships in participatory policymaking, leading to insights gathered in a one-sided manner, results in a lack of sustained interaction and the absence of a feedback loop. Consequently, participants may feel that they are not being taken seriously in the process.

This intervention entails participants receiving a personal postcard and a title. The postcard thanks them for their dedication and describes that they receive the title of Policy-Possible-Maker. The personal attention and feedback can make participants feel that they are making an impact and that their participation is desired. Attached within the postcard is a QR code, which allows participants to become part of the Policy-Possible-Maker community. Here, they can keep track of updates on the policy, ask questions and track in what way their input has been used. Additionally, blockchain technology keeps the data of participants safe and makes the actions of policymakers transparent. Participants can be confident that their input will be considered since they can track their input in the decision-making process. When their input does not have an influence, a well-reasoned rationale has been attached so it will be visible for them either way.

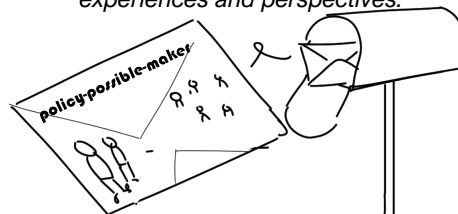
I deliberately suggest using blockchain technology for this design because it offers important opportunities for building an optimal feedback loop. “Blockchain technology is a digital technology that allows processes involving transactions to occur in a traceable, transparent and fair manner” (De Haas et al., 2020). Blockchain can create trustworthy digital information transfers, even if the parties involved do not trust or know each other (Pals & Van den Wall Bake, n.d.). Blockchain has the potential to evolve into a significant technology for enhancing democratic processes. De Haas et al. (2020) argue that substantiated feedback of decisions in the end of the process are crucial to successful participation, especially when insights are not used, as this has a positive effect on trust in the political system. In times of distrust in the formal recording of a transaction system, blockchain is regularly applied (De Haas et al., 2020). Moreover, blockchain can be interesting for capturing deliberations, as input can be traced back by everyone. It is especially suitable when people have little confidence that their voice has a real impact. This might in turn encourage policymakers to evaluate the input as also brushing it aside will become visible. The use scenario is visualised in Figure 19. The visualisation of the design intervention can be seen in Figure 20.

Reflection

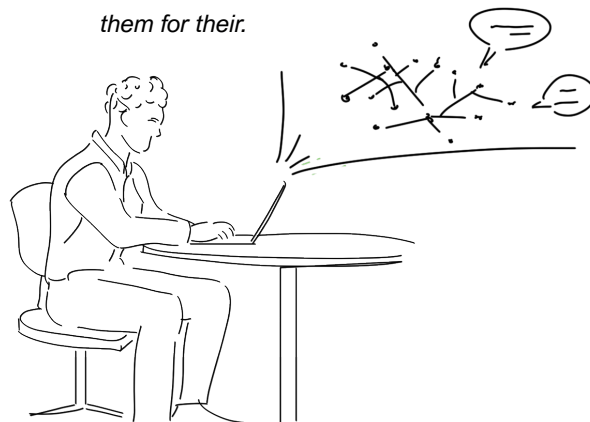
For policymakers who are already busy, this community formed through the QR code adds an extra task, because updates must be maintained continuously. I can imagine that this increases the sense of being monitored, which could make policymakers headstrong. Additionally, the direct interaction increases expectations of the people affected by the policy, which also requires relevant policymakers to respond to queries. However, care should be taken to avoid information overkill. If every step taken by decisionmakers must be recorded and substantiated, then the essentials can get lost. Policymakers must also be cautious to avoid the appearance of favouritism, where only community members participate in novel assignments simply because they are easily accessible. People affected by policy who are not yet approached should still be invited to participate as well. Furthermore, a digital platform makes it possible to maintain a nation-wide relationship, but it is only accessible to those who are digitally proficient. While a postcard, without the opportunity to participate in a digital community can be a pleasant gesture, it does not effectively keep people informed of what has been done with their input.



Policymakers have conversations with people who may be affected by their policy, collecting their experiences and perspectives.



After these participatory sessions, the participants receive a postcard in their mailbox, which thanks them for their.

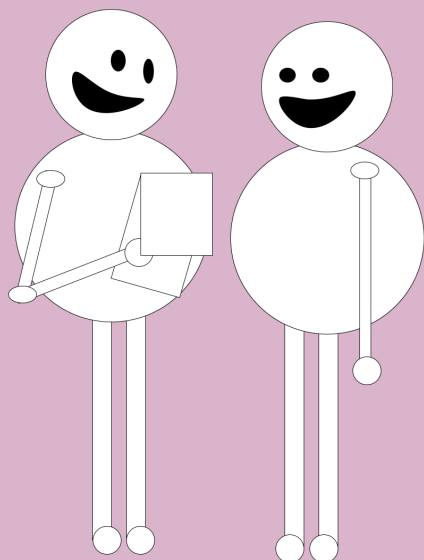


QR-code in the card provides access to the community of Policy-Possible-Makers. Here participants can track the progress of the policy, and track how their input has been used. It is possible to connect with policymakers as well.

Figure 19: The scenario showcasing the use of the Policy-Possible-Maker postcard

You are a Policy-Possible

Share your experience



Dear Jane,
Thank you so much for sharing your
experiences with us!
You are now a policy-possible-maker,
thanks to you, policy can be created that
works.

Curious to see how your input has been
taken into account? Scan the QR-code and
become part of the policy-possible-makers
community

Best regards, Jan



Figure 20: The poster showcasing the Policy-Possible-Maker postcard

ible-Maker



Jane
Kerkstraat 24a
Terpdam, Nederland

Join the community

5.1.4 Het Veronderstel Spel

Policymakers are not always aware of (unconscious) assumptions they make that may unintentionally influence the trajectory, process, and outcomes of participatory policymaking. This can lead to obstacles to entering the conversation, keeping the conversation open and extracting important insights. The game will be briefly explained here. It will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

My game makes policymakers aware of (unconscious) assumptions they may have about the people affected by their policies through questions. By becoming aware of (hidden) assumptions, the aim is to lower the threshold to work participatorily and be open enough in the conversation to ask non-directive questions and actually hear the answers. The game is a box with question cards. Players take turns in answering a question and when the other players hear an assumption in their answer they tap the bell. The goal is to subsequently examine how these assumptions can be evaluated. Therefore, after playing the game the answers and test strategies are recorded on a canvas. Throughout the policy process, the canvas is updated to reflect which assumptions proved accurate and which did not. This canvas also encourages policymakers to share unexpected outcomes with their colleagues. This game and its outcomes recorded in the canvas should be part of a ministry-supported method. The visualisation of the design intervention can be seen in Figure 21. The use scenario is visualised in Figure 22.

Reflection

At a first glance, a card game seems relatively easy to integrate into current practices because it does not necessarily take a lot of time or organisation. In addition, becoming aware of assumptions is incredibly important because the impact of wrong assumptions has an impact on the entire policy process. Moreover, interviews indicated that it is often these assumptions about the people affected by policies on which cooperation is less successful. This will be elaborated on further in Chapter 6.



*Policymakers play the game together with colleagues.
They answer the questions on the cards.*



If any players hear an assumption, they hit the bell,



*Afterwards, the assumptions are described on a digital canvas and evaluated during the
interactions with people affected by policy.*

Figure 21: Scenario showcasing the use of Het Veronderstel Spel

Het Verond



**Het
veronderste
spel**

Figure 22: The poster showcasing the Het Veronderstel Spel

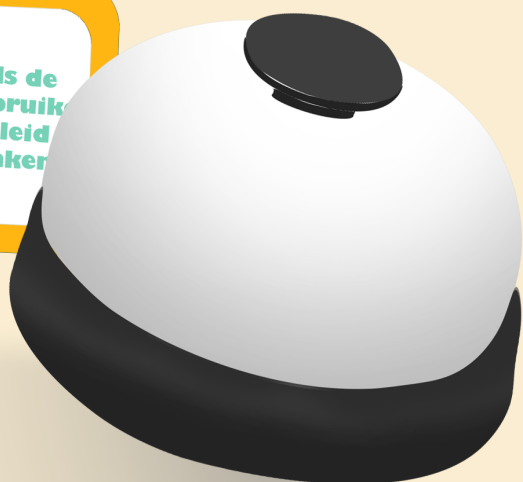
erstel Spel

**Advocaat
van de
duivel**

**Heb jij een
blinde vlek
op dit dossier?**

**Ik weet wat de
eind-gebruiker
nodig heeft**

**Wat als de
eind-gebruiker
dit beleid
zou maken**



5.2 Roadmap

Not all interventions are immediately implementable. Some require technical developments, which can be time-consuming and expensive, while others need a change in mindset. The roadmap aims to demonstrate how these experiments can be implemented based on the acquired insights and my personal impression of the readiness of different parties in the system. Therefore, this roadmap should be viewed as speculative rather than factual. Additionally, this roadmap provides the foundation for the decision of my final design presented in this report.

First Horizon: Exploring & Preparing (2024-2025)

Urgence

Assumptions held by collaborating stakeholders can significantly influence the course of a policy process, which therefore could influence the other obstruction areas as well. Based on my analysis in Chapter 3, there appears to be limited awareness of this issue. However, it does come across from the interviews as if the willingness is extremely high to work participatively. Therefore, I expect that 'Het Veronderstel Spel', will be well received as awareness can be fostered in an engaging and enjoyable manner by policymakers. In an enjoyable manner to uncover their assumptions about those affected by policies. By exploring these assumptions within the "safe" environment of a policy team, an open mind can be cultivated, thus laying the foundation for effective participatory policymaking.

Readiness

For 'Het Veronderstel Spel', no technical advances are needed, as it is a card game. Additionally, no foundational mindset shifts are needed when, as earlier analyses showed, people are willing to create policy participatorily. This game could be implemented this year already. Based on the urgency of creating awareness and the current momentum for participatory policymaking, I consider the quick trial of an experiment in the form of 'Het Veronderstel Spel' important. Therefore, I have chosen to further develop this design.

Second Horizon: Everyone on the Same Page (2027-2030)

Urgence

When the ground is prepared after becoming aware of assumptions, the next step I recommend is making sure that stakeholders are involved as equally as possible. During my research within one policy section, it was mentioned often how requirements are not discussed in the frontend. When more people become involved in participation, more requirements need to be discussed or more people may be disappointed with the result. 'Approach Alignment' was developed during the interviews with policymakers. Hence, I could see directly that there was traction and interest for the idea of having a tool which supported aligning perspectives.

Readiness

Approach Alignment can, in principle, be developed already as it is a tangible and easy-to-produce game. However, there are process shifts and mindset shifts required as the game proposes that, at some point, all stakeholders should be in one meeting to align the different frameworks. Aligning perspectives and requirements with more people entails increased deliberation and a partial relinquishment of personal control over the process. As a result, I think this idea needs still a few more years of lobbying before it can be implemented.

Third Horizon: Evolving the System (2030 -)

Urgence

Many policymakers feel overwhelmed with their responsibilities (Chapter 3). Numerous directives and limitations in policymaking originate from political sources. Political promises are not always achievable, or the policy is implemented but fails to address the issue effectively. Policymakers can find themselves in a challenging intermediary position. On one hand, they face pressure and constraints imposed by political demands, and on the other hand, they contend with the expectations of those affected by their policies or the lack thereof. It is therefore important to make politicians and people affected by policies aware of political constraints on participatory policymaking through 'Dilemma Debate'.

Additionally, people affected by policy who are involved often miss communication about how their input has been used to impact policy. As a result, they do not always feel taken seriously. Interviews with external parties within the MSAE system highlighted the importance of personal contact and building relationships. Establishing some form of a relationship between policymakers and people affected by policy can help individuals feel valued and taken seriously. Without this, participants may not feel the motivation (anymore) to participate in future research. The 'Policy-Possible-Making Postcard' has been developed for policymakers to reach out in a more personal way and people affected can view how their input is being used, as every decision is made transparent.

Readiness

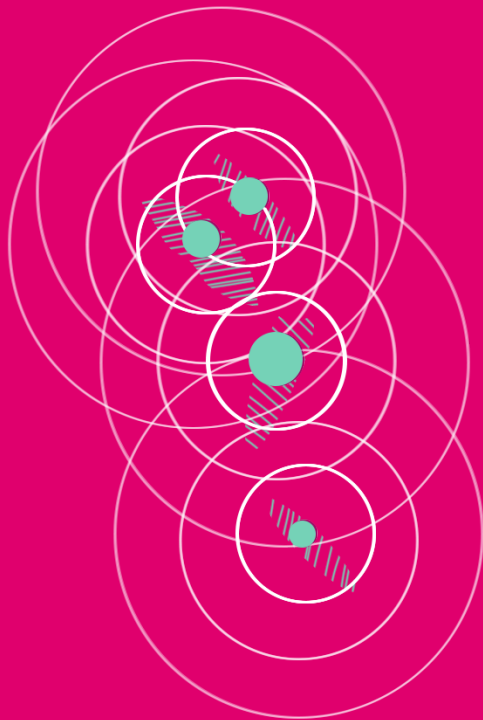
Dilemma debate requires both technological development and mindset. A dilemma game for on live television needs to be developed and promoted. In addition, it should be carefully considered whether these interactions with dilemmas expose the effect of promises on participatory policymaking. Finally, mindsets need to be changed because politicians need to be open to highlighting the effects of their promises.

For the Policy-Possible-Making Postcard, process shifts, mindset shifts, and technological advances within the government are necessary. Process shifts are necessary as all the steps of participatory policymaking need argumentation now, as they become fully transparent through the blockchain technology. This creates vulnerability for all involved parties, and this requires a mindset shift. Technological advances are needed within the Ministry as the blockchain technology is not advanced enough yet for deliberation purposes, according to De Haas et al. (De Haas., 2020). Therefore, I think it may take years to fully implement this idea. Therefore, I think implementing these two ideas will take the most time.

6

Design Development

In this chapter, one of the four strategic design interventions is developed and presented.



6.1 Background

During the exploration phase, it has been discovered that unconsciously, people make assumptions about their collaboration partners, such as people affected by policy. Ideally, such collaborative efforts involve the participation of diverse stakeholders who may influence or be impacted by the policies under consideration. However, in these dialogues between policymakers and affected individuals, no one enters the discussion without preconceptions. Each participant brings their own set of assumptions, which are shaped by their past experiences and contribute to their worldview. Subsequently, my design question is:

How can dealing with assumptions contribute to lowering the hurdle for policymakers to fully engage in participatory policymaking?

After discovering assumptions as areas of obstruction, I delved deeper into the topic, both in the literature and through additional qualitative research. Because assumptions can enrich discussions and the effectiveness of collaborative processes but they can also hinder them. The absence of deliberate efforts to uncover and critically reflect on these assumptions can pose risks as I previously described.

6.2 Background Knowledge

Assumptions

Assumptions play a significant role in decision-making and policymaking, incorrect assumptions, however, can lead to substantial policy mistakes (Saryazdi, 2022). Often the failure of a policy is partly caused by incorrect assumptions (Hoogerwerf, 1990).

The literature I consulted extensively confirms what I encountered in the responses to my qualitative research. Ideally, policymaking is grounded in robust policy theory. Policy theory is a set of, among others, assumptions underlying policy and norms used in policy (normative relationships) (Hoogerwerf et al., 2021). The practical application of policy theory often faces challenges. It typically reflects the dominant viewpoint of central actors, rarely incorporating alternative or competing perspectives, thus potentially limiting its effectiveness (Bongers, 2023). Policy theories underlying most measures are often speculative and derived from informal discussions among insiders—politicians, bureaucrats, journalists, and lobbyists—rather than systematically derived from scientific or practical knowledge (Van Hoesel, 2017). If these assumptions are incorrect, the resulting policy will also be flawed (Van Hoesel & Herold, 2020). Putters (2022) highlights in his research that policymaking built on “unspoken and untested assumptions” risks violating “legitimate expectations” between government and citizens regarding rights such as social protection and fair treatment.

Various assumptions about human behaviour significantly influence policymakers’ perspectives. For example, economists typically assume rational behaviour in the model of Homo Economicus (Vriend, 1996). The 2017 WRR report, “Weten is nog geen doen” (Knowing is not yet doing), highlights the traditional government policy perspective that assumes citizens will act correctly when provided with adequate knowledge (Boot, et al., 2017). This rationalist viewpoint forms the foundation of many legal and economic policies. Conversely, behavioural science suggests that individuals often do not act in accordance with their intentions. The report indicates that while both perspectives advocate for individual responsibility and aim for citizen autonomy and self-sufficiency, they differ in their assumptions about mental capacities and psychological principles (Boot, et al., 2017). In the report of Sociaal en

Cultureel Planbureau (SCP), the topic of 'mensbeelden' in policymaking is discussed: "an assumption about what people want, can do and how they behave. Policymakers are often unaware that the 'mensbeelden' they assume when making policy choices are too simplified, too optimistic or too gloomy" (Gebhardt & Feijten, 2022). They suggest: become aware, discuss and adjust. Especially when such discrepancies arise. In policymaking, integrating "multiple sources of knowledge" throughout the policy process and fostering the dialogue around the "stories behind the numbers" is important (Putters, 2019) (Van Daalen, 2019). One of the behavioural experts in the ministry once said to me that because their policies are usually prepared in teams with a fixed composition they lack diversity, everyone shares the same unchallenged assumptions. People naturally seek harmony and tend to bond with those who share similar values and norms, often attracting like-minded individuals. Stepping outside this comfort zone is challenging but necessary.

6.3 Design Focus & Goal

Design Focus

In this research I want to focus on the awareness of assumptions that policymakers can have regarding the interaction with, and expectations of the people affected by the policy. Initially, the often unawareness of bias or assumptions regarding other stakeholders and the importance of becoming aware of this only became clear to me after I had re-evaluated all of the data from interviews so far. It was interesting to discover that assumptions were mentioned without the interviewee noticing. This often concerns their idea of the capabilities or expectations of the people affected by their policies. For example, “they will expect us to solve their problems,” or “we can’t offer them anything. These types of assumptions can be an obstacle to even wanting to engage in a conversation at all. Validating these insights with policymakers and policy support teams has shown that there is no routine or method for triggering awareness of assumptions in policy-making teams. It also became clear to me that these assumptions can have an impact in starting the conversation with other stakeholders and the extent to which someone is open to the importance of recognising assumptions in the beginning of a policy trajectory.

PS2: “We often insert our own norms and values on what we hear. The filter is also there from the citizen to the government. If we become aware of this filter, we can do more with it. Be aware of our judgements”

Hidden assumptions cause constraints on expectations and perceptions, which may influence and limit the questions asked (Rogers, Williams, 2006). According to Rogers and Williams (2006): “Implicit assumptions deeply influence how they perceive things and how they work”. “Interest in questions of ‘reality’ and ‘knowledge’ is thus initially justified by the fact of their social relativity. What is ‘real’ to a Tibetan monk may not be ‘real’ to an American businessman. The ‘knowledge’ of the criminal differs from the ‘knowledge’ of the criminologist..” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

In dialogues between policymakers and affected individuals, no one enters the conversation without preconceptions. Participants bring their own set of assumptions, which are shaped by their past experiences and contribute to their worldview. Worldviews can be understood as foundational perspectives through which individuals perceive and interpret reality (De Witt, De Boer, Hedlund, & Osseweijer, 2016). They encompass assumptions, beliefs and values that influence not only cognitive and emotional responses but also behaviour and decision-making (O’Brien, 2009). The challenge of understanding our own assumptions and predispositions is a formidable yet pivotal one to face.

While it is important to discuss assumptions during conversations between people affected by policy and policymakers, it is primarily important that policymakers are encouraged to discover assumptions among themselves first. Because assumptions of policymakers can have far-reaching consequences regarding the overall trajectory of policymaking. Assumptions can influence who policymakers plan to talk to, where they plan to find them, whether they think it is a good idea to start the conversation or what expectations they have of the people they plan to talk to. The next step is to discuss these assumptions with each other and test them in the conversation with the person affected by the policy. A follow-up study could still look at discussing assumptions between policymakers and people affected by policies: How to start this conversation, engaging both sides equally. This will be addressed further in the recommendations.

As openly discussing certain assumptions can be quite sensitive, I sought a design approach that could alleviate this tension. I found that a game format would be a suitable method for this purpose. During the development of the design, the assumptions identified in interviews were used as inspiration. I supplemented this by conducting a brainstorming session with two participation experts and a co-creation session with five policymakers. In the co-creation session, I inquired about the assumptions they held or had encountered and discussed the characteristics a design should possess to be successful within their department (see Appendix H).

Design Goal

I wanted to design a product which triggers awareness and discussion about the assumptions policymakers in a team have regarding the interaction with people affected by their policy. With this design, I want to contribute to the practice of participatory policymaking within the MSAE by lowering the threshold to interact with the people affected by policy in an open manner. Ultimately, the aim is that this design contributes to ensuring policy which is better tailored to the personal situation of those affected by it.

Users

The users of this design will be policymakers within the MSAE who have moved passed the 'why' of participatory policymaking and are eager to learn more about 'how' to create policy participatorily in an impactful manner.

6.4 Type of Assumptions

After defining this obstruction area, I went back through all the notes from earlier interviews. Additionally, I asked two participation experts about which assumptions they heard around them. Finally, during a co-creation session, assumptions were identified with policymakers (see Appendix H). Striking was how people found it relatively easy to describe other people's assumptions, while they had more trouble discovering their own out of the blue. Eventually, the retrieved assumptions all together could be categorized in the following four categories. The aim is to integrate all of these categories into the final design.

Interaction

They will expect us to solve all of their problems

They will be mad at the government so it might be better not to say we are from the Ministry

We cannot offer them anything but they will expect a lot from us, so what is the point

Capabilities

They are not capable of balancing interests broader than their own perspective

They will not understand the constraints on the decision-making processes that politicians in The Hague impose on it

My policy topic is too complex; they will not understand it

Process/flow

They will run once the minister gives an assignment

The hierarchy blocks communication efficiency

Intention/vision

Some people see participation merely as a check

Not all of us mean the same people when we talk about the end-user

6.5 Prototyping

Idea Generation & inspiration

Collaborative brainstorm with peers; a graduated strategic designer, graduating strategic designer and a master student design for interaction (see Figure 23). Additionally, I had multiple brainstorm sessions on my own as a result of these ideas gained in the session with my peers. This led to a variety of different ideas. Comparing them to the design requirements and my impressions from conversations with policymakers I had up till that point, I was able to choose four design directions.



Figure 23: Brainstorming with peers at the faculty. Ideas were formed on how to disocer assumptions.

Concepts & Evaluation

Based on the four design directions I derived from my research, I created four different prototypes and posters. I was curious to see what type of interaction made people feel most comfortable in sharing their assumptions and what type of product they would consider most suitable in their current way of working. The boundary conditions created for the final design can be found in Appendix I. I presented the four prototypes within the innovation team (see Figure 24). Five people gave me their feedback through an evaluation form on design criteria and a verbal explanation. Additionally, I went to a policy section and asked random people if they were willing to provide me with their opinion regarding my prototypes. Five people from the same section and one person from another section shared their perspectives with me. The evaluation form can be found in Appendix I.



Figure 24: Creating four designs and discussing the four prototypes with the innovation team and policymakers.

Conversations with policymakers and people from the innovation team revealed a preference for the card game called “Hidden Hypotheses”. Respondents considered it most suitable in the current way of working and effective for becoming aware of assumptions and discussing them with colleagues. The game ‘Assumption Detection’ also got positive feedback on the initial design requirements that I had drawn up together with the policy team prior to drawing up the four design proposals (See Appendix I). ‘Assumption Detection’ is a narrative-based game with roleplaying. I feared however creating the storyline for ‘Assumption Detection’ would be challenging. To make a realistic storyline all the details should need to be accurate, while being adaptable for different policy sections at the same time. So, to actually create this well seemed very complicated to me, especially in the context of this project. Moreover, if the narrative would turn out too unrealistic, it might even fail to reveal the interesting assumptions. Therefore, I ultimately decided to continue with the development of Hidden Hypotheses. Below are some of the comments on the four concepts, which also represent the responses of others:

PM18: “Hidden hypotheses and out-of-the box lunch box is close to our way of working”.

PM19: “The box forces at least a conversation; but people may prefer not to eat during consultations”.

PM17: “Combo of approachable and effective works best. People are busy but it seems important, so something that fits into the whole process”.

There were some elements from Assumption Detection that policymakers were enthusiastic about, such as the bell and roleplaying. Others predicted a negative effect.

PM16: "There is a good chance that people will play a role instead of expressing their own assumptions".

PM17: "I can imagine that with Assumption Detection people become defensive".

For the next round of testing, I wanted to evaluate these two positive assessed elements as an addition to potentially make Hidden Hypothesis more attractive to play. Additionally, I wanted to evaluate a group reflection canvas. I suspected that working on a canvas could create continuity in reflecting on assumptions and that a game might not trigger the testing of answers that well.

PS1: "From a behavioural perspective, the canvas is complementary because it secures the translation of insights/assumptions gathered into action perspectives: concrete actions, which assumptions should we test, with whom, and how?".

Finally, multiple people suggested it to give the game a Dutch name, it would be accepted more easily. Thus, from now on, I will call the concept: "Het Veronderstel Spel".

It is my intention that this card game will become part of a methodology, to be designed by people after me, in which the outcomes of the game are noted on a canvas. Concrete actions should be noted on this canvas on how to verify the assumptions and how the outcomes could play a role in the next step of the roadmap for more effective participatory policymaking.

Final Design Validations

To develop the content for the cards and the canvas of 'Het Veronderstel Spel', I was able to reuse the assumptions discovered through my interviews and from the co-creation session with policymakers about assumptions. Moreover, I brainstormed with a behavioural expert and an innovation expert with a background in psychology. In this way, the initial design evolved (see 25).

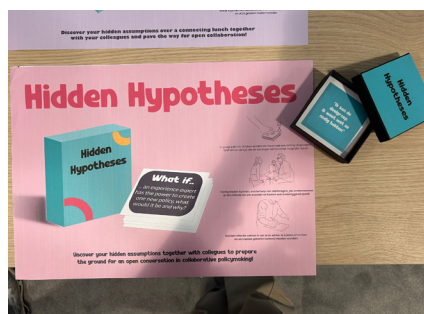


Figure 25: The concept chosen to develop further. Initially called Hidden Hypotheses

They supported me in considering distinct categories of questions, for example: more steering cards (Statements and What-if cards) and cards with open questions. After these first conversations regarding the content of the cards, I had a meeting with a policymaker to validate the first ideas. This validation reinforced the type of statement cards I had already created and inspired me to also develop more open-ended question cards to explore the underlying perceptions behind the assumptions. In her experience, policymakers often think they are talking about the same definition but often end up having a different idea about what it means.

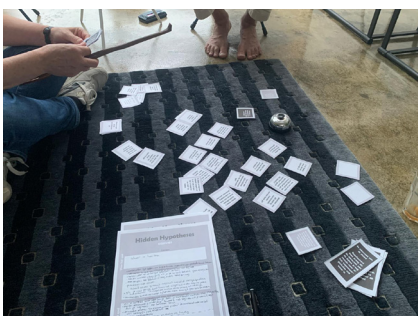


Figure 26: The concept chosen to develop further. Initially called Hidden Hypotheses

After the first conversations, I made a rough test version of the cards which I evaluated at home to see if their interaction would work as anticipated (see Figure 26). I used the cards with open-ended questions as support for other question cards to delve deeper into the topics. This evaluation showed that the initial design worked sufficiently well for an initial test with policymakers.

The first high quality version of the game was ready to be created, and different type of cards were ready to be tested, (see Figure 27).



Figure 27: The first high quality version of 'Het Veronderstel Spel', with different cards and a physical canvas

The first time playing the game

I evaluated the first version of the game with three policymakers (see Figure 28). The setup was as follows: One of the players was asked to write the assumptions down on a paper canvas and everyone was allowed to ring the bell when hearing an assumption. I had laid out all kinds of different question cards on the table. Some served to trigger an assumption in a participant, others to support through providing examples of critical questions to delve deeper into the topic. Additionally, there was one pile of the other cards. Statement cards, open cards and what-if cards, all mixed on a pile. Each player could pick one card from the pile per round.



Figure 28: The first evaluation of the design with policymakers at the MSAE.

When people started playing, instantly some unexpected issues occurred: people were in a discussion and therefore not using the ask-in-more depth cards. Moreover, there were too many different cards on the table, this caused sensory overload.

PS15: "The game is still too broad at present, making you get 'lost in discussion. Some selected cards would be easier"

PM13: Give specific questions to the participants with three rounds".

PM15: Some policymakers may not recognise their own assumptions. You need a facilitator".

The suggestion of having a facilitator was made by the policymaker validating my first version as well. She suggested including someone from another team to function as a facilitator, because an external individual may be more critical of assumptions that are commonly held within a policy team. Another obstacle was the fact that an imaginative case was used, the conversation became a bit speculative because of that. On the question what a bottleneck in the game could be, one of the participants had a concern regarding the effect of the groups' composition:

PM13: "Stubborn and not open sparring partners".

Finally, another significant issue was that the individual tasked with taking notes found it challenging to simultaneously write and actively participate in the game. The bell got lost in the discussion, until the end of the game. Then, assumptions were being called out with the bell. There was no specific feedback given on the bell. Additionally, I asked the players to fill out an evaluation form to discover what it meant for them, what it would mean for their way of working, hurdles and more. The evaluation form can be found in Appendix I.

The second time playing the game

In the next iteration round, I considered the concerns from the first test. Together with a behavioural expert, we discussed how the game could be played in different rounds. The progression from more steering cards to open-question cards could help foster the right mindset and openness among players. For the second test, I would facilitate the session, to see if there would be a difference in the evaluation of this game and the previous one. Additionally, I incorporated three rounds following the new strategy and removed certain cards that the behavioural scientist and I deemed least likely to initiate discussion. During the rounds, I planned to read out the statement cards and ask participants to step to the true or false side. In subsequent rounds, I would distribute different cards and I would time each phase of the game. The aim was to prevent the sensory overload. The second evaluation took place with two policymakers from a different policy section (see Figure 29).



Figure 29: The second evaluation session with different policymakers and a new setup for the game.

The distinct phases and having a facilitator already helped in creating a more structured way of playing. Both players really enjoyed the bell, because it created a more game-like and fun ambiance, where they would ring the bell for the other person as well as when they were about to say an assumption themselves. Within the first round with the statement cards, there was already a remarkably interesting discussion. Players had to step in whether they considered the following statement true or false. The Statement: "The target group will expect us to solve their problems". They had completely different opinions. When I asked them why they chose true or false, the answers were (paraphrased):

False: because they already have so little trust in the government, they will have no faith that we can solve their issues.

True: They will expect us to solve their problems because we also created them in the first place.

Both saw a valid point in the other persons assumption but did not know which one could be true.

Their feedback confirmed the feedback from the previous test regarding the values of rounds.

PM14: "The risk of a messy game when you do not include rounds".

PM14: "Not too many ask-more-in depth cards".

Finally, they were enthusiastic about the flexible element of roleplaying cards.

My stated goal of preventing sensory overload seems to have been achieved with the setup of the various game rounds.

The Canvas

These sessions did not reflect extensively on how best to use the canvas and whether it works best digitally or physically. Therefore, this was discussed further with an innovation expert and a participation expert at the policy section. I will discuss the outcomes in subchapter 6.7.

Reflecting on the evaluation

The last test of the design worked best; including game rounds and having a facilitator structured the session (see Figure 30). Furthermore, it became clear that at least 90 minutes for the game is desired to allow for depth of discussion. The bell made the session playful.



Figure 30: A more high quality prototype of the final design to give people at the Ministry an impression of what the game will look like.

6.6 Final Concept

Het Veronderstel Spel

‘Het Veronderstel Spel’ (Figure 31) is my final design to facilitate the discovery, awareness and eventually the testing of individual assumptions. The game is designed to be played during the fuzzy front end of policy trajectory. Assumptions can unconsciously influence the direction of policy, such as determining who is included in discussions and which questions are posed. Additionally, the game can be played during the transitions of different phases of the policy process, as these may sometimes span multiple years. The objective is for policymakers to become aware of their own assumptions, as well as those of their team members, and understand the potential impact these assumptions may have on the policy process. Together, they explore these assumptions in an enjoyable, ad hoc manner, incorporating the gained insights into the subsequent stages of the process to assess them further.

At the start of this project, many of the policymakers at MSAE had no or just limited awareness of their assumptions and the influence of the consequences that these assumptions can have on policymaking. These consequences are diverse. This game reduces the obstacles posed by unevaluated assumptions surrounding the interaction between policymaker and people affected by policy. The results of this game should help with steering the MSAE towards the desired situation of *Praktijkgericht werken* in each phase of policy practice.

To facilitate and drive this awareness, the ‘Veronderstel Spel’ has been created together with policymakers from different policy sections. The game contains several elements to engage in this investigation together in a fun way (see Figure 32). The game includes a canvas that guides the next steps, testing assumptions and taking the lessons to the next policy process. The game can be deployed at strategic points in the policy process to maintain an open setting. It is a practical tool that can be used at several points in the policy process. It is important to designate a facilitator for guiding the game, who also writes along, keeps an eye on time and deploys new rounds, this to prevent a sensory overload (see Figure 33). A facilitator can be a trained person or a colleague from outside the policy team.

Game Elements

- Ice-breaker cards
- Statement cards: Literally stepping in on a line to what extent you consider it true or false
- What-if cards: To empathise with a situation that may occur
- Open question cards: Open questions about interactions with people affected by policy
- Roleplaying cards: an additional element to answer questions from a role
- A Reflection Canvas: Filling in the front end during the game, the back end during the policy process
- Explanation cards: of the phases in the game, for the facilitator
- True or false cards
- A bell: Flexible in use, for example if you hear an assumption or have a different perspective

All cards can be found in Appendix K.



Figure 31: The final design of 'Het Veronderstel Spel'. Of each round, an example of a card is shown. From left to right: Statement card, 'what if' card, open question card and the flexible roleplaying card.



Figure 32: The final design of 'Het Veronderstel Spel', made of Perspex of card board cards with questions



Figure 33: A facilitator reaching out for one of the cards explaining the rounds

6.7 Execution

Whenever a new policy process is launched, for instance via a mandate from the *coalition agreement* or *signals* from society, colleagues from the team get together to play this game. The game contains several rounds that build up to the open-ended questions.

Round 1

The facilitator places cards with “true” and “false” on it, at a distance apart. Then, the facilitator reads a statement aloud and asks the participants to position themselves at the ‘false’ or ‘true’ card, depending on where they believe the answer to the statement lies. The facilitator then requests explanations from the participants. Examples:

If I conduct research outside, it’s better not to say that I am part of a ministry

People affected by the policy will expect us to solve their problems

The facilitator reflects briefly on the assumptions that he/she has heard and written down.

Round 2

After the first round, a more open round of cards is played. The facilitator provides each player with four “What-if” cards. Each player can pick one to answer and discuss it together. Every time a player hears an assumption in someone’s answer they hit the bell. Examples:

What if the people affected by the policy could develop the policy themselves, what would be in it?

What if the minister requests the policy product tomorrow and you have time to speak to one person affected by the policy, what kind of person would it be?

The facilitator reflects briefly on the assumptions that he/she has heard and written down.

Round 3

The facilitator provides four open questions to every player. The players can choose which one to answer and discuss it together with their colleagues. Every time a player hears an assumption in someone's answer, they hit the bell (see Figure 34). Examples:

Do you have a blind spot on this dossier?

What do you think people affected by this policy expect from this policy and why?



Figure 34: Action photo of two people reaching out for the bell as they heard an assumption.

Concluding of the first part

Round 4 is used for the reflection on the game. The facilitator and players discuss the assumptions they have heard and write down on the canvas how they are planning to assess the assumptions. The canvas content will be inserted in a digital content on intranet, so it is always accessible to people of the team and will not get lost.

Second part

During the course of the policy trajectory, colleagues within the policy team reflect on the back of canvas which assumptions they have tested and what the unexpected outcomes were. They write down which lessons they would take along with them to their next policy trajectory of phase and write down what lessons they would like to share with colleagues.

The digital canvas

The canvas has been created in a digital format to ensure it is always accessible and cannot be lost (see Figure 35). Additionally, I would recommend to lock features. Unlocking requires each section to be completed before moving on to the next step. This design compels participants to engage in reflection from start to finish and to properly validate their assumptions. Furthermore, it allows others to verify that each step has been fully completed.

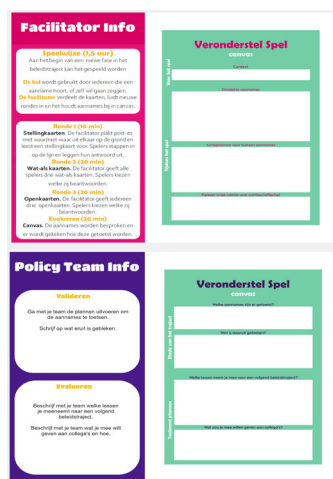


Figure 35: The digital canvas Policymakers can use to keep track of assumptions and evaluate them.

6.8 Implementation

The game is not implemented during this research project. The following recommendations are made for the implementation based on conversations with people from an innovation and participation background.

Introduction Workshop

To introduce the game, a place on the intranet should be set up on for the game. This should contain, for example, the canvas but also short videos on the usefulness of the game and the different rounds. Moreover, there needs to be an explanation on how to be a facilitator for another team. Furthermore, the game can be added to the first step of the policy compass to alert policymakers to the application and that it is important to discuss your assumptions with each other as early as possible.

The game might be launched during “Meaningful Summer” of the Ministry. Here, workshops are held that policymakers can attend to further develop their skills).

Under the guidance of a facilitator, policy teams could then be introduced to the game (see Figure 36). This way, different teams become aware of the game and have experienced how it is played and what the impact could be.

Playing Independently

After the summer, the games than should be distributed to all policy sections, with an introductory talk. The participants of meaningful summer can be asked to be the ambassadors who can take the game forward internally in their departments.

Since it is important that the game can be played regularly and easily integrated into current processes, it should be able to play the game ad hoc. The time taken to play this game should be flexible in this regard and no external professional facilitator is needed. As a result, the game can be played reasonably independently at different times in the policy process.

The integration of the canvas

A digital version of the canvas is preferred to integrate the findings seamlessly in the current processes. However, an online collaboration tool, used by the entire Ministry, does not yet exist. Subsequently, the canvas should be promoted on three locations on the intranet of the Ministry: ‘Leer & Ontwikkelplein’ (Learning and Development square), ‘SZW Werkt’ and ‘Alkemio’. The canvas then also needs to be placed in multiple online collaboration tools such as ‘Mural’ and ‘Group Decision’. These are the approved tools currently worked with by policymakers. These are the three internal

locations where employees of the MSAE find tools and information. Additionally, it would be useful to include it in the 'Policy Compass', a website where all tools and information about the policymaking process is gathered.

Training Facilitators

30 second explanatory videos can be created to share tips and experiences for people interested in becoming facilitators for others.



Figure 37: A facilitator introducing the game to the players.

6.9 Validation

Validation

Research question 1. What does the design intervention mean to policymakers?

According to the evaluations with policymakers, the game does trigger the retrieval and awareness of the assumptions they make in their work. The cards aim trigger the players to critically review the policy area and their points of view.

PM14: "The game gives insight into how you yourself deal with assumptions during your work."

Research question 2. What does the design intervention mean for the way of acting of the policymaker?

The game can help the player in recognizing assumptions and critically reconsider potential decisions or courses of action.

PM14: "As a policy maker, you can make sharper choices or set course."

However, it is not possible yet to see whether the insights collected from this game will also incite the action of evaluating assumptions. It is not yet possible to see whether the steps the policy trajectory, and the external parties the policymakers would like to involve, change after playing the game. Both are critical steps; more time would be needed to actually see if there are any long-term effects.

Research question 3. What effect could the design intervention have on conversations with people affected by policy?

Policymakers indicated that the effect could be that the people affected by policy feel more heard. Moreover, it could provide insights regarding signals; whether a policy could work or whether a policy is causing unintended side effects. It was indicated that this may lead to a better understanding concerning the conversation between people affected by policy and policymakers.

Research question 4. What could be potential hurdles in the design intervention?

Finding the people who are affected by policy willing to participate or having sparring partners who are not willing to have an open discussion. A group of players with a similar vision could potentially form a hurdle, since they could potentially overlook assumptions due to a similar way of thinking.

PM13: "Stubborn, not open, sparring partners."

Additionally, there is a risk of the game becoming confusing if there are too many cards in play at once. A facilitator can choose the cards beforehand, but this would require some idea regarding the type of policy the team is working on beforehand. An independent, actively listening facilitator is needed, to remind players of assumptions if this does not happen naturally and to ask critical questions when the discussions stay too superficial.

Research question 5. Would the intervention stimulate policymakers to evaluate discovered assumptions and in what way?

PM20: "Hopefully yes, being aware of assumptions makes you ask in a more open way."

Bringing some selected cards to the conversation with people affected by the policy, was mentioned to evaluate assumptions during the interaction. The canvas was not mentioned.

Research question 6. Can the design be integrated in the current way of working of the policymakers?

PM15: "Yes certainly, in policy changes as well for example."

It could, but some adjustments and testing are still needed. A challenge for integrating the design in the current way of working is the canvas for example. People are not always meeting in the office, a physical canvas can get lost or is not used over the course of a policy trajectory. Additionally, online meetings happen regularly. Most of the work is done via the computer. Therefore, a digital canvas would be better to integrate in the current way of working. However, there is, at the moment, no single platform all policymakers use to collaborate where this digital canvas could be placed and at the same time be accessible for all participants. For now, this is difficult to realize.

Research question 7. How often do you start a new policy process? Can the game be used at other times than at the very beginning?

According to most testers it would help, both at the start as well as during the policy-making process. They consider it valuable in all phases, a good test to see if we are moving and thinking in the right and same direction.

PM14: "At the beginning and in between evaluations, or, like now, with the arrival of a new cabinet."

In conclusion, the game has potential. Especially because there is currently no tool to trigger awareness about assumptions regarding the interaction with people affected by policy.

Pain points & Mitigation strategy

- **Too many different cards:** Overload for players
Mitigation approach: Create less cards, hand out specific sets of cards in distinct phases of the game, ask the facilitator to provide every player with three cards.
- **Needing a good facilitator:** The influence of the facilitator is quite big, as this person must be very alert to assumptions.
Mitigation approach: uploading 30 second videos to train employees in developing the skillset needed to be an alert and critical facilitator.
- **Group Thinking:** If everyone shares the same vision, people might not recognize their assumptions and in turn overlook critical assumptions.
Mitigation approach: By asking a facilitator from another policy team, preferably even another section.
- **Confirmation Bias:** People may try to search for evidence that substantiate their perspective without looking for other evidence. So if too many people have the same reference frame they might dismiss assumptions as true.
Mitigation approach: playing the game with multiple people in a safe environment may lead to a more open ambience. The “game element”, the bell, might make one more eager to look for an occasion to press the bell. Possibly it promotes critical listening to each other’s statements.
- **People who are alone on a policy topic:** It is especially important that people who are solely responsible for a policy topic become aware of their assumptions. For playing the game properly you need more than one person but asking external people may form an obstacle.
Mitigation approach: Play along with another section
- **Integrating the canvas digitally:** There is no single place where policymakers collaborate online. It differs per section. Therefore it can become difficult to integrate the canvas.
Mitigation approach: promoting it on different channels and providing the canvas on different collaboration tools used within the Ministry.

6.10 Suggestions for Further Development

The game is co-creatively developed with policymakers. This collaborative process led to a number of participants becoming enthusiastic about further possibilities and applications during the development phase. Although I was unable to incorporate many of these suggestions into my design, they remain valuable considerations for future development. Additionally, I also have personal recommendations for the further development of the current version of 'Het Veronderstel Spel'.

Validating the current version

The game has not yet been tested by policymakers who select their own facilitator. Up to this point, I have always been involved in the game. Testing this could determine whether the game is intuitive enough for policy sections to play independently or if more training for facilitators is necessary. Additionally, the integration of the game can be further developed. Initially, I would test the digital version of the canvas for its discoverability in the digital environment, usability in the policy process, and whether it truly encourages the tracking and validation of assumptions over time. As I described earlier in this study, I think it is useful for the whole procedure if certain text fields in the canvas are locked until certain actions are actually performed and the outcomes are described. I would also like to reiterate the importance of investigating potentially undesirable side effects in the long term as well as the importance of investigating with the current set of cards whether they all genuinely contribute to the awareness of assumptions or if some have less impact; the latter could then be removed, which is good to prevent sensory overstimulation. Furthermore, if the Ministry considers the testing of this form of assumptions to be important, it might also be worth examining whether making the game mandatory in the policymaking process would ensure its continuity.

Validating the current version

As the game is further developed, it could be interesting to explore the creation of various sets. Policy sections could collect these sets depending on their specific tasks. For instance, a set could be designed to facilitate discussions about assumptions between policymakers and (vulnerable) individuals affected by policies. Different cards might also be more suitable for other departments, such as legal advisors or communication teams. Another purpose of the current game format could be to explore assumptions towards each other with participants from other involved policy departments or, for example, implementing organizations.

One of the participants considered it to be useful as a tool for conflict mediation between stakeholders, as she noticed many assumptions were not voiced among themselves.

PS10: "I think that this game, besides being a really good starter for a collaboration, can also be of added value during the process when there are a lot of assumptions about the other person slumbering under the surface and these remain not being talked about or even lead to real conflicts. As a way of mediation even, by combining it with a session regarding the governance triangle, or when looking at deep democracy or process direction"

Overall, there are still numerous tests that could be conducted to ensure that all components of the game function properly and do not produce any undesirable side effects. Furthermore, various variations of the game could be developed.

7

Conclusion, Recommendations & Reflection

This final chapter contains the conclusion and recommendations regarding this thesis, enhancing participatory policymaking at the MSAE through multiple design interventions. Additionally, I reflect on the process.

7.1 Conclusion

With this thesis, I aim to contribute to enhancing participatory policy processes within the MSAE through the use of multiple design interventions. These interventions react to the challenges I identified throughout my research into the topic of how the Ministry can properly contribute to making better policy and thereby improving trust between government and the people affected by policy. The research questions in this project are answered in this conclusion.

What are the obstacles and opportunities in the participatory policy-making processes within the MSAE?

Key findings from my research show that understanding the system of participatory policymaking at the MSAE has led to being able to position different challenges in relation to each other. The system is not solely active within the MSAE: policymaking is an amalgamation of alignments between policymakers, *De Lijn*, politics, implementation organisations, municipalities, provinces and the people who are affected by the policy. As a result, the policy-making system at the MSAE is complex and unpredictable. The use of safe-to-fail interventions through design sprints have supported the exposure of multiple challenges which occur in different areas of the system and influence each other. These interventions were in the form of conversations, evolving system maps and prototypes and sketches. Examples of challenges that have been discovered are: managing different interests and (contradicting) expectations within the system, internalising new skills, dealing with assumptions, connecting on a personal level and creating reciprocity in the interaction. The main opportunity is that at the moment there is real momentum for participatory policymaking, not only at the MSAE but in the entire public sector. Both the policymakers and the management team of the MSAE recognise its importance. Therefore, the investigation and the resolving of challenges in the participatory policy-making system will be widely supported.

Due to these challenges, policymakers are presently unable to fully engage in participatory policy-making practices. This poses a risk of *token participation*. *Token participation* can lead to policies which are not tailored to the people for whom they are created and potentially lead to a reduction in trust between policymakers and the people affected by policy. When interpreting these findings, it became clear that there is not one main problem which can be solved to enhance participatory

policymaking. Rather, it is a wicked problem which can only be untangled through the use of multiple solutions on a safe-to-fail basis, creating a ripple effect. Evolving on these interpretations, I clustered the different challenges into areas obstructing the current participatory practices. To steer the policy-making system at the MSAE towards the desired situation, I have designed a strategically located design intervention for each of the corresponding area's Four in total. In a product portfolio, the four following obstructing areas and the corresponding design interventions have been presented.

1. **Faulty Frameworks:** The frameworks at the MSAE are not always adapted accordingly to the changing way of working that is required for participatory policymaking. My intervention: a game called 'Approach Alignment', to get people on the same page.
2. **Task Overload:** There are, within the complicated work environment which is the MSAE, too many tasks and expectations experienced by some policymakers. My intervention: Dilemma Debate. It is a game, like the telltale game series, on live television to create awareness among politicians and voters, confronting them with the (long-term) effect of their political promises on the potential to create policy together with the people affected by it.
3. **The lack of a Relationship:** Participation processes are often still a one-way relation of information retrieval. My intervention: 'The Policy-Possible-Maker postcard', building a relationship through more informal, personal and reoccurring interactions. To make these relationships durable every participant is offered the possibility to join a network with the other Policy-Possible-Makers and policymakers where they can track policy and see the impact of their contributions.
4. **Unevaluated Assumptions:** (wrong) assumptions are not always evaluated. My intervention: 'Het Veronderstel Spel'. A game to discover and question assumptions for validity

In what way can designs interventions help enhancing participatory policy-making practices?

Earlier in this conclusion I described how I employed design interventions to investigate participatory policymaking at the ministerial level, resulting in the identification of obstruction areas. Strategic interventions were then applied to mitigate these obstructions. This research demonstrates that implementing multiple safe-to-fail design interventions—analogous to the ripples that form in the water after dropping multiple pebbles into a pond—can reveal the dynamics of participatory policymaking at the MSAE. Moreover, areas of destructive interference are highlighted by the locations in the pond where ripples are flattened. These areas obstruct the system from enhancing in participatory policy-making practices. By pinpointing these obstructed areas, it became possible to introduce strategically positioned design interventions—akin to dropping pebbles in flattened areas—to create ripples that may elevate the participatory processes at the identified leverage points to align with the Ministry's objectives. Overall, my design experiments in this research should positively influence participatory policy-making processes by targeting intervention in multiple areas in the system. Particularly of my design intervention 'Het Veronderstel Spel', I believe I can conclude from my research that recognising and investigating assumptions at an early stage can positively influence participatory policymaking and thereby contribute to restoring the confidence of people affected by policy in the policymakers and politics.

7.1.1 Limitations

Time & Scope

This research took place over the course of five months. The project started with a clear scope, but within this scope, the investigation and final design would be reactive rather than preventive. From a strategic and personal perspective, it was more interesting to look at what could be done preventively. Solving a problem at the root cause is usually more effective than softening its symptoms. To find the root cause a rescoping was necessary. This broadened the scope and made the research more exploratory. As a result, it took longer to arrive at final designs and the research phase took a lot more time than anticipated. In addition, I had to dive into the policy-making process while being inexperienced, so it may have taken me longer to discover how the working methods and systems work than designers with experience in the public sector might need.

Research

The individuals I spoke with, my ability to create an open atmosphere and the questions I asked, all influenced the data I collected. The people I spoke to were generally open to participatory policymaking. In addition, the initial conversations came about due to the recommendation of the innovation team and subsequent referrals. This may not give you a multifaceted picture of what is going on within the Ministry. Most interviewees within the MSAE have been part of the bubble of policymakers around the innovation team. Furthermore, I have chosen not to speak to people who are affected by a specific MSAE policy due to the time limitations of this research. Their side has been represented by participation experts and actors in the system such as the national client council, community builders, participation consultants and from the literature. They see the common threads in participatory processes because they hear stories directly from multiple sources. In addition, I have spoken to an active citizen with experience in (non-MSAE specific) participatory processes such as round the table discussions, to retrieve insights directly from a participant's source as well. However, richer information could still have been gathered by speaking to people who can tell these experiences of being affected by MSAE policy first-hand.

Interpretation

During this project, I conducted extensive research and gathered a significant amount of information. Not all this information has been explicitly addressed in this report. Some information has provided me with a better understanding of participation within the public sector, though it is not directly relevant to this report.

However, other research has played a significant role in gathering information and conducting analyses on where the obstruction areas lie within participatory policymaking at the MSAE. I believe that the clustering insights, from the different types of research I conducted, reflect a strong personal element of my role as a designer. It involves considering the experiences I bring with me and how I subsequently interpret the results. Another designer might have developed different cause-effect-solution pathways using the same data. This is the nature of solving wicked problems since the designer always has to bring new elements into the process. Although the identified obstruction areas I have defined have been individually validated, they are not the only existing obstruction areas. Of the designs, primarily the assumption game has been broadly validated, along with the alignment game to a lesser extent. The challenges I was able to identify within the limited timeframe of this study are recognised and validated by employees of the Ministry. Furthermore, I also do not think these designs are the only ways to address the specific problem areas. These are conceived from my experiences and perspective, and generally have a game-focused element. This is not necessary and has limitations because not everyone is comfortable with a game format.. I personally recognised the significant value of incorporating a game element, as it can shift people's perspectives, draw them away from their daily tasks and make it enjoyable to discuss challenging topics such as assumptions and expectations. By trying to engage people with my designs I strive to steer away from the notion that participatory policymaking is just another task to check off the list.

Evaluations

The final strategic design could have undergone more rigorous evaluation, particularly regarding the use of the digital canvas, to determine if this would facilitate policymakers in evaluating their assumptions. Due to time constraints, I was not able to do this myself as to observe the outcomes of such a safe-to-fail experiment, I believe that additional months, perhaps even years, will be required. Additionally, the final design was evaluated with people that were already open to participatory working. Consequently, no consideration has been given to whether the enthusiasm about het 'Veronderstel Spel' holds when a team involves policymakers with diverse perspectives on participatory policymaking. On the other hand, the organisation has expressed interest in purchasing the game. I think that the enthusiasm and recognition regarding aspects like raising awareness and validating assumptions may have prompted a desire to pursue this further, at least among the people I have spoken to. I hope that the approach and the insights gathered will inspire continued experimentation and testing to keep enhancing participatory policy-making processes.

7.2 Project

Recommendations

Testing multiple strategic interventions

For follow-up research on this thesis, I would recommend developing various interventions from this portfolio (or new ones) to the level of ‘Het Veronderstel Spel’. It is interesting to investigate for each intervention what kind of ripple effect they cause within the system (positive or negative) and whether the ripples from other interventions interfere with each other (constructively or destructively). This allows for the investigation of whether it is more impactful to implement multiple interventions simultaneously to achieve the broadest possible (positive) outcomes, or if it is better to test each intervention individually to determine their specific effects.

Leverage points

Additionally, I think it is important to conduct follow-up research on defining leverage points as soon as possible. Impactful participatory policymaking, where participants feel as if their voice matters, is the aim. However, if actions are taken randomly, with each policymaker acting at different points in the policymaking process and without clarity on whether these are the moments when policy can still be redirected, there is a risk of token participation. Additionally, given the pressure policymakers already face, it is useful in terms of task allocation to know the most effective moments for intervention.

Engagement

In a new study, it may be relevant to involve an additional target group, such as people who have not yet expressed interest in participation. Understanding how to motivate these individuals to participate is crucial, as without them, new policies will continue to have blind spots. I believe it may also be worthwhile to involve people who are directly impacted by the policies more intensively in co-creation sessions for creating safe-to-fail experiments.

Methodology

Finally, it also seems relevant for future research to develop a methodology that allows policymakers to systematically address identified obstacles. For instance, using my designs as a basis, an overarching methodology could be established where assumptions are first identified and then tested. Subsequently, the focus could shift to aligning all stakeholders towards a common goal. Following this, maintaining a more equal relationship with all involved parties should be addressed.

7.3 Reflections

Reflection on participatory policymaking at the MSAE and recommendations

I think people within the Ministry, whom I have spoken to, have already acknowledged the importance of participatory policymaking. The challenges that emerged indicate that while most policymakers acknowledge the importance, they struggle with implementing it effectively. Therefore, I believe that the goal of the MSAE regarding participatory policymaking should grow with the phase policymakers are in. This translates into a need for a more tangible goal. In other words, instead of goal which implies 'more' participatory practices', shift to a goal representing the need for 'effective' participatory practices. Effective participatory practices entail knowing when participation can have a real influence on the policy and only employ it at those times, as well as knowing how to conduct participatory policy-making practices by 'removing internal obstructions' at the Ministry beforehand.

When I reflect on the various obstacles and interventions, changes in mindset, processes and technologies are needed to reduce internal obstructions. Based on this, I believe the initial goal "Within three years (2025), every SAE'er places the end-user at the centre of every stage of the policy-making process", is (unfortunately) not achievable. This too, argues for an adjustment of the goal. New objectives could, for instance, be developed through a phased plan. The initial objective is to help employees understand the 'why'. The next objective is to encourage employees to identify obstacles within their policy department and address them, the 'how', and the last objective to determine 'when' participation genuinely has an impact.

Looking forward

This research has shown that the dynamics between society, politics and the ministry have a great impact on the possibilities of influential participatory work. In fact, the current government has drafted a coalition agreement based on outlines rather than one with predefined problems and solutions. This could provide more room for ministries to engage in a broader study with all stakeholders. Adding to that, this cabinet indicates a very strong vision on involving people affected by policy in creating policy. Below some statements from the coalition agreement (Hoop, Ief en trots – Hoofdlijnenakkoord 2024 - 2028 van PVV, VVD, NSC en BBB, 2024):

"Politics and governance, despite good intentions, has made mistakes in recent years, by not always taking people's concerns seriously"

“The civil service is arguably putting more emphasis on professionalism, knowledge, implementation and citizen perspective; recruitment for and rotation in the general administration service are being context.”

Moreover, utilising design principles to understand the system of the MSAE within the framework of participatory policymaking has worked well in this project. It entails employing design interventions and subsequently interpreting the responses retrospectively, with the aim of fostering innovation within the public sector. There is momentum to use design to innovate within the public sector. This is demonstrated, among other things, by the establishment of PONT: “PONT organises programme from 2024 to 2026 to increase the impact of design-based approach on societal task” (De Publieke Ontwerppraktijk, n.d.).

Personal reflection

Reflecting on my project choices during my master’s and extracurricular activities, I realise that I prefer to orient myself broadly and learn from various fields. I believe that all these experiences contribute elements to what shapes you as a designer. When searching for a subject for my graduation project, I focused on finding a project in the public sector because I was extremely curious about how I would perceive my role as a designer here. I had no prior experience in this area and wanted to delve into it as a culmination of my studies. In my design brief, I have specified several learning objectives: Learn more about the governmental sector, connecting with people, generating and analysing data through co-creation and qualitative interviews, stakeholder research and management, rapid design skills and developing and testing prototypes. The only objective I completely abandoned was processing data with machine learning. Initially, this seemed interesting, especially when I was more focused on language and reflecting on input. However, as I broadened the project’s scope, I no longer saw significant added value for this method for research. Below, I outline my learning points through dividing them into strengths and weaknesses.

Weaknesses

What I have learned about myself is that I can be insecure, and this can significantly impact individual research. Looking back, this has led to a struggle with making decisions and often sought verification from the people I spoke with. This was partly due to being new to the public sector and dealing with a large, complex issue. It is also a trait in my personality, that I do not always trust my own expertise. As a result, I constantly felt that much remained unexplored or unconsidered. This made it difficult for me to distinguish between main issues and sidetracks. I coined a term for this: Fear of Missing Information. I was often afraid of missing something important or believed that being physically present would yield more than an online meeting. However, I have grown in this area. After the initial phase, I started conducting more meetings online, and I found out this did not detract from the quality of the information or the connection with people. With such a broad topic, there will always be information gaps. For instance, regarding how societal distrust in the government has fuelled participation, this was frequently mentioned by the Ministry. When reviewing reports and scientific research, it becomes clear that trust is a highly ambiguous subject. The relationships involved are not always straightforward. This is something I got caught up in for quite a while until I figured out that I could mention this ambiguity and at the same time rely on what the Ministry perceives as the reason

for the shift to more participation. What I found difficult during this study as well was the sensitivity of words. Initially, I always talked about 'the citizen', but this does not say very much because in the case of participatory policymaking, you want to speak to the people who are specifically affected by that policy, not just any inhabitant of the country. Within the Ministry, people had different words for participation and people affected by policies, because of this I got tangled up with it myself.

Strengths

Working in sprints greatly helped me to achieve tangible results quickly, and combining this with qualitative research allowed me to establish connections with people on various levels. I engaged in different forms of data collection and analyses, sometimes even simultaneously. Producing a tangible product is out of my comfort zone because I have never considered myself a maker. At first glance, this may seem like a disadvantage, but my initial doubts made me much more critical, and at the end of the line, I ended up with a much better product because I tested it endlessly in many ways to make sure it works. I can therefore now stand confidently behind my design. My strengths highlighted in this study are connecting and involving people. I think sometimes my lack of confidence in my own expertise led me to actively seek out and gratefully utilise the knowledge and experiences of others. I believe people noticed this and felt genuinely valued as a result. I also think my motivation, enthusiasm to learn and the ability to quickly translate information into results and insights contributed to this perception. I think this has paid off well in my research because it has led to people referring me to others, sharing their feelings and experiences and getting back to me if they had information, they considered relevant for my research.

Personal learnings about participation

What I quickly discovered during my research was that, while investigating participation, I was conducting a participatory project myself. I first realised this because I recognised certain challenges faced by policymakers within my own project, such as: How can I engage people when I don't yet know exactly what for? What should I ask them? How do I provide feedback to them? What if their input has no influence? And how do I keep track of all these contacts? The positive element I recognised from participatory literature and the conversations with participation experts, is that involving the relevant people (such as policymakers) frequently and at moments when it truly impacts the process, creates opportunities for engagement. This approach makes people enthusiastic and more invested in ensuring that the outcomes have the desired impact. The game was developed from the bottom up, rather than me conducting an analysis and then prescribing how they should change their practices. By engaging the policymakers in my process to enhance participatory practices I effectively already started giving them tools to use in participatory processes.

All things considered, I have learned an immense amount about the public sector and what it is like to design within it. Independently conceiving and executing this graduation project had its ups and downs, but I am very pleased with the result and the knowledge it has provided me.

Glossary

The Government = De Overheid

1600 organisations and bodies including 11 ministries, 12 provincial authorities and 390 municipal authorities, (Overheid.nl).

The National Government = Rijksoverheid, Het Rijk

Prepares policies, legislations and rules on a national level and takes the implementation and monitoring into account as well.

The Government = De Regering

The king and all ministers. Responsible for the governance of the country and implementation of policies.

The Cabinet = Het kabinet

all ministers and all state secretaries

Coalition Agreement = Coalitie Akkoord

What the government sets out to achieve in their cabinet period. Leaders of parliamentary groups negotiate on a draft when they want to make up a new cabinet. It is a compromise between different parties (Wat is een regeerakkoord?, n.d.).

The house of representatives = De Tweede Kamer**The Senate = De Senaat, De eerste Kamer**

Mainly responsible for legislation. If the house of representatives vote for a legislative proposal, the senate will have to vote to.

The States General, The Parliament= De statengeneraal, het parlement

The house of representatives and the senate combined

The Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry: De Parlementaire Enquête Commissie

The house of representatives and the senate have the right of investigation and inquiry; open an investigation on a specific topic. This is a way to monitor the government.

Staats secretaris = State secretary

Conduct some of the ministers' tasks. If the minister is absent, the state secretary will stand for them

Ministry, Department = Ministerie, departement

A ministry prepares policies, laws and legislations. They also have an important task in implementing and evaluating policies, yet this can also be conducted by internal or

external organisations or persons.

The Minister = De minister, De bewindspersoon

Each ministry is headed by a different minister from the government. A minister may be supported by a state secretary.

Parliamentary Question: Kamervraag

Questions submitted by members of the House of Representatives to the government

Decision Memo = Beslisnota

Background information a minister uses during the decision-making process on a chamber document.

A proposal, a draft bill

In case the cabinet thinks a new legislation is required, civil servants draft a bill. This includes details on the implementation of the bill and the legal provisions required. Afterwards, the draft is examined by the House of Representatives.

The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy = Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het

Regeringsbeleid (WRR)

An independent Advisory Body for the government policy, providing strategic policy advice which is scientific based. Often regarding issues with long-term political and social consequences.

Signal = Signaal

Omens of a situation that a keen observer could notice, often when something not quite right which relates to a policy, legislation or law. A signal is an indication which needs to be interpreted to understand the underlying phenomenon it refers to. This is a term often used within the MSAE.

Menselijke maat

'to fairly consider the interests of citizens during the development and enforcement of policies, laws, and regulations' (Lensen-Goossen, et al., 2021)

Mensbeeld

an assumption about individuals' desires, abilities, and behaviors. Often, policymakers do not recognise that the human images they use to inform their policy choices may be overly simplistic, excessively optimistic, or unduly pessimistic (Gebhardt & Feijten, 2022).

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Appendices

Appendices

- A. Approved brief
- B. Interview guides
- C. First Sprint Evaluation
- D. First co-creation session
- E. Designs Sprint 2
- F. Design Sprint 3
- G Clusteren
- H Co-creatie 2
- I Designs Creation
- J Final Design Evaluation Form
- K Inhoud van het spel

A. Approved Brief



Name student **Noortje Duijzer**

Student number **4,668,707**

PROJECT TITLE, INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM DEFINITION and ASSIGNMENT

Complete all fields, keep information clear, specific and concise

Project title **Closing the loop in collaborative policy development involving both citizens and policy-makers.**

Please state the title of your graduation project (above). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

Introduction

Describe the context of your project here; What is the domain in which your project takes place? Who are the main stakeholders and what interests are at stake? Describe the opportunities (and limitations) in this domain to better serve the stakeholder interests. (max 250 words)

This graduation project takes place at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (MSAE), within the innovation team. The aim of MSAE is to contribute to equal, healthy and safe employment in The Netherlands. "The ministers' responsibilities include labour market policy, including migration and free movement of workers, benefits and reintegration, income policy, combining work and care, working conditions policy and inspection thereof." (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). According to the recently published WWR report, the government should intensify its efforts to enhance grip among citizens when formulating and executing policies, (WWR, 2023). Citizens should be equipped with the necessary resources, opportunities, and rights to pursue their life aspirations. Insufficient control over one's life can precipitate health issues, premature mortality, heightened social unease, and potentially foster inclinations towards conspiracy theories, (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, December 2023). The involvement of citizens in policy-making is sometimes seen as a response to social unease (WWR, 2023). Involving citizens in policy evaluation is fairly new, (Sociale Vraagstukken, 2018), and becoming popular due to its potential to lead to more fair and improved decision-making as more perspectives are included, (Visser, 2023). According to Visser, it may also increase trust in the government (2023). Citizens are involved in the process of policy-making via forums, deliberation, panels, interviews, focus groups, and more (Rijksoverheid, n.d.), (Berenschot, 2023). After these sessions, policy papers are written. This should also result in policies better tailored to the wants and needs of citizens, which leads to more "doenlijk" and accessible policies. However, according to the WWR report, participation provides mainly more grip to those with the time and capability to effectively take part in such processes, (2023). Those without the time and capability might benefit more from competent elected representatives. Therefore, a design approach to explore engagement, communication, limitation and opportunities in participatory policy-making may lead to novel insights. Stakeholders in this domain are the citizens of the Netherlands, Innovation Team at MSAE board members at MSAE employees at MSAE. Opportunities in this domain: Enhancing trust, collaboration and transparency. Empowering citizens with control. Empowering employees by means of tools or methods in collaborative policy-making, more "doenlijke" policies. Limitations in this domain: Caution with unpublished policies, sensitivity and stress regarding the topic of the policy, range of different policies and their complexity.

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Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Problem Definition

What problem do you want to solve in the context described in the introduction, and within the available time frame of 100 working days? (= Master Graduation Project of 30 EC). What opportunities do you see to create added value for the described stakeholders? Substantiate your choice. (max 200 words)

"Citizens' trust in society is increasingly in the spotlight. This concerns not only the trust citizens have in other people, but especially in politics and other institutions." (CBS, 2023). According to Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, about 20% of Dutch citizens believe the government's poor performance justifies complete system overhaul (2023). The Allowance Affair has led to an overall decreasing confidence in the government (Van Zutphen, 2023). In fear of making mistakes, citizens no longer apply for facilities. Concerns have been raised about the growing number of individuals who either hesitate to seek assistance or lack awareness of how to access it, especially in neighborhoods where livelihood and poverty concerns are widespread. (Sociaal Werk Nederland, 2023). Therefore, trust in the government and the government's capability to address peoples problems are the overarching themes. One element of the issue concerns the publication of complex policy papers regarding the considerations on decisions, when citizens are involved in in policy-making. This complex feedback loop of information discourages citizens, who participated in developing the policy, from reading the effect it has had. Sociaal Werk Nederland (2023) argues that merely providing active information to citizens is inadequate, as they are increasingly resistant to receiving the message. On top of that, experiments of municipal governments showed that interactive policies are only accepted if citizens can actually find their contributions reflected in policy, (Sociale Vraagstukken, 2018).

Assignment

This is the most important part of the project brief because it will give a clear direction of what you are heading for. Formulate an assignment to yourself regarding what you expect to deliver as result at the end of your project. (1 sentence) As you graduate as an industrial design engineer, your assignment will start with a verb (Design/Investigate/Validate/Create), and you may use the green text format:

My goal is to design a tangible and evocative intervention to improve and tailor the feedbackloop in participatory policymaking, between citizens and policy-makers. I am to do so by supporting citizens in their understanding of complex information throughout the process, and employees of the ministry Social Affairs and Employment in collaborating with citizens and the changes that arise from the open government. The overarching goal is to contribute to openness and transparency, leading to an increase of trust in the government.

Then explain your project approach to carrying out your graduation project and what research and design methods you plan to use to generate your design solution (max 150 words)

I would like to employ multiple design cycles, incorporating prototypes and pilots to gather information. Initially, I will initiate a brief cycle centered on initial conversations to generate excitement about the project and gather valuable feedback. Following this, I will undertake a more extensive cycle requiring additional time. Lastly, the third and most comprehensive design cycle will build upon insights from prior cycles, conducting thorough research and concluding with the implementation of an effective intervention—be it a tool, method, strategy, or framework—to enhance citizen engagement in policy-making and deepen their comprehension of the process and its results.

In the background, I intend to continue to draw on insights from the legal design and policy design literature. I want to do this interactively, by comparing theoretical insights and what I see directly in practice. I plan on making use of journey mapping and process mapping methods to create an understanding of how policy is currently created, in what way citizens experience their involvement and overall challenges and opportunities. I will use ideation methods and test possible solutions in different cases of policy creation. Finally, I will keep track of a reflective diary throughout the entire process.

Project planning and key moments

To make visible how you plan to spend your time, you must make a planning for the full project. You are advised to use a Gantt chart format to show the different phases of your project, deliverables you have in mind, meetings and in-between deadlines. Keep in mind that all activities should fit within the given run time of 100 working days. Your planning should include a **kick-off meeting**, **mid-term evaluation meeting**, **green light meeting** and **graduation ceremony**. Please indicate periods of part-time activities and/or periods of not spending time on your graduation project, if any (for instance because of holidays or parallel course activities).

Make sure to attach the full plan to this project brief.
The four key moment dates must be filled in below

Kick off meeting	27 feb 2024
Mid-term evaluation	24 apr 2024
Green light meeting	26 juni 2024
Graduation ceremony	25 juli 2024

In exceptional cases (part of) the Graduation Project may need to be scheduled part-time. Indicate here if such applies to your project

Part of project scheduled part-time	
For how many project weeks	
Number of project days per week	

Comments:

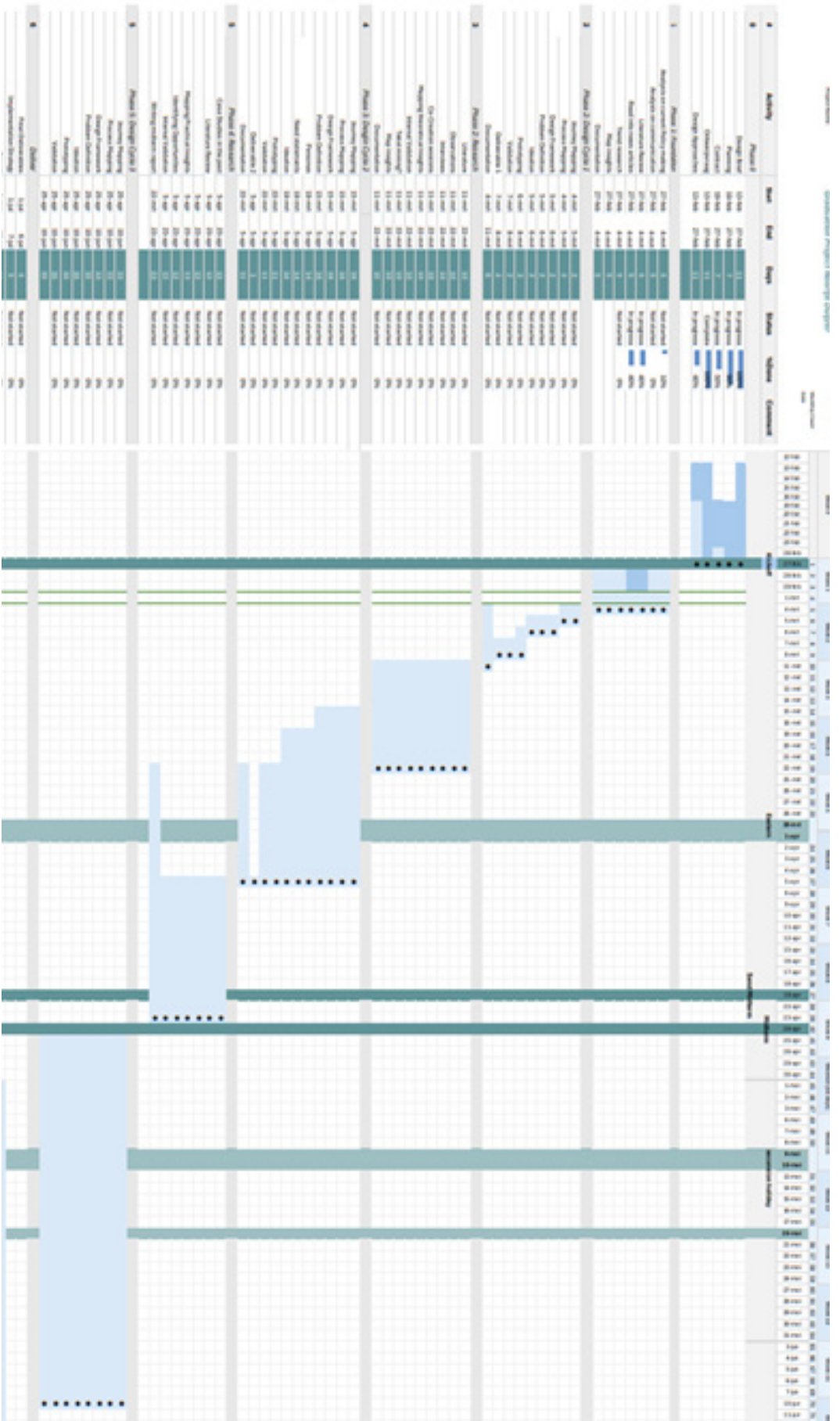
Motivation and personal ambitions

Explain why you wish to start this project, what competencies you want to prove or develop (e.g. competencies acquired in your MSc programme, electives, extra-curricular activities or other).

Optionally, describe whether you have some personal learning ambitions which you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project itself. You might think of e.g. acquiring in depth knowledge on a specific subject, broadening your competencies or experimenting with a specific tool or methodology. Personal learning ambitions are limited to a maximum number of five.
(200 words max)

In the first quarter of this year, I have completed an internship at Accenture. Here I got an insight into what it is like to work at a major consultant and at the same time at a design agency. To broaden my perspective, I was very curious about the governmental sector. When starting to look for a graduation project, I was also looking into the translation of complexities through design. It started with an interest in complex technologies but lead me towards the translation of complex documents for citizens (partly based on my own annoyance in not understanding leases or tax returns). In a conversation with Peter Lloyd he advised me to look into legal design; where I became curious about making complex documents understandable and accessible for all using design methods. I really enjoy connecting with people and working with people, making others feel heard and combining different perspectives. It is very interesting to conduct my graduation project at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment as this is the place here policy is written and decisions are made which have an effect on the country as a whole. The involvement of citizens is important and this is recognized already.

I want to learn more about generating and analyzing data, and translating that into an effective outcome. Data could be gathered through co-creation sessions, text-mining, qualitative interviews, etc.
I would like to learn more about stakeholder research and management in a governmental setting
I would like to develop skills in rapid design cycles, from ideation, to developing and testing prototypes (such as tools that would be actually used, and not end up on a shelf).



B. Interview Guides

Interview questions policymakers (differ per person)

- Kan je wat meer vertellen over je werkzaamheden?
- Hoe wordt er bij jou beleidsafdeling praktijkgericht gewerkt?
- Wat ervaren ambtenaren en betrokkenen als lastig in het proces?
- Ervaar jij, of mensen in je omgeving, wel eens drempels om gesprekken aan te gaan met mensen uit de praktijk?
- Op welke wijze wordt er een relatie/connectie aangegaan met samenwerkingspartners?
- Hoe worden inzichten verwerkt?
- Heb je een voorbeeld van een best-practice?
- Bij welk beleid hebben inzichten uit de praktijk echt invloed gehad?
- Voeren jullie wel eens gesprekken met de praktijk zonder een probleemstelling?
- Op wat voor manier wordt er tijd of ruimte gemaakt voor participatieve processen?
- Hoe houden jullie deelnemers op de hoogte?
- Hoe ga je om met verwachtingen?
- Vindt iedereen praktijkgericht werken even belangrijk?
- Heeft de politiek invloed op praktijkgericht werken?

Questions Policy section

- Kan je een gemiddelde dag voor jou beschrijven?
- Wat vind je goed gaan in de huidige manier van hoe beleid wordt gemaakt
- waar liggen valkuilen in de huidige manier waarop beleid wordt gemaakt?
- Heb je een idee hoe een het ideaal gezien gemaakt zou worden?
- Hoe is het om met mensen te werken die geraakt worden door het beleid wat jij maakt?
- Wat is het doel om dit te doen? Wat is de waarde van deze kennis?
- Is het vaak al van te voren duidelijk wat het doel, hoe ga je om met onzekerheid
- Hoe komen die gesprekken tot stand?
- Zitten jullie wel eens met verschillende externen in 1 meeting, hoe gaat dat?
- Wat is lastig hierin, iets wat vaak misgaat? En waar in het proces? Front end, in het process zelf, evaluatie?
- Hoe spelen de verschillende (hiërarchische) lagen een rol? Ook naar burger toe?
- Zit er weerstand, waar komt dat door?
- Heb je het gevoel dat mensen het spannend vinden? Waardoor komt dat?
- Zijn er aannames over wat voor input de persoon die geraakt wordt kan brengen? Zijn
- mensen zich hiervan bewust? Zijn daar andersom ook aannames denk je? Wat voor effect heeft dit?
- Zijn er verwachtingen die gemanaged moeten worden
- Speelt vertrouwen een rol, hoe gaat dat?
- Kan je dit doen in elke fase van beleid, hoe werkt dat?
- Hoe ga je om met de uitkomsten van ervaringskennis, hoe plaats je signalen? Sensemaking?
- Hoe kom je er achter wat mensen proberen te communiceren naar aanleiding van een signaal
- Waar zitten blindspots in deze manier van werken?
- Empathie naar beide kanten toe?
- Wat is denk je de motivatie waardoor mensen die geraakt worden meedoen?
- Wanneer kan input gemakkelijk meegenomen worden?
- Hoe koppelen jullie inzichten terug?

Questions someone was part of participation processes

1. Kunt u mij wat meer vertellen over uzelf?
2. Heeft u wel eens met een participatie sessie/traject meegedaan? Waar ging dat over en hoe werd het georganiseerd?
3. Wat was uw motivatie om deel te nemen?
4. Wat ging goed?
5. Wat heeft u als lastig ervaren?
6. Heeft u eruit gehaald wat u eruit wilde halen?

Proces

7. Op wat voor manier bent u betrokken geraakt bij een participatie bijeenkomst?
8. Heeft u dit zelf actief opgezocht of werd u uitgenodigd?
9. Wanneer in het proces werd u betrokken?
10. Bijvoorbeeld, bij het maken van de agenda en de plannen, probleem achterhalen, oplossingen bedenken, oplossingen kiezen, evalueren.. en meer?
11. Bent u één keer, of door het hele proces heen betrokken?
12. Waar gaat voor u het meeste tijd inzitten bij een participatie sessie/traject?

Samenwerking

13. Is er met u besproken op wat uw verwachtingen zijn bij deelname?
14. Is er met u besproken op wat voor manier u betrokken zou willen blijven?
15. Hoe gaat u om met verwachtingen en hoe zou u willen dat er vanuit de organisator mee omgegaan wordt?
16. Heeft u het gevoel gehad dat u een invloed had op het beleid wat gevormd werd/ de uitkomsten van de participatie bijeenkomst?
17. Heeft u een connectie gevoeld tussen u en de organisatie?
18. Welke randvoorwaarden zijn voor u van belang voor een gelijkwaardige samenwerking tussen u en de organisatie die een participatie bijeenkomst organiseert?

Terugkoppeling

19. Had u een verwachtingen van de uitkomsten van de sessie en wat er met uw inzichten gedaan werd?
20. In hoeverre zag u de inzichten ook terug in de uitkomsten?
21. Wat is uw gevoel erbij, als uw inzichten niet representeert zijn in de uitkomst?
22. Op wat voor manier werd u meestal van een update/terugkoppeling voorzien?
23. Heeft u er actief zelf naar gevraagd of werd dit gedaan door de organisatie?
24. Hoe voelt u zich erover wanneer er geen informatie teruggekoppeld wordt?
25. Wat is voor u een ideale manier om op de hoogte gehouden te worden?
26. Indien u niets over resultaten teruggekoppeld zou krijgen, zou u dan iets doen om hier toch meer over te weten te komen? Waar zou u dan informatie ophalen?
27. Heeft wel eens iets van een vergoeding gekregen voor een deelname? Hoe voelde u zich daarover?
28. Hoe zou u op de hoogte gehouden willen worden van de progressie van mijn\

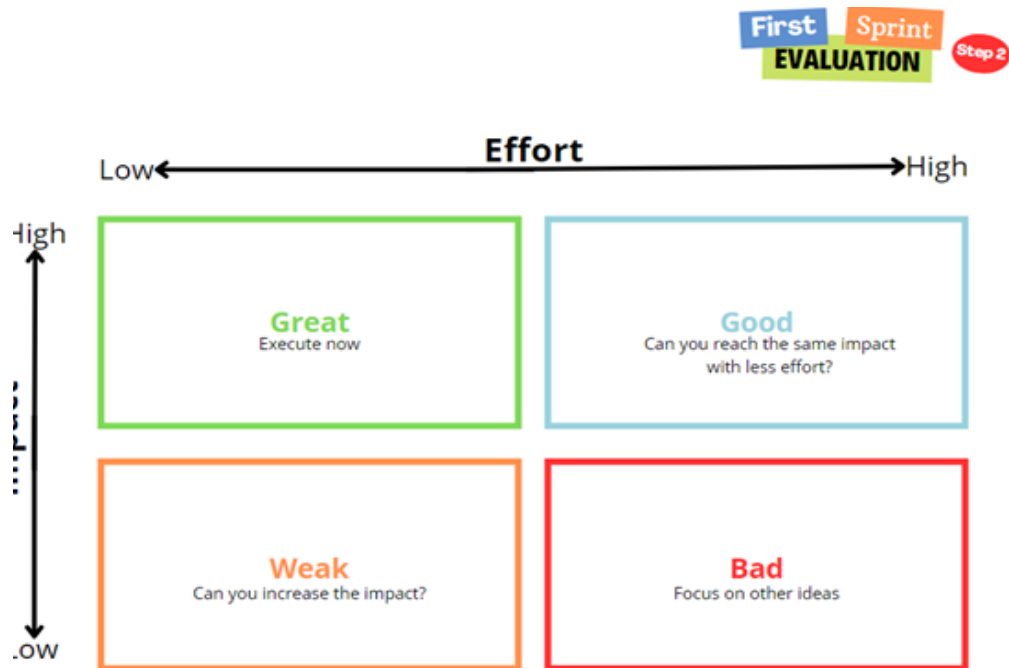
onderzoek

Questions External experts on participation

- Kan je mij wat meer vertellen over jezelf en ervaringen met participatie?
- Zijn er veranderingen geweest de afgelopen jaren en waar zou dat door kunnen komen?
- Wat zijn volgens jou op dit moment knelpunten in participatie projecten?
- Hoe kan op nationaal level samenwerken?
- Wat denk jij dat het verschil is in participatieprojecten op vanuit de gemeente en vanuit de overheid, voor deelnemers en organisatie?
- Wanneer in het proces worden mensen betrokken?
- Is het vaak één keer, of door het hele proces van beleidsvorming heen?
- Waar gaat het meeste tijd inzitten bij een participatie traject?
- Ook wanneer de probleemstelling/opdracht nog niet helemaal duidelijk is? Hoe vliegen jullie dit dan aan?
- Bespreken jullie hoe actief mensen in het proces betrokken zouden willen blijven?
- Op wat voor manier voorzien jullie mensen van een update/terugkoppeling?
- Is hier actief vraag naar vanuit de deelnemers?
- Wat is het risico als het vergeten wordt?
- Horen jullie wel eens geluiden over onvrede hierover vanuit de buurten?
- Hoe lossen jullie dit dan op?
- Bieden jullie iets aan deelnemers aan?
- Hoe gaan jullie om met verwachtingen vanuit de deelnemers?
- Is er wel eens angst om participatie processen te starten uit angst om verwachtingen niet waar te kunnen maken?
- Hoe waarborgen jullie gelijkwaardigheid in de samenwerking?
- Hoe verwerken jullie de input van deelnemers in beleid? Is dit nog terug te vinden?

C. First Sprint

Evaluation SETUP



How usable is the concept in practice?

• What problem would the concept solve?

Which goal does it help to reach

• What are pitfalls or downsides of the concept?

Would the use of the concept be impactful?

• What type of person would(n't) make use of the concept?




D. First Co-creation session

Setup

Each participant had to write down their answer and move the sheet to the person next to them. 7 people from different professional backgrounds within the MSAE participated.

Tijd	Wat	Nodig
15:00	Inloop	Alles klaarzetten
15:05	Opening	Ppt: Doelstelling SZW Naambordjes
15:10	Energizer motivatie	Ppt slide. Plaatjes uit stanley + uitleg
15:25	Transitie	Slide
15:30	Vraag ronde 1	Geprinte vragen, timer, bel
15:35	Vraag ronde 2	
15:40	Vraag ronde 3	
15:45	Vraag ronde 4	
15:50	Vraag ronde 5	
15:55	Vraag ronde 6	
16:00	Vraag ronde 7	
16:00	Pauze	
16:05	Nabespreken	Tape en post-its
16:20	Closing off	Slide

Sheets used



In hoeverre doet jouw afdeling onderzoek met de mensen die geraakt worden door beleid/ jouw werkzaamheden?


Wie waren dat?

Wanneer in het proces?

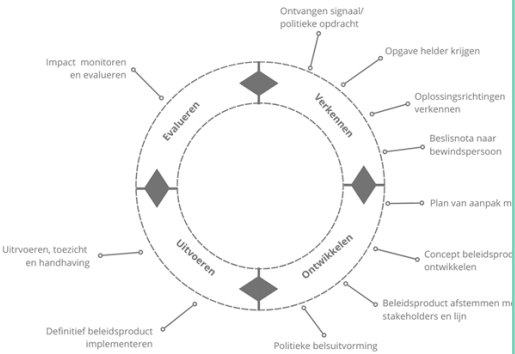
Wat werd er mee gedaan intern?

Wie voerde het uit? (Intern onderzoek of extern uitbesteed)

Hoe zijn de inzichten toegepast?



Teken uitroeptekens (!) waar jij het belangrijk vindt dat er meer inzichten, van de mensen die geraakt worden door het beleid/ jouw werkzaamheden, meegenomen moeten worden leg uit waarom.



The diagram shows a circular process with four main stages: **Verkennen** (top), **Ontwikkelen** (right), **Uitvoeren** (bottom), and **Evalueren** (left). Each stage has associated activities: **Verkennen** includes 'Ontvangen signaal/ politieke opdracht', 'Opgave helder krijgen', 'Oplossingsrichtingen verkennen', and 'Beslisnota naar bewindspersoon'. **Ontwikkelen** includes 'Plan van aanpak maken', 'Concept beleidsproduct ontwikkelen', 'Beleidsproduct afstemmen met stakeholders en lijn', and 'Politieke besluitvorming'. **Uitvoeren** includes 'Definitief beleidsproduct implementeren' and 'Uitvoeren, toezicht en handhaving'. **Evalueren** includes 'Impact monitoren en evalueren'.



Teken minnen (-) waar jij hebt ervaren dat de inzichten, van mensen die geraakt worden door het beleid/ jouw werkzaamheden, het minst duidelijk in het (beleids)product terug te zien zijn en leg uit waarom.







The diagram is identical to the one in the top-right sheet, showing the circular policy process with stages: **Verkennen**, **Ontwikkelen**, **Uitvoeren**, and **Evalueren**, each with its respective activities.



In hoeverre heb jij een drempel ervaren om samen te werken met mensen die geraakt worden door beleid/ jouw werkzaamheden, en hoe heeft zich dit geuit?

Sheets used

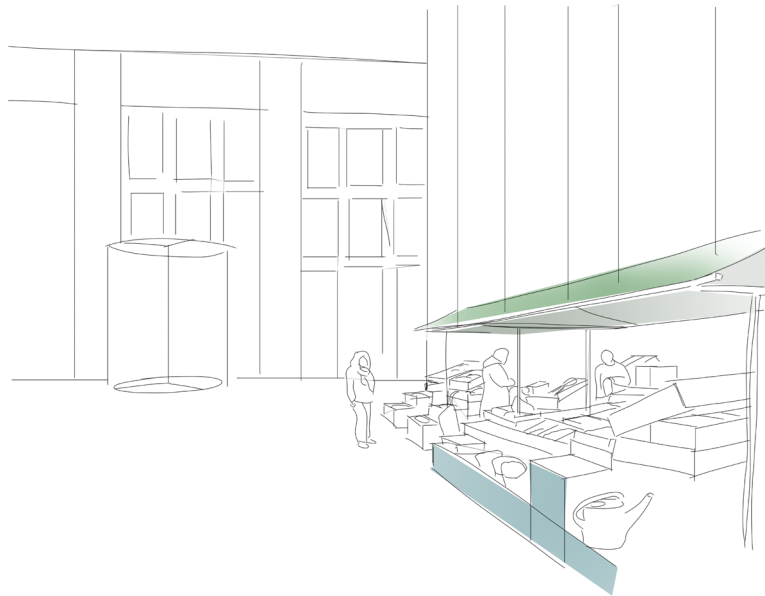
 <p>In hoeverre heb jij een relatie opgebouwd en informatie teruggekoppeld naar <i>mensen die geraakt worden door beleid/ jouw werkzaamheden</i>?</p> <p>Wat ging gemakkelijk?</p> <p>Wat ging lastig?</p>	 <p>Wanneer in het proces heb jij het als meest <u>effectief</u> ervaren om samen te werken met <i>mensen die geraakt worden door beleid/ jouw werkzaamheden</i>?</p> <p>Effectief voor de inhoud van het beleidsstuk</p> <p>Effectief voor de manier van werken</p> <p>Effectief voor de persoon die geraakt wordt door het beleid/werkzaamheden</p>
 <p>In hoeverre heb jij een drempel ervaren om samen te werken met <i>mensen die geraakt worden door beleid/ jouw werkzaamheden</i>, en hoe heeft zich dit geuit?</p>	 <p>In hoeverre heeft de politiek een invloed (gehad) op het samenwerken met <i>mensen die geraakt worden door beleid/ jouw werkzaamheden</i>, en kan je jouw antwoord toelichten?</p>

Hoe wil jij op de hoogte gehouden worden?

Naam:

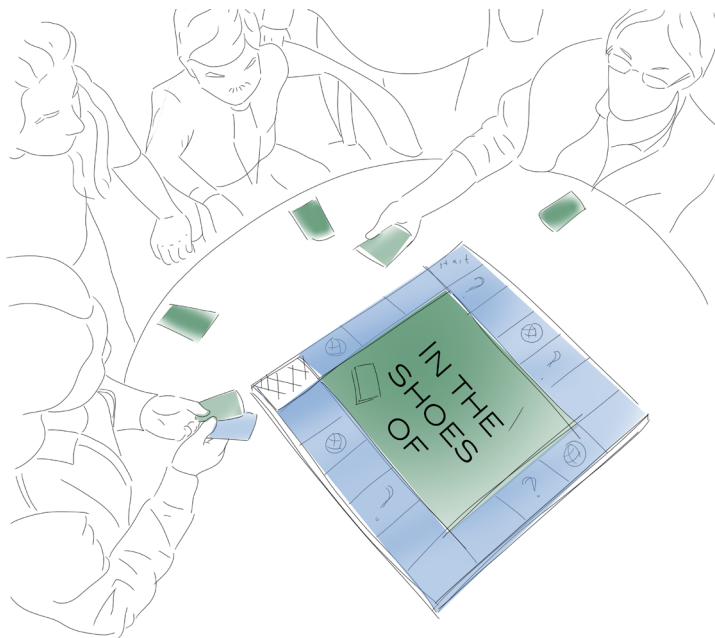
- ☐ Af en toe een mailtje met een update hoe ver je bent
- ☐ Een belletje of koffie
- ☐ Het rapport aan het einde (Eind juli)
- ☐ Iets anders:

E. Sprint 2 Designs



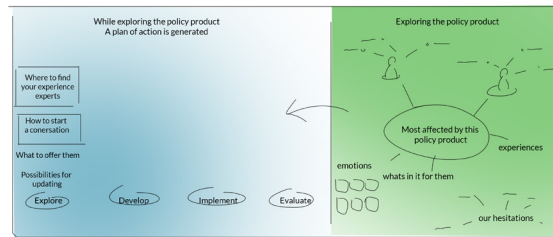
Design 1

A market place inside the Ministry, so that there is a low key interaction in a public building. The idea is to reduce the feeling of a ivory tower



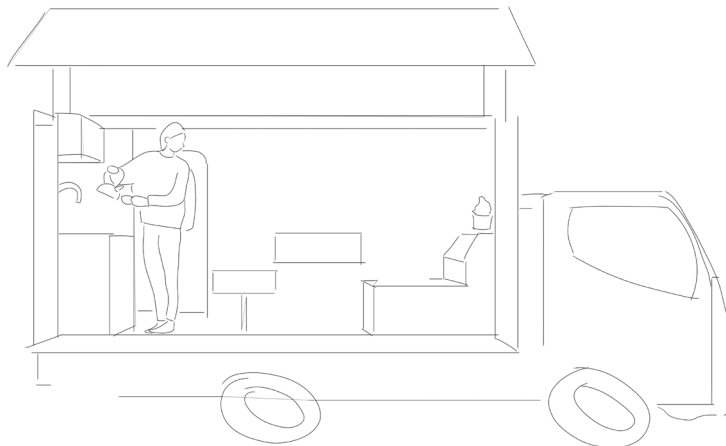
Design 2

A roleplaying board game. You empathise with the person on your card and take their point of view



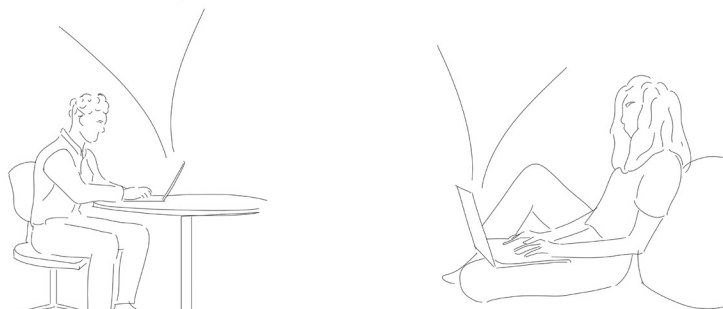
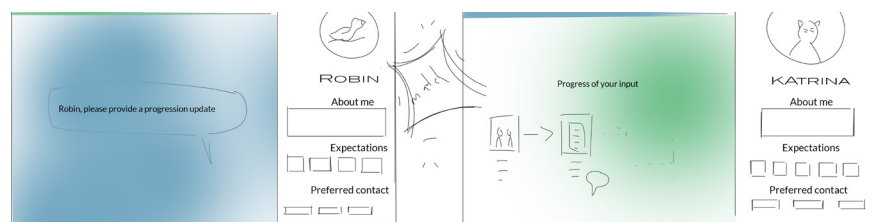
Design 3

A digital tool to brainstorm with people affected by policy, which turns into requirements



Design 4

The Ministry has a bus to travel through the country. It becomes fun to move around and information is not only retrieved around The Hague. Reducing the hurdle of policymakers to go out on the streets.



Design 4

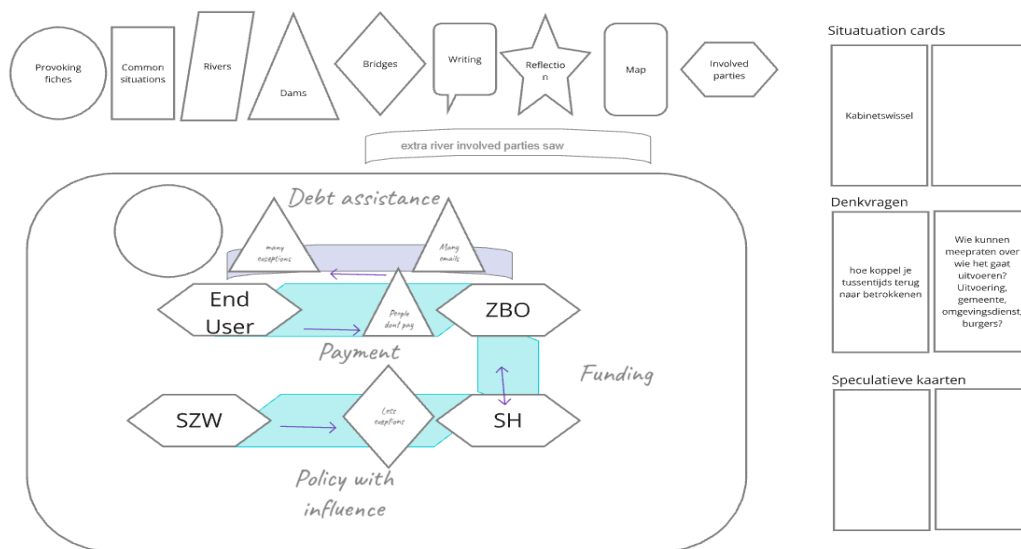
A website matching policymakers and people with experience on a certain topic. They can communicate with each other on the platform

F. Sprint 3 Design

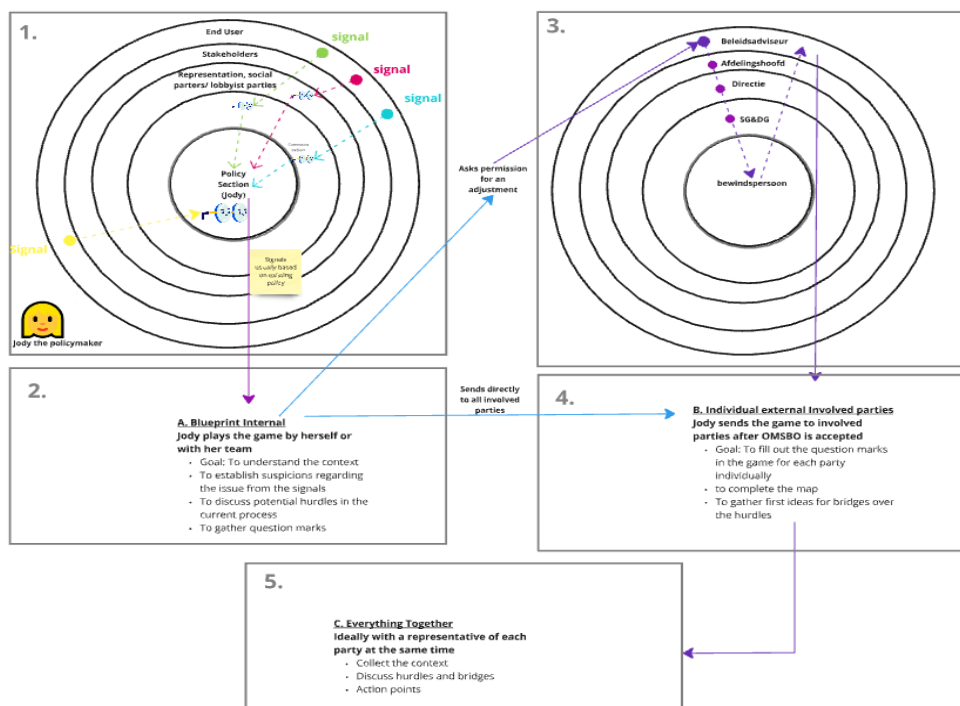
Design 1

A game to make frameworks of requirements together with stakeholders. The idea is that every stakeholder receives a set of this game, plays it on their own and discusses everyone's results during one joint meeting.

PARTS



GAME STEPS



G. Clustering Insights

Different clusters

All of the insights were combined into clusters. Clusters were connected in terms of causal relationships. The named clusters and their relationships are defined below.

Unevaluated Assumptions

- Clusters
 - Transparency and trust in diversity
 - People's expertise is difficult to estimate
 - Sometimes mistrust in capabilities
 - Trust in each others capabilities
 - Reaching the right people
 - Managing dealing with expectations
- Relation
 - Problem:
 - people's expertise is difficult to estimate
 - Mistrust in each other's capabilities
 - Interventie punten
 - Transparency & trust in delivery
 - Managing/dealing with expectations
 - Interventie
 - Dealing with assumption

Approach Alignment

- Clusters
 - Unclear requirements
 - Miskwalificaties
 - unclear communication
- Relation
 - Problem
 - Unclear formulation, making testing difficult
 - Frameworks fall over when tampering with thgem
 - Difficult to communicatie, actions are therefore difficult to conduct and evaluate
 - Not everyone is always on the same page and they are evaluating their work to different frames (appels met peren vergelijken)
 - Intervention points
 - Transparency & trust in delivery
 - Managing/dealing with expectations
 - Long term vision
 - Flexible framework
- Sensitivity to fluctuations

Task Overload

- Clusters
 - Overmaat incalculeren: flexibiliteit inbouwen
 - Task overload:
 - Political pressure defines the proces en urgency
 - vulnerable position
- Relation
- Problem
- o Task overload

- Hostile environment
- Interventie punten
 - Calculate flexibility in

Lacking relationship

- clusters
 - Dialog instead of ordering
 - Relationship building instead of one-way street
 - Need of space for continuous co-creation
 - Reoccurring understandable communication
- Relation
- Problem
 - One-sided communication
 - rdering information
 - No spare for reciprocity
 - Unclear communication
 - Intervention
 - Dialog instead of ordering
 - Relation building
 - Creating flexibility

H. Co-Creation 2:

Policy section

Setup

In 30 minutes, I asked a group of one policy team to answer the question on the sheets with post-its. together we discussed in a rapid co-creation session the different insights



- Bewust worden van aannames
- Bespreken met team?



Na gesprek

- Interpretatie evalueren
- Delen inzichten intern



In gesprek

- Verwoorden van aannames
- Bespreken en valideren
- Elkaar écht horen
- Open het gesprek in

I. Design Creation

Conditions

These boundary conditions came about during the last co-creation session within a policy section. As a designer, I also added some conditions I personally considered important, such as visually appealing.

Use of the design

- Accessible for policymakers working at the Ministry
- Efficient and useful by being easy to implement in the current way of working
- The design should be moveable and playable
- The use of the design should be self-explanatory and intuitive
- The design must be playable flexibly to be adaptable to the context of the policy product and team

Form of the design

- The design should be visually appealing
- The design should be appealing by promoting an enjoyable and engaging approach to work

Content of the design

- The content of the design should trigger awareness through reflection and critical thinking and conversations between colleagues.
- The content of the design should trigger policymakers to evaluate and test assumptions

Impact of the design

- The design should provide a more open conversation with the people affected by the policy
- The design should contribute to how the research process with people affected by the policy is structured
- The design should encourage awareness of assumptions and subsequent testing of those assumptions

Based on the four design directions, I created four different prototypes and posters. I was curious to see what type of interaction made people feel most comfortable in sharing their assumptions and what type of product they would consider most suitable in their current way of working.

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

Evaluation

For evaluation of the four designs, a form was used. Participants had to divide 100 points over the four concepts. They could add argumentation. In most cases there was



Je mag **100 punten** verdelen over de vier concepten, per vraag.

1. Welk concept helpt het meest om een gesprek over aannames op gang te brengen tussen collega's? Licht toe:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Hidden Hypotheses : | 3. Assumption Detection : |
| 2. Out-of-the-Box Box : | 4. Unveiling Assumptions : |



2. Welk concept helpt het beste om bij jou en je teamleden te onderzoeken welke (onbewuste) aannames er zijn? Licht toe:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Hidden Hypotheses : | 3. Assumption Detection : |
| 2. Out-of-the-Box Box : | 4. Unveiling Assumptions : |



3. Met welk concept zou je je veilig voelen om samen je eigen aannames mee te onderzoeken? Licht toe:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Hidden Hypotheses : | 3. Assumption Detection : |
| 2. Out-of-the-Box Box : | 4. Unveiling Assumptions : |



4. Welk concept zou je het meest aantrekkelijk vinden om te gebruiken? Licht toe:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Hidden Hypotheses : | 3. Assumption Detection : |
| 2. Out-of-the-Box Box : | 4. Unveiling Assumptions : |



5. Welk concept is gemakkelijk te integreren met de huidige werkwijze? Licht toe:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Hidden Hypotheses : | 3. Assumption Detection : |
| 2. Out-of-the-Box Box : | 4. Unveiling Assumptions : |



6. Welk concept zou je regelmatig willen gebruiken, bijvoorbeeld aan het begin van elk nieuw beleidstraject?

Licht toe:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Hidden Hypotheses : | 3. Assumption Detection : |
| 2. Out-of-the-Box Box : | 4. Unveiling Assumptions : |



7. Is er een concept wat bijdraagt in het, met een open blik, aangaan van gesprekken met mensen die geraakt worden door beleid? Licht toe:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Hidden Hypotheses : | 3. Assumption Detection : |
| 2. Out-of-the-Box Box : | 4. Unveiling Assumptions : |



8. Nog andere tips, suggesties of opmerkingen?

Score

Based on the points and argumentation given, I could see which design scored best. Hidden Hypotheses won by far. Assumption Detection was the runner up. People liked the bell element and roleplaying. Evaluation was done within the support team and the policy section I also conducted my interviews with.



J. Final Validation

1. Wat betekent dit voor spel jou?
2. Wat betekent dit spel voor jouw handelen?
3. Wat voor effect zou het spel kunnen hebben in gesprekken met eindgebruikers?
4. Wat zouden knelpunten kunnen zijn?
5. Zou je de ontdekte aannames toetsen in het gesprek? Hoe?
6. Zie je dit spel passen in de huidige werkprocessen?
7. Hoe vaak begin je aan een nieuw beleidstraject? Is het spel ook op andere momenten inzetbaar dan helemaal aan het begin?
8. Opmerkingen/suggesties?

K. Cards

<p>Ik ken de eindgebruikers, ik weet wat ze nodig hebben</p>	<p>Meepraten leidt tot teleurstelling</p>	<p>De eindgebruiker snapt de Haagse beslisprocessen niet</p>
<p>Ik ben volledig transparant als ik samenwerk met de eindgebruiker</p>	<p>De eindgebruikers gaan in het gesprek verwachten dat wij hun problemen kunnen oplossen</p>	<p>Als ik uitvraag doe op straat kan ik beter niet zeggen dat ik van een ministerie ben</p>
<p>Het besluit staat al vast, de eindgebruiker betrekken heeft weinig nut</p>	<p>Het verhaal van 1 eindgebruiker zegt niet zo veel</p>	<p>Ik ga niets nieuws horen wanneer ik met de eindgebruiker in gesprek ga</p>
<p>De eindgebruiker kan niet breder kijken dan eigen ervaringen</p>	<p>Ik wil eerst alles over de eindgebruikers weten voor ik in gesprek ga</p>	<p>Ik weet waar ik eindgebruikers moet vinden en hoe ik ze moet contacteren</p>

<p>Wat als de eindgebruikers dit beleid zelf mochten ontwikkelen, wat zou daar dan in staan?</p>	<p>Wat als de minister morgen het beleidsproduct opgeleverd wil zien en je kan nog 1 eindgebruiker spreken, wat voor iemand zou dat zijn?</p>	<p>Wat als de eindgebruiker in jullie gesprek gefrustreerd raakt of boos wordt?</p>
<p>Wat als de vragen die je had bedacht helemaal niet aan bod lijken te komen door iemands persoonlijke verhaal?</p>	<p>Wat als je met de eindgebruikers in gesprek gaat, hoe gedragen zij zich in het gesprek?</p>	<p>Stel je voor, je gaat in gesprek met een eindgebruiker en deze persoon wil het hebben over iets wat buiten jouw beleidsterrein valt?</p>
<p>Stel je voor, je gaat in gesprek met de eindgebruikers, hoe verloopt de interactie?</p>	<p>Stel je voor, je gaat in gesprek met de eindgebruiker, wat zouden jullie bespreken?</p>	<p>Wat als je verhalen/ geluiden ophaalt die tegen de voorgestelde/ gewenste oplossingsrichting ingaan?</p>
<p>Wat als je 1 advies aan de minister zou mogen geven, wat zou dat dan zijn?</p>	<p>Wat als je het beleidsproces opnieuw mocht inrichten, hoe zou het er dan uitzien? Wat zou anders zijn en wat zou hetzelfde zijn?</p>	

Wat zijn de overeenkomsten tussen ons en eindgebruikers?	Wat zijn verschillen tussen ons en de eindgebruikers?	Hoe werk jij praktisch gericht?
Wat is het doel van de uitkomst van dit beleidstraject?	Staat er al iets vast in dit beleidstraject?	Wat denk jij dat de eindgebruikers verwachten en waarom?
Wat zijn de drijfveren van de eindgebruiker?	Wat zijn passende middelen/oplossingen om tot het doel van dit beleid te komen?	Wat zijn de randvoorwaarden om tot het doel van dit beleid te komen?
Welke reacties verwacht je van de eindgebruiker?	In hoeverre subgroepen zijn er binnen de doelgroep te onderscheiden? Zo ja, welke?	Welke andere doelstellingen of factoren moeten ook mee in overweging genomen worden?

<p>Heeft de eindgebruiker vertrouwen in de overheid?</p>	<p>Hoe kan je de eindgebruiker spreken?</p>	<p>Zijn er mensen binnen de doelgroep die moeilijk te bereiken zijn en hoe zou je deze mensen toch kunnen spreken?</p>
<p>Is er een begrenzing in hoe transparant je kan zijn?</p>		<p>Op welke ervaring is dat gebaseerd?</p>
<p>Waarom heeft dit de prioriteit denk je?</p>	<p>Wat zouden gevolgen kunnen zijn van deze aanpak?</p>	<p>Waardoor zou dit gedrag veroorzaakt kunnen worden denk je?</p>
<p>Zou je een reden kunnen bedenken waarom dit mogelijk niet waar is?</p>	<p>Op welke informatie is dit antwoord gebaseerd?</p>	

Is er een ander urgent vraagstuk wat ook meegenomen moet worden in de overweging?	Hoe zou je de eindgebruiker beschrijven vanuit een conservatief perspectief?	Hoe zou je de eindgebruiker beschrijven vanuit een progressief perspectief?
Hoe zou je de eindgebruiker beschrijven vanuit een economisch perspectief?	Wat versta jij onder praktijkgericht werken in dit beleidstraject?	Hoe denk je dat de eindgebruiker jou/de beleidsmaker ziet?
Heb jij een blinde vlek op dit dossier?	Is er wel 'een eindgebruiker'? Of "de eindgebruikers"?	Wanneer moet je eerlijk zijn tegen de eindgebruikers?
Wanneer moet je niet eerlijk zijn tegen de eindgebruikers?	HET VERONDERSTEL SPEL	Hebben de eindgebruikers onderling dezelfde behoeften? Waarom wel of niet?

<p>EEN EINDGEBRUIKER</p> <p>Beantwoord deze vraag alsof je een eindgebruiker van het beleid bent</p>	<p>SPEELWIJZE (1,5 UUR)</p> <p>Spelen: In het begin van een nieuwe fase in het beleidstraject</p> <p>De bel wordt gebruikt door iedereen die een aanname hoort, of zelf wil gaan zeggen.</p> <p>De facilitator verdeelt de kaarten, leidt nieuwe rondes in en het houdt aannames bij in het digitale canvas.</p>	<p>IJSBREKER</p> <p>Een man en zijn zoon krijgen een ernstig auto ongeluk. De vader overleeft het niet. De zoon wordt naar het ziekenhuis gebracht, rechtstreeks de operatiekamer in. De chirurg kijkt naar de jongen en zegt: "Ik kan deze jongen niet opereren, hij is mijn zoon!" Rara hoe kan dit?</p> <p>De chirurg is de moeder van het kind</p>
<p>DE ADVOCaat VAN DE DUIVEL</p> <p>De advocaat van de duivel vertegenwoordigt altijd de tegenovergestelde mening en eist bewijzen</p>	<p>DE MINISTER</p> <p>Beantwoord deze vraag alsof je de minister bent</p>	<p>RONDE 3 OPENKAARTEN (20 min)</p> <p>De facilitator geeft iedereen drie openkaarten. Spelers kiezen welke zij beantwoorden.</p> <p>Alle spelers mogen op de bel drukken wanneer zij een aanname horen.</p>
<p>RONDE 4: EVALUEREN MET CANVAS (20 min)</p> <p>De aannames worden besproken en er wordt gekeken hoe deze getoetst worden.</p>	<p>RONDE 2: WAT-ALS KAARTEN (20 min)</p> <p>De facilitator geeft alle spelers drie wat-als kaarten.</p> <p>Spelers kiezen welke zij beantwoorden. Alle spelers mogen op de bel drukken wanneer zij een aanname horen.</p>	<p>RONDE 1 STELLINGKAARTEN (10 min)</p> <p>De facilitator plakt 'waar' of 'niet waar' kaarten en legt deze uit elkaar op de grond.</p> <p>De facilitator leest een stellingkaart voor. Spelers stappen in op de lijn en leggen hun antwoord uit.</p> <p>Alle spelers mogen op de bel drukken wanneer zij een aanname horen.</p>
<p>WAAR</p>	<p>NIET WAAR</p>	<p>HET VERONDERSTEL SPEL</p> <p>Het Veronderstel Spel is co-creatief gemaakt met beleidsmakers van SZW.</p> <p>Doel: Bewust worden van aannames over de eindgebruikers en deze toetsen</p> <p>Waarom: Iedereen heeft aannames. Ze worden gevormd door ervaringen, normen en waarden. Het risico is dat deze (onbewust) als waarheid worden beschouwd. Daarmee vormen zij een filter in het beleidstraject. Dit spel maakt spelers bewust van aannames en stimuleert toetsing.</p> <p>Spelers: Spelers (beleidsmakers)</p> <p>Facilitator: (iemand buiten beleidsteam)</p> <p>Flexibet: Rollen, ijsbrekers & doorvragers</p>

