

ARE WE MAKING

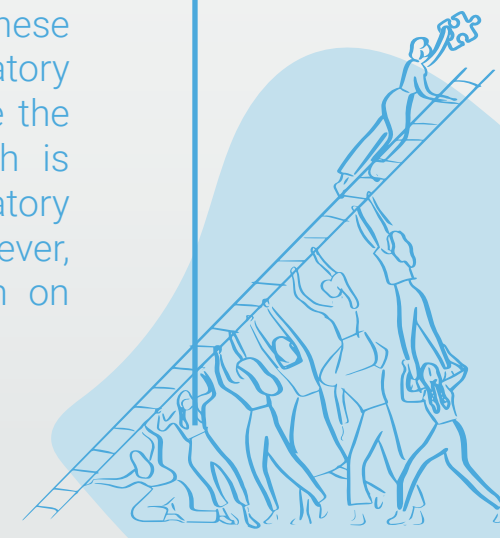
IMPACT

A tool for participatory design with citizens

THE CONTEXT

Society is increasingly faced with complex and wicked problems (Hervieux & Voltan, 2019). As a result, organisations face complex and open challenges and design has become more popular as an approach to address this (Dorst, 2011). Due to these global changes, the social design field is growing (Tromp & Vial, 2022). Participatory design is part of this field and has also gained more acceptance over the years (Smith & Iversen, 2018). The concept of citizen participation is experiencing growth due to rules and regulations that encourage this in government projects (e.g. the Omgevingswet (IPLQ, n.d.)).

Municipalities hire design studios like Zeewaardig to help guide these participatory processes, because of their expertise in the field of participatory design. Literature shows that there is often still a need to demonstrate the value of design to clients (Schmiedgen et al., 2016). This research is commissioned by Zeewaardig, a design studio working on participatory design, who also want to demonstrate the value of their approach. However, little is known about the impact of a participatory design approach on participating citizens.

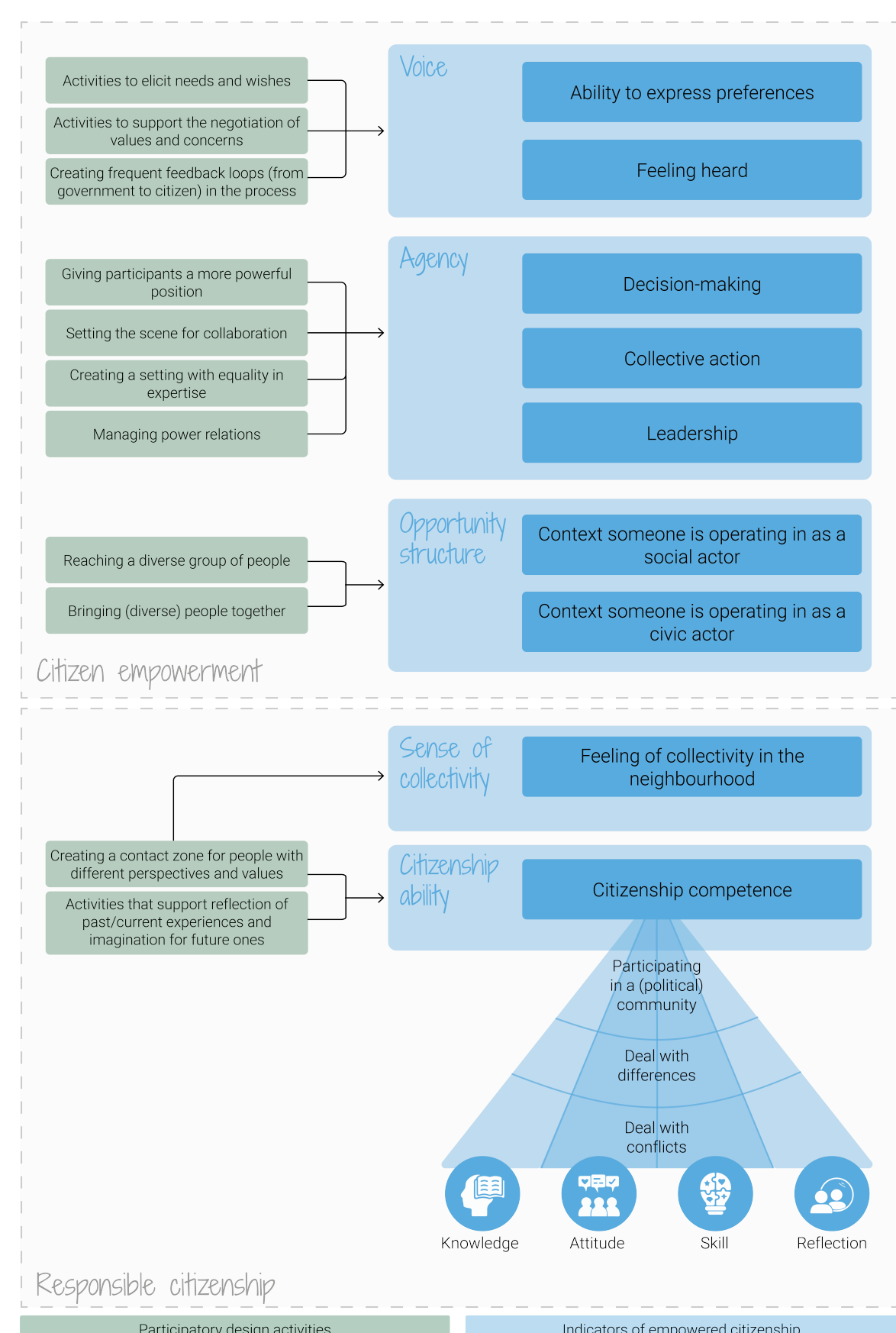
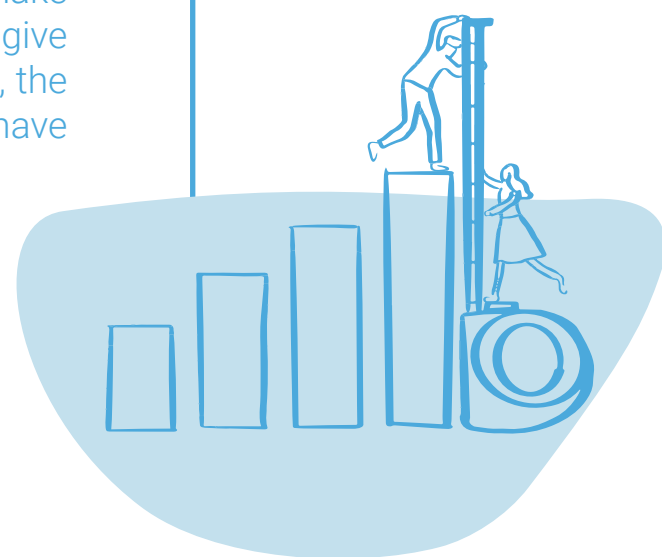


THE SOLUTION

This research proposes the concept of empowered citizenship as a key form of impact that can be made on citizens through a participatory design approach. It further details this concept in a framework that outlines the various components that make up empowered citizenship and the participatory design activities that are related to this impact. Empowered citizenship consists of two components: citizen empowerment (which consists of voice, agency and opportunity structure) and responsible citizenship (which consists of a sense of collectivity and citizenship abilities).

In a case study analysis, the framework was used to explore its use when evaluating impact. The case study analysis provided insight into the relation between participatory design and empowered citizenship. Besides, three impact considerations were found that are relevant to participatory designers when shaping a project. Finally, the insights from literature and the case study analysis were used to develop 'Are we making impact?', an impact demonstration tool.

The tool was evaluated with Zeewaardig and other participatory design studios. This demonstrated its value as a tool that helps designers to make more effective agreements at the front end of a project. This in turn will give them more freedom to work towards empowered citizenship. In addition, the tool helps to demonstrate impact and thus improve their practice and have more credible arguments towards (future) clients.



THE DESIGN

The 'Are we making impact?' tool consists of a poster and a booklet. Both are set up around the same three elements: 1) What is impact in the participatory design context, 2) How to think about impact in participatory design projects, and 3) Demonstrating impact, step by step. The first two elements use the empowered citizenship framework and impact considerations to help designers become aware of impact in their projects, better understand it, and be able to make informed decisions about it with clients in a kick-off. The third element provides an overview of the steps designers need to take to demonstrate the impact of their participatory approach.



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