

MSc thesis

***Governance within the Neighbourhood
Green Plans:***

A case study in the city of Utrecht

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Abstract

In both scientific literature and policy practice, there is nowadays much discussion about the observed shift from government to governance. This shift, which entails the increasing involvement of non-state actors in policy making, is often linked to the perceived prevalence of neo-liberal thought. It is believed that newly created political spaces might enable state actors to continue exercising control over non-state actors in novel ways. Against this background, this study examines the 'Neighbourhood Green Plans' (NGPs). The NGPs are a green participation programme in the Dutch city of Utrecht for 'greening' the city's neighbourhoods with the help of residents. This study aims to understand the NGPs as an example of participatory governance, by providing an account (including organizational and substantive aspects) of this particular policy domain. Another aim is to examine whether and how a neo-liberal rationality can be recognized in the NGPs and how it relates to bottom-up ideas and initiatives.

For analyzing the NGPs, the *Policy Arrangement Approach* is used. This is a theoretical framework that makes it possible to grasp both the organization (i.e. actors, rules and resources) and substance (i.e. discourse) of a given policy domain. In an additional analytical step of this study, (*neo-liberal*) *governmentality theory* is used. This theory investigates contemporary forms of governing and the underlying political rationalities, which are perceived to be related to the principles of freedom and own responsibility. However, governmentality theory also presupposes that non-state actors have the capacity to respond to top-down acts of governing in their own ways. Based on the chosen theoretical framework, three main research questions will be addressed: 1) the characteristics and development of the policy arrangement of the NGPs; 2) the interactions of actors within the arrangement of the NGPs, and the relation between the NGPs and external bottom-up initiatives; 3) the exercise of discursive and organizational power by actors seen from the perspective of neo-liberal governmentality and a bottom-up approach.

The case study of the NGPs is analyzed through document analysis and the interviewing of persons with different roles in the NGPs. It turned out that, through the NGP programme, the municipality had the intention to let residents decide on the substance of the neighbourhood green. However, throughout the process, the municipality was in control of the organization of the programme (e.g. by involving actors, making rules and ensuring funding). During a major part of the process, residents were dependent on the municipality for information about the progress of their ideas and projects. Although the interactions between municipality and residents differed per neighbourhood and project, the overall feeling among residents was that the whole process has been rather time-consuming and demanding.

With the NGPs, the municipality wanted to give residents the freedom to design the public green as they liked, whereby the municipality tried to abandon its own policy goals. On a wider level, the ambition of the municipality was to work towards a sustainable public space with multiple usage. Linked to this ambition, the municipality attempted to stimulate residents' commitment and sense of responsibility. This was also visible in the ways in which the municipality governed through the NGPs. Several of these governing mechanisms are an expression of discursive and organizational power. These governing mechanisms, together with the underlying political rationales that were identified, point to elements of a neo-liberal form of governmentality. Although there were some cases in which the municipality's ideas were contested, the particular set-up of the NGP programme seems to have limited the abundance of an alternative, bottom-up approach.

1. Introduction

1.1 Sustainable development in an urbanized world

Urbanization on a global scale is not a new phenomenon, but is nonetheless getting increasingly significant, given the fact that it has never been so omnipresent as today. Even more so, an illustrative turning point was reached in 2007 when for the very first time, more than half of the world's human population was living in urban areas (FIG 2010). According to a recent report of the United Nations, this number already amounted to 54 per cent in 2014. The UN report predicts that by the year 2050, the urbanization will be no less than 66 per cent, although the level of urbanization is very different for each country. The UN also notes that 'front runners', in this sense, are by far Northern America (82 per cent residing in urban areas in 2014), Latin America and the Caribbean (80 per cent) and Europe (73 per cent). The prospect is that these and other world regions continue to urbanize over the next couple of decades (United Nations 2014). Evidently, this trend – in tandem with the global population growth – implies that cities are increasingly becoming the centres in which sustainable development challenges will need to be addressed (United Nations 2014). The Dutch *Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving* (planning agency for the living environment) regards 'sustainability' as possibly the greatest human challenge of the 21st century (Hajer 2011).

1.2 The neglected 'green dimension'

The term 'sustainable development' is generally subdivided into the three pillars 'economic', 'social' and 'environmental' (see United Nations 2012), which have to be addressed in a balanced way (General Assembly of the United Nations n.d.). However, there is currently an imbalance between the three pillars, whereby the environmental dimension is the one that is often overshadowed by the other two (United Nations 2011). In Campbell (1996), an urban planning model is explained in which the planner implicitly defines himself on the basis of the stance he takes relative to three conflicting planning priorities, which are the economy, the environment and equity. In this triangular model, a balance of the three priorities is achieved in the centre and is called 'sustainable development' (Campbell 1996). The same article points to the fact that, despite the apparent commitment of planners to environmental issues, urban planning has been characterized by a long-lasting reputation of promoting urban development at the expense of natural values (Campbell 1996).

At the same time, there seems to be a widespread acknowledgement in both policy and scientific literature that ecological and environmental issues in urban areas are in urgent need of attention. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), for example, dedicates one of its reports to the 'green economy' under the heading of 'pathways to sustainable development and poverty eradication' (see UNEP 2011). In this report, the environmental dimension of sustainable development is given ample attention, for instance in the context of 'green cities'.

In this thesis, the focus will be on a local policy programme, known as the *Wijkgroenplannen* (Neighbourhood Green Plans), that was initiated by the Dutch municipality of Utrecht for creating physical green in the direct vicinity of citizens (more details will follow later). This programme can be considered as an example of the wider call – in policy as well as academics – for the realization of greener cities and for the involvement of local actors in decision making in new ways (as was mentioned above). Potential benefits that are often mentioned in regard to these 'greening' efforts are environmental as well as social in character (Kabisch 2015).

Within the wider context of debates about sustainable development and the greening of cities, a currently running European research project that is entirely dedicated to this topic of ‘green cities’ – and which is an umbrella project for my thesis – is called ‘Green Infrastructure and Urban Biodiversity for Sustainable Urban Development and the Green Economy’ (GREEN SURGE in brief; see also text box 1). The research project is a collaboration in which 24 partners in 11 countries take part, and it is funded by the European Commission Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) (GREEN SURGE¹ n.d.). While concerning itself with urban green programmes and initiatives around Europe, the GREEN SURGE project focuses on non-traditional forms of governing in which – besides formal governments – a variety of other actors get involved in decision making on urban green space (Buizer et al. n.d.).

Box 1: GREEN SURGE

What is it?

GREEN SURGE is a European collaborative project that collects knowledge on a variety of urban green programmes and initiatives characterized by non-traditional forms of governing.

Regarding its aspiration, GREEN SURGE says the following: *‘GREEN SURGE will identify, develop and test ways of linking green spaces, biodiversity, people and the green economy in order to meet the major urban challenges related to land use conflicts, climate change adaptation, demographic changes, and human health and wellbeing. It will provide a sound evidence base for urban green infrastructure planning and implementation, exploring the potential for innovation in better linking environmental, social and economic ecosystem services with local communities.’* (GREEN SURGE¹ n.d.).

Working packages

The overall approach that GREEN SURGE applies is project-wide and science-driven and is underpinned by a common framework methodology, with bottom-up knowledge at the local level (Buizer et al. 2015). As its full name makes clear, GREEN SURGE is broad in scope and contains eight so called ‘working packages’ (see GREEN SURGE², n.d.) whereby working package six focuses explicitly on governance and more specifically *‘on governance that integrates participatory approaches (bottom-up) with planning approaches (top-down)’* (GREEN SURGE³ n.d.). To this end, the project will provide the necessary evidence for the enhancement of multi-actor participation in the planning and delivery of urban green infrastructure (GREEN SURGE³ n.d.). My thesis will be part of this sixth working package.

A four layered approach

In order to be able to study participatory governance, working package six has come up with three ‘tiers’ and, in addition, applies a ‘four layered framework’ (see Buizer et al. n.d.), in which the first two layers (both belonging to ‘tier 1’) are exploratory in nature and meant to provide background knowledge on governance situations and relevant initiatives in the twenty selected cities across Europe. The third layer (this is ‘tier 2’) encompasses in-depth case studies of urban green space initiatives in context. After the zooming in by layer three, layer four (this is ‘tier 3’) expands the focus once again by sharing insights and the lessons that will be learnt in the five selected ‘Urban Learning Labs’ (see Buizer et al. n.d.). My thesis will be situated within the third layer of working package six.

1.3 Governing an increasingly complex society

According to Taylor (2007), most commentators agree that the overall complexity of contemporary societies, in the context of globalization, has rendered it impossible for national governments to govern without actively involving other actors as well. Because of this, governing spaces are getting opened up, which implies that previously excluded actors can now choose to take part in the policy process (Taylor 2007). This latter phenomenon, which occurs on a global scale and has become omnipresent in both scientific literature and policy practice, is basically a shift from government to governance or '*a shifting pattern in styles of governing*' (Stoker 1998, p. 17).

There are quite some varieties of the term 'governance' with their own specific meanings, such as 'good governance', 'economic governance', 'governance *in* and *by* networks' and 'multi-level governance' (see Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden 2004). Nonetheless, all these governance types have in common that, *inter alia*, the formal government (if involved at all) is merely one out of many possible actors (Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden 2004). Rather than a single shift 'from government to governance', multiple shifts can be distinguished: horizontally, vertically, upwards and downwards. In short, it can be said that decision making is increasingly taking place in complex networks consisting of supra-national, national and sub-national actors on a vertical axis, and public, semi-public and private actors on a horizontal axis (Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden 2004).

It should be noted, though, that these governance shifts are *not* absolute. In the governance literature, there is an on-going debate about the extent to which the state has maintained or lost its power relative to non-state actors (see Arnouts et al. 2012). This issue will be addressed in more detail later in this study, namely in the context of neo-liberalism.

1.4 Citizens and policy making

In international and national policies, there is nowadays a call for things like 'community participation', 'public participation', 'public involvement', 'community empowerment' or 'decentralization'. (Taylor 2007; see also Campbell and Marshall 2000). These phenomena are sometimes rephrased as participatory *practices* like 'empowered participatory governance' (Fung and Wright 2001 in Buizer 2008), 'collaborative dialogues', 'deliberative policy practices' and 'argumentative planning' (see Buizer 2008). According to Buizer (2008), the common idea that connects these new practices is that this variety 'leads to a reinvention of politics' (Hajer 2003, p. 98 in Buizer 2008).

The OECD (2001) gives three reasons why it sees merit in strengthening government-citizen relations or, in other words, in allowing the public to participate in decision making (in which participation is divided into 'information', 'consultation' and 'active participation'). The OECD notes that participation assures the realization of a better public policy, relating to the stronger basis for policy making that is provided by involving non-state actors. The idea is that, as a consequence, it results in more effective policy implementation. Secondly, citizen involvement and the openness of government increase the general trust in and legitimacy of government. In the third place, an increase in citizen involvement stimulates active citizenship in society which, in turn, complements and strengthens (representative) democracy (OECD 2001). Benefits like the ones mentioned above clearly show why governments are supposed to co-operate with civil society actors in a process of 'interactive policy making', defined as '*the attempts of governments to involve citizens and other private actors at an early stage of the policy decision-making process*' (Buizer 2008, p. 9).

From the perspective of citizens, the benefits of participation are, for example, an increased transparency and accountability of government, a greater opportunity for asserting their rights (CPP 2005 in Aylett 2013), a possible reduction of social inequalities (Abrahamsen 2000; CPP 2005; McGee et al. 2003; all in Aylett 2013) and the enhancement of community capacity for engaging in planning in a worthwhile manner (Abers 2000; McGee et al. 2003; all in Aylett 2013).

Taylor (2007) uses the term 'community' to indicate *'people who are the intended beneficiaries of community participation, involvement or empowerment strategies.'* (Taylor 2007, p. 314). Related to this, Barnes et al. (2003) bring forward the idea of 'constituting the public', which refers to the fact that such notions as 'the public', 'the community' and 'citizens' can be considered as social constructions, that are derived from particular institutional discourses and ideologies (Burr 1995 in Barnes et al. 2003). Besides the lack of clarity concerning who constitute the participants, also the precise meaning of 'participation' (and similar terms) is rather controversial (Aylett 2013).

The last part of the previous section (i.e. 'governing an increasingly complex society') has already touched upon the question, what changes in governance talk and practice have really meant for the amount of influence that citizens can exert in decision making. When adding this question to the apparent vagueness in terminology related to participation, it becomes clear that the exact role of citizens in new forms of policy making needs closer scrutiny.

According to Aylett (2013), the divide between state-driven participation policies and community initiative, which can be observed here, has regularly been reflected on in literature as a dichotomy, with different schools preferring to consider community participation as either struggle and community empowerment or as an institutionally driven and instrumental practice (Aylett 2013). Aylett (2013) notices that there are strong arguments to abandon this dichotomy and instead, to try to look at this relationship between state and community actors more carefully, since varying non-state actors are often getting involved in multiple initiatives and projects characterized by government-led as well as more autonomous forms of participation (Aylett 2013).

Related to this is the idea that the different approaches to public participation, which could be seen in the past, are sometimes conceived of as three different 'generations' (see box 2) – firstly distinguished by Lenos et al. 2006 (in Wijdeven et al. 2013) – which can still be observed *next to each other* in everyday practice. It should be noted, though, that participation has a different history in different parts of the world. Whereas in Aylett (2013), participation was reviewed at a global level, the generations of participation as described in box 2 seem to be more oriented to Western Europe.

Box 2: 'Generations' of public participation

The first generation of citizen participation entails the participatory component within decision making procedures which dates back to the seventies (Wijdeven et al. 2013) or, alternatively, to the sixties. This first generation can be described as 'consultation' characterized by a 'reactive' role of citizens (Buizer 2008)

According to Wijdeven et al. (2013), during the second generation (which dates from the nineties), citizens got the opportunity to participate in earlier stages of the decision making process by means of co-production and 'interactive policy' (see also Buizer 2008). In that time, the government was still overtly dominant as it had the authority to decide in which issues citizens were allowed to participate and also to what extent.

Wijdeven et al. (2013) note that the third generation has its origin in the beginning of the

21st century and that this generation is characterized by the increased policy focus on *informal* (as opposed to formal) citizen initiatives. Buizer (2008) points to the fact that this generation is characterized by politics which is more and more taking place at many different places – in addition to elected councils and parliaments. Wijdeven et al. (2013) say that this approach is about an initiating civil society (regarding contents and process) where the government is merely a participant. Also the implementation of ideas is mainly exercised by citizens themselves. Hence, this third generation participation – in principle – turns on its side the respective roles of government and citizens that could be observed during the second generation and before (Wijdeven et al. 2013). At the same time, Wijdeven et al. (2013) note that, in practice, it turns out to be difficult for government to take a step back and accept a more passive and facilitating role.

1.5 Emerging governance constellations

On a more empirical level, Cornwall (2002) adds to the previous discussion, that globalisation as well as localization have resulted in new actor constellations which are transcending traditional boundaries into new spaces. It is argued that especially the character of these increasingly diverse and occupied spaces and the participation dynamics within them need to be analysed (Cornwall 2002). According to Cornwall (2002), relevant questions that could be asked about participation in practice are, for example, which actors are inviting others to participate, which actors are taking part and finally, which ideas and expectations actors have about their involvement.

According to Cornwall (2002) scientific literature on participation mainly focuses on such things as the existing mechanisms for public participation and how they are supposed to function in order to be effective. Cornwall (2002) observes that there is not much knowledge (note: back in 2002) about the ways in which examples of public participation actually function in practice, nor about the question who is allowed to take part, under which conditions and with what resources. Of course, developments in this area are going so fast that knowledge of participatory governance is likely to have increased enormously in the meantime. On the other hand, Wijdeven et al. (2013), in their extensive state of the art study on active citizenship, express their trouble in providing a comprehensive overview of scientific insights on this topic, which, according to them, is due to: 1) the huge number of initiatives and scientific studies; 2) the fact that developments in this field are still going on at a high rate; and 3) the observation that active citizenship is an analytically and conceptually complex topic (Wijdeven et al. 2013). The idea that also the contextual element is crucial for understanding any example of public participation in practice, is nicely articulated by Cornwall (2002) when he says: *'Treating participation as situated practice calls for approaches that locate spaces for participation in the places in which they occur, framing their possibilities with reference to actual political, social, cultural and historical particularities rather than idealised notions of democratic practice.'* (Cornwall 2002, no page number)

According to Parker and Murray (2012), there is a wide variety of examples in which community participation or similar approaches have been carried out in practice, which differ in terms of their motives, context and, hence, also their qualities. Nevertheless, public participation has typically been perceived as an automatically desirable practice (Parker and Murray 2012). Campbell and Marshall (2000) observe that discussions about public participation frequently omit the question about the rationales for and, hence, the expected benefits of initiating this

seemingly desired practice. In addition, Parker and Murray (2012) argue that analyses of attempts to involve local communities often lack theoretical aspects as well as the motives and expectations of targeted communities (see Brownhill and Parker 2010 in Parker and Murray 2012).

These may be reasons to become suspicious of (some) participation projects, all the more so when you look at the conclusion of many studies that, in reality, real political influence of communities in the previously mentioned 'emergent spaces' has been rather limited (see Taylor 2007). Taylor (2007) adds to this that it has even been argued that these seemingly 'open' governing spaces are a disguise for new forms of control by the state.

1.6 The advance of neoliberalism

The ongoing shift towards 'governance-beyond-the-state' (see Swyngedouw 2005) is widely believed to be closely linked to the rise of neoliberal thought. Neoliberalism can be understood as a political and economic strategy that became institutionalized on the national level in Britain and the US in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Jessop 2002; Hursh and Henderson 2011). According to Jessop (2002), the strategy arose from the older idea of liberalism by orienting itself to the changed global conditions. During this reorientation, novel forms of 'governance-beyond-the-state' were established (Swyngedouw 2005). According to Jessop (2002), neoliberalism strives for such things as the liberalization and deregulation of economic transactions, the privatization of state companies and services and for limiting traditional state interventions. At the same time, it fosters other types of state interventions as part of the new governance movement. This often entails the transfer of government capacities upwards, downwards and horizontally, which is aimed at, *inter alia*, the realization of a flourishing global market (Jessop 2002; see also Swyngedouw 2005).

As Jessop (2002) argues, neoliberalism also has the aim to reorganize civil society, which entails the political involvement of an array of actors that is much wider than in the case of traditional liberalism. Against this background, the notion of 'community' is encouraged as a compensating 'back-up' approach in the event that the market mechanism turns out to be inadequate (Jessop 2002).

In urban politics – where much of the governance analysis can be situated – neoliberalism is often considered as the 'dominant trajectory' that is being followed in the transformation of governance practices (Leitner et al. 2007, p. 3 in Blanco et al. 2014). This perceived dominance becomes also apparent from the fact that globally powerful organizations like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, US government and the European Union are disseminating the neoliberal ideology (Dezalay and Garth 2002; Hanley et al. 2002; Stiglitz 2002; Massey et al. 2006; Dobbin et al. 2007; all in Mudge 2008).

Although neoliberalism typically involves, *inter alia*, a change in emphasis from the state to the market as well as to more inclusive and participatory types of governance (see Jessop 2002), there is a large amount of critical research done on the ways in which these neoliberal principles and practices relate to issues of power and the positions of actors that actively engage in governance. In the context of these new forms of governance-beyond-the-state and their embedding within neoliberal ideology, Swyngedouw (2005) argues that novel forms of governance claim to enhance citizen empowerment and democracy, while, in reality, they frequently turn out to be 'authoritarian' and 'undemocratic'.

In this study, it will be examined to what extent, and how, neoliberalism manifests itself in the selected case (i.e. the Neighbourhood Green Plans). Related to this, the power relations between different actors within this participation programme will be exposed. Since

neoliberalism will be important for the way in which I will look at the NGP programme, I will now zoom in on the manifestations of neoliberalism at the city level – the context in which this study will be rooted. I will also take a look at the ways in which ‘the urban’ interrelates with the role of the local state. This section will serve as a context for neoliberal operations in order to better understand the theoretical elaborations that will follow later.

1.7 Neoliberalism, the city and the (local) state

Blanco et al. (2014) argue that it is particularly at the level of the city on which neoliberalism becomes visible in its most immediate form. They speak about cities as *‘arenas of “neoliberal localization” in which place-specific forms and combinations of neoliberal regimes are brought into being’* (Brenner and Theodore 2002 in Blanco et al. 2014, p. 3132). The increasing relevance of the urban scale motivates Blanco et al. (2014) to put forward the notion of ‘the logic of the urban’, which points to the fact that cities are the places where such things as innovation, economic growth and all kinds of social interactions are shaped and brought about (Blanco et al. 2014). Also Swyngedouw (2005) refers to the city as a ‘pivotal terrain’ for the emergence of new forms of governance. According to Blanco et al. (2014), the increasing significance of the city in constituting as well as disseminating these urban ideas and practices imply that current accounts of urban governance and the role of neoliberalism herein, reject the centrality of the state. Related to this, it is argued that “‘self-organising’ practices of urban self-government” rather than the state should become the focus of urban political analysis, which is denoted with the term ‘seeing like a city’ (Magnusson 2010, p. 43 in Blanco et al. 2014, p. 3132).

While Blanco et al. (2014) support the centrality of complex urban processes in analyses of neoliberalism in action, they simultaneously warn for the possibility that other explanatory logics for urban dynamics are too easily overlooked and, associated with this, for a too easy dismissal of the persistent significance of the local state in these urban localities (Blanco et al. 2014). Blanco et al. (2014) argue that current analyses of governance, which tend to support the idea of the ‘hollowing out’ of the local state, are often criticized for having failed to see that local governance networks are often characterized by clear hierarchies (Davies 2011 in Blanco et al. 2014). The suggestion that the state often maintains a crucial role in the era of multi-actor governance is something that will be taken into account in the theoretical framework of this study. I will elaborate more on this point when turning to governmentality theory.

Swyngedouw (2005) who – in his paper – critically addresses new forms of ‘(urban) governance’ in a context of neo-liberal rule, argues that new forms of governance are often lacking formal rules and regulations on who can participate and on where in the system the power is located (Hajer 2003a in Swyngedouw 2005). In this context, one could say that these more complex forms of governance are characterized by an ambiguous *‘modus operandi’* (Swyngedouw 2005) with the involvement of ‘unauthorized actors’ (Beck 1999, p. 41 in Swyngedouw 2005). According to Swyngedouw (2005), this may lead to conflicts and tensions between actors on matters related to such things as entitlements and institutional power. Swyngedouw (2005) also notes that issues like responsibility and political goals often remain open to dispute. In the end, however, it is often solely the government who divides the competencies among participants and, hence, it is also the actor who determines the power relations in this confusing reality. Further, these new forms of governance are very often – either directly or indirectly – managed by state authorities, or, at least, articulating with it (Swyngedouw 2005).

Besides from the issue of hierarchy, the local state also remains important for its role in expenditures on public services and as a conflict mediator, which is related to the fact that local

government often has crucial vertical and horizontal connections (Blanco et al. 2014). Newman (2013) adds to this that *'(...) local authorities may, through their own policy agendas, be crucial actors in producing, reproducing, reworking and reconstituting neoliberalism (...)'* (Newman 2013, p. 6).

The point that I want to make in this section is that – in line with Blanco et al. (2014) – the urban scale is particularly relevant for studying the ways in which neoliberalism takes shape in practice. This reflection also demonstrates that the role and influence of the local state must be seriously taken into account, since it may be more significant in the neoliberal era than is often believed. As a last remark, I have to refer once more to Blanco et al. (2014) when they note that, besides official local government, 'the local' also comprises of e.g. the 'demands for democracy' of local citizens. Hence, the operations of neoliberalism need to be studied in such a way that it includes both the local government and the wide array of non-governmental actors that may be involved in a given policy domain. By looking at the motivations and aims of different actors, this study wants to shed light on the question to what extent residents are really given the opportunity to have political influence.

1.8 The Dutch policy context

1.8.1 The space given to citizen initiative

The word *'participatiesamenleving'* ('participation society') was elected the Dutch word of the year 2013 by the Dutch *Genootschap Onze Taal* (Association Our Language). The term refers to the perceived transition in the Netherlands from the classical welfare state towards a participation society. According to the Association Our Language, this means that we are heading towards a society in which citizens are increasingly taking the responsibility for their own life and surroundings (NRC 2013). Although the idea of 'stimulating own responsibility' is not new in policy talk, it has recently gained more importance, according to the Dutch *Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau* (Social and Cultural Planning Agency) (Vrooman et al. 2012, p. 11 in Wijdeven et al. 2013).

According to Wijdeven et al. (2013), most attention in the Netherlands is currently being paid to the smaller and informal citizen initiatives, which are generally considered as 'hot and new'. According to the common definitions, these citizen initiatives are – in principle – not initiated by government but, instead, by citizens themselves (Wijdeven et al. 2013). Regarding the attention being paid to active citizenship in Dutch *policy* in particular, the Social and Cultural Planning Agency observes that during the last decennium, the Dutch state has spent many efforts on stimulating citizen participation and local initiatives with citizens in their close vicinity (Dekker et al. 2007, p. 86 in Wijdeven et al. 2013).

Noteworthy is the fact that – indeed – the idea of citizen initiative *from bottom-up* in particular, has recently received relatively much attention in Dutch policy on many different terrains (Wijdeven et al. 2013). In a report on behalf of the Dutch *Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving* (Planning Agency for the Living Environment) about the 'energetic society', Hajer (2011) notes that the numerous non-governmental actors in Dutch society who want to take the initiative to act and change things, do not find enough support in current national policy (Hajer 2011). Buizer (2008) seems to agree with this when she observes that in policy-dense countries like the Netherlands, local initiatives often have to match formal policy and need to get support from politicians, instead of being allowed to go their own way. Hajer (2011) notes that, during the past fifty years, Dutch society has moved from being hierarchical and pillarized towards a network society. Hajer (2011) observes that despite this fact, the organization of Dutch

government has adapted very slowly to these changes. Too much power rests with vested interests and in political centres (Hajer 2011).

1.8.2 The position of government in society

Regarding the relation between citizens and government in the Netherlands, Hajer (2011) speaks of a strong 'horizontalization' with a crisis in government authority that is related to some general governance deficits (i.e. a 'legitimation crisis', an 'implementation deficit' and a 'learning deficit', see Hajer 2011). Despite this perceived 'government crisis', Hajer (2011) notes that in the changing governance constellation of modern Dutch society, the government will keep a crucial position in preparing the stage for market operations and also for the provision of some collective services (such as sustainability) which cannot be delivered by the market alone.

Moreover, according to Hajer (2011), a new planning in which the government is withdrawing can (at least at the level of the city) lead to a rapid deteriorating state of the environment when there is no strategic goal setting. He notes that at the *city* level, government should be there to formulate the wider ambitions and challenges concerning sustainability and to merge the energy within the urban community towards tackling these sustainability issues (Hajer 2011).

In a new philosophy for the role of government in society (in general, so not specifically at the city level), Hajer (2011) pledges for a government that sets goals, facilitates, stimulates learning and cherishes innovators. He argues that in this philosophy, government steering contains a mix of the following five elements: 'taking a clear position', 'infrastructure for steering routines', 'dynamic legislation', 'financial instruments for behavioural change' and finally, 'monitoring and feedback' (Hajer 2011). Hajer (2011) also points to the importance of the different levels of government (i.e. national, provincial and municipal government) since every level has its own orientation and strengths in dealing with particular issues.

1.8.3 The citizen perspective

According to a study by the Social and Cultural Planning office in 2011 (as mentioned by Dekker and Den Ridder 2011, pp. 21 – 40 in Wijdeven et al. 2013), Dutch citizens themselves have a double position regarding the idea of 'own responsibility'. These authors argue that on the one hand, citizens are prepared to be pro-active and take their own responsibility when it concerns caring for yourself and your surroundings, whereas on the other hand, they look rather sceptically upon the transfer of responsibilities from the state towards citizens. Firstly, this is because they consider their own contribution already quite large, and, secondly, a call from government is generally conceived as not being very credible as government too could do much more than it actually does (Dekker and Den Ridder 2011, pp. 21-40 in Wijdeven et al. 2013; see also Hajer 2011, p. 9). According to Hajer (2011), citizens are very committed to their direct living environment and in turn, this very small-scale environment is a crucial component of the wider sustainability challenge. Especially this small-scale level, such as the city or neighbourhood, is very suitable for connecting citizens with wider environmental issues. According to Hajer (2011), the dynamics of society is at its maximum at the level of the city.

1.9 Participation in the Neighbourhood Green Plans

Building upon this last point from the previous section, my thesis will be about an urban greening project that is characterized by a particular form of public participation. As mentioned before, the participation programme that will be used as a case study in this thesis is known as the Neighbourhood Green Plans (henceforth abbreviated with 'NGPs') and is located in the Dutch city of Utrecht.

The NGP programme comes down to the fact that in each of Utrecht's ten neighbourhoods, residents were invited by the municipal government to come up with green ideas for their own neighbourhood. Subsequently, in each neighbourhood, the feasible green ideas constituted the formal NGP and would be implemented in the near future. The principle behind the NGPs is that residents will be the ones who eventually decide which projects are implemented and what they will look like. For each neighbourhood, the municipality has reserved a budget of €500,000.

In this thesis, I will look at the governance characteristics of the NGPs within the particular urban context in which the programme takes place. Following on from critical literature on public participation, this study will closely examine the positions and power relations of different actors within the programme. By looking at how and by whom the NGPs are organized (in terms of e.g. rules and resources), it will be examined how much political influence different actors really have in practice. An important part of the analysis is formed by the aims and motives of different actors, which are linked to the expected benefits of participation. When it is known what is driving different actors to join the NGPs, governing acts (by both state and non-state actors) might be seen from a particular light. By looking at all these characteristics and dynamics of this participation programme, it will also become clear to what extent the NGPs are characterized by new forms of state control, relative to bottom-up initiatives with residents in charge. For analyzing the governance dynamics in the NGPs, two theoretical perspectives will be applied. These will be discussed in chapter 2.

1.10 Research objective

The first, more descriptive objective is to provide a comprehensive and contextual account of the policy arrangement of the NGPs, in order to gain insight into the functioning of this relatively novel form of participatory governance. My aim at a deeper level is to examine the extent to which a neoliberal rationality can be recognized in the NGPs, how it manifests itself and how it relates to a bottom-up approach in the form of spontaneous initiatives by non-state actors.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Policy Arrangement Approach

2.1.1 Rationales

In this thesis, the theoretical fundament will consist of the Policy Arrangement Approach (PAA in brief) (see eds Arts and Leroy 2006; Arts et al. 2006; Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004). The PAA has been developed for two purposes. Firstly, it tries to recover the disturbed balance in the sociological agency-structure debate connected to the work of Anthony Giddens, by doing justice to both drivers for change. Secondly, the approach aims at connecting environmental issues with wider societal and political trends, because of their strong intertwining (Leroy and Arts 2006, pp. 5-6). Also the desire to grasp shifts in governance while simultaneously maintaining some relevant 'classical' concepts, was a rationale for developing the PAA (Van Tatenhove et al. 2000; Arts and Van Tatenhove 2000; Leroy et al. 2001; Arts and Leroy 2003; all in Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004). As such, the PAA came into being by using, reflecting on and criticizing other already existing policy approaches (Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004). In the PAA, a policy arrangement refers to *'the way in which a policy domain is shaped, in terms of organisation and substance, in a bounded time-space context'* (Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004, p. 341).

2.1.2 Core concepts of the Policy Arrangement Approach

At the core of the Policy Arrangement Approach are, besides the concept of 'policy arrangements', also the concepts of 'institution' and 'modernization'. The term 'institutions' will be better understood by firstly emphasizing the process by which institutions come into being (i.e. the process of institutionalization). When applied to policy processes, institutionalization refers to *'the fact that relatively stable definitions of problems and approaches to solutions gradually arise in and around policy, more or less fixed patterns of divisions of tasks and interaction develop between actors, policy processes develop in accordance with more or less fixed rules and so on.'* (Arts et al. 2006, p. 96). Moreover, when the two-sided formation of institutions is emphasized, the notion of 'institutions' provides the necessary link with the agency-structure debate.

This becomes clear when Leroy and Arts (2006) point out that the formation of an institution refers to the fact (see also the above definition) that, slowly but surely, actors' actions consolidate into structures, while these structures, in turn, guide actors' behavior. Simultaneously, and as a result of this, the term points to the fact that 'meanings' will eventually consolidate into behavioral rules and organizational structures, which, in turn, reproduce and recreate these meanings (Leroy & Arts 2006, pp. 6-7). This latter account shows that besides the *agency-structure* dichotomy, also the *substance-organization* duality (see Hajer 1995; Hay and Wincott 1998 both in Leroy and Arts 2006, p. 7) is incorporated into the institutions concept. This way, the notion of institutions can be graphically located at the center of two crossing continua with 'discourse' (i.e. the substitute of 'substance', see Leroy and Arts 2006, p. 8) and 'organization' as the horizontal extremes, and 'agency/actor' and 'structure' as the vertical extremes (Leroy and Arts 2006, p. 8).

The second key concept within the PAA is 'modernization' or 'political modernization' (see Arts et al. 2006) and refers to *'structural processes of social change and their impact on the political domain'* (Arts et al. 2006, p. 97). According to Leroy and Arts (2006, p. 10), 'modernization' is linked either to society and politics at large or to environmental politics in particular. Regarding the former, a common denominator in all the interpretations of the term is

the notion of 'change' that causes the on-going modernization process of western societies to take another course. The domains in which these changes occur are technology, economy, politics, society and epistemology. Often, modernization is linked to widespread processes such as globalization (see Castells 1996-1998; Yearly 1996 both in Leroy and Arts 2006, p. 11; Arts et al. 2006), individualization (Arts et al. 2006) and the high consequence risks and their irreversible environmental impacts (Spaargaren et al. 2000 in Leroy and Arts 2006, p. 11). Noteworthy, the vast majority of scholars in this modernity debate seem to agree that environmental problems are the supreme manifestation of contemporary modernity and its associated problems (Leroy and Arts 2006, pp. 10-11). Importantly, modernization processes like globalization, are said to have some far reaching political impacts on, for instance, the role of the nation-state. This way, modernization and changes in governance become closely linked.

Within this changing governance constellation, Leroy and Arts (2006, p. 12) refer to the emergence of 'multi-actor governance' in particular, in which governmental, market and civil society actors are steering together on different policy levels at the same time. This transformation is expressed both within the environmental domain and beyond, on a wider political level. In this context of modernization and multi-level governance, institutions come into play when new political spaces (i.e. emerging political institutions) are created as a result of new/innovative governance relations between actors (Leroy and Arts 2006, p. 12).

The third core concept within the PAA is 'policy arrangements'. Following the above line of argumentation, a policy arrangement can also (compare with above) be defined as: *'the temporary stabilisation of the content and organisation of a particular policy domain at a certain policy level or over several policy levels – in case of multi-level governance.'* (Leroy and Arts 2006, p. 13). According to Leroy and Arts (2006), a policy arrangement can be said to refer to a stable, institutionalized pattern, caused by on-going policy processes and agency interactions. Policy arrangements become connected to modernization by acknowledging that policy arrangements are not merely the consequence of strategic actions by agents; they also reflect long term contextual trends in the domains of society and politics (Leroy and Arts 2006, p. 13).

Finally, the term 'policy arrangements' tries on the one hand, to characterize arrangements, and on the other hand, to grasp their dynamics by looking at the relative stability or change of these arrangements and the underlying mechanisms (Leroy and Arts 2006, p. 13).

2.2 A (neo-liberal) governmentality perspective

While until now, neoliberalism has been treated as if it were a coherent entity of some sort that can be simply observed in reality and analyzed, this may not be exactly how it really is. 'Neoliberalism' can be understood as a concept that is 'widely overused and notoriously difficult to pin down' (Clarke 2008 in Newman 2013, p. 2). Newman (2013) suggests that – rather than a single neoliberalism – there is actually a variety of economic, political and governmental projects that exist simultaneously. Larner (2000, p. 5) adds to this that *'neo-liberalism is a more complex phenomenon than may have been recognized by many participants in these debates'*. Following on from these remarks, Larner (2000) distinguishes between three interpretations that perceive neoliberalism either as 'policy framework' (see also Lemke 2002 who calls this type 'neoliberalism as an economic-political reality'), 'ideology' (see also Newman 2013 and Lemke 2002) or as 'governmentality' (see also Newman 2013 and Lemke 2002). Besides these three theoretical frameworks, other conceptualizations can be distinguished elsewhere, such as neoliberalism as 'practical antihumanism' (see Lemke 2002) and as 'assemblage' (see Newman 2013). For my thesis, I will adopt a (neo-liberal) governmentality perspective, to which I will now turn.

Box 3: Neoliberalism as ‘policy framework’

According to Larner (2000), an understanding of neoliberalism as ‘policy framework’ is the most well-known conceptualization. This notion refers to the transition from the Keynesian welfare state towards a society which is dominated by market forces, which, in turn, is believed to be closely related to the ‘globalization of capital’ (Larner 2000). An important factor that makes this transition possible is – as is generally assumed – the spread of a hegemonic ideology that manages to get important political institutions and actors under its control (Purvis and Hunt 1993 in Larner 2000). This ideology consists of a set of five principles: ‘freedom of choice’, ‘the individual’, ‘market security’, ‘minimal government’ and ‘*laissez faire*’ (Belsey in Levitas (ed.) 1996; in Larner 2000). The dissemination of these ideas has been stimulated by institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank (Marchak 1991 in Larner 2000) and influential politicians like Thatcher and Reagan (Teeple 1995 in Larner 2000). Although the scholars perceiving neoliberalism as ‘policy framework’ do not automatically agree with each other on every detail, studies within this school of thought nevertheless tend to perceive neoliberal programs as rather coherent, and policy makers are generally perceived to be the crucial actors (Larner 2000). The fact, that in this framing of neoliberalism the notion of neoliberal ‘agenda’ is often used, already points to the belief in the programmatic coherence of the ideology (Teeple 1995 in Larner 2000). According to Larner (2000), analyses within this school typically focus on the concrete *outcomes* of neoliberal policies and programs, without substantially contributing to a better understanding of the neoliberal transition itself and its success in constituting policy programs (Larner 2000).

Box 4: Neoliberalism as ‘ideology’

Neoliberalism as ideology can be considered as a more sociological perspective which is more encompassing than ‘neoliberalism as policy framework’, in the sense that it takes into account a wider array of processes and institutions (Larner 2000). Larner (2000) gives special attention to the contributions of Stuart Hall on ‘Thatcherism’ to make clear how neoliberalism as ideology (e.g. ‘Thatcherism’) contrasts with the way in which the Marxist school of thought understands ideology. Whilst the Marxist tradition argues that the dominant ideas are automatically the ones of the ruling class, the former (i.e. Thatcherism) in fact managed ‘*to constitute subject positions from which its discourses about the world made sense to people in a range of different social positions*’ (Hall in eds Nelson and Grossberg 1988; in Larner 2000, p. 9). As such, Hall perceived Thatcherism as an ‘ideological transformation’ (Larner 2000) in which neoliberal principles achieved ‘ideological hegemony’ (Hall 1988 in Larner 2000). In this way, it was possible to legitimize the subjection of people to economic principles of the market (Newman 2013).

Moreover, Hall showed that by means of these ideological processes, different identities were constructed (Larner 2000). Related to this, the work of Jane Jenson was characterized by the issue how political discourse creates identities in a socially constructed way, whereby she focused in particular on oppositional identities rather than the more ‘official’ ones of the ruling actors (Larner 2000). Contributions within this school of neoliberal analysis show that multiple voices exist within new forms of governance and that neoliberalism and its implementation in the form of specific political projects may actually be quite fragmented and complex rather than coherent and uncomplicated (Larner 2000).

2.3 Political rationalities

2.3.1 The neoliberal rationality

The idea of 'neoliberalism as governmentality' can originally be traced to philosopher Michel Foucault and is rooted in the tradition of post-structuralism (see Larner 2000). The word 'govern-mentality' can be split into the words 'governing' (*'gouverner'* in French) and 'modes of thought' (*'mentalité'* in French). These two words point to the concepts of 'governing technologies' respectively their underlying 'political rationality', which are inextricably tied together (Lemke 2002) and which represent the core of the governmentality perspective (see also Rose 1999 in Cotoi 2011). This becomes also clear in the following understanding of governmentality as *'the rationalities and tactics of governing and how they become expressed in particular technologies of governing, such as – for example, the state'* (Foucault 1984 in Swyngedouw 2005, p. 1997).

In the context of this governmentality perspective, a 'political rationality' can be defined in a broad sense as *'a way of doing things that was oriented to specific objectives and that reflected on itself in characteristic ways'* (Rose et al. 2006, p. 2). Lemke (2002, p. 53) refers to a rationality as 'a specific form of reasoning' and O'Malley et al. (1997, p. 501) perceive political rationalities as 'broad discourses of rule'. When considering this latter understanding by O'Malley et al. (1997), the meaning of 'political rationality' can arguably be 'equated' with the second, broader level of discourse as distinguished by Liefferink (2006, p. 58), namely those discourses about the preferred relation between the state, market and civil society (i.e. mode of governance). In my thesis, I will use this latter interpretation of a political rationality, as it appears the most practically applicable and because it suits the focus of this study. Swyngedouw (2005) seems to share this latter interpretation of political rationality when he points to the newly emerging modes of governance in which – besides from the state – also market and civil society actors are included. He goes on by saying that these more inclusive modes of governance represent a new governmentality with a distinctive political rationality and its associated technologies and instruments (Swyngedouw 2005).

In scientific literature, analyses of this new governmentality are typically linked to the rise of neoliberalism, which is the reason why governmentality (largely due to the work of Foucault) is often referred to as 'neo-liberal governmentality' (see e.g. Swyngedouw 2005 and Lemke 2001). As a particular political rationality, the neo-liberal governmentality can be said to produce a 'programmable reality' by using a particular knowledge, morality and language, whereby it operates by means of 'discursive fields' (Rose 1999 in Cotoi 2011). It can therefore be said that in these discursive fields, *'the exercise of power is rationalized'* (Lemke 2001 in McKee 2009, p. 466). Elaborating on this, Rose et al. (2006) argue that a governmentality perspective provides a distinctive view on political power. More specifically, it tries to illuminate the ways in which political power is exercised in connection with particular rationalities and aimed at the specific objectives belonging to these rationalities (Rose et al. 2006). In this context, Lemke (2001) argues that a political rationality is anything but a neutral, objective reflection of the reality that should be governed. The construction and rationalization of reality in a particular way in fact legitimizes the use of certain technologies for governing the targeted subjects and objects (Lemke 2001).

Although governmentality is typically connected to neoliberalism, the aforementioned interpretations of the notion 'political rationality' seem to suggest that, in principle, it should also be possible to identify other rationalities than neoliberalism. In view of this issue, it may be instructive to look at the interpretation of governmentality by Schinkel and Van Houdt (2010),

who make clear why governmentality analysis is so inextricably linked to the neo-liberal rationality. These authors interpret Foucault's notion of 'governmentality' as a political rationality *an sich*, which is rather different from the 'classical political philosophies' (read: rationalities) like liberalism and communitarism (see e.g. Van Gunsteren 1998 in Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010). They note (by drawing on Foucault) that governmentality does *not* try to map the relationship between the state and citizens according to some fixed ideal type rationality. Adopting a governmentality (as rationality) perspective rather involves the critical examination and description of the concrete and diverse ways in which different actors are governed while interacting with each other (Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010).

With the above interpretation of governmentality in mind, it is relevant to look at how Foucault (according to Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010) understands neoliberalism in relation to governmentality. The following quote (in Dutch) is very illustrative for this: *'For Foucault, neoliberalism [...] is not a doctrine that defines the relation between state and market in a certain way, but rather a form of governing rationality in which individual freedom is one of the crucial starting points of governing. In neoliberalism, society is governed by seizing the individual freedom which is not, like in liberalism, regarded as a natural given (as with Kant), but which is seen as result of a juridical construction (Foucault, 2004: 167). In this way, it becomes possible to arrange a population through an allocation of responsibilities, which is possible on the basis of the administrative constitution of a free subject. Concretely, this means that governing is based on the thought that individuals are governing themselves.'* (Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010, p. 14).

Contrary to Schinkel and Van Houdt (2010), I will not interpret governmentality as a political rationality in itself and (following on from this) e.g. neoliberalism as a 'strategy'. What these authors perceive as strategy I will perceive as rationality, although this is merely a matter of wording. The more important argument for my thesis is another. On the one hand, neoliberalism can, *inter alia*, be perceived as a doctrine or ideology with principles like 'freedom of choice', 'the individual', 'market security', 'minimal government' and '*laissez faire*' (Belsey in Levitas (ed.) 1996; in Larner 2000), whose dissemination has been stimulated by institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank (Marchak 1991 in Larner 2000).

However, as Schinkel and Van Houdt (2010) note above, neoliberalism is something else when considered from the Foucauldian perspective of governmentality. In my thesis I will therefore perceive neoliberalism as this particular form of governing through a constructed freedom of individuals (see Foucault 2004 in Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010) and the subtle and essentially top-down imposition and allocation of responsibilities (see Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010). I will follow Foucault's idea (as interpreted by Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010) that governmentality, in a general sense, is rather about understanding the concrete and diverse acts of governing in a governance constellation characterized by cooperation between different actors.

2.3.2 Alternative political rationalities

Notwithstanding this broad conception of neo-liberalism, it may still occur that a given policy arrangement is characterized by forms of governing which are not completely (or at all) neo-liberal in nature. Rose et al. (2006) note that, although governmentality analysis has been very useful for understanding neo-liberal rule, there has been a tendency to treat neoliberalism as a largely constant 'master category' which can be universally applied to explain politics in all kinds of contexts (e.g. O'Malley 1996; Ruhl 1999; both in Rose et al. 2006). Rose et al. (2006) go on by saying that they agree that neo-liberal principles can nowadays be observed in the majority of

governing regimes, but that these new modes of governance are not simply an outcome of the neo-liberal rationality.

Blanco et al. (2014) add to this that the local scale is considered very important for shedding light on how neoliberalism co-exists and interrelates with alternative political rationalities (e.g. conservatism and nationalism), which, in turn, leads to the creation of place-specific realities that may not be (fully) attributable to neoliberal processes (Geddes and Sullivan 2011 in Blanco et al. 2014). In this context, Rose et al. (2006) refer to the existence of elements belonging to communitarianism (i.e. in Blair's 'Third Way' in the UK) or elements which are derived from neo-conservatism and a religious morality (i.e. in the Bush administration in the US). Also Jessop (2002) advocates 'looking beyond neoliberalism' in order to make sense of the empirical political reality.

Blanco et al. (2014) point to the fact that governmentality analysis is well suited for grasping this complex reality, since the governmentality perspective perceives the state as far from homogeneous, whereby it tries to illuminate the different rationalities and technologies that exist within, *inter alia*, these state authorities (Dean 1999; Howarth 2013; both in Blanco et al. 2014).

2.4 Governing technologies & discourse

Besides from identifying the particular rationalities that get expressed in governing, governmentality analysis also focuses on the use of 'technologies' or – in a broader sense – '*on the technologies and assemblages of practices, materials, agents and techniques that are deployed to put these rationalities, categorizations and abstract programmes into effect*' (O'Malley et al. 1997, p. 502).

Swyngedouw (2005) speaks about 'technologies of power' and notes (in the context of neo-liberal governmentality) that these can be split up into 'technologies of agency' and 'technologies of performance' (Dean 1999 in Swyngedouw 2005). Strongly related to these two categories of technologies, Rose et al. (2006) give some specific examples of technologies which are 'autonomizing' as well as 'responsibilizing', namely audits, budgets, benchmarks and standards. Rose et al. (2006) add that these and other technologies are part of a neo-liberal rationality that is underpinned by the principle of 'freedom'. As can be seen, these technologies are broad in nature and follow more or less logically from the aforementioned Foucauldian interpretation of the neo-liberal rationality.

With regard to the definition given above (i.e. the one derived from O'Malley et al. 1997), I want to make clear that in the remainder of my thesis, I will only (explicitly) take into account the notion of 'technologies'. However, I interpret 'governing technologies' in such a way that it includes the wide variety of manifestations of governing which may say something about underlying intentions, thus including e.g. textual accounts of them as well as physical acts. The following quote gives a clear account of how the neo-liberal rationality (based on freedom) might govern society through particular technologies, when examined through governmentality theory: '*By means of the notion of governmentality the neo-liberal agenda for the "withdrawal of the state" can be deciphered as a technique for government. The crisis of Keynesianism and the reduction in forms of welfare-state intervention therefore lead less to the state losing powers of regulation and control (in the sense of a zero-sum game) and can instead be construed as a reorganization or restructuring of government techniques, shifting the regulatory competence of the state onto 'responsible' and 'rational' individuals. Neo-liberalism encourages individuals to give their lives a specific entrepreneurial form. It responds to stronger 'demand' for individual scope for self-determination and desired autonomy by 'supplying' individuals and collectives with the*

possibility of actively participating in the solution of specific matters and problems which had hitherto been the domain of state agencies specifically empowered to undertake such tasks. This participation has a 'price-tag': the individuals themselves have to assume responsibility for these activities and the possible failure thereof. (Donzelot 1984, pp. 157–77 1996; Burchell 1993, pp. 275–6; both in Lemke 2001, pp. 201–202).

This neoliberal governmentality will form the basis for my conceptual framework. However, governmentality theory as described hitherto suggests that it is rather top-down oriented. As this is not the whole story, I will complement my perspective on governmentality with a bottom-up component in section (...). But before doing so, I will first turn to the notion of discourse, since this concept is crucial too, when trying to grasp how the neo-liberal governmentality manifests itself.

In post-structuralism (i.e. the tradition in which governmentality analysis originates, see Larner 2000), 'discourse' is understood: *'not simply as a form of rhetoric disseminated by hegemonic economic and political groups, nor as the framework within which people represent their lived experience, but rather as a system of meaning that constitutes institutions, practices and identities in contradictory and disjunctive ways'* (Fairclough 1992 in Larner 2000, p. 12). Cotoi (2011) states that political rationalities are strongly based on particular discourses and objects (e.g. economies, communities and individuals) to be governed.

When elaborating on the link between discourse and technologies, Newman (2013) says that, from a governmentality perspective, neoliberalism is usually seen as the application of *technologies* that govern people on the basis of certain economic logics, which, in turn, are embedded within different *discourses* (e.g. discourses of 'markets', 'consumer choice' and 'individual autonomy') (Newman 2013; see also Brown 2005 and Rose 1999; both in Newman 2013).

To sum up the connection between some core concepts in governmentality, it can thus be said that it is by means of *discourse* that neoliberalism (as political *rationality*) attempts to employ particular *technologies* for achieving certain aims. This makes clear that 'discourse' can be seen as an analytical construct which reveals a lot about the use of particular technologies and the underlying rationalities. How exactly I am going to use discourse will be explained in my conceptual framework.

2.5 Human subjects

The aforementioned 'autonomizing' and 'responsibilizing' technologies and their embedding within a neo-liberal rationality based on freedom (see Rose et al. 2006) are closely related to another core idea in governmentality literature, namely the idea of producing human 'subjects'. Newman (2013) for example, argues that neoliberalism employs particular strategies with the aim of turning people into 'subjects' that are self-governing (Geddes and Sullivan 2011 in Newman 2013; see also Brown (2005) and Rose 1999; both in Newman 2013). Larner (2000) adds to this that under neoliberalism, people are typically stimulated to run their own affairs by becoming active, autonomous and responsible subjects in an active society (Larner 2000). In this light, even 'empowerment' should be understood as a governing strategy aimed at producing subjects who are self-governing (Cruikshank 1994, 1999 in McKee 2009).

The attempt of neoliberalism to frame people in certain ways through governmentality produces some typical subjects such as the 'liberal economic actor', the 'active citizen' or the 'responsible citizen' (Newman 2013). However, Newman (2013) also notes that these subject positions are not automatically some linear, intended outcomes of a neo-liberal agenda, because they can also be shaped in a bottom-up way and because subjects may resist or choose to not

obey to certain subject positions (Barnett et al. 2008, 2011 in Newman 2013). According to Newman (2013), this possibility of resistance shows the merit of the fact that governmentality is conceptualized as 'project' or 'strategy' instead of 'outcomes' (which is the main conceptualization under the analytical perspective of 'neoliberalism as policy framework').

The above mentioned ideas of 'political rationalities', 'technologies', 'subject positions' and 'discourses' will form the basis of the analytical lens that I will employ in my thesis. I will use them in order to show what a neo-liberal governmentality perspective can reveal about the NGP programme in Utrecht. As has been mentioned before, adopting the perspective of (neo-liberal) governmentality does not mean that I am going to compare governing aspects of the NGP programme to the neo-liberal ideology to see to what extent they 'fit'. Following Foucault's interpretation (according to Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010), the neo-liberal governmentality in my thesis will be understood as those forms of ruling based on, *inter alia*, individual freedom and the division of responsibilities among subjects. It is this broad form of ruling on which I will focus my attention. However, this perspective does not preclude the possibility that governing acts are observed whose rationale should be sought elsewhere. The following section further elaborates on this issue.

2.6 Political rationalities in the Netherlands

As has been said, it is possible to distinguish several of political rationalities which may, in principle, be observed in reality. I will now zoom in on the Dutch political context in order to see how I can demarcate my case study in terms of the concrete political rationalities that I will focus on. I want to notice in advance that it is impossible to provide an all-encompassing overview and reflect upon every rationality (such as the ones mentioned earlier) that might be observable in the Dutch political context. As a top-down perspective on governmentality, I think that the neo-liberal rationality, as understood by Foucault, is broad enough to make sense of those governing actions that are essentially top-down. In order to complement this top-down view, I will also draw upon the possibility that bottom-up resistance and alternative acts of governing might take place. This idea forms the basis for the second rationality of the 'energetic society' that I will focus on (although I will call it a 'bottom-up approach'). Although the neo-liberal rationality has already been extensively described, below it will be shortly covered once again, in order to be able to contrast it with the second rationality that I will examine.

2.7 Top-down versus bottom-up governing

2.7.1 Top-down: the neoliberal rationality

In a report by Van der Steen et al. (2014), an attempt is made to come up with a new steering philosophy for the Netherlands. When describing some developments in the production of 'public value' in Dutch governing over time, they distinguish between different 'production models'. Each of these can be characterized by a particular interrelation between the state, market and community (or civil society) (WRR 2012; Hoogenboom 2011; Van der Lans en De Boer 2011; Gray, Jenkins, Leeuw en Mayne 2003; O'Flynn en Wanna 2008; Hall 1995; Mort Weerawardena en Carnegie 2006; all in Van der Steen et al. 2014). When looking more closely at how they describe governing in the Netherlands over time, it becomes clear that these production models can be perceived – for the aim of my thesis – as different political rationalities. An illustrative rationality which is identified in the report is the classical 'welfare state' which arose in the Netherlands in the fifties and sixties (i.e. an upward movement in the triangle). According to Van der Steen et al. (2014), at the end of the eighties and the beginning of

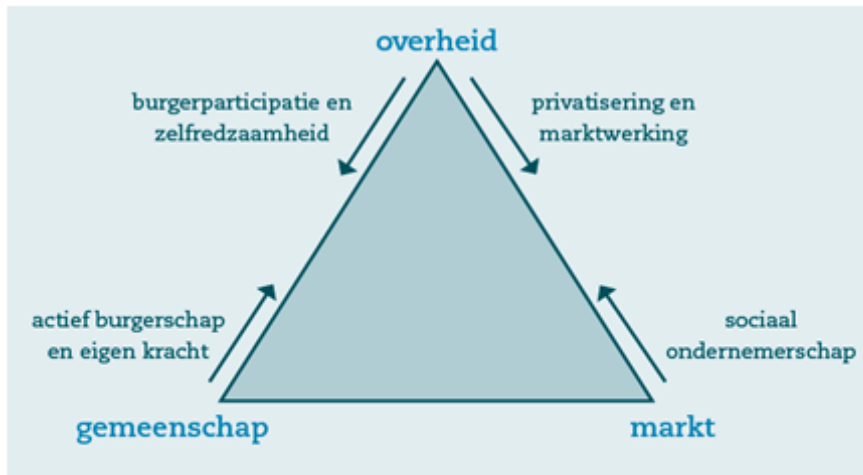


Figure 1: In this figure (derived from NSOB 2013 in Van der Steen et al. 2014), the production of public value is illustrated and, more importantly, the different governing shifts associated with this.

(they call it a ‘governance paradigm’) from the mid-nineties onwards, which can be characterized with terms like ‘own responsibility’, ‘output management’ and ‘market forces’.

Van der Steen et al. (2014) note that, while the strong shift towards the market started to gradually level off from the beginning of the 21st century, the state currently tries to transfer competencies towards civil society (ROB 2012 in Van der Steen et al. 2014). These shifts towards the market (i.e. privatization in figure 1) and, a bit later, towards civil society (i.e. citizen participation in figure 1) were stimulated by government in a *top-down* way (Van der Steen et al. 2014; see also Salverda and Pleijte 2015). Van der Steen et al. (2014) argue that – rather than a desire of citizens – this transfer of tasks to civil society was clearly a desire of the state, which needed to cut expenditures and started to realize that civil society and the market were better able to address certain issues than the state (Van der Steen et al. 2014). Van der Steen et al. (2014) also point to the importance of decentralization of tasks to municipalities in particular, since it is at the local level that citizen participation is connected with the community. Also Engbersen (2012) points to the fact that from the beginning of the 21st century, civil society is suddenly given prime importance and associated with terms like ‘decentralization’, ‘active citizenship’, ‘self-organization’ and ‘community responsibility’.

Although Van der Steen et al. (2014) make a distinction between the shift to the market on the one hand and civil society on the other, the point is that these authors explicitly consider both shifts as being steered in a *top-down* way (i.e. contrary to the *bottom-up* shift described in the next section). Because of this, I will henceforth consider both these top-down shifts as part of the neoliberal rationality. The reason for this is that – as has been mentioned before – not only the market but also civil society has an important role to play in a neoliberal rationality (see e.g. Jessop 2002).

2.7.2 Bottom-up: the energetic society

Van der Steen et al. (2014) consider the widespread idea that such things as ‘own strength’ and ‘own responsibility’ can simply be ‘implemented’ and thereby realized in a top-down fashion as problematic. According to these authors, participation only works when people themselves see the merit of it. Following from this, Van der Steen et al. (2014) observe that this top-down initiated participation (i.e. including both the shifts towards the market and towards civil society) is in reality complemented by a second movement (see also Salverda and Pleijte 2015).

the nineties, this upward movement came to a halt when such things as market forces, privatization and liberalization put the market in the center of attention. Although Van der Steen et al. (2014) do not explicitly link this to the neo-liberal rationality, the similarity is obvious. Also Engbersen (2012) points to the emergence of a neo-liberal rationality

Van der Steen et al. (2014) point to the simultaneous existence of bottom-up initiatives by both market parties and citizens, which emerge spontaneously without a call from the state (Rose 2000; Schinkel en Van Houdt 2010; both in Van der Steen et al. 2014). In these initiatives, civil society and the market take the lead on their own terms, while the state (if joining at all) merely has a supporting function (Van der Steen et al. 2014). To characterize this development, Van der Steen et al. (2014) speak about a 'network society'. The ability to create public value through these networks is, in turn, the main idea behind the concept of the 'energetic society' (Hajer 2011 in Van der Steen et al. 2014). According to Van der Steen et al. (2014), this idea of the energetic society often implies that non-state actors take the initiative to achieve their own goals without asking the state for permission to do so. In these initiatives, people take actions which may compete with the state or which may cause friction with rules or goals set by the state (Van der Steen et al. 2014). The fact, that in many cases the initiative shifts from the state to other actors, means that it is often better to speak of 'state participation' instead of 'citizen participation' (Van der Steen et al. 2014).

However, the rather black and white distinction between (mainly neoliberal) top-down and bottom-up initiated processes of citizen involvement (as has been outlined above) might be more complex in empirical reality. Following on from this, Engbersen (2012) notes that, although the neoliberal paradigm has become dominant in the last couple of decennia (Uitermark 2011 in Engbersen 2012), it is very well possible for different paradigms to exist at the same time (Engbersen 2012). These authors also point to the existence of hybrid forms of paradigms (see Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010 in Engbersen 2012). When applying this to my thesis, this means that it is important to keep paying attention to the wide array of technologies and instruments that may be used by the state, as they do not necessarily belong to a purely neo-liberal rationality.

2.8 Applying governmentality as analytical lens

I will now shortly turn to some academic reflections which show how the theory of neoliberal governmentality can be used in empirical research, how it has been used and what can be learned from these examples. The reason for elaborating on these issues is that governmentality theory offers relatively few tangible tools and concepts for looking at reality. For getting a better grip on the theory and the ways in which it can be applied in my own thesis, it might therefore be beneficial to elaborate a bit further on some issues addressed in governmentality theory. Subsequently, the theoretical framework and the reflections below will be linked to the case of the NGPs in order to make clear how this study will proceed.

2.8.1 Strengths of the governmentality perspective

Cotoi (2011) makes tangible what governmentality as analytical lens can reveal, by saying that it asks, for instance, under which conditions, where, by whom and about whom, discourses and other utterances are produced that are labeled as 'the truth'. In addition, governmentality theory also tries to unravel how these truths are employed in practice; what conflicts, coalitions, etc. occur in the process and which alternative truths there are (Cotoi 2011). Governmentality analysis is therefore about *'the invention, contestation and operationalization of various rational programmes and techniques that try to conduct behaviours so that specific results can be obtained'* (Rose 1999, p. 20 in Cotoi 2011, p. 112). Cotoi (2011) adds that governmentality shows, how both the attempts to govern the conduct of subjects and the opposing efforts to undermine this, need to rationalize their actions by embedding them in a certain truth, which is not seldom regarded as nearly 'scientific'.

Also McKee (2009) is confident that governmentality theory has the potential to provide many crucial insights, for instance by looking at how the subject to be governed is produced through discourse by means of the application of certain techniques and strategies.

Moreover, by understanding 'governing' in a broad sense, governing by the state is seen as merely one out of many types of government. This argument is where Foucault's concise definition of governmentality as 'the conduct of conduct' derives from (Foucault 2003d: 138 in McKee 2009, p. 468), which comprises '*any calculated attempt to direct human behaviour towards particular ends*' (Dean 1999 in McKee 2009, p. 468) – hence also including the governing actions of dominated subjects themselves (McKee 2009). Although governmentality analysis focuses on the wide array of actors that may be involved in governing, it also wants to show how the state claims to be fully dependent on non-state actors while simultaneously remaining a crucial actor in framing the definition of a problem as well as the solution to it (McKee 2008 in McKee 2009).

Another strength of governmentality analysis is its understanding of 'power' as being *productive* rather than oppressive and restrictive in the sense that it creates discourse and certain subjectivities which are also mobilized (McKee 2009; Foucault 2003e in McKee 2009). According to Foucault, power is about being able to 'structure the (possible) actions of others' and the 'management of possibilities' (Foucault 2003d, p. 138 in McKee 2009 p. 471). Power is therefore always exercised over subjects who are free, who have an own will and can resist government practices by coming up with alternatives (McKee 2009). Because of this, power can be seen as a political strategy that can be applied by both the more dominant governors and the actors trying to counterbalance this (Cooper 1994 in McKee 2009).

Related to the above, Larner (2000) argues that one of the important contributions of governmentality literature is that – instead of regarding new political constellations as something stable and inevitable – it problematizes them by emphasizing their complexity and contingency (Larner 2000; Barry et al. (eds.) in Larner 2000). Larner (2000) adds that, in this way, governmentality analysis tries to increase the space for critical voices and for changes of the status quo.

2.8.2 Potential pitfalls

However, Larner (2000) also points to the fact that the governmentality analyses as applied to neoliberalism, have generally focused on wider governmental themes and not so much on the 'messy actualities' of concrete neo-liberal projects. Larner (2000) adds to this that there has been a small number of studies on specific neoliberal projects, but that *those* analyses had the problem that they put too much emphasis on the powerful discourses as present in official policy documents. The important point that Larner (2000) concludes with is that these Foucauldian inspired analyses have rarely looked at the simultaneous existence of discourses from both hegemonic and oppositional actors in particular projects.

According to McKee (2009), another shortcoming of many governmentality studies is the neglect of empirical reality, since, oftentimes, a 'discursive governmentality' approach is applied (i.e. focusing on political rationalities as present in formal government documents) (Stenson 2005 in McKee 2009). Because of this, the question that remains unanswered is the extent to which objectives and intentions, as stated in these policy documents, have actually been achieved on the ground (McKee 2009). The same applies to the question why certain subjects – expected to exist when relying on the formal political rationales and discourses – cannot be recognized as such in reality (McKee 2009). Related to this, McKee (2009) notes that a top-down governmentality perspective, which is restricting itself to political rationality, prevents an

understanding of power that also recognizes the freedom and agency and, hence, the resisting ability of the human subject (see also O'Malley et al. 1997 in McKee 2009).

2.8.3 A 'realist governmentality'

Based on the work of Stenson (2005, 2008), McKee (2009) has come up with an alternative form of governmentality analysis which is called 'realist-governmentality'. It is a reaction to some perceived theoretical shortcomings of work within the governmentality tradition – not to be confused with the features of Foucauldian governmentality per se (McKee 2009). As a new approach, *'it advocates complementing discursive analysis of emergent governmentalities with localized empirical accounts of actual governing practices, which seek to regulate the conduct of specifically targeted populations. In doing so, it brings into focus the micro-practices of local initiatives and the behaviour of local actors'* (McKee 2009, p. 478). This quote describes quite accurately what I will do in this thesis, as I will indeed complement the analysis of policy documents with interviews in which I will speak to people in different positions. I will do this with the aim to find out how people perceive the NGPs from their own point of view. By doing so, it might turn out, like the earlier mentioned literature often suggests, that implementing a policy programme like the NGPs is far from easy and straightforward.

As the realist governmentality approach is strongly rooted in empirical reality, it fully takes account of, *inter alia*, social relations, context and the associated complexity which is often characteristic for the 'struggles around subjectivity' (McKee 2009, p. 479). According to McKee (2009), the realist governmentality approach is better applicable in practice, firstly because it focuses on discourse as well as its effects on the ground (McKee 2009; see also Stenson 1998 in McKee 2009) which, therefore, reveals the *'inevitable gap between what is attempted and what is accomplished'* (Li 2007, p. 1 in McKee 2009, p. 479). Secondly, it is better capable of illuminating bottom-up resistance because it already presupposes that subjects might resist the position in which others might want to place them (McKee 2009; see also Clarke 2004 in McKee 2009). Thirdly, it takes better account of *'the various local contexts in which governmental rationalities, strategies and techniques are actively contested'* which *'opens up a critical space in which to explore how central 'plans' are mediated from below and the way in which projects of rule are applied differently in different places'* (McKee 2009, p. 480). In the last place, the role of the state is given prime importance because, in this era of neoliberal multi-actor governance, decentralizing as well as (re)centralizing tendencies can be observed (Stenson 1998 in McKee 2009).

2.9 Conceptualizing 'power'

The PAA is inspired by the agency-structure debate relating to Giddens (see Leroy and Arts 2006). Some authors working with the PAA also perceive 'power' in the tradition of the agency-structure debate, which is for example showed by the following quote: *'Although we consider Foucault's power framework thought-provoking, we nonetheless still prefer to attach the concept of power to social actors on the one hand and (changeable) structures of domination on the other (such as Weber and Giddens do)'* (Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004, p. 349). However, the understanding of power in the tradition of the agency-structure debate is quite different from the one in governmentality theory.

According to McKee (2009), in the agency-structure debate, the resistance to power is generally perceived as an act of freeing oneself from a dominant suppressor. In the agency-structure conceptualization, freedom is therefore understood as the absence of coercion (Rose et al. 2006 in McKee 2009). In governmentality theory, *'power is exercised only over free subjects,*

with a capacity for action, and who have a fundamental recalcitrance of will' (McKee 2009, p. 471). Even more, in governmentality theory, 'freedom' is actually understood as '*a rather diverse array of invented technologies*' (Rose et al. 2006, p. 100 in McKee 2009, p. 471). Reflecting on this, the creation of freedom by means of certain technologies is in fact how a neoliberal rationality exercises power, for example by constituting free and autonomous subjects (see also McKee 2009). Power in governmentality theory can thus be seen as a 'political strategy' (Cooper 1994 in McKee 2009). This is indeed very different from the (agency-structure based) argument that freedom exists in the absence of coercive power. However, when looking more specifically at the question how power can be operationalized in the PAA, it turns out that the above difference does not have to be a dilemma for my research.

In the context of the PAA, Liefferink (2006, p. 54) mentions 'resources' and 'power' as if they are the same thing. In the same article, though, the notion of 'discursive power' (among other types) is also brought forward: *'Discourses can be used as 'weapons' for gaining, for instance, political legitimacy, but without being under any actor's exclusive control, some actors may be able to change the content of the narratives prevailing in the arrangement, or even to introduce wholly new ones. Such 'discursive power' is often based upon political legitimacy'* (Liefferink 2006, p. 55).

Also Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) explicitly argue that they take into account the discursive as well as the organizational form of power. They add to this that 'arguing' and 'persuasion' are sometimes purposefully excluded when speaking about power, since some authors think that power is necessarily exercised 'against the will of others' (Weber 1964 in Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004). Nonetheless, it is important to realize that using arguing and persuasion for convincing a discussion partner (i.e. the 'power of arguments') is still very different from 'simply agreeing' (Risse 2002 in Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004).

The first type, 'organizational power', can refer to e.g. rules and resources, whereas the second type 'discursive power' can refer to discourses (see Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004). Basically, both forms of power also refer to the well-known organization-substance duality, in which 'organization' consists of the actors, resources, and rules of the game, while substance covers the discourses of a policy arrangement (Liefferink 2006, p. 45).

When taken together, the four dimensions of the PAA seem to provide an appropriate tool for studying the exercise of power (i.e. in a discursive and organizational form). Also in my own research, I will use this distinction between 'discursive' and 'organizational' as an analytical tool to analyse power, although I recognize that both forms are strongly interrelated. Moreover, taking into account both these 'dimensions' of power does not mean that I cannot look upon power in a Foucauldian sense. For a deeper understanding of my case, I will eventually look at power from the perspective of neoliberal governmentality. Because of this, the distinction between discursive and organizational power can be seen as a useful link between the analytical framework of the PAA and the subsequent governmentality analysis.

3. Conceptual framework

3.1 Policy Arrangement Approach

3.1.1 The four dimensions of the PAA

In order to achieve the aforementioned twofold aim of policy arrangements, four dimensions are distinguished for characterizing a given policy arrangement:

- The involved *actors* and their *coalitions*.
- The distribution of *resources* between the different actors and the resulting disparities in power and influence.
- The *rules of the game* leading the interactions within arrangement, which include both the formal procedures that were agreed upon, and the more informal routines and rules.
- The policy *discourses*, comprising of the actors' norms and values, problem conceptualizations and advocated types of solutions.

(See Liefferink 2006).

In this framework, all four dimensions are inextricably interrelated; a change in one dimension nearly automatically involves changes in one or more of the other dimensions as well (Liefferink 2006, p. 48; Arts et al. 2006). The twofold aim of fully understanding the daily policy processes in the arrangement at a given moment, and grasping the full dynamics of the arrangement over time, will only succeed when exposing these interconnections in a comprehensive way (Liefferink 2006, pp. 45-46, 48-49). This will be done in my thesis as well. Moreover, according to Liefferink (2006), these four dimensions should be considered as four different analytical perspectives on a given policy arrangement. Each of these perspectives will illuminate different elements of the arrangement and needs its own research methods (Liefferink 2006, p. 46). They note that an important choice that has to be made by the researcher is where to start in the tetrahedron that puts the four dimensions relative to each other. This choice is relevant as different starting points mean different insights about the arrangement that will be acquired by the researcher (Liefferink 2006, p. 49-50).

In my thesis I will start from the actor perspective because when the actors are known, the subsequent resources, rules of the game and discourses that are distinguished can already be linked to these different actors. Moreover, by mapping the actors in the beginning functions as a way to further delineate my case. The four dimensions will be used for answering the first research question. For this question, the characteristics as well as the dynamics of the policy arrangement need to be addressed. For a given dimension, the first thing that will be done is describing the main *characteristics* (thereby distinguishing between the different 'accents' within a dimension, e.g. the different resources, their mobilisation and their distribution). Next, for each dimension I will describe the dynamics, so how (elements of) a dimension has changed in the course of time.

When analyzing the characteristics and temporal dynamics of the NGP programme, the context will be taken into account in order to shed light on why some processes and phenomena are taking place in a particular way and not in another. However, since 'context' is a notion that can involve (nearly) any time, place and domain, it needs to be delineated in order to be applicable. In a spatial sense, I will limit my scope to the *local* context – which means 'the city of Utrecht' – with its relevant trends and processes that affect the policy arrangement of this particular programme (see also Buizer et al. 2015). From the perspective of 'time', I will only look at the period in which the neighbourhood green plans have taken place. Wider ongoing trends in space and time that are both within and outside the field of urban green space

governance and that are affecting contemporary perspectives on participation will be outside the scope of this study. Although the modernization processes are very important for understanding large and small-scale contexts, it will not be explicitly addressed in this study, notwithstanding the fact that the identified local trends and processes can, of course, be manifestations of these broader modernization processes.

3.1.2 Actors and coalitions

According to Liefferink (2006), an analysis that starts from the perspective of actors is the most suitable way to obtain a good overview of a policy arrangement around a particular issue. As they note, also in reality, 'the actor' is often the central unit, since people – first and foremost – interact with other people. Only in the interactions between people, other things like resources, rules and discourses become visible (Liefferink 2006, p. 50). Following this line of thought, also in my thesis, the actor perspective will be adopted, which means that, by starting with describing the different actors (i.e. individuals, groups and organizations) involved in the policy issue, the subsequent analytical categories (i.e. resources, rules and discourses) will firstly be linked to the different actors.

Different actors can also join each other in a policy coalition. Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) define a policy coalition as: *'a number of players who share resources and/or interpretations of a policy discourse, in the context of the rules of the game'* (Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004, p. 342).

As Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) note, the actors that are part of one such coalition have similar policy objectives which they try to achieve by participating in policy processes. According to them, a distinction can be made between 'supporting' and 'challenging' coalitions. A supporting coalition supports the predominant discourse or rules, while a challenging coalition challenges these (Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004).

Although the notion of 'policy coalitions' mostly relates to the dimension of actors, in order to identify these coalitions, it is necessary to know more about the resources and discourses within the particular policy issue at stake (see the above definition of 'policy coalition'). Therefore, when describing these policy coalitions I will look at any merging of actors that occurs, whereby I will try to figure out whether the origin of this gathering effect should be explained from the discourse and/or resource point of view.

In accordance with my first research question, I will firstly identify all the actors which are somehow involved in the policy issue at stake (i.e. the neighbourhood green plans), either directly or indirectly, alternatively referred to as 'central' versus more 'peripheral' actors (see Liefferink 2006, p. 51).

Simultaneously, I will also try to find out whether there are actors that have been excluded from the policy process while they would actually seem like natural/logical participants. This may prove important for the later analysis zooming in on relations of power. Subsequently, I will describe the background and motivations of the involved actors. The background of an actor refers to such things as the identity (e.g. as local resident or consultant), expertise and capacity or function of actors while participating in a given policy process. The motives are an answer to the question why an actor chooses to participate. As such, it is probably closely linked to the particular background and the norms and values of an actor. Also the relations of actors with other actors will be examined.

3.1.3 Resources

The notion of resources is inherently related to the concept of power (Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004, see also Liefferink 2006, p.54). Also for Arts et al. (2006), this dimension of the Policy Arrangement Approach is all about power and influence. For them, 'power' refers to *'the mobilisation, division and deployment of resources'* while 'influence' refers to *'who determines policy outcomes and how'* (Arts et al. 2006, p. 99). I will perceive resources as *'a stock or supply of money, materials, staff, and other assets that can be drawn on by a person or organization in order to function effectively'* (Oxford Dictionaries 2015). 'Resources' cover a wide array of things, such as money, information and political legitimacy (Liefferink 2006, p. 54). According to the same author, it is important – when analyzing the distribution and use of resources – to keep in mind that in a policy issue, all the involved actors are at least to some extent dependent upon each other for the particular resources that each actor has. Liefferink (2006) also notes that the existence of these resource dependencies causes a situation, in which certain actors tend to flock together if they control the same, important resource(s). This leads to the emergence of 'resource coalitions' (Liefferink 2006, p. 54).

In my thesis, I will first try to identify all the resources that exist in the policy arrangement of the NGP programme, thereby looking at e.g. money, information, expertise, legitimacy, skills, labor and social network, etc. Simultaneously, I will try to find out for each of these resources to what extent they are controlled by the different actors. Subsequently, it will be analyzed how these different resources are used by different actors and for what purposes. Also the emergence of 'resource coalitions' will be looked at.

3.1.4 Rules of the game

According to Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004), the 'rules of the game' delineate a given policy domain. More specifically, 'rules' can be defined as *'the mutually agreed formal procedures and informal routines of interaction within institutions'* (Liefferink 2006, p. 56). Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) link this 'rule dimension' to 'new institutionalism' by saying that within new institutionalism, there are different currents with their own conception of 'rules'. These currents have in common that they *'consider institutions as sets of rules that guide and constrain the behaviour of individual actors'*. (Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004, p. 342). They add that new institutionalism addresses both informal conventions on the one hand and formal constitutions and organizational structures in policy processes on the other hand. Therefore, it is not only possible to analyze the interrelations between formal and informal rules, but also to look at the rules beyond the traditional modernist institutions (Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004).

In my thesis I will apply a broad conception of rules which will include the formal procedures, constitutions and organizational structures on the one hand and informal routines and conventions on the other hand. Moreover, I will acknowledge the guiding and constraining character of rules and also look at the rules of the game of policy arrangements that go beyond the classical modernist institutions. More concretely, I will try to find out which rules are in operation, which actor(s) have established them and how.

3.1.5 Discourse

According to Hajer and Versteeg (2005), in daily reality the words 'discourse' and 'discussion' are regularly (but wrongly) used as synonyms. They define discourse as *'an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices'* (Hajer and Versteeg 2005, p. 175). Therefore, the 'discussion' (or debate) is actually *the object* that is analyzed. Doing

discourse analysis means studying 'language-in-use' (Wetherell et al. 2001a in Hajer and Versteeg 2005) or, in other words, trying to discover linguistic patterns, structures or regularities in those discussions (Hajer and Versteeg 2005). According to Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004), discourses refer to 'interpretative schemes' that actors apply. These discourses are often not really known by the participants in a discussion (Hajer and Versteeg 2005). Given the fact that each discourse has a different argumentative rationality, the notion of discourse also has its repercussions on the democratic content of a debate. In order to be called 'democratic' (for which Hajer and Versteeg (2005) use the term 'deliberative quality') a discussion must be open, inclusive, accountable, integer, reciprocal and it must allow the involved actors to learn through reiterative conversations (Hajer and Versteeg 2005).

At a deeper level, acknowledging discourse implies the assumption that a single, 'true' reality does not exist. In this view, there is rather a plurality of co-existing realities which are socially constructed. When this social constructiveness of reality is acknowledged, another thing that should be taken into account is the contextual factors which might explain why particular discourses or 'accounts of truth' arise in a certain place. (Hajer and Versteeg 2005).

Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) come up with their own definition of 'policy discourses' that seems more applied to the policy arena. They define it as: '*dominant interpretative schemes, ranging from formal policy concepts to popular story lines, by which meaning is given to a policy domain*' (Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004, p. 343). According to Liefferink (2006), discourses emerge at two different levels. At the first, broader level, there are discourses about the preferred structure of society and more specifically about the relation between the state, the market and civil society (i.e. the preferred mode of governance). At the second level, there are discourses that are about a specific policy problem (e.g. its character, its causes and solutions). At this second level of discourse, the strategic positions of actors become clear. Moreover, at both levels it may occur that several actors together form a discourse coalition around one discourse (Liefferink 2006, p. 58).

At the first level of analysis in my thesis (i.e. my first research question), I will use the above definition of discourse as given by Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004), since it is more specifically directed towards policy analysis and not too abstract. I will therefore look at 'formal policy concepts', 'popular story lines' and other 'dominant interpretative schemes' (see Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004). I will take into account the dominant and formal discourses as well as those that are subordinate or informal. Therefore, the notion of '*dominant interpretative schemes*' must be conceived of with care, in order to prevent that subordinate discourses are being forgotten. I will also try to figure out which actors belong to which discourse(s) and whether there are coalitions that are formed around them.

At a later stage of my research, discourse will be looked at more critically, taking account of power relations from the perspective of neoliberal governmentality. This will be explained in more detail in another section. Here, in the context of mapping the policy arrangement of the NGPs (the first research question), I will limit myself to identifying the different discourses of different actors and to describing what they are about in terms of contents related to the NGPs.

3.2 The PAA and governmentality: the way to proceed

Because of the fact that governmentality is a theoretical lens rather than an operational framework, it has much additional value to use the Policy Arrangement Approach as an initial framework for analysis. I believe that the PAA is very suitable as a first step to make sense of the potentially complex political reality of the NGPs. Through the dimension of actors, I will obtain a comprehensive overview of all the actors which are somehow engaged in the NGP programme,

which provides a good means of delineating my analysis for further examinations on, for instance, the creation of subject positions and power relations. The dimensions of rules and resources will provide more clarity about the positions and roles of actors within the policy arrangement. This, in turn, provides the necessary information for looking at the extent to which different actors have the ability to exercise power and, hence, to decide to refrain from adopting particular subject positions or to shape and introduce governing alternatives.

For the governmentality analysis, the dimension of discourse can be seen as the starting point, as it is through discourse that political rationalities, technologies and subject positions become apparent in the first place. Also the underlying aims of actors, to which these governing efforts are ultimately directed, can be determined this way. Subsequently, it needs to be investigated how the translation of discourses and aims into practice takes place and how, during the process, top-down ideas are adopted, adapted or resisted.

Although it is difficult to operationalize the governmentality approach for empirical research purposes in a step-by-step way, it provides me with sufficient analytical tools in the form of some core concepts and the theoretical ideas about these (as offered above), which can be used for analyzing a policy arrangement like the NGP programme. Hence, the above elaborations on governmentality had the aim to open up the wide array of insights which a governmentality lens can reveal about the operations of a neoliberal governmentality and the emergence of a bottom-up approach.

Neoliberal governmentality will be examined in the Foucauldian sense (as interpreted by Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010) who perceives neoliberalism as a form of governing based on freedom and the top-down allocation of responsibilities in a context of multi-actor governance (see Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010). I will examine the presence of this political rationality by looking at the concrete governing technologies that are applied by the local state. I will do this for instance, by analyzing such things as the particular language, knowledge and morality which are expressed through discourse (see Rose 1999 in Cotoi 2011). In doing so, I perceive the production of discourse in a Foucauldian sense as a way to exercise power ('power as being productive' (see McKee 2009; Foucault 2003e in McKee 2009). Discourse is thereby used to justify a rationality by giving it a certain truth value (see Cotoi 2011).

Whereas the focus will be on neo-liberal governmentality – ruling mainly through the principles of freedom and responsibility – I will try to take all governing acts into consideration with regard to the NGPs. Hence, if ways of governing can be observed in the NGPs that are not typical for the neo-liberal rationality, I will explicitly mention and discuss this.

Since governmentality theory has taught me that (discursive) power resides with the powerful and with the oppressed (see Cooper 1994 in McKee 2009), I will search for discourses not only by looking at official government documents, but also by speaking to the non-governmental actors. Therefore, I will not only examine the *production* of (formal) discourses but also their *mobilization* in practice (see McKee 2009; Foucault 2003e in McKee 2009) and the way in which they may be contested or triggering the emergence of alternative discourses (and their coalitions) (see Cotoi 2011). Hence, I will firmly root my analysis in empirical reality and local context, whereby I will presuppose the autonomy and agency of actors to act according to their own will (see also O'Malley et al. 1997 in McKee 2009).

When taking into account this bottom-up 'rationality', I will also look at the response of state authorities to bottom-up plans or actions that might conflict with goals or rules established by state authorities (see Van der Steen et al. 2014). If conflict can indeed be observed, it is important to find out whether the state is prepared to adapt the rules. This would be an important issue for deciding whether a bottom-up approach is accepted. In this way, the PAA

dimension of 'rules' becomes very important for understanding governmentality. While looking at bottom-up initiative and ideas, it is also necessary to look at the question whether the state accepts this alternative 'rationality' and, consequently, a less direct role or no role at all for itself.

However, even when a bottom-up approach seems to crystallize in the NGP programme, it is important not to downplay the potentially big role that the state may still have. Also the role of the state in e.g. framing problem definitions and solutions (see McKee 2008 in McKee 2009) should be taken into account, since this kind of influences would mean that a fully bottom-up approach might be impeded.

Bottom-up acts of governing (e.g. resistance or offering policy alternatives) can be discursive or more 'physical' in nature. The emergence of spontaneous and self-organized green space initiatives by citizens as reaction to the (more formal) NGP programme might be an example of the latter. To make the connection with my third research question, I will look at the way in which different actors employ their *discursive* and their *organizational* power. For this, I am keen to use Foucault's understanding of power as the ability to 'structure the (possible) actions of others' and as the 'management of possibilities' (both from Foucault 2003d, p. 138 in McKee 2009 p. 471). Taking a look at this Foucauldian understanding of power, it seems clear that exercising power can be done in a discursive and in an organizational way (e.g. mobilizing resources and changing the rules of the game). For the purpose of my third research question, I will link these both forms of power with the question to what extent the aims of different governmental and non-governmental actors have been realized.

Another thing that I will focus on is 'human subject positions', whose construction takes place in conjunction with a particular rationality and governing techniques (see McKee 2009). I will investigate whether and, if so, how subject positions are created (e.g. the active or responsible citizen, see Newman 2013), by whom and by which governing technologies this is done. I will do this by examining discourse (see also McKee 2009). Moreover – while recognizing the critique against some work on governmentality – I will also look at how these subject positions might be adopted, adapted or resisted in a bottom-down direction (see Barnett et al. 2008, 2011 in Newman 2013). Because of the fact that I acknowledge the inherent recalcitrance of governed actors (see McKee 2009), I am well aware that subject positions as created in official discourse, may not be found in empirical reality – thereby accounting for another of McKee's (2009) critiques on some governmentality analyses. Evidently, the ability to create particular subject positions (and the ability to resist this) is a form of discursive power (see McKee 2009) aimed at the realization of certain desired outcomes (see Dean 1999 in McKee 2009). The application of governing technologies and the creation of human subjects will be examined as part of my third research question.

3.3 Research questions

RQ 1) What are the characteristics of the policy arrangement of the NGPs in Utrecht, how has the arrangement developed over time, and how has it been influenced by the particular local context?

RQ 1.1) Which actors are involved, what are their background and motivations, and how do the actors relate to each other?

RQ 1.2) What are the different resources, how are they acquired, distributed among and used by different actors?

RQ 1.3) What discourses are produced and how are they used by different actors?

RQ 1.4) What are the rules of the game and how are they established?

RQ 1.5) Which bottom-up local greening initiatives are not part of the (initial) NGPs policy but become nonetheless connected with it, and what are these initiatives about?

RQ 2) How do actors interrelate and interact within the policy arrangement of the NGPs and how, in turn, does the arrangement interrelate and interact with related bottom-up initiatives (i.e. those initiatives as referred to in RQ 1.5)?

RQ3) To what extent are state and non-state actors able to exercise discursive and organizational power for achieving their aims relating to the NGPs, when examined through the perspective of neoliberal governmentality and a bottom-up approach?

RQ 3.1) What are the aims of state and participating non-state actors within the policy arrangement of the NGPs?

RQ 3.2) Which governing technologies and subject positions does the state produce (i.e. through formal discourse) to underpin its aims?

RQ 3.3) How much space and flexibility does the NGPs policy offer to non-state actors for expressing their desires and for determining their aims, and how does this relate to the emergence of bottom-up initiatives?

RQ 3.4) In which ways do state and non-state actors exercise discursive and organizational power to achieve their aims in the interactional processes during the implementation of the NGPs policy in practice (i.e. including the related bottom-up initiatives)?

RQ 3.5) What are the outputs and (perceived) effects of the NGPs and to what extent do these correspond to the aims of state and non-state actors?

RQ 3.6) To what extent can these findings (including RQ 3 as well as RQ 2) be understood from the perspective of neo-liberal governmentality and/or a bottom-up approach?

4. Research methodologies

4.1 The NGPs as case study

An important factor that influenced my research design is the fact that this study will be part of the overarching GREEN SURGRE research project. The Neighbourhood Green Plans in Utrecht were selected as a case study for this project. A case study is useful when the goal is to provide an in-depth and accurate account of a phenomenon (Green and Thorogood 2009), particularly when the studied area or phenomenon is relatively unknown (Kumar 2011). A case can comprise of e.g. an individual, community, an event or a city (Kumar 2011). According to Kumar (2011), in a case study, the whole population under study must be regarded as one entity and the case as a whole a 'bounded system' (Burns 1997, p. 364 in Kumar 2011, p. 126).

The case in this study comprises of the 'Neighbourhood Green Plans', which form a programme that was initiated by the municipality of Utrecht in the year 2010. With this programme, the municipality wants to 'green' the city's neighbourhoods together with residents. In each of Utrecht's ten neighbourhoods, the municipality invited citizens to come up with green ideas. After a municipal assessment on feasibility and some other criteria, the selected ideas from one neighbourhood were bundled in the form of a Neighbourhood Green Plan (henceforth abbreviated with 'NGP'). This way, the green ideas of residents were converted into projects that were to be implemented within a given time frame. Included in the NGP programme was a budget of €500,000 per neighbourhood, from which €420,000 was reserved for the actual implementation of the projects. From the initiation of the programme in 2010, on average two or three NGPs have been done each year. Although the ten NGPs were, for the most part, set up according to the same idea and principles, in practice, the different NGPs were often found to vary in terms of actors involved, rules, available resources and contents.

Since the NGPs form a distinct policy programme that is also spatially bounded, the case could rather easily be delineated. A case study design therefore seems an appropriate study design for analyzing the NGPs. Such a delineation is also necessary in order to be able to apply the PAA to the NGPs. It is for example important to decide when actors can be considered to belong to the arrangement and when not. In the same way, when analyzing the rules of the game, the boundaries of the policy 'game' must be known. Since the NGPs form a distinct policy domain, the PAA was expected to be an appropriate tool for examining the phenomenon of 'participatory governance' in the case of the NGPs.

Moreover, an *in-depth* analysis by means of a case study is very suitable for the chosen research phenomenon, as the NGPs (the case) are a relatively novel form of participatory governance which, in this specific form, cannot be observed in many other places. Due to its very particular character, giving an in-depth account of the NGPs provides an interesting opportunity for studying participatory governance from programme to practice.

In the second half of the analysis, this study used the case of the NGPs in order to examine the phenomenon of 'neo-liberal governmentality'. The NGPs were expected to be an interesting research opportunity for analyzing neo-liberal governmentality in practice. Literature on neo-liberal governmentality argues that the participation of residents in policy making is often promoted for the reason that it may provide state actors with new ways of governing, typically in a deregulated form where autonomous residents are made responsible for certain policy issues. Moreover, when looking at this literature, the claim that citizens are in charge must be looked upon critically, since state actors often continue to have important positions relative to non-state actors. These views, which are prevalent in reflections on (participatory) governance, made me curious about why and how the NGP programme was

established and, subsequently, put into practice. Although on the first view, the NGP programme suggests that residents will decide what the neighbourhoods will eventually look like, I became interested in how such a promising approach would work out in practice and to what degree residents were really able to exert political influence. Based on the used literature, I wondered whether a certain degree of autonomy of residents (i.e. to decide on the neighbourhood green) and the allocation of a budget would imply that residents were expected to do certain things in return. Because of this, the choice was made to look from a neoliberal governmentality perspective to the NGPs, without forgetting to consider any alternative explanations that might be there.

The context in which a phenomenon takes place is very important in a case study design, as compared to other designs (e.g. experiments), and therefore explicitly taken into account (Yin 1994 in Green and Thorogood 2009). This *local* context is indeed explicitly included in this research (see e.g. research question 1) as this is also a prerequisite for an appropriate application of the PAA. An implication of this context dependency is that the results obtained in this study cannot be generalized to other cases that are somehow different from the one studied (see Kumar 2011).

In a case study design, the collection and analysis of data is typically rather flexible (Grinnell 1981 in Kumar 2011). Moreover, the combination of several methods for collecting data (e.g. interviewing and using secondary sources) is generally very important for an in-depth case study (Green and Thorogood 2009; Kumar 2011). Also for this study, several data collection methods were used: a document analysis, in-depth interviewing and the analysis of written responses on questions.

An implication of the case study design for the acquisition of data is, that for an in-depth account of the phenomenon, it is necessary to have access to a diverse body of data. For this, I was to some extent dependent on the number and quality of documents and the amount and quality of information that could be obtained through the interviews. As Kumar (2011) notes, for an in-depth understanding of a case, rather than selecting a random sample from the population, the researcher needs to collect as much data as possible. In this study, this was done by combining the information from diverse sources and from diverse perspectives that could shed a different light on the NGPs.

4.2 The setting

As became clear in the previous section, 'the case' in my research is the NGP programme in Utrecht. Hence, the physical boundaries of the case will be those of the city of Utrecht. However, the NGP programme can be seen as a composite case in the sense that it covers ten different neighborhoods. In fact, there are therefore ten different NGPs. This fact makes it rather challenging to study the programme in its entirety. In the beginning of the study, the decision had to be made whether to focus on a single neighbourhood (or maybe two) or to analyze the NGP programme in its entirety.

I expected that, even though the ten NGPs were taking place within one overarching programme, it would be far from self-evident that a comparable policy arrangement would be observable when looking at each of the ten neighborhoods separately. When I started to collect data through interviews, it soon turned out that, in a lot of respects, there were indeed significant differences between different neighbourhoods. It proved difficult to find out which neighbourhood would be particularly suitable as a more specific case study. Moreover, municipal officials were often involved in several NGPs which made it rather easy to get a fairly comprehensive view of the NGP programme. In addition to this, a potential risk that I foresaw

was that it could be difficult to get in touch with enough relevant respondents when choosing for only one neighbourhood. For the above reasons, the decision was made to regard the NGP programme in its entirety as the case.

The challenge was therefore to collect data in such a way that it would guarantee a diversity of viewpoints that matched reality to a sufficient extent. This implied that I had to speak to people and read documents from different NGPs. In order to structure the search for interviewees, I made sure that three levels were covered: the *strategic, street and operational* level. The strategic level comprises of e.g. politicians and municipal officials. The street level comprises of residents as well as other non-state actors. The *operational* level concerns those people working on the implementation of the NGPs programme.

I considered it particularly important to delineate the strategic level in advance. On the strategic level, first of all, I took into account the policy which is *directly* dealing with the NGPs. This meant the analysis of one or more official NGP documents (i.e. the list of project to be implemented) and the interviewing of politicians and/or municipal officials that were directly involved in the NGPs. On top of this specific NGP policy, I also examined the, in my perception, most closely related policies of the 'Green Structure Plan Utrecht 2007' and 'Multiannual Green Programme 2015-2018' in which the NGPs are embedded. This choice was made in order to get a better impression of the reasons for which the NGPs were established and the particular context in which this occurred.

4.3 Data collection

4.3.1 Documents

A first data source that was considered important for providing a comprehensive account of the NGPs are documents. 'Documents' can be perceived as *'the whole range of written sources that might be available relating to a topic, and by extension other artefacts that can be treated as documents, such as photographs or video recordings'* (Green and Thorogood 2009, p. 173). As Green and Thorogood (2009) note, documents may function as background information for the researcher but may also be part of the analyzed data, for example when doing discourse analysis.

In my thesis, I decided at the beginning that I would use at least a few carefully selected documents that were publicly accessible: the Green Structure Plan Utrecht 2007, the Multiannual Green Programme 2015-2018 and the official document of NGP Binnenstad. It was chosen to analyze NGP Binnenstad because the described policy process could be considered a rather 'standard' approach (to the extent that this is possible).

It also turned out that, in addition to these policy documents, there were some progress reports about the NGPs that were written by non-state actors. A first document that I used was a short report written by the neighbourhood council Zuidwest. The document was called *'Results of the digital neighbourhood consultation and Green Tour through Zuidwest – spring 2013'* and was written on the basis of a neighbourhood consultation that was aimed at getting insight into the way in which NGP projects and other green initiatives were developing. A second document that was included in this study was written by the 'MAGIE' consultative group (in which MAGIE is an abbreviation of 'Environmental Advice Group Infrastructure and Ecology'). This document was a formal letter by MAGIE that was directed to the College of Mayor and Aldermen. It provides a short, intermediate evaluation of the NGPs in general. A third and last document that was included in this study was the list of test criteria for assessing the NGP ideas. These provided a good overview of some important rules of the game.

Although all documents mentioned above provided me with important background knowledge, I also used all of them as an important source of data (i.e. for the four PAA dimensions and the governmentality analysis) that could help me answering my research questions. Although dominant discourse can be revealed when analyzing policy documents, governmentality theory has taught me to look beyond these sources in order to obtain a comprehensive view. Therefore, I compared the initial motivations and aims of the municipality – documented before the implementation of the project – with accounts of interviewees (state and non-state) at a later stage of the NGP programme.

4.3.2 Websites

In addition to documents, I also chose to include the web pages for some of the NGPs on the municipal website in my study. I decided to use the *main* web page about the NGPs and further the specific web pages about the NGPs Binnenstad, West and Leidsche Rijn. The decision to include these sources was made after the interviews had been conducted. The reasons for choosing the web pages of these particular NGPs had to do with the fact that I had obtained quite some information about these neighbourhoods in other ways (through documents and/or interviews). I considered the analysis of these particular web pages as way of triangulating the obtained data.

4.3.3 Interviewing

A major way of acquiring my data was by means of interviewing. I used this for deriving data from people with a different relation to the NGPs. I included interviewees from the strategic, operational and street level. In a broad sense, interviewing can be understood as: *'Any person-to-person interaction, either face to face or otherwise, between two or more individuals with a specific purpose in mind is called an interview.'* (Kumar 2011, p. 144). As Kumar (2011) notes, because of this broad definition, the interviewer can decide himself on the content, format and structure of the questions and interview as a whole. Because of this, an interview can be flexible/unstructured (i.e. to some extent improvising how the interview proceeds) or inflexible/structured (i.e. strictly sticking to the formulated questions, sequence, etc.) (Kumar 2011).

For the purpose of my thesis, I applied a common type of interviewing that is somewhere in the middle of these extremes, known as 'semi-structured' interviewing, in which *'the researcher sets the agenda in terms of the topics covered, but the interviewee's responses determine the kinds of information produced about those topics, and the relative importance of each of them'* (Green and Thorogood 2009, p. 94).

When linking this to my own thesis, it seems to fit my need for information quite well. More specifically, I was interested in some particular issues, such as the motivations and aims of a person in the context of the NGP, the person's relation with other actors, the resources and rules within the policy arrangement as well as less tangible things like discourse. I was aware that quite some of these issues are too abstract to formulate it in a straightforward way. Therefore, I needed to come up with some more concrete themes or specific questions that would shed light on these abstract issues. I asked open-ended questions and let my interviewees talk as much as possible while steering them in a direction which was relevant to me. Although the initial intention was to conduct about twelve interviews, in the end I did seventeen interviews (see the next paragraph for a complete list).

It should be noted that the obtained data in this study also have to serve GREEN SURGE. For my interviewing methodology, this meant that I had to ask a certain number of questions

which needed to be covered for following-up analysis and comparison between different cases in GREEN SURGE, but which are not directly relevant for my own thesis. Because of this, the interview style was semi-structured, albeit more tending towards structured. In order to guarantee that the relevant topics would be covered in the interviews, I made use of an 'interview schedule' (as research tool), which is *'a written list of questions, open ended or closed, prepared for use by an interviewer in a person-to-person interaction (...)'* (Kumar 2011, p. 145). I constructed this list in such a way that it (implicitly and/or explicitly) covered all the topics and concepts necessary for my own research questions and those of GREEN SURGE, while also trying to maintain the possibility for improvisation and flexibility. In the beginning I made two different interview schedules: one for residents and another for municipality officials. After the first interviews, I adapted the interview schedule for each upcoming interview, based on the background and role of the respondent in the NGPs and based on the topics about which more information was needed. In the end, I did seventeen interviews with the following persons:

- 1) City councilor for the political party *GroenLinks* in Utrecht.
- 2) Project leader and principal for respectively drafting and implementing NGPs, from the municipal department of Environment & Mobility.
- 3) Municipal official at the department of City Engineers, housed at the municipal department of Urban Works.
- 4) Landscape architect at the municipal department of Urban Design.
- 5) Former municipal official; now advisor sustainable initiatives at 'Utrecht Natuurlijk' (Utrecht Natural).
- 6) Municipal official at the neighbourhood office Overvecht.
- 7) Member of neighbourhood council Binnenstad.
- 8) Founder of 'Natuurlijk Wijs Advies' (Natural Wise Advice) and member of a third party called *TALrijk*.
- 9) Member of the 'Natuur- en Milieuplatform Leidsche Rijn' (Nature and Environmental Platform Leidsche Rijn).
- 10) Initiator and supervisor of two NGP projects concerning vegetable gardens.

For the remaining part, I had 7 interviews with residents from different neighbourhoods (including Noordwest, Overvecht, Leidsche Rijn, Zuidwest and Noordoost). One resident that I contacted by e-mail preferred to answer some questions in written form and to send them back through e-mail. Together, these interviews include the strategic level (nr. 1, 2 and 4), operational level (3 and 5) and street level.

4.4 Acquisition of data

As my research is qualitative in nature, the sampling of interviewees in my research was done in such a way as to ensure that as much in-depth knowledge as possible was obtained about my case within the time available (see Kumar 2011). As is typical for qualitative research (according to Kumar 2011) there is no predefined sample size as is the case in quantitative studies. Rather, during the collection of data, the researcher keeps searching for data until a *saturation point* is reached when means that adding new elements to the sample does not offer any new information anymore (Kumar 2011). Kumar (2011) also notes that, since representativeness is not so important in qualitative research (such as in-depth case studies), the sample size is in itself not of particular relevance and that randomization (for avoiding bias) is not taking place. According to Kumar (2011) also the sampling strategy is not so important when doing

qualitative research, since the aim is simply to obtain information which is diverse. For this, it is often not necessary to speak to many persons.

Although many sampling designs and methods are exclusively possible for quantitative research, the 'non-probability sampling designs' are possible for qualitative studies as well (see Kumar 2011). Kumar (2011) notes, that these are applied '*when the number of elements in a population is either unknown or cannot be individually identified*' (Kumar 2011, p. 206). Within this group, five different sampling designs can be distinguished (see Kumar 2011), a combination of which will be used in my study. I basically started with 'judgmental sampling', which means that the researcher carefully selects those people who are expected to be the most suitable for providing valuable data (Kumar 2011). This is how I started my search for data, as my first interview was with a key person (the NGP project leader) which could provide me with a good overview of the NGP programme at large.

A second sampling design which I used is the 'snowball sampling'. This means that after I collected data from the first respondents, the respondents' network was used to identify the next respondents (Kumar 2011). As Kumar (2011) notes, this method is sensitive to bias, since the respondents that will become part of your sample depend very much on the first person(s) which were selected and whose network was subsequently used. After I had identified the first respondents, I indeed used this snowball method for identifying other respondents. This way, it was possible to get into touch with key persons in the network with varying positions concerning the NGPs. It turned out that these state and non-state respondents were often prepared and capable of pointing to the pros as well as the cons of the NGP programme which gave me the impression that multiple sides of the case were touched upon.

I also selected some respondents by means of 'expert sampling', which means again that the researcher judges the potential value of different persons as data source, with the only difference that in the case of expert sampling, the interviewees need to be well-known experts on a topic relevant for your research (Kumar 2011). I did this in order to include representatives from different key actors in my research, such as consultants, people from a neighbourhood office and a neighbourhood council.

After I had selected a respondent that I wanted to speak, I contacted him or her by e-mail or phone and explained broadly what my research topic was about. For several interviews I went to Utrecht to meet the respondents. However, in order to be able to do as many interviews as possible, I chose to save some time and therefore did several interviews by phone as well. All interviews (by phone and in person) were audio-recorded. In all cases, I asked respondents for permission to record the conversation.

When it comes to the acquisition of documents, some important and recent policy documents (such as the Multiannual Green Programme, Green Structure Plan and most of the NGP documents) could be found online. One other document (i.e. from the MAGIE consultative group) was obtained by an insider through e-mail. The documents about the Green Tour through Zuidwest and the assessment criteria on the NGPs were publicly accessible on the internet.

4.5 Ethical issues in collecting data

Since conducting my fieldwork involved working with people from whom I tried to extract a lot of information, some ethical issues concerning the researcher as well as the research participants turned up (see Kumar 2011). Regarding the ethical issues concerning the research participants, the first immediate issue was obtaining *informed consent*. This means that participants make the voluntary choice to participate in the study and that they are made aware of the research purpose, relevance, the nature of their participation and the potential ways in

which they will be affected (Kumar 2011). I approached most respondents by e-mail, whereby I explained what my research entailed and what I expected from them. A few times, I gave this explanation by phone. In all cases, I made sure that I was transparent about the aim and relevance of my study and about what the involvement of respondents in my research would entail. I thereby assured that people participated voluntarily in my research.

A next issue was the search for *sensitive information* (see Kumar 2011), which may upset or embarrass respondents. This point was even more important, when accounting for the fact that I conducted in-depth interviews. Although I think that the topic of my research is not likely to offend or embarrass people much, a few questions about e.g. a person's relations with other certain other people or institutes and about the resources at their disposal (money, knowledge) might have been regarded as an invasion of privacy by some. In the opinion of Kumar (2011), asking these kinds of questions should be possible and is ethical as long as participants are made well aware of the kind of information they are requested to provide and when you give them enough time to make a decision on this. I took due account of this issue, first – and more superficially – by sending an e-mail to participants and secondly – and more thoroughly – just before asking the potentially intrusive questions.

In my study, most respondents didn't mind to have their identity revealed in this study. However, some residents wanted to stay anonymous, which was promised to them. A few respondents wanted to verify the way in which their information was used in the report. For this reason, in two steps during the analysis, the text was sent to them for approval.

4.6 Data processing and analysis

As Kumar (2011) notes, the kind of data processing and analysis you choose depends on the way in which you want to present your results, for which there are three ways: writing a *narrative* about the studied phenomenon; identifying and writing about the *main themes* emerging from your data; and (as an additional step to the previous one), *quantifying the major themes* to show their relative importance (Kumar 2011). In my thesis I used the narrative format, since I have a fairly specific set of research questions that should be explicitly addressed and answered. A narrative is a suitable way to zoom in on each of these questions.

In order to translate the audio data to written text, I transcribed the interviews in a rather accurate way. For a few interviews, this task was outsourced and the quality of the transcripts verified after this. For the great majority of interviews, the 'cleanness' of the audio recorded data was very good. Only in a few interviews the audio data was sometimes a bit blurry. The ambiguous elements in the interviews were marked in order to guarantee a reliable analysis.

Kumar (2011) also notes that it may lead to better results if transcribed interviews (especially unstructured ones) or notes from field observations are shared with the participants to find out whether they agree with the information that they gave earlier. Before the analysis, I asked all respondents whether they wanted me to share the transcript with them. Several respondents indeed wanted to verify the interview. Some of them made adaptations, which I respected during the data analysis.

After all the obtained data had been converted into written text, the analysis could start. For the sake of efficiency, transcribing and analyzing data were done simultaneously so that no time was lost. Kumar (2011) offers some steps that can be part of the procedure for doing 'content analysis' – which Kumar (2011) explains as identifying the major themes and main findings about these. For being able to eventually write a narrative about the main findings (that would follow the structure of my research questions) I did two things (see also Kumar 2011 for

these). First, I identified the main topics (i.e. those relevant to my research), which would form the basis for further analysis. Second, I analyzed the data from interviews and documents and assigned pieces of text to these main themes whenever possible (see Kumar 2011).

The data analysis was for an important part influenced by the fact that this study is linked to the GREEN SURGE project. For this reason, I made use of 'case tables' as an instrument which *'will be a specific table in Excel with the aim to summarize the main findings of each data source and also with the aim to function as a starting point for your analysis'* (Buijs et al. n.d.; see also Miles et al. 2013 in Buijs et al. n.d., p. 16). For GREEN SURGE, the benefits of this case table are the increase of transparency of data and the facilitation of comparative analysis with other case studies in GREEN SURGE (Buijs et al. n.d.). Moreover, due to the very comprehensive character of the case table and the fact that it is also partly founded on the PAA, the case table was a very appropriate tool for coding the data in my study. The table consisted of an extensive list of themes with, for each theme, a short description of what this theme entailed.

Each data source (i.e. interviews, written responses, documents and text from websites) was analyzed with all the categories (i.e. themes) from the case table in mind. Because of the comprehensiveness of the table, a large part of the obtained data was found to fit within this table. When a piece of data fit within one or more of these categories, the text was included in the concerning category (or categories) of the table. At the same time, I also looked at the data source from the perspective of my own study. On the basis of my own theoretical framework and research questions, I had formulated a couple of core themes that would enable me to tackle the huge amount of data in a suitable way. As the case table was very comprehensive, the identified core themes in my own research almost always corresponded to a certain category of the predefined case table (e.g. the four PAA dimensions, the development of the case, contextual factors and the aims of actors). Even the data that was relevant for governmentality analysis (almost) always corresponded to categories in the table (e.g. the categories about discourse, collaboration, strategies and power relations). The case table therefore functioned very well as a tool for coding the data for my own research. In addition to the coding of data through the case table, I also gave the pieces of data belonging to certain core themes (for my study) a particular colour. This way, it would be possible in a later stage to look more specifically at certain themes when necessary.

In this way, each individual data source was analyzed. After this, the data that was included in the different case tables (one table per data source) was summarized and simultaneously translated into English. In a next step, an overarching case table was made in which, for each topic category, a short but comprehensive narrative account was constructed. The final output for GREEN SURGE was a short narrative (outside the case table) about the main findings of the case study which also served as a basis for my own research.

As a next step after the finalization of the case tables, the results were further analyzed and displayed in a narrative form. Based on the summarized data from the case tables, the further analysis started with the four PAA dimensions. It was tried to identify core issues within these dimensions and to look for relations, commonalities with illustrative examples and the dynamics within and between these dimensions. In this way, the policy arrangement of the NGPs gradually emerged from the data and was presented in such a way that these dimensions and their interrelations were best visible.

After this, there were still many themes that could be identified from the data that were somehow relevant for the further governmentality analysis and for the second research question (e.g. issues like self-management, public support, responsibility, communication). Insofar as these themes were considered to be related to the selected theory, they were included in the

results. During the analysis, gradually, a certain structure emerged that did justice to the empirical reality of the NGPs and to the different research questions in my study.

4.7 Reflection on the researcher's role and applied methods

4.7.1 Obtaining knowledge

An important question to consider when doing qualitative research is '*how we come to know the world, and have faith in the truth, or validity, of that knowledge*' (Green and Thorogood 2009, p. 11), which deals with the 'theory of knowledge' called 'epistemology' (Green and Thorogood 2009, p. 11). According to Green and Thorogood (2009), there are different epistemological traditions (e.g. social constructionism and interpretative, feminist and critical approaches), which differ in the ways in which they propose to get to know the world and about the status of the obtained knowledge. The epistemological ideas and assumptions characteristic of qualitative research derive for an important part from critiques on positivist knowledge, which is traditionally connected to the natural sciences (Green and Thorogood 2009).

The fact that – for an important part – I looked at the construction of *discourse*, means that my research is rooted in social constructionism (also called 'constructivism') (see also Green and Thorogood 2009). This epistemological perspective presupposes that reality is a social construction and a result of human actions, rather than something stable and 'pre-existing' which can simply be discovered (Green and Thorogood 2009). Research in this tradition is therefore often about questions such as '*how phenomena are constructed*' and '*who has the power to produce legitimate classifications*' (Green and Thorogood 2009, p. 15 respectively p. 16). The above corresponds very well with what I did in my research, as I looked at how discourse was produced, at the construction of subject positions (i.e. 'classifications') contained within these discourses and at the question how aims and discourse are expressed through different acts of governing.

4.7.2 Methodological orientations and considerations

Notwithstanding the different epistemological traditions in qualitative research, there are some general orientations regarding the methodology that can be followed by the researcher (e.g. naturalism and reflexivity) (Green and Thorogood 2009). Especially *reflexivity* was useful to get more clarity about my role as a researcher. According to Green and Thorogood (2009), it is about the fact that researchers must not only take a critical stance towards their topic, but equally to the way they perform their own research. This reflexivity is a way of dealing with the subjectivity that is inherent to doing qualitative research, while not downplaying the value of their findings in producing knowledge about the world (Green and Thorogood 2009). Although reflexivity applies to all stages of the research (Green and Thorogood 2009), I think that it is especially important to reflect on what role the researcher plays in both data generation and analysis (see Green and Thorogood 2009). This can entail reflections on your identity as researcher and how you relate to e.g. the interviewees, which are things that can influence your data (see Green and Thorogood 2009).

Regarding my position as researcher, it might be a relevant fact that I am a student rather than an experienced researcher. Although the precise effect of this is not straightforward, it might imply that respondents feel more free to express their opinion. I must say that I was surprised to see that many respondents were rather critical about certain aspects of the NGPs and not afraid to share this with me.

When it comes to data collection and analysis, I am aware of the fact that I used a particular literature (i.e. relating to neo-liberal governmentality) as theoretical perspective for

my research. Because of this, there is a risk that a researcher starts to steer the data collection in a way that is serving the aims of his study and, during the analysis, may see every detail in the light of the theory that is used, without looking for alternative explanations or nuances.

This point brings me to a wider debate about what distinguishes qualitative science from non-scientific accounts (e.g. journalism or novels) of social processes (see Green and Thorogood 2009). According to Green and Thorogood (2009), one of the strategies that – when properly taken into account – can make this difference, is ‘a careful and rigorous analysis’. This is about the fact that the researcher must prevent that he only provides the evidence which he hoped to see in a ‘cherry-picking’ way (Green and Thorogood 2009). Second, ‘an attention to evidence’ is important when describing and interpreting phenomena (Green and Thorogood 2009).

Since neo-liberal governmentality theory entails the risk that reality is perceived in a very particular way, the analysis of the NGPs though the PAA really helped me in providing a comprehensive account of the case without omitting certain topics. The results chapter presented the data in such a way that important nuances in the data about NGPs (for e.g. about the four dimensions) became clear. The interpretation of the results in the light of governmentality theory was only done in the discussion chapter and could therefore easily be linked to the evidence from empirical reality that was presented in the results chapter. This evidence was often complemented by literal quotes from documents and interviews and by carefully paraphrased accounts of individual respondents. In addition to this, when presenting a particular topic that was relevant in the light of the chosen theory, I always tried to provide a full account that included several sides of the issue, for example regarding the multiple motivations of the municipality for setting up the NGPs; the perceived interaction between the municipality and residents; and regarding the question to what extent aims were achieved.

A third point is ‘a critical approach to subjective accounts’, which is about the fact that social science should not simply perceive subjective data as ‘the truth’ but rather as ‘contextual accounts’ (Green and Thorogood 2009). I dealt with this point in my research by explicitly considering the context and by speaking to several respondents about similar issues. Hence, I tried to maximize the diversity of data for important themes.

4.8 Validity, transferability and reliability

4.8.1 Internal validity

Kumar (2011) notes that the issues of ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ are not easy to standardize for qualitative research methods, because of their flexibility and spontaneity. Though, he notes that there are some ways to proceed. It is important to note that ‘validity’ can be understood as *‘the degree to which the researcher has measured what he has set out to measure’* (Smith 1991, p. 106 in Kumar 2011, p. 178). Since this understanding of validity seems most immediate for the research instruments (of which I have one), I have only looked at the interview schedule that I adopted. According to Kumar (2011) there are two ways to determine whether an instrument is measuring the right thing (i.e. what the researcher intends to measure): based on logic and statistical evidence.

When I constructed my interview schedule, the validity of this instrument was checked on the basis of logic. This meant that I examined each interview question in the light of the research questions and objective, in order to see if the questions were likely to elicit relevant answers (see Kumar 2011). Since my interviews were semi-structured, I could sometimes take a small sidestep and reformulate the initial questions in such a way that the respondent provided an answer that addressed my research focus. This proved quite important in my case, since

some of my questions were about rather abstract concepts. In order to obtain relevant data as well as some related broader information (for a better understanding), I often asked several questions to a respondent. This way I tried to construct a relevant and full account of a certain topic or concept (see also Kumar 2011). I have taken due account of this when I constructed the interview schedule.

Dealing with validity at a wider level of a research means that the researcher should be able to defend himself against people who are critical about the 'truth' value of his interpretations and who might therefore ask: *'Why should I believe this?'* (Green and Thorogood 2009, p. 220). A way to deal with this for qualitative researchers is to provide a diverse account of a phenomenon that includes 'disconfirming evidence' and to make sure that the context is properly taken into account (see Green and Thorogood 2009). As has already been mentioned before, these issues were taken into account in my own research, for example by including different data sources and different respondents. When displaying the results, this issue was dealt with by constructing a narrative that included the different views that existed for many themes.

4.8.2 Transferability

'Transferability' is about the question whether the outcomes of a study are generalizable or can be applied to other cases in different conditions (Trochim and Donnelly 2007 in Kumar 2011). Kumar (2011) notes that, although this can be rather difficult to realize in qualitative research, transferability can be enhanced by carefully describing the followed steps and procedures, so that it would be possible to replicate the study. As became clear in previous sections about the applied methods, I tried to accurately map the different steps in my research and write down the considerations which motivated me to make particular choices. Due to the very particular character of the NGP programme and its strong relation with the city's governance structure, it seems very difficult to generalize findings from this case of participatory governance to other seemingly comparable cases elsewhere.

4.8.3 Reliability

Kumar (2011) perceives the 'reliability' of a research instrument as follows: *'if a research tool is consistent and stable, hence predictable and accurate, it is said to be reliable'* (Kumar 2011, p. 181). More specifically, an instrument can be called reliable if multiple measurements produce similar outcomes under similar conditions (Moser and Kalton 1989 in Kumar 2011). Kumar (2011) argues that it is very difficult for social scientists to achieve a high extent of reliability, for which he mentions examples that are responsible for this, such as 'the physical setting', 'the respondent's mood' and 'the nature of the interaction'.

These are quite universal 'problems'. Assuring the reliability of the interview guide in my own research was even more difficult, since I only interviewed a relatively limited number of people and, moreover, in a partly semi-structured way. Related to this is the fact that my aim was to obtain a rich and in-depth account of the case, which implied that I adapted some questions of my interview guide based on the role of a respondent in the NGPs and, hence, the particular information that I hoped to get from them.

Finally, I also took the information from earlier interviews with me to later ones, in order to get multiple viewpoints on similar issues. Green and Thorogood (2009) argue that reliability can be enhanced by ensuring that accurate field notes and transcriptions are made. Since, in this study, all interviews were audio recorded and accurately transcribed, this issue was properly taken into account.

5. Results

5.1 Background and aims of the NGPs

5.1.1 The NGPs in local policy

The NGPs are embedded within the *Groenstructuurplan Utrecht 2007* (Green Structure Plan Utrecht 2007), which is a local policy for the large-scale urban green spaces and the connections between these. The small-scale green in the neighbourhoods of Utrecht had been lacking, and the Green Structure Plan contained the intention to use the NGPs for improving the green at the neighbourhood level (NGP project leader, personal communication, 13 May 2015; Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015). In turn, the local department of *GroenLinks* – a green minded political party – included the NGPs in their election programme for the council elections of 2010 (GroenLinks city councilor, pers. comm. 7 July 2015).

The specific ambition of GroenLinks that formed the basis for the NGPs was to have some green space for all residents of Utrecht within a distance of 300 meter from their house. In turn, this ambition was provoked by studies arguing that Utrecht was very stony compared to other Dutch municipalities. As GroenLinks emerged as the largest party after the local elections, the NGPs became one of the main priorities in the coalition agreement for the period of 2010-2014 (GroenLinks city councilor, pers. comm. 7 July 2015; Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015) which bore the title ‘Green, open and social’.

A second incorporation of the NGPs into local policy took place through the annually updated *Meerjaren Groenprogramma* (Multiannual Green Programme). This programme further elaborates on the three priorities that the municipal council has formulated for the Green Structure Plan: 1) high quality green within the city, 2) more green around the city and 3) green connections towards this green around the city. In addition, the *Bomenbeleid Utrecht* (Tree Policy Utrecht) and Neighbourhood Green Plans have been made priorities as well, with the aim to provide residents with sufficient green space within walking distance (Municipality of Utrecht 2015¹). The Multiannual Green Programme is the implementation programme for all these political priorities.

5.1.2 The municipality’s motivations and aims

Especially the first priority as mentioned in the Multiannual Green Programme (i.e. high quality green within the city) is applicable to the NGPs (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). In relation to the NGPs, this priority is rephrased as follows: ‘*Goal of the neighbourhood green plan is more green, nicer green or better accessible green in the neighbourhoods*’ (Municipality of Utrecht²: website main page n.d.). The municipality also argues that the NGP projects have a social function in the sense that citizens come into contact with each other, learn from each other and are given a shared responsibility (Municipality of Utrecht 2014).

A political factor that influenced the idea of citizen participation in Utrecht, such as in the NGP programme, is the sentiment that citizens in Utrecht have been confronted with many infrastructural projects in the public space which were decided upon beyond their will (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). In addition, the municipality finds it important that citizens have a pleasant living environment which they can help design (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). During the NGPs, the municipality intends to give citizens much more control over the design of public space than it is used to do. This intention also corresponds with a main principle of the current coalition agreement, namely that the city of

Utrecht is created by the municipality and residents together, rather than from the 'ivory tower of the municipality' (NGP project leader pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

Box 5: Alternative views on the municipality's motivations

Among people involved in the NGPs, different opinions exist about the question what motivated the municipality to initiate this city-wide greening programme. Even though the GroenLinks councilor claims that *budget cutting* is not a motive for the municipality to stimulate green self-management, several other respondents *do* think that budget cuts are an important reason why the municipality stimulates citizens to adopt an active attitude towards green space. However, these same respondents largely agree with the GroenLinks councilor about the idea that the trend of increasing citizen involvement in public green is actually rather beneficial.

One resident observes that, during the last few years, the municipality has started to look at participation as an opportunity rather than a threat. He adds that the municipality may have started to operate more tactically, due to the recognition that these projects are a 'win-win situation'. When the neighbourhood green wouldn't get off the ground, the municipality will have to deal with the issue that the sewers may need to be adapted due to increasing rainwater drainage. According to this resident, this would probably be much more costly than prevention through the enhancement of neighbourhood green (resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

Another resident believes that the NGPs were initiated for several interrelated reasons: 1) as an opportunity for GroenLinks to present itself as a green party; 2) to respond to complaints about the municipality not doing what residents want; and 3) as a municipal election strategy by asking what citizens want and subsequently realizing this (local NGO member 2, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

Based on the above views, it can be argued that residents and the municipality tend to have rather divergent views about the reasons why the NGPs have been set up. Later in the analysis, it will be explained why this perceived ambiguity is criticized by several respondents. Since the organization and underlying ambitions of the NGPs have almost exclusively been determined by municipal officials, in practice, a mismatch can be observed between the municipality and a part of the residents in terms of the ideas and desires they have (for more details, see section 4).

Even though the participatory component of the NGPs may seem to indicate that the residents' ideas and interests are put centre stage, the underlying motive for initiating this programme also relates to the municipality's own interests. On a question about the municipality's reasons to give residents quite some influence via the NGPs, the NGP project leader says, *inter alia*, the following: '*Regarding green but also public space in general, we notice that – when residents are allowed to help design it and can say how they would like to see it – public space is more widely used. We want to stimulate the multiple use of public space. We also want residents to feel responsible for public space. This is only possible when they have a certain relation with it. When they have the feeling that they can exert influence on it, but also when they have helped design it themselves and maybe even created it, the sustainability of such a location is obviously much higher, as people take much more care for it themselves.*' (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

This quote suggests that the municipality aims at having a sustainable public space with a 'multiple use'. This wider aim or ambition is substantiated by an official at neighbourhood office Overvecht. She argues that the importance attached to close involvement of residents in

the NGPs is also expressed by the word ‘open’ in the previous coalition agreement with the motto ‘green, open and social’ (pers. comm. 16 June 2015).

The aim of having a sustainable public space is closely linked to the issue of self-management of green. In relation to self-management, the GroenLinks councilor says that his party keeps promoting this practice for its potentially high societal value, even though he claims that self-management of green is actually *more* expensive than regular management by the municipality. According to this councilor, the value of self-management lies in its contribution to social cohesion and its stimulating effect on people’s involvement with each other and their neighbourhood (GroenLinks city councilor, pers. comm. 7 July 2015).

The perceived relation between self-management and a sustainable public space is also illustrated by another official. She argues that green space is vulnerable in areas with nuisance and vandalism. That’s why it is important that residents living directly next to the place feel attached to it and make the place their own, for example by doing some self-management. This is important to balance those people who threaten the place in a negative way. She also notes that, for her, the ideal citizen should create public support for his plan in the whole street and should therefore think beyond his own front door (Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

At a wider level, the NGPs are also underpinned by the general political trend to actively involve citizens in decision making regarding the public space (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015, Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015) and, by doing so, to give them more responsibilities (local NGO member 1, pers. comm. 19 June 2015). While aiming at the realization of ‘more, nicer and better accessible green in the neighbourhoods’, the municipality makes clear that its explicit intention is to let residents decide what this green should look like (Municipality of Utrecht²: website main page n.d.).

Overall, it can be said that the municipality has multiple interlinked motivations and aims concerning the NGPs, namely the realization of physical green, social cohesion, a pleasant living environment, a multifunctional and sustainable public space and a sense of responsibility among citizens. Even though participation is a crucial part of the NGPs, it is important to be aware that the aims and framework of the NGPs have *not* been determined in cooperation with residents. The residents were only invited to join at the moment that the municipality had figured out how the NGPs would be carried out (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). As will gradually become clear in the next sections, the particular way in which the NGP process was designed had several implications for the policy arrangement of the NGPs.

5.2 The municipality’s perspective on participation

5.2.1 Role of residents in urban green

In the NGPs, discourses can broadly be observed at two levels: 1) at the level of the preferred relationship between the municipality and citizens (i.e. the mode of governance) and 2) at the level of the projects’ substance. In the NGPs, these two levels turn out to be closely interlinked. The municipality’s course of action in the NGPs is based on the thought that *submitting* green ideas should be done exclusively in a bottom-up way, without any interference from the municipality. Residents, though, believe that this interference is sometimes necessary in order to be able to realize particular types of green and related functions. Before elaborating on this issue more profoundly, the municipal perspective on participation will be presented in more detail.

The following quote from the Multiannual Green Programme 2015-2018 gives a fairly comprehensive account of the municipality’s perspective on urban green in general (i.e. not specifically related to the NGPs) and the role of citizen participation in this: ‘*Green is a subject*

that residents and companies in Utrecht are very concerned with. Citizens find a green living and working environment important and would like to influence it themselves. However, our residents do not merely talk about projects, they really establish them. A green city fits well with a city that takes action. In several parks, for example, beautiful initiatives have emerged, (.....). Voluntary commitment of residents makes green more diverse than the municipality could ever achieve on its own. A sustainable and diverse green public space is only achieved when you work together with residents and when you listen to their ideas. A green environment has a positive effect on living comfort and health, house prices and the satisfaction of residents concerning their direct living environment. Commitment of residents in the field of design and management is thereby essential. The role of the municipality is mainly facilitating and providing framework conditions.' (Municipality of Utrecht 2015¹).

It can be observed that most of the earlier mentioned motivations and aims of the municipality are somehow incorporated into this quote. Look for instance at terms like 'green city', 'living comfort', 'sustainable and diverse green public space' and 'voluntary commitment'. This fragment also suggests that the preferred role of the municipality is, at least in the end, relatively passive (see e.g. 'facilitating' and 'providing framework conditions'). As was already pointed out, the organization of the NGPs seems to be characterized by a more active role of the municipality.

5.2.2 The municipality's views on participation

Regarding the issue of participation, it is relevant to point to the motto of the new college (since 2014): 'We make Utrecht together'. According to a local councilor, this motto means that the municipality should give people more influence in shaping their surroundings, for example by supporting green citizen initiatives (GroenLinks city councilor, pers. comm. 7 July 2015). At the same time, this councilor argues that the role of local government *vis-à-vis* citizens in creating urban green space depends on the situation. He notes that, ideally, citizens should be empowered and taking initiatives themselves with a facilitating local government. When necessary, though, the municipality should also be prepared to be more active and provoke initiative itself or, at the other end of the spectrum, be prepared to take the mere role as passive supervisor, for example in the case of self-management (GroenLinks city councilor, pers. comm. 7 July 2015).

Although the above expresses a fairly nuanced, context-specific view on participation, it can be observed that, in practice, the municipality finds it difficult to keep a proper balance between deregulating and retaining control. Within the municipality, officials do not always agree on the desired role of the municipality in projects regarding public space. One municipal official notes that, due to the fact that citizen initiative is a rather new phenomenon, the municipality is still trying to find out how to design participation processes and how this relates to the issue of 'responsibility'. According to her, a complicating fact is that there is still no person within the municipality who bears the ultimate responsibility for public space (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015).

Regarding the question whether the role division between citizens and the municipality in green projects should be top-down or bottom-up, another official argues that both are necessary. She explains that the municipality has an important responsibility as the guardian of the common interest. As citizens can sometimes be very focused on the space just in front of their own house, the municipality should always balance the interests at the street vs. the wider neighbourhood level. This implies that, if there is an opportunity to make a stony neighbourhood

greener, the municipality should allow herself to do it, even in the case that some direct neighbors are against this (Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

A third (former) municipal official observes the current role of the municipality in a slightly different way. On the one hand, she understands the municipality's wish to stay a bit in control and its hesitance towards all kinds of changes, costs and possible damage, since the municipality has the ultimate responsibility over public space. On the other hand, she believes that the municipality is still claiming the city too much by setting conditions and limitations, which can be de-motivating for citizens. She argues that citizens should be given the feeling that the city belongs to them and that they can shape it themselves with the support of the municipality (local NGO member 1, pers. comm. 19 June 2015).

The above views within the municipality express the dilemmas involved in deciding about the pros and cons of bottom-up initiatives taking place *outside* public participation policies versus the embedding of these initiatives *within* these same policies. The question is often to what extent aims and interests of residents correspond to those of the municipality.

Box 6: Experimenting with participation

Before the establishment of the NGPs, a pilot was conducted in two neighbourhoods (i.e. Noordoost and Zuid). When comparing the chosen approach in this experimental phase with the current NGPs, a clear development can be observed in terms of organization.

A municipal official explains that, at the time, the municipality was trying to find out how to shape the process. The pilots for these two neighbourhoods consisted of a rather intensive process with various actors, for determining the green opportunities in the neighbourhood. Some of these ideas were selected for implementation. However, during the pilot another college settled, because of which the NGPs were interrupted for a while.

She adds that, when the party GroenLinks entered the college again, the NGPs were continued. In this second (i.e. current) term of the NGPs, after the change of college, the initial approach was abolished. As an example, this official explains that the process in neighbourhood Oost was kept rather open and less intensive. According to her, this had to do with the perception that – from the participatory perspective – Oost is a 'difficult' neighbourhood, in the sense that its residents are known for having rather demanding wishes. This belief made the municipality decide to continue with a less intensive approach to participation (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015).

5.3 Involving residents

5.3.1 Motivations and aims and at the street level

All residents have their own, specific reasons for participating in the NGP. Aims and considerations that residents mention in relation to their NGP projects are to 'green' the neighbourhood, increase safety, increase the biodiversity or particular species, create a nice meeting/relaxing/sitting place, reduce nuisance, produce eatable green, enhance social cohesion, improve playing facilities for children and to create ecological structures.

Besides GroenLinks, also residents are sensitive to the image of Utrecht as 'stony city'. One respondent, for example, notes that in her own neighbourhood, residents are always worrying about the public green space, since their amount of green cubic meters per household, is far below the 75m² prescribed by the *Alterra Norm* (i.e. a generally used target number for the amount of green to be realized per house). She adds that there is a risk that some places in the

neighbourhood might even get more stony due to many building projects (resident 8, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

It is notable that, in the NGPs, the wish for nice looking green is often linked to the idea of realizing playing opportunities for children and, particularly, realizing places that stimulate children to come up with their own initiatives and to play in a *creative* way (e.g. with sticks and making cabins).

5.3.2 Unevenly distributed involvement

The concern for more green and its particular functions is believed to be rather context-specific. In practice, it turns out that certain groups of people are relatively reluctant to become active in co-designing their neighbourhood green. One municipal official tells that the municipality would have particularly liked to see more green in those neighbourhoods that are stony or have low quality green. However, in practice she observes the paradoxical situation that these same neighbourhoods were often less interested in the NGPs (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015). It is observed that the people who join participation projects regarding public space, including the NGPs, are often highly educated, white, relatively old, of a higher socio-economic status and/or already active in society in some way (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015; resident 8, pers. comm. 5 June 2015). It is also argued that neighbourhoods consisting of people with a lower social-economic status, often prefer parking places and that less fortunate people are more interested in money for food than for trees in front of their house (resident 8, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

One resident points to another contextual factor, namely that public support for green initiatives might be higher in neighbourhoods with a lot of bought instead of rental houses such as in his own neighbourhood. He thinks that, on the longer term, it might be difficult to get people in his neighbourhood interested in green, as foreign people are increasingly moving into this neighbourhood. He explains that, because of their culture, these immigrants tend to have a very different attitude towards green. He is therefore rather sceptical towards the involvement of these residents in public green and towards the potential of the 'self-efficacy model' when it concerns his own neighbourhood (resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015). In his direct vicinity he observes the following: *'When I now look at the [street where he lives]: about half of the houses at this location is already owned by immigrants, but also from these houses, half of the gardens on the front side have been converted into paved terrace. That is actually rather funny: public green is made greener, while private individuals are turning the green into stone. This way, not much progression is made.'* (resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

The above makes clear that certain (groups of) people are believed to be more interested in green than others. It should be noted, though, that this is only an observation from a few respondents and would need to be scrutinized more closely. Despite these sentiments, the municipality has the idea that residents' sense of commitment to green can be actively increased. This is illustrated by a local councilor, who gives the example that people from Suriname are, broadly speaking, particularly interested in allotment gardens when you compare this to autochthonous citizens of Utrecht. It should be noted that, directly related to this example, also other respondents observe that foreign people are often particularly interested in eatable green. More importantly, the local councilor gives this specific example (i.e. about Surinamese people) for making the argument that, in his opinion, almost all people are interested in green in their vicinity, albeit in different ways. He argues that the challenge of getting them involved is to address people in a way that is appealing to them (GroenLinks city councilor, pers. comm. 7 July

2015). Further in the analysis it will become clear how the municipality tried to increase this involvement in the NGPs and to what extent this was achieved.

5.3.3 Striving for customization

Following on from the proposition that residents' commitment can be actively increased, the municipality has adopted a different approach to communication and participation for the various NGPs. This approach is known as 'neighbourhood focused working' and is used by the municipality in other projects as well (local NGO member 1, pers. comm. 19 June 2015). When deciding upon how to organize a process, factors like the predominant socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in neighbourhoods are taken into account (GroenLinks city councilor, pers. comm. 7 July 2015; NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015; local NGO member 1, pers. comm. 19 June 2015).

Following on from this, the municipality, in collaboration with an social broker called *Doenja Dienstverlening* (Doenja Service Provision), has even organized an exclusive information meeting in NGP Leidsche Rijn for Moroccan women, as these women were reluctant to join a regular information meeting (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). In these kinds of situations, the question arises whether the municipality is prepared to make suggestions and present options to residents in order to inspire them and provoke ideas for the NGPs. This issue will be addressed in the next section.

5.4 NGPs in practice: steering vs. hands-off

5.4.1 The municipality's view

Notwithstanding the many possible forms of citizen participation in urban green, the municipality is quite clear about how it wants to integrate the participatory component in the NGPs: *'What has been particularly new for us, is that we abandon our own policy goals at the moment that we see those plans. It can be seen very often that residents have very different ideas about public space and the use of their surroundings than we have. It has been quite a change in thinking to say like: "yes, but do we actually want a piece of green over there, and does it fit with the general appearance of the street." We are trying to abandon those kinds of thoughts. Hence, we are trying to give residents much more control over the final design. And when translating this to the current college programme, it can be said: "well, that is indeed what we want, as we make Utrecht together with the government and residents, and not only from the ivory tower of the municipality.'* (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

More specifically, the municipality notes that it wants to involve residents during the design, use and management of the newly created green (Municipality of Utrecht²: website main page n.d.). The NGP project leader notes that the special characteristic of the NGPs is its sole focus on citizen's wishes. Although the word 'plan' suggests coherence, this coherence is actually absent. The NGPs rather consist of separate projects without any political thought behind the distribution of these. Due to their character, the NGPs have not led to any green structure in the neighbourhoods (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

Despite the chosen approach for the NGP, one municipal official argues that the municipality prefers to see green in 'open ground' and on a more structural level, such as trees in the whole street rather than for example flower boxes, as these are difficult to manage, not durable and have a limited added value (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015). The NGPs and its significance for structural green was found to be contentious.

5.4.2 Critique on the municipality's view

Several respondents are critical about the NGPs' main concern to simply implement the wishes of residents, without too much bothering about coherence or wider significance of the realized green. Several respondents argue that the municipality should come up with a shared vision or ambition regarding green, that can be communicated to citizens when green projects like the NGPs are established. They are wondering about the municipality's precise intentions with the NGPs and about the wider value of the programme for the city. According to one respondent, residents had too much influence in the NGPs. In his opinion, the municipality should allow itself to have an opinion and to put things within a wider frame. He calls it a 'strange dogma' that the municipality reserves a substantial amount of money to realize plans that must come for 100% from residents (local NGO member 2, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

Several respondents therefore advocate a more stimulating and steering role for the municipality in the NGPs. This preferred role is typically linked to realization of structural, ecological green. The MAGIE consultative group says the following regarding this issue: *'In most of the NGPs there was little attention from the municipality for the existing municipal Green Structure Plan and for strengthening the ecological qualities in the city. We would be pleased if, from this background, a framework or ambition is formulated to which residents can connect in order to strengthen green in the neighbourhood. This can, for example, be done with themes like green for watching, for using, for eating and for ecology such as a butterflies/bees ribbon. In this way, a connection arises between initiatives and neighbourhood transcending value'*. (MAGIE consultative group 2014).

Directly following from this quote, a third party called *TALrijk*, that has been involved during the participation stage in NGP Zuidwest, decided to inform residents through similar themes like 'eatable green' and 'green for using'. According to one member of *TALrijk*, these ideas were offered out of necessity, as there were no other reference points that could be used for communication about the NGPs (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015). This consultant further elaborates on this issue by saying that the municipality should map the different levels of urban green: from vertical facade green all the way to bigger parks. She explains that, when you know what already exists and what is lacking, priorities per neighbourhood can be given. Moreover, nature and biodiversity should be the starting points for this priority setting. About this priority setting she says: *'Then [i.e. when the municipality is able to steer through a clear policy], you can set up a neighbourhood green plan again, as the ambition to let citizens choose and think along is great, because the resident lives there and is there 24/7. He knows exactly what he wants, what he doesn't have and what he needs. However, when there is no steering, the resident cannot categorize things; he will not know in which direction to think.'* (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015).

It should be noted that this perceived need for steering might indeed be true when the aim of residents is to increase the ecological coherence of the city at large. However, it should be kept in mind that there are also residents who are mainly concerned about the green in front of their door without any desire to make their small project part of a 'green chain'. Though, the argument that several respondents, as cited above, seem to make is that the municipality should provide residents *at least* with the *possibility* to contribute to green in a way that is significant and complementary. Several non-governmental respondents therefore call upon the government's capacity to create an overarching vision for stimulating the realization of particular green types and their functions.

An important point that should be considered once more, is that the aims and approach of the NGPs have been determined by municipal actors. New actors that entered the

arrangement, such as the MAGIE consultative group and TALrijk, decided to put forward alternative ideas about the role of the municipality and substance. However, as the framework and rationales of the NGPs had already been decided upon in the preliminary stage, it might have been difficult to put these alternative ideas on the agenda. On the other hand, as the NGPs haven't run parallel to each other, some insights *could* have been used for the later NGPs.

5.4.3 Structural and ecological green

Among many respondents in different positions, the idea of having structural, ecological green is considered very important. Several residents note that they would have liked to see a connection between their own NGP project and an overarching green plan, such as the Green Structure Plan or the city's main tree structure. Some people seem to feel that enhancing ecological functions is something that cannot be realized by individual residents and therefore needs assistance by the government. In this regard, a respondent from Leidsche Rijn says that the initial expectation of residents was that in each neighbourhood, a comprehensive neighbourhood wide plan (i.e. in the form of the NGP) would be made in dialogue with residents for strengthening the green and ecology in a structural way. He regrets that the NGP budget turned out to be intended for being spent on a number of diverse and scattered projects (resident 4, pers. comm. 17 June 2015).

Also within the municipality, different opinions exist about the necessity to steer on the contents of the NGP ideas. The Urban Design official confirms that structural green didn't get much attention in the NGPs. She argues that, for her, the ideal role division between the municipality and residents in creating urban green, would be with a bit more steering by the municipality about the possibilities than was done for the NGPs. In her opinion, this might have led to better, more structural results. She adds that it might have helped to inform citizens more so that they would have been able to think on a larger scale. In her opinion, it would have been nice to show citizens the municipality's vision on the neighbourhood and to learn from each other. In the neighbourhoods in which she was involved herself, this hasn't occurred. She considers it noticeable that in NGP Leidsche Rijn, the ideas were very different in the sense that they were more ecologically oriented and directed to the structural level (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015).

Based on the above, it becomes clear that there are different opinions about the extent to which the municipality should adopt an active role in deciding what kinds of green should be realized. Although the impression is created that ecology hasn't been covered at all, in NGP Leidsche Rijn, this structural element has finally been included – at least to a certain extent (see NGP project 3 called 'Ecology in Leidsche Rijn', in 'Municipality of Utrecht 2015²'). In accordance with the planning, this ecological project still needs to be implemented. Residents in NGP Leidsche Rijn felt that the inclusion of more structural ecological aspects was not easy (see box 3).

Box 7: Steering and ecology

The municipality

Although the hands-off approach (i.e. regarding the contents) to the NGPs is now a reality, during one intermediate internal evaluation of the NGPs, the question was addressed to what extent the municipality should make suggestions and offer ideas to residents. The officials from the department of Urban Design supported this (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015). Regarding the NGPs, the Urban Design official says that, from her professional point of view, she would have liked to collaborate with residents in creating green structures in the neighbourhood that could comprise of an ecological, spatial, culture-historical and recreational

function.

Residents in NGP Leidsche Rijn

One member of the *Nature and Environmental Platform Leidsche Rijn* tells that, in one NGP meeting that he attended, many people were present. Because of this, one proposal that was made, proved capable of having a lot of impact. This respondent and some other people told the municipality that they would like to spend the NGP budget on filling the gaps in the ecological infrastructure. However, the responsible municipal official initially didn't want to take this suggestion into consideration, as it was claimed that this idea didn't really come from residents themselves. When people saw that the municipal project leader was against this, many of them expressed their support for the ecological idea. According to this respondent, the fact that multiple residents wanted the municipality to be more active and to think along with them, was a clear sign which set something in motion. He notes that these ecological ideas also appeared in another NGP meeting, in neighbourhood Vleuten de Meern, a bit later. This respondent was positively surprised that – from two newly constructed sub-neighbourhoods in both Leidsche Rijn and Vleuten de Meern – a lot of people expressed their concern about the absence of fauna in the neighbourhood. This respondent, with the Nature and Environmental Platform, decided to submit plans for the NGP and bundle them. These were about hiding places for fauna, more trees and shrubs with fruits and nuts, etc. in order to create a structure with good living conditions for animals. Though, he finds it very striking that, in his belief, the idea of creating ecological connections was only addressed during the second last NGP (local NGO member 2, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

5.5 Actors and resources

5.5.1 General organization of the NGPs

For designing and successfully implementing a city-wide greening project like the NGPs, a range of tasks and resources is required. The municipality has therefore adopted a 'multi-disciplinary approach' to the NGPs in the sense that various municipal departments have participated in the process from their own expertise (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

The department of Environment & Mobility is the principal of the NGPs and has been responsible for designing the approach and for coordinating the implementation of the programme. In the preparatory stage of the NGPs, a municipal project group was formed per neighbourhood. In neighbourhood Binnenstad, for example, this group consisted of a neighbourhood advisor, a landscape architect (department of Spatial & Economic Development), a planner (department of Urban Works), the neighbourhood consultant from *Nature and Environmental Communication* and a project leader (department of Environment & Mobility). This project group was engaged in collecting relevant information, contacting the neighbourhood council Binnenstad, preparing the participation and communication and making an analysis of the neighbourhood. Subsequently, the NGP was brought to the attention in the neighbourhood, whereby residents and entrepreneurs were invited to submit their green ideas (Municipality of Utrecht 2014).

For announcing the possibility to submit ideas for the NGPs, multiple channels were used, at least in NGP Binnenstad: the neighbourhood website and digital newsletter (both managed by the neighbourhood office), the neighbourhood newspaper, posters and leaflets, a

press release; a special letter sent to local stakeholders; and information and participation meetings (Municipality of Utrecht 2014).

After the deadline, the submitted ideas were assessed and clarified, and a financial estimation was made. For this, the project group judged the ideas on a list of pre-defined criteria (see next section), in consultation with the departments of Environment & Mobility and Heritage. Most of the potential NGP locations were visited, and it was examined to what extent NGP ideas were connected to existing green projects of the municipality. The municipality also tried to find additional budgets for the NGP. Subsequently, the responsible alderman was asked to approve the outcome of the assessment, after which the outcome and further steps were communicated to the initiators of green ideas. After this, the official NGP document could be compiled and proposed to the local Board of Mayor and Alderman for approval (Municipality of Utrecht 2014).

The last step in the process is the actual implementation of the individual projects, for which either the department of Urban Works or IBU Urban Engineers has been in charge. In those projects where self-management by residents is not a logical option, Urban Works has been given the task to manage the project locations after the implementation.

The chronological process described above is a more or less standard approach that, with some minor differences, was applied in several NGPs (e.g. Overvecht, Leidsche Rijn and Binnenstad). However, in some neighbourhoods the process was done rather differently (e.g. West and Oost). It can be observed that the municipality decided to keep the organization of the NGP per neighbourhood very loose, in the sense that whoever wanted to take the lead could do this. This leader was either the neighbourhood office, neighbourhood council or a third party (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015). Since the process was mostly guided by one of these agencies, it is important to take a look at the resources (and thereby power) that these actors possess and how this influences the relation of these actors with residents.

5.5.2 Neighbourhood offices and councils

The neighbourhood offices in Utrecht are municipal agencies which are responsible for their own neighbourhood. They have been involved in different ways and to different extents in the NGP in their neighbourhood. Their involvement depended, among other things, on the type and size of the project (Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015). In terms of resources, they had an important role in the NGPs because of their knowledge about the history of the neighbourhood and their extensive network. An official of neighbourhood office Overvecht says that, in general, her office advises colleagues about participation and communication in the neighbourhood. She tells that, during the NGPs, their main activities were advising about communication, invitations and information meetings; providing publicity and involving important partners in the neighbourhood (pers. comm. 16 June 2015).

Also in terms of finance the neighbourhood offices are quite influential as they manage the *Initiatievenfonds* (Initiatives Fund) which was, until recently, known as the *Leefbaarheidsbudget* (Liveability Budget). This is a municipal budget which residents can apply for when they need financial support for a green initiative. This particular budget has also been important as additional finance for the NGPs, as will be explained later in this chapter.

In each neighbourhood, also the neighbourhood *council* has been involved in different ways and to different extents. Neighbourhood councils are consultancy bodies, consisting of engaged residents from the neighbourhood, which give advice both spontaneously and on demand to the local Board of Mayor and Alderman and to the municipal councilors. A neighbourhood council is supposed to be a proper reflection of the neighbourhood (resident 8,

pers. comm. 5 June 2015; consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015). The idea is that, as the neighbourhood councils have an easy entrance to the municipality, they reduce the distance between the municipality and residents (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015). Through their network function, the neighbourhood councils have been very important for distributing relevant information about the NGPs to residents (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

However, there is also critique about the extent to which the neighbourhood councils serve their function as representative bodies of the neighbourhood. It is remarked that they tend to be an elite, which is possible as the members are not democratically chosen (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015). In addition, the neighbourhood councils have a powerful tool in the form of the 'neighbourhood consultation' which they can set up on their own initiative and in their own way. Based on the outcomes of these consultations, the neighbourhood councils give advice to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. One respondent points to the power of a neighbourhood council when she says that a given project will not be realized when this council is against it. In her opinion, it was therefore a formality to involve the neighbourhood councils intensively during the NGPs (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015).

It should be noted that the above response came from a single (albeit well-informed) respondent. However, the sentiment that these bodies might not be representative, in conjunction with the open approach to the NGPs and the resulting major role of the neighbourhood council in some NGPs, seems to legitimize a critical position. This need becomes even more apparent when the example of NGP Oost is taken into account. One municipal official argues that, in the context of the NGP, neighbourhood council Oost did a survey about green strengths and opportunities in the neighbourhood. According to this official, this survey was not representative as it was mainly done among green minded people (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015).

Box 8: NGP West

In NGP West, the process was deviant from the usual approach. The participation stage, including the collection of ideas, is normally done by the municipality. However, at the request of neighbourhood council West, the participation of NGP West was conducted by a third party called *Ruimte voor Advies* (Space for Advice). This was done through a digital neighbourhood consultation, which resulted in a list of about 50 ideas, even before the NGP in this neighbourhood had started (Municipality of Utrecht: webpage NGP West n.d.).

However, it soon turned out that the neighbourhood consultation hadn't been sufficiently brought to the attention of residents. Therefore, the neighbourhood consultation was brought to the attention once more and the submitting period was extended. This resulted in about 350 ideas. This huge number was caused by the fact that – contrary to other neighbourhoods – NGP West chose to set *no* requirements for submitting ideas (Municipality of Utrecht: webpage NGP West n.d.). Whereas in other NGPs the submitted ideas could be turned into projects in a relatively simple manner, in NGP West more stringent choices had to be made. Some important considerations used for selecting projects were the already available green in a sub-neighbourhood, the condition of this green and recent investments in green (Municipality of Utrecht: webpage NGP West n.d.).

One former municipal official, who was involved in NGP West, notes that the whole procedure was very confusing for residents. She felt that no justice was done to the efforts of residents. In her opinion, residents were overruled and didn't get a proper answer to many of their questions. As she couldn't support the course of events in NGP West, she decided to

retreat from the process (local NGO member 1, pers. comm. 19 June 2015).

5.5.3 Other actors

5.5.3.1 Knowledge

Several respondents agree that it is necessary for residents to possess particular resources for successfully realizing a green initiative from the design stage all the way to self-management. According to the MAGIE consultative group, initiatives of residents can only be given shape when residents know what to expect from the municipality in terms of planting, equipment, digging work and organizational support (MAGIE consultative group 2014). Besides from these 'practical' resources, other people point to the potential importance of more 'intrinsic' resources like the neighbourhood characteristics and the education, knowledge and skills of the participating residents (neighbourhood council Zuidwest 2013).

According to an official from Urban Works, it is not a big deal at all that residents sometimes lack the knowledge about things like ecology, maintenance and procedures, since the main factor, according to her, is the commitment of residents and their willingness to learn about different aspects of a project. She adds that assisting residents with these things is always a collaboration between residents and the municipality (pers. comm. 11 June 2015). To a certain extent, the municipality has indeed filled this perceived 'knowledge gap' herself: by organizing information meetings for the NGPs, by providing advice via neighbourhood supervisors, etc.

In some NGP projects, initiators of an idea were given the responsibility to bring residents together for a meeting. One resident notes that – although he can understand why he was given this task – a participation project could run dead if this would be asked from people who are less familiar with organizing things (resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

Box 9: Social management

As the municipality aims at realizing a high degree of involvement among residents in the NGPs, cooperation was sought with, *inter alia*, social brokers (e.g. Doenja Service Provision and *Me'kaar*) which have a lot of experience at the street level in assisting people to initiate bottom-up projects in the neighbourhood. In the NGPs, these agencies have especially been involved in the public playgrounds and locations with BSO's (after school care institutes) where they have an important social role (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

Regarding the NGP project in playground *De Boog*, one resident tells that the *green* self-management was something that the involved residents were prepared to do. Though, the municipality wanted to have the total playground in self-management. According to this resident, the *social* management is a very particular task that requires education and a lot of time. She also notes that residents sometimes feel like they are lacking the knowledge about dealing with some troubled youth in the playground. For this, they get support from a social broker. This broker has offered a training to the residents about an approach called 'the peaceful neighbourhood' (resident 7, pers. comm. 17 June 2015).

5.5.3.2 Bottom-up involvement

Besides from the municipality, there are also third parties who have filled the perceived 'knowledge gap' on their own initiative. An example of this is TALrijk, which consists of three women with a green, communicative background and with relevant knowledge (e.g. about ecology, drawing and participation). The municipality allowed TALrijk to guide the participation trajectory with residents in NGP Zuidwest. According to one member of TALrijk, their intention

was to involve residents in a bottom-up way for the NGP and to inform them about regulations and conditions (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015). She adds that residents, except from some money, especially need clear framework conditions, some knowledge and confidence.

In order to involve people for the NGP, this respondent and her colleagues from TALrijk went to different events in the neighbourhood which weren't about the NGPs. She observes that these events were especially visited by foreigners, whereas the organized information meetings are rather visited by native Dutch people. About the way in which they tried to stimulate participation, she notes: *'We had bought bunches of mint and, together with residents, we put the mint in boxes with earth. We handed out the mint with a label attached to it. The children who were passing received mint, and, as we had put the mint into boxes, it would automatically develop roots. Then, they will have a little plant which grows and which is eatable. Turkish and Moroccan people drink a lot of mint tea. We did this as a promotion during the opening of a square. People really liked this. My idea with the mint was – it was a twig like from a rose – with a label attached to it: 'green idea, do something with it'. On the back was the invitation for the resident information meeting for that neighbourhood. I can imagine that a child gives the twig to his mother, after which the mother decides whether or not to do something with it. In this way, you will get a small handful of people who say: 'how nice, I will come!'. However, if the weather on the particular night is bad, people don't feel like coming anymore and decide to stay away.'* (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015). This anecdote illustrates that, at least in this particular neighbourhood, an effort was made to involve particular groups of people in a way that is appealing to them. Since TALrijk was only involved in neighbourhood Zuidwest, it is not clear whether these kinds of creative methods for involving residents were used by other agencies (e.g. the neighbourhood councils or offices) in other neighbourhoods as well.

5.5.3.3 Remaining actors and resources

Some other actors that were involved in the NGPs can be linked to particular resources or certain regulations. *Housing associations* were involved as ground owners and co-financers of projects taking place on their ground; *construction companies* for the implementation; *water boards* for co-finance and for the relation between the NGPs and the Neighbourhood Water Plan; the Nature and Environmental Platform Leidsche Rijn for its ecological knowledge; and the MAGIE consultative group for its expertise regarding urban nature and participation. Depending on the character of different projects in the NGPs, various other actors have sometimes also been involved, such as neighbourhood associations and railway and utility companies.

5.6 Rules and funding

5.6.1 Starting budget

Even though the municipality has been in charge of the organization of the NGPs, it claims that residents will decide about the substance of the green ideas. However, it is also important to look at the extent to which the pre-defined framework of the NGPs, comprising of the rules and resources, allows residents to realize their aims and ideas.

In order to get residents involved in the greening of their neighbourhood, the municipality provides each NGP with a starting budget of €500,000 for planning and implementation. This money is provided by the Multiannual Green Programme. The drafting and realization of this programme is done by the department of Environment & Mobility. From this €500,000 budget, a maximum of €80,000 could be spent on the analytical stage, participation stage, process costs and the drafting of the NGP. For the actual implementation of the ideas remains €420,000 euro, which includes the costs of the preparatory work (e.g. consultations

with residents), ground work, design, etc. (Municipality of Utrecht 2014). However, the €420,000 euro is a *starting* budget; the municipality explicitly attempted to find co-finance for the NGPs.

Box 10: Budget as incentive for participation

The budget of the NGPs has become a vital part of the programme and could be seen as an ‘instrument’ to stimulate participation. According to the municipal project leader, the pilot that was done for two neighbourhoods prior to the current NGPs was without the implementation budget of €420,000. The municipality only had the wish to set up the NGP programme, and the idea was to start looking for budget when the green ideas would be submitted. Though, at the time it was learned that this doesn’t work as you must offer residents something in order to attract them and to avoid disappointments (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

One respondent notes that, during the pilot stage, the municipality spent about three years on these first neighbourhood green plans. However, from the moment that the NGPs re-appeared in the form of the current NGPs, there wasn’t enough money anymore to assist each neighbourhood for the duration of three years (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015).

On the basis of this account it can be argued that, compared to the pilot stage, the municipality offers residents *more* budget but *less* time for the NGPs. In fact, several residents point to a lack of communication by the municipality during the NGPs, which they also link to a perceived lack of time. Further in this chapter, it will become clear that, even though money may be an important incentive for attracting residents in the beginning, ‘time’ is a crucial resource for keeping residents motivated throughout the process.

5.6.2 Rules and conditions

Notwithstanding the conception that the municipality chose to give residents a lot of freedom by posing very few requirements regarding the *contents* of the green ideas (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015), a set of assessment criteria was defined in advance as a selection mechanism for the submitted ideas. In order to be eligible for the NGP budget, the proposed ideas had to comply, at least to some extent, with these criteria. Within the NGP programme, rules and funding are therefore closely related. ‘Hard’ assessment criteria for the NGPs *as a whole* were, among other things, that residents could only submit ideas for their own neighbourhood and that monuments, playground(s) (equipment), edifices and artworks were excluded from the NGP.

The submitted ideas were further tested on their practicability within the NGP budget. For this, a division was made between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ criteria. Some important *hard* criteria were: the consistency with existing policies and other planning processes/projects; feasibility (e.g. in terms of cables and pipes, archaeology and technical aspects); feasibility of management (either by the department of Urban Works or through self-management); and the rule that initiators had to collect a minimum of five collected signatures from fellow residents. Moreover, the location of a project had to be a public and publicly accessible space on municipal ground.

Examples of *softer* criteria were: the significance of the project for the neighbourhood; no overlap with the existing urban green structures (as part of the Green Structure Plan and Tree Policy); contribution of the project to the quantity, quality and accessibility of green or to social cohesion; and the rule that greater public support means a greater chance that the project will be implemented (Municipality of Utrecht n.d.¹).

Related to this, another rule that is worth mentioning is the fact that, for the older side of the city, the municipality decided that the parks couldn't join the NGPs, as they are already very green and have a distinct funding (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). For neighbourhood Leidsche Rijn, on the new side of the city, it was decided that the parks were allowed to join, because these parks are new, because additions in this neighbourhood are needed and because there is no distinct funding for these parks (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

Besides from the parks, also urban agriculture was a special point of consideration for the NGP budget, even though this category is not mentioned in the assessment criteria. For the urban agriculture there used to be a subsidy project, but after this one-off project had stopped, the NGPs adopted and financed some of these urban agricultural plans too. It remains a difficult decision for the municipality whether or not to honour agricultural ideas for the urban green space (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015).

The above suggests that, in terms of the substance of the green ideas, the municipality has a potentially larger role than it claims. When looking at the dynamics at the street level this becomes even more apparent.

5.6.3 Rules and funding in practice

5.6.3.1 Flexibility

The intention of the municipality was to actively involve residents in the realization of the planned neighbourhood green. Since the municipality also wants to enhance the sustainability of public space and, therefore, residents' sense of responsibility, it seems important to prevent disappointments among residents as much as possible. Because of this, it is relevant to look at the extent to which residents' ideas were honored. In NGP Binnenstad, as example, 34 ideas were submitted. From this total number, 24 ideas would be dealt with (i.e. either through the NGP, the Neighbourhood Water Plan or the Liveability Budget). In NGP Binnenstad, 10 ideas were rejected due to non-compliance with some of the pre-defined assessment criteria (Municipality of Utrecht: webpage NGP Binnenstad n.d.). This means that quite some people will be, to a greater or lesser extent, disappointed and unable to accomplish their objectives. However, it may not always be clear for residents what these criteria exactly imply and whether they apply to the project location in mind.

The municipality's rationales for approving ideas and spending the budget in particular ways don't always become clear. Whereas, on paper, the NGP budget can only be obtained when ideas conform to the set criteria, the municipality sometimes deals with these criteria rather flexibly, with the result that also deviating ideas could be honoured. So, even though the municipality claims that residents will decide which (feasible) ideas they want to implement, the assessment framework enables the municipality to keep exerting control over the green ideas that will eventually be realized.

The municipality basically acknowledges this by saying that, contrary to the hard criteria, the *softer* criteria could be adapted under certain circumstances (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). Related to this flexibility, the NGP project leader argues that people sometimes find it difficult that there is no budget for tackling a certain location in its entirety. On the one hand, she confirms the rule that the NGP budget is reserved for green and must therefore not be spent on stony elements – also because stone is much more expensive than green. On the other hand, she argues that spending some money on a bench or playground equipment should be possible from time to time, as long as a 'proper balance' is maintained

(NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). This account illustrates that, in practice, the municipality not only uses the softer criteria quite flexibly but also some of the 'hard' criteria (i.e. the rule regarding playgrounds).

5.6.3.2 Rules in practice: examples at the street level

When taking a look at the street level, this flexible attitude of the municipality towards its own rules becomes apparent. In fact, a municipal official notes that the spatial context of a proposed idea played a role in decisions of the municipality to be more strict or flexible in honouring particular ideas (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015). This is illustrated by some examples in practice.

As was mentioned before, one 'hard' criterion is that public space on which an NGP idea is projected must be publicly accessible 24 hours a day. However, there are also courtyards with a gate, which are public space but close at night. After some time, the municipality decided that these places could also join because in some neighbourhoods the proposed plans were about these places in particular (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

In one NGP project about the construction of some greenery, it occurred that, rather than the plants, especially the solid components (such as the stony borders of the greenery, the ground and adaptation of the street concretion) were a large share of the budget. The wish of the residents to have the stony elements in a particular way, which would be more expensive, was honoured as well (resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015). In this case, the budget was therefore used in contradiction with the assessment framework, and one could question on what grounds this decision was made.

In another case (see also box 6), a resident asked the municipality whether the remaining budget of her NGP vegetable garden(s) – that would be terminated – could be spent on knowledge exchange about these projects. The municipality refused this suggestion because it was considered 'labelled money' which had to be spent on physical green in the neighbourhood (supervisor of two NGP projects, pers. comm. 22 May 2015).

Another example is neighbourhood Binnenstad, where there is the feeling among residents that it has always been very difficult to realize green in this particular neighbourhood. Because of this, the great majority of the residents automatically came up with relatively modest ideas for the NGP (Member of neighbourhood council Binnenstad, pers. comm. 19 June 2015). One respondent from Binnenstad tried to submit some NGP ideas for the *Singel* area (a historical defensive canal around Utrecht). In his view, the scope of his ideas transcended the Singel. However, the ideas were rejected by the municipality. This resident considers it very unfortunate that this large Singel area was excluded from the NGP, even more so because of the limited options in this neighbourhood (Member of neighbourhood council Binnenstad, pers. comm. 19 June 2015).

Box 11: Generosity of NGP budgets for urban agriculture, a playground and a park

When both vegetable gardens (as mentioned above) were still operating, the two initiators got paid for their guiding role during the two projects (about €20,000/25,000 per garden during the first year). According to one of the initiators, this made a lot of things possible in these projects. Although from this budget everything had to be done (i.e. the hours of the initiators and materials), there was some money left each time (supervisor of two NGP projects, pers. comm. 22 May 2015). Whereas urban agriculture has been regarded as a contentious category of green in the context of the NGPs, this example indicates that some vegetable gardens received a lot of money. An additional factor which *might* have contributed to this, is the fact

that, in this case, the two vegetable gardens were located on the ground of a housing association which decided to provide additional finance for the projects.

Also in some other NGP projects, the budget was provided remarkably generous. An example of this occurred in the NGP project regarding playground(!) *De Boog*. The initiating resident of this project had a very modest idea that didn't require a lot of money. The idea was to merely replace the bamboo and add some endemic bushes to the playground in order to attract small animals. However, in the end, she obtained much more budget (i.e. €45,000) from the NGP than she could have ever imagined. This resident notes that, apparently, the municipality interpreted her ideas about playing opportunities for children in a different way. She has never been asked to submit a financial estimation for her idea. The resident notes that this budget suddenly offered new possibilities for a complete redesign of the playground, including the addition of new playground equipment (resident 7, pers. comm. 17 June 2015). Although it was a rule that playgrounds and equipment would be excluded from the NGP, this case illustrates that the municipality is sometimes quite flexible in this.

Another situation in which something similar occurred is the redesign of a small park (in NGP Noordwest), which was a component of a larger NGP project that included some neighbouring locations as well. One involved resident heard from fellow residents in another part of the neighbourhood that this single project formed a very large share (i.e. €135,000) of the available NGP budget (resident 2, pers. comm. 23 June 2015).

The municipality claims that, in most cases, the NGP budget proved to be enough for realizing the feasible projects, although it was sometimes necessary to adjust the ideas a bit in order to make them more realistic (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). Even though this might be true, there are examples of projects in which the municipality turned out to have too little budget. This is illustrated by a project in NGP Noordoost. In relation to this project, one respondent mentions that only parts of the initial idea could be realized since the municipality had run out of money. There also appeared to be overlap with already existing projects on that location (resident 8, pers. comm. 5 June 2015). Residents in this neighbourhood were wondering where all the budget had gone. This respondent thinks that in this NGP, a large part of the budget that should have been available for physical green, was actually spent on consultations between municipal departments (resident 8, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

It is noticeable that the municipality seems to deal rather flexibly with projects that are not (completely) complying to the *substantive* rules, whereas the 'rule' that ideas should really be submitted in a bottom-up way is defended quite firmly. At the street level, this implies that (green) playgrounds and 'solid' components have sometimes been given more weight than ecological types of green. Although, in principal, it seems justifiable that the municipality is prepared to occasionally abandon its rules to meet alternative wishes of residents, a form of decision making like this implies the risk of intransparency and arbitrariness. Further in this chapter, this issue will be elaborated in more detail.

An example where residents were confronted with limitations regarding the contents of their idea occurred in one project where the initiator wanted to have some shrubbery. Even though one respondent told the municipality that he was willing to prune the shrubs when necessary, the municipality made clear that this still didn't fit with the mechanic management that they were applying in this neighbourhood. Because of this, the residents were obliged to adapt some of the preferred species in order to fit the municipality's management plan. Another resident involved in this project confirms that there were very clear conditions on which plant

species were possible and not possible (resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015; resident 6, pers. comm. 25 June 2015).

5.6.4 Co-finance

5.6.4.1 Linking up with other initiatives and budgets

Also outside the NGP programme, several green projects and initiatives were taking place before and during the NGPs. Besides from NGP projects that have found co-finance, there were also green initiatives that were already operating before the NGPs and that decided to use the NGP budget to finance themselves or to get additional finance (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015; resident 4, pers. comm. 17 June 2015). There are also residents who were already thinking about proposing a green plan to the municipality, when they heard about the NGP. These residents decided to use the NGP to finance and realize their idea.

Whereas these residents benefitted from the sudden opportunities of the NGPs, the municipality, in turn, also benefitted from these older initiatives. When possible, the municipality tried to combine submitted NGP ideas with other running green projects and initiatives in the neighbourhood.

Moreover, the municipality obtained co-finance for multiple NGP projects and was also able to place some projects under other existing budgets, with the result that more money could be spent on the remaining NGPs projects. In general, this additional money came from a variety of municipal and other (public) budgets and actors (e.g. the Maintenance Budget, Neighbourhood Action Plan, the Green Web, the Safety Plan, the Water Agency, the Province, the ministry of Economic Affairs and housing associations). It is also noticeable that, at a certain moment, the vast majority (i.e. 84%) of co-financed projects was obtained for only two NGPs (out of eight running NGPs), namely the NGPs Zuid and Oost (Municipality of Utrecht 2015¹).

The municipality also tried to involve entrepreneurs in the NGPs. In NGP Zuid, there was a project about the restoration of the *As Musketon*, which is a waterway near a shopping mall. At this location, the shopkeeper's association was involved in the design of the NGP project, and provided some budget as well (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). Not only the municipality tried to generate financial means for the NGPs. Some residents were also active in involving companies or entrepreneurs in their NGP project, e.g. for sponsoring, giving workshops and donating materials (resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015; resident 7, pers. comm. 17 June 2015). This may compensate the residents' dependency from the municipality somewhat, although the majority of finance was still provided by the municipality.

Noticeably, part of the implementation budget of €420,000 in NGP Zuidwest had already been spent on another citizen initiative (called *Redesign Maasplein*). Therefore, the remaining budget that was available for this NGP was €355,000. Despite this fact, a further selection of the feasible projects was not necessary as some of them related to the urban green structure and could therefore be financed through another municipal budget. Also the neighbourhood office adopted some ideas in NGP Zuidwest through its Initiatives Fund (Municipality of Utrecht: webpage NGP Zuidwest n.d.). The Livability Budget was typically aimed at the smaller green projects, like facade gardens, tree mirrors, plant boxes, etc. If these kinds of ideas were proposed for the NGP, the municipality asked the neighbourhood offices (who manage the Liveability Budget/Initiatives Fund) whether they could contribute something as well (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

5.6.4.2 NGP budgets and beyond

Because of the existence of several green budgets, a logical question seems what the function is of the NGPs and its budget. This question is addressed by some respondents. One respondent noted that the NGPs should be seen as initiator for new green initiatives. She thinks that, although people were already initiating green projects before the NGPs, the NGPs were very useful in showing residents that the municipality is a proponent of a 'demand oriented approach'. She observes that also outside the NGPs, the municipality is very open to bottom-up green initiatives and tries to find finance for these (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015).

A local councillor confirms that, also before the NGPs, there was space for residents to come up with green initiatives. Moreover, this will not change after the NGPs (GroenLinks city councilor, pers. comm. 7 July 2015). Due to a lack of money, the NGPs, as programme, will not be continued after the current projects are finished. Nevertheless, GroenLinks is trying to find new ways to continue the stimulation of green initiatives, for example by making existing budgets more flexible (GroenLinks city councilor, pers. comm. 7 July 2015).

Related to this, one resident from Leidsche Rijn expressed his regret that the NGP budget was spent on distinct and fragmented projects instead of on improving the green and ecology in the neighbourhood in a more structural way. He notes that the Livability Budget had already been there to cover these scattered initiatives (resident 4, pers. comm. 17 June 2015). Also another resident seems sceptical about the way in which the municipality dealt with some small, separate projects within the NGP or through the Liveability Budget. He says that it often occurs that a small piece of green is realized, while nobody except from the initiator knows about its existence (local NGO member 2, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

Here, a clear relation between the organization and substance of the NGPs can be observed. A sentiment among people is the necessity of an overarching green ambition for the municipality, in order to make sure that citizen participation has a wider significance for the urban green.

5.6.5 Reflections on the chosen framework conditions

The municipal project leader notes that, until now, all NGP projects which were feasible could be realized, so there hasn't been a necessity to choose. Although this issue was anticipated and included in the process, the NGP project leader was happy that it was not necessary after all. If this necessity had been there, the municipality would have talked with residents about which projects to implement (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). This illustrates that, when choices would have been necessary, the municipality had probably taken a relatively active role in deciding which ideas to implement. Although the idea is that this would be done in collaboration with residents, it is important to realize that the choice for this particular form of decision making was made *for* residents *by* the municipality.

Among residents there are different perspectives on the question whether or not the overall NGP framework was sufficiently clear. Even though all 'feasible' ideas may have been implemented, this doesn't mean that residents were always able, even with the best will, to make sure that their ideas were feasible or realistic. In this context, it is relevant to mention that, despite the availability of the rules for the NGPs, there were still multiple ideas that had to be rejected due to non-compliance with any of these rules.

The MAGIE consultative group points to this issue. This group argues that it is crucial for the NGPs that – preferably per neighbourhood – clear framework conditions and goals are set in advance and properly communicated, as this will prevent disappointments among residents. (MAGIE consultative group 2014). They also argue that the involvement of residents will be in

serious danger when their submitted ideas are rejected based on arguments that are ambiguous or that were not communicated in advance (MAGIE consultative group 2014).

Related to this, there seems to be a difference in the way of thinking between the municipality and residents. One municipal official thinks that residents should just submit their ideas, after which the municipality will figure out what is possible. She adds that the municipality always has the intention to realize ideas at least to a certain extent rather than simply rejecting them (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015).

However, not all involved respondents appreciate this open and flexible approach. Some of them are critical because, in their opinion, the possibilities and limitations on particular locations were too vague and because a clear framework was absent (see resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015; resident 8, pers. comm. 5 June 2015). One resident tells that, concerning the idea to create a couple of plant boxes for the NGP, she and her fellow residents were surprised to hear that they were very much 'drawing outside the lines' and that their idea was very ambitious (resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015). This resident tells that she would have liked to hear the limitations in advance and explicitly asked for these in order to make it easier to design a realistic plan. She even told the municipality about the existence of cables on one spot, but got the response that residents shouldn't worry about these limitations as it would be figured out for them (resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015).

5.7 Communication and collaboration

5.7.1 Inadequate communication

As the NGP framework was constructed by the municipality, there is the risk that intransparent procedures prevail over face-to-face contact. A shared sentiment among several respondents is a lack of communication from the municipality towards residents, which also seems to be an important issue for other projects in Utrecht's public space in general.

The NGP project leader believes that the municipality clearly communicated the framework for the NGPs, in which residents were expected to think along. She argues that this worked out very well, and that there were hardly any conflicts about the rules of the NGPs as it is very clear why certain things are not possible (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). There is also the opposing idea that conflicts haven't occurred, precisely because there hasn't been any communication. In this respect, one respondent notes that, because residents are kept ignorant about the progression of the plans, they don't know how to feel about it (local NGO member 2, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

The respondent from TALrijk notes that, in her own neighbourhood West, she had to submit her idea on paper and has never been invited to discuss about it in person. In Zuidwest, she and her colleagues from TALrijk invited all initiators of ideas for three meetings until the plans were ready. Residents were also informed about regulations and conditions, since, according to this respondent, these were often not clear in the other NGPs. She argues that, although the conditions of the NGPs existed on paper, they have to be actively communicated and explained to residents. She argues that, when the communication fails, too many ideas will be submitted, which happened for instance in NGP West (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015).

With respect to the communication in the NGPs, a local NGO member experienced the following: *'What I actually see is that, after the phase of submitting plans, the municipality is like an amoeba: the plans are taken in and digested inside, and we are quite concerned by what it will eventually look like in practice.'* (local NGO member 2, pers. comm. 11 June 2015). In his opinion, the municipality is torn between two ideas. On the one hand, many things are organized to

promote citizen participation whereas, on the other hand, the municipality keeps residents ignorant in later stages when certain things must be done. Residents may therefore become rather unmotivated for these projects (local NGO member 2, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

5.7.2 Bureaucracy and the factor 'time'

In the NGPs, particularly the resource 'time' seems an important determinant of how the NGP process is perceived by residents. The municipal project leader notes that government is by definition slow and that there is simply not sufficient capacity to implement all the NGP projects at the same time. She acknowledges that this slowness is sometimes difficult to accept for residents who want to have their project realized on a short term (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

Judging from the experiences of several residents, the NGP process was perceived as very time-consuming, and the sentiment exists that the municipality has regularly dealt quite carelessly with the residents' available time, for example for receiving some promised materials. (see resident 7, pers. comm. 17 June 2015; resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015). One respondent notes that, if this hadn't been her own NGP idea, she would have definitely dropped out after some months (resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015).

Another resident once complained about the slow NGP process by sending a timeline to the municipality with the question whether it was still the intention to make something of it or not. The respondent notes that this was a very clear signal that finally made the municipality start to take some efforts (resident 7, pers. comm. 17 June 2015).

The potential disadvantages of the municipal bureaucracy in the NGPs is addressed by the neighbourhood council Zuidwest: *'Bottom-up participation in which citizens implement their neighbourhood green plans [i.e. single NGP projects] themselves along with the municipality hasn't come off the ground yet. (.....). Private green initiatives do come off the ground and foster social cohesion. "De Achtertuin" [The Backyard] is a nice example of this. The major difference between De Achtertuin and a neighbourhood green plan [i.e. a single NGP project] is that residents have started with De Achtertuin on their own initiative. For the neighbourhood green plan, the municipality of Utrecht has been the party who took the first initiative. An essential difference.'* (neighbourhood council Zuidwest 2013).

The neighbourhood council Zuidwest adds that, at the time of writing, the municipality had hardly communicated yet about further steps in NGP Zuidwest. It is argued that bottom-up participation doesn't get off the ground in the sense that residents involved in this NGP projects still needed to organize themselves concerning the implementation and management (neighbourhood council Zuidwest 2013).

5.7.3 Internal dynamics within the municipality

A complicating factor that is mentioned in relation to communication by the municipality during the NGPs, are officials changing position during the project. One respondent argues that civil servants won't feel committed if they are only taking part in the project for a short time (resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015).

One resident, involved in the project about playground De Boog, mentions that she continuously got new contact persons (about six) and was sent from department to department. She had looked for some enthusiastic residents to support her plan and that could help with self-management, which was requested by the municipality. The residents waited for about a year for the municipality to proceed, as the project leader had to be replaced. As a consequence, the momentum disappeared and almost all the involved residents dropped out. She also points to

the difficulty that residents had to deal with multiple departments from one organization, whose communication is often not optimal (resident 7, pers. comm. 17 June 2015). Also the MAGIE consultative group argues that the inter-departmental collaboration between Environment & Mobility, Urban Works and the neighbourhood offices is should have been better in the NGPs, in order to be able to unequivocally communicate to residents (see MAGIE consultative group 2014).

5.7.4 Commitment of officials

Judging from the experiences of several respondents, the success or failure of single NGP projects is strongly related to the attitude, motivation and qualities of civil servants in key positions. Regarding this issue, one respondent (involved in two NGPs) observed that the project leader in one of the NGPs in which he took part, didn't seem very emotionally involved in the NGP. According to this respondent, the benefit of the municipal project leader in the other NGP was that, contrary to the other project leader, she was working in her own field of expertise. This means, according to him, that this project leader wants to do her best because she will keep encountering several of the involved people after the NGP as well (local NGO member 2, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

Despite the above critique, there are also residents who experienced a close collaboration and good communication with the municipality during the NGP. One resident says that, for their NGP project, the involved residents had several pleasant meetings with someone from the neighbourhood office to talk about practical aspects of their project (resident 6, pers. comm. 25 June 2015). Another resident, from the same project, tells that he liked the chosen approach, in which the municipal representative allowed the residents to offer ideas, while the municipal official made clear the possibilities and limitations (resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

5.7.5 Collaboration between NGPs and other initiatives

5.7.5.1 The NGPs as a one-off programme

Even though the NGPs form a distinct programme with a framework, in which the green initiatives by residents are embedded, they are not intended to operate in a vacuum. This is illustrated by the following quote: *'With neighbourhood green plans, we try to link up with other initiatives in the neighbourhood and with co-finance, so that an even bigger boost is given to green and the public space.'* (Municipality of Utrecht 2014).

In practice, the municipality tried to act according to this idea, for instance by linking the approved green ideas to other running projects, by bundling them and by moving them to other budgets or programmes. However, it also occurred multiple times that locations with another running participation process were excluded from the NGPs because otherwise, in the opinion of the municipal project leader, different processes would be mixed up in a confusing way (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

On the whole, the NGPs can be considered as a one-off project that, for the most part, stands on its own without too many structural interrelations with other initiatives. Although there are some interactions with the NGPs, most green initiatives outside the NGPs were just moving on in the way they already did. Also the neighbourhood council Zuidwest observes that it is definitely not self-evident that different NGP projects and private initiatives start cooperating with each other by themselves (neighbourhood council Zuidwest 2013).

There is consensus among respondents that serious tensions between the NGPs and other green initiatives were largely absent. Several respondents believe that, in those cases

where there was an interaction, this interaction was probably facilitative. Judging from the experiences from respondents, concrete examples of this facilitation are scarce.

5.7.5.2 Examples of collaboration beyond the NGPs

Despite the perceived scarcity of interrelations between NGPs and other initiatives, one example is given by the municipal project leader. She notes that, on one location, there were two NGP ideas which were approved by the municipality. Though, in the time before the implementation, a spontaneous park, known as *Ringpark Dichterswijk*, was planned for the same location. Ringpark Dichterswijk was a spontaneous initiative from two architects who came up with a vision for that location. As the two NGP ideas would be located in this planned park, the municipality argued that these two NGP ideas were there the first. The idea of the municipality was therefore to let the two architects join an information meeting for the NGP to see whether they could inspire the residents or create a coherent plan. The municipality hopes that the residents and architect can solve this issue together (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

However, in general there is some critique that the municipality could have taken a more active position in linking individual NGP projects to other projects that were planned for the same location. In one NGP project, it occurred that a part of the location was redesigned for the NGP. Another part of this location was tackled (outside this NGP project) in a similar way but with some significant differences which, according to one resident, were at the expense of a uniform green image. This resident also considers it very unfortunate that other parts of this location were converted into grass. This resident actually sent an e-mail to the concerned project leader about this issue but the latter didn't feel accountable. He would have liked to see more interaction between the different initiatives with an active role for the municipality, in order to improve the result. On the other hand, he can also imagine that involving too many people in such a large project could hinder the ability to have productive discussions (resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

5.8 Implementation and beyond

5.8.1 Unforeseen regulations

During the NGPs it turned out that implementing green projects in the public space of a large city can be difficult, as it may occur that the municipality is confronted with unexpected issues such as soil contamination, archaeology, cables and pipes in the soil, railway regulations and rare flora and fauna. As these kinds of issues were often not accounted for in the preliminary stage, the budgets for some projects were exceeded. When such issues occurred a first time, budgets often had to be moved a bit in order to make everything fit from the financial point of view (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015; Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015). Because of these unexpected factors, the municipality made clear that, even in the implementation stage, it might still be necessary to adjust or reject some ideas (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015; Municipality of Utrecht: webpage NGP Binnenstad n.d.).

The question is what the implications of this are for the green ideas that residents propose. A resident tells that one large project within NGP Binnenstad was delayed due to severe soil contamination. What followed was a very long trajectory which made people rather doubtful about the project (Member of neighbourhood council Binnenstad, pers. comm. 19 June 2015).

Another respondent argues that, in NGP Noordoost, residents were told that those projects that eventually got selected had already been screened on feasibility by the

municipality. When the projects were about to be executed, it turned out that many projects had to be cancelled for several reasons, such as overlap with other running municipal projects (resident 8, pers. comm. 5 June 2015). The same resident also tells that, in NGP Oost, residents became rather sceptical towards participation due to the serious limitations posed to the realization of green projects by the occurrence of cables and wires (resident 8, pers. comm. 5 June 2015). She explains that, whereas she liked the participation stage very much, during the implementation a lot of things were suddenly not possible anymore.

5.8.2 Conflicting interests & public support

The construction of a framework for the NGP, with a set of rules and the availability of a budget, has been a means for the municipality to keep the oversight over the project, and to confine the participative component within desirable and manageable limits. However, multiple NGP projects indicate that reality proved more complex than was anticipated for by the municipality. The municipality was often confronted with unpredictable dynamics at the street level, in which each NGP project was a case on its own that asked for a different position of the municipality. An Urban Design official observes that the transition from the determined NGP document towards the implementation didn't go well (pers. comm. 12 June 2015). She notes that, despite the rule of obtaining five signatures for a green idea, the support base for plans hadn't been sufficiently arranged during the implementation, as there are many more people living in a street than the few proponents of a green idea. She argued that, because of this, much more costs were made during the implementation which were not anticipated for (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015; see also Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

According to one official, the NGP approach was too open and free, observable in the slogan: 'Come with an idea, and we will do something with it'. She says that the approach of the Liveability Budget was much better, as it includes the built-in condition for an idea that a certain number of signatures has to be collected in order to be taken into consideration (Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015). Even though public support was no strict and formal rule, this official turned it into an informal one herself. This occurred for example when, in a later stage, other residents came up with additional green ideas. In such cases, she would say that the idea is possible on the condition that the resident him/herself makes sure that there is enough support for it (Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

5.8.3 Dealing with disputes

When confronted with different views among residents, the municipality tried to find a suitable compromise for each situation specifically (Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015). However, as this aspect was initially not sufficiently anticipated on, the municipality developed its own criteria in practice, for dealing with these different situations. When looking at some individual cases, it can be observed that the municipality is quite powerful in her role as mediator of these situations.

The municipal project leader gives the example of an NGP project about a vegetable garden in which a lot of people were in favour and a few against. She notes that in such cases it is sometimes important to balance towards the supporters and just realize the project, whereby the complains should be solved whenever possible. She adds that it is not possible that a project is cancelled due to a single complaining resident (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). In another case (in NGP West), a decision had to be made about whether to honor the wishes of the initiators (who were living further away from the intended project location) or the wishes of the opposing residents living directly next to the place. Eventually, the decision was made that

people living directly next to place have a more influential voice (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

These two examples demonstrate the influential role of the municipality as rule maker. It is also important to realize that the criteria according to which the municipality biases towards the proponents respectively the opponents are often decided upon on a case by case basis and therefore far from clear-cut. Whereas this seems to suggest that opponents remain powerless when faced with decisions like these, residents have their own strategies to try to achieve their interests (see box 10).

Box 12: Strategies for reaching objectives

In at least one case, a single resident, who was completely against the planned NGP project, went to court and won the lawsuit. A neighbourhood office official tells that, after this, her office took the decision that in the future everybody should at least agree with a plan in order to have it implemented (Official at neighbourhood office Overvecht, pers. comm. 16 June 2015). In one project about a park, some opponents started to collect signatures against the planned park. These opponents wanted a big playing ground on that location. Also at the residents meeting they kept resisting to some extent, but the park was still realized (resident 2, pers. comm. 23 June 2015).

Residents not only looked for support *against* a project but also *in favor of* a project, for example by collecting signatures, publishing in a newspaper (Municipality of Utrecht 2015¹) and by making a website about the project (Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

In one NGP project, the municipality seems to have adopted another strategy for dealing with (potential) conflict. One resident for example (resident 3, pers. comm. 23 June 2015) says that he and fellow residents are afraid that planting vegetation in the wadi at that location will disturb the water discharge and might cause floods. He notes that, even without vegetation, the road is already covered with water every now and then. This respondent adds that people who moved into the neighbourhood in recent times do not know the neighbourhood and underground, which can be problematic when they come up with green ideas (resident 3, pers. comm. 23 June 2015). The residents at this location received a 'neighbourhood message' from the municipality which asked for their opinion. This residents tells that he responded to it by sending an e-mail. The resident notes that people who didn't respond to the neighbourhood message were labeled as 'neutral/not against' concerning the project, while – according to this resident – many more people than the few responding to the neighbourhood message, are actually against the project. Despite the few complaints and the worries of other people, the decision was taken to realize the project in the near future. This resident has the impression that the municipality has not really listened to the opponents (resident 3, pers. comm. 23 June 2015).

5.8.4 Self-management in practice

Even though the municipality regards self-management as an important aspect of the NGPs, officials note that in some projects self-management doesn't make sense. Depending on the situation, the question whether or not look for sufficient public support for self-management is decided upon by the municipality (official at neighbourhood office Overvecht, pers. comm. 16 June 2015).

One official notes that residents are – strictly spoken – not responsible for the maintenance of NGP projects. There is an arrangement that a basic management is done by the neighbourhood supervisors. Additional elements that come on top of that (i.e. the things that

residents want) may have to be managed by residents themselves (Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015). As one respondent mentions, strictly spoken, the departments of Urban Works, Environment & Mobility or the neighbourhood office are ultimately responsible for a given piece of public space, as the municipality is the owner (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015).

As became clear earlier, in the design stage of the NGPs, the promise of residents to do self-management was presented as an advantage that would make the chance bigger that your idea would be selected for the NGP. For actually realizing self-management of finished NGP projects, the municipal department of Urban Works sometimes used so called 'self-management contracts', which were signed by the involved residents. Though, the municipality says that they take it into account that self-management may stop after a while. It is argued that residents don't oblige themselves to keep doing self-management for a very long time (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). If residents neglect their project location while they had agreed to adopt it in self-management, the municipality makes one extra effort to give it a boost again. If that doesn't work the place is cleaned-up, after which the municipality can decide to convert it into something that is easier to manage for Urban Works (Official at neighbourhood office Overvecht, pers. comm. 16 June 2015; Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015; NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

5.9 Outputs and effects

5.9.1 Measuring effects

Since one of the NGPs' aims was to enhance the quantity, quality and accessibility of neighbourhood green, an evaluation of the finished NGPs might seem a logical next step. Several residents point to the importance of evaluating the NGPs for identifying the successes and lessons to be learned. Though, it seems as if the municipality is not very keen on doing these evaluations. A respondent from the MAGIE consultative group argues that the NGPs have been an experiment from which the municipality should learn. An evaluation of the NGPs has therefore been on the MAGIE-agenda for a long time already (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015). One official argues that an evaluation of the NGPs at this moment wouldn't make sense, since most projects need more time to flourish (Official at neighbourhood office Overvecht, pers. comm. 16 June 2015).

As a general evaluation instrument, the municipality works with the so called 'Utrecht Monitor'. This is an annual measurement among residents (not linked to the NGPs) about their living comfort in their surroundings (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). However, determining the correlation between the enhancement of physical green and the perceived effects on living comfort is considered to be difficult (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

In addition, it is also argued that it is very difficult to measure the tangible (green) outcomes of greening projects (GroenLinks city councilor, pers. comm. 7 July 2015), also because green can be regarded as 'soft', in contrast to 'hard' and easily quantifiable features (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015). It is confirmed that final evaluations in a formal project group are hardly ever conducted for green projects. The need for project evaluations also depends on the priorities of the responsible person at a given moment (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015).

Even though the NGPs have not been evaluated in an official way, one municipal official notes that there has been at least one intermediate evaluation in the NGPs that she attended. She

tells that it frequently occurs that project leaders evaluate things among one another. According to her, this might also have happened for some of the NGPs (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015).

5.9.2 Green and other physical outputs

Given the huge number of NGP projects, many different types of green were realized, such as flowers, shrubs, trees, vertical green (i.e. against walls) and greenery with solid components. Also the scale of projects ranged from relatively small green additions to larger projects about parks, allotment gardens and green playgrounds. Residents sometimes received more, in terms of physical elements, than they had asked for. In playground De Boog, for example, residents were happy to see that many things were possible: re-designed green borders, new playground equipment, a laying tree trunk and some poles for children, plant compartments and a 30 meter long strip with butterfly attracting plants.

In general, residents were satisfied with the green outputs of the realized NGP projects. This can be heard both directly from involved people themselves and indirectly from residents who hear positive stories from fellow-residents. Several municipal officials as well as residents derive the success of the NGPs from the positive comments (e.g. in the form of photos, e-mails and verbally) they get from people and neighbourhood councils about how nice things have become as a result of the various NGP projects (see Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015, NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015; resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015; Official at neighbourhood office Overvecht, pers. comm. 16 June 2015). Respondents also tell that they observe that most projects have become very nice (Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

Although most respondents are quite satisfied about the physical outcomes, there are also people who are dissatisfied or who have some smaller points of critique. One respondent observes that the final result of the NGP projects was often quite different from the initial idea. She adds that these adaptations and compromises have always been discussed through dialogue even though citizens often prove firm in having their idea realized as they intend (local NGO member 1, pers. comm. 19 June 2015). Several residents confirm that their ideas have not completely (or at all) been implemented in the way they hoped (see box 5 for some critical opinions). Like some respondents rightly point out, it should be kept in mind that the final outcomes are often difficult to assess since the plants may not immediately be full-grown or blossoming.

Box 13: Critical opinions at the street level

One resident observes that the involved people in his project are happy with the physical outcomes. However, he adds that in terms of plant species, the residents got something else than expected. The NGP manager had shown some pictures from plants, but the final result was somewhat different. This resident has the impression that there are less colour gradations and flowering periods than expected. On the other hand, he notes, the plants aren't full-grown yet and maybe things will improve. The same respondent also wants to mention that some particular species for which they asked were realized as intended and that he understands that not everything is possible. He concludes that the municipality has sufficiently listened to the residents (resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

The consultant (from TALrijk) also submitted an idea for her own NGP herself. She wanted to have perennials, while in the NGP document it appeared that there were flower bulbs in the grass. This was not what she had asked for; she is therefore not satisfied with the

handling of her own idea. She notes that the extent to which people are satisfied by the result, very much depends on the particular idea in question. More in general, she considers it a very positive thing that the municipality always tried to, at least, realize every NGP idea (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015). Another respondent is mainly positive as well, although she observes that some of those residents who have more insight in the whole project are less satisfied. She adds that in evaluations things are appeased with the remark that many projects do have been realized (resident 8, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

Some other small points of critique mentioned by residents, as their own experience or the experience from fellow residents, are: a tree that was placed in front of someone's window, a perceived lack of diversity in plant species and the omission of a couple of trees that were promised by the municipality.

5.9.3 Green effects

One resident notes that, notwithstanding the very nice physical green that was created as a result of the NGPs, the increase of green *in percentages* is probably fairly low. As reasons for this, she mentions that the projects are generally small in scale and because other green spots that had already been there have merely improved in quality rather than quantity (resident 8, pers. comm. 5 June 2015). One respondent links the green physical outputs of the NGPs to an improvement in the livability of the city (Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015). To what extent the perceived increase in living comfort, as a result of the NGPs, is shared by other people is not clear and also considered hard to measure. Related to this is the fact that one municipality official would have liked to see more green in particular neighbourhoods which were stony or had low quality green (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015).

According to the NGP project leader, the effects of green projects, such as the NGPs, on biodiversity are generally unknown, as measurements are not done when there is no clear reason for it. She adds that biodiversity is only measured, quite ironically, at the moment that species are at risk of disappearing, for example when new buildings are planned for a given location (pers. comm. 13 May 2015). One respondent has the impression that their project has led to more opportunities for birds and butterflies (resident 6, pers. comm. 25 June 2015). By and large, it remains unclear to what extent the NGPs have really increased the biodiversity.

As became clear earlier, several respondents criticized the municipality for the reason that it didn't explicitly aim at strengthening the urban green infrastructure. Some respondents would have liked their project to be part of a wider green structure (resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015; resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015). One respondent regrets that there was no ecologist in the assessment team of the green ideas. According to her, the ideas should have been tested on ecology, its position in the green chain and importance for the neighbourhood (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015). Another resident (resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015) is still waiting for a couple of trees that were promised to her. She notes that these trees are very important for the people living in and passing through the street. Moreover, this place was intended to become part of the city's main tree structure and a 'gateway to the city' which she considered a great idea (resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015).

5.9.4 Social effects

Even though social as well as other effects of the NGPs are hard to measure, there seems to be consensus among municipal officials and residents that, by and large, the NGPs have strengthened the social cohesion in the neighborhoods. In practice, it turned out that several aspects of the NGPs have the ability to enhance the social cohesion in a neighbourhood. Named

examples are the information meetings where residents get into contact with each other, the practice of self-management and the mere sharing of management materials. This enhanced social cohesion can even be observed in small NGP projects such as the example of a street where residents are doing the management of the newly created façade gardens and tree mirrors (resident 8, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

Also the mere improved appearance of a place after the NGP project can have positive social effects. According to one resident, contrary to the situation before the finalization of the NGP project, people now like to come, even from far, to the new park. He notes that on pleasant evenings people are eating and barbecuing in the park, after which most of them leave the place clean behind. Moreover, some people, who were hardly ever seen outside, are now celebrating a birthday in the park (resident 2, pers. comm. 23 June 2015).

In one NGP project regarding an allotment garden, it can be observed that new people have started to go outside because of the garden. On this location the social interactions improved because residents increasingly started to see each other and because they started cooking outside with ingredients from the garden (supervisor of two NGP projects, pers. comm. 22 May 2015). In one of these allotment gardens another effect could be observed. The initiator tells that, in the first year, there was some youth hanging around at the place. However, after some time this group had gone, as mothers started to sit outside in order to keep an eye on their garden. Consequently, a form of social control emerged (supervisor of two NGP projects, pers. comm. 22 May 2015).

More in general, the NGP project leader considers the NGPs as a huge success and a great example of what can be achieved, with a relatively modest budget, when giving more freedom to residents in designing the public space (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). Except from the necessary cancellation of a few projects during the implementation, she cannot think of any serious disappointments or failures (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). She and another municipal note that the NGPs have resulted in a lot of positivity at the neighbourhood level and have been received very positively in local politics as well (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015, Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015). One notable fact is that the project NGP Zuid was nominated in 2011 for the *Provincial Sustainability Award 2040*.

Box 14: The intense dynamics of vegetable gardens

In many respects, community vegetable gardens are a very particular form of green projects. The dynamics and development of vegetable garden projects are very much dependent on the particular location. In this regard, a significant difference can be observed between two vegetable gardens that are part of this study. In the garden project known as *Huize de Geer*, the project location is an enclosed courtyard with hardly any activity. The initiator of the projects describes the courtyard as a 'watching box' where it feels as if everyone is watching you.

According to this respondent, the other vegetable garden, known as *Nijenveld*, is a very different case. Since this garden lies in a passageway, many people leaving and entering the place can see what is happening there. She observes that, although her two gardens are located quite close to one another, they are completely different in terms of dynamics. They have in common that the many things happening in these places are very unpredictable. According to this respondent, another example of a neighbourhood garden that she knows (the *Riddertuin*) is again very different. As the city has many faces, she sees the difficulty for the municipality to anticipate on these different contexts.

Vegetable gardens also tend to be multicultural settings with particular dynamics and challenges. When conflicts occur, the respondent and her colleague generally tried to solve

them through conversations. However, she observes and considers it unfortunate that the everyday reality in these places sometimes feels like ‘the right of the strongest’, characterized by intense emotions and therefore difficult to handle.

This respondent is therefore hesitant about the conclusion of these kinds of projects. She considers project Nijenveld as a huge success where nice things have been realized but, at the same time, argues that it has created quite a stir. Regarding project Huize de Geer, she tells that it was really tried to make it a success. Though, after all, this project didn’t work out well and will be/has been cancelled. She even argues that it may be better not to do these kinds of projects again or, more specifically, this concept of projects with supervisors, since it is really necessary to invest in the supervisors. On the positive side, she tells that being involved in these neighbourhood vegetable gardens and to see the passion and labour of these residents is very impressive and gives a lot of positive energy (supervisor of two NGP projects, pers. comm. 22 May 2015).

5.9.5 Realized self-management

5.9.5.1 Tangible outcomes

Insofar as it was an aim of the municipality to involve (new) residents in urban green and to keep them involved in the future as well, there are different views on whether this has been accomplished. The amount of self-management examples might be a first indicator that shows people’s involvement with the public space. At one particular moment during the NGP programme, about one third of the NGP projects had resulted in self-management (see Municipality of Utrecht 2015¹). The municipal project leader argues that the many examples of self-management in the NGPs demonstrate a strong commitment and sense of responsibility of residents for their neighbourhood (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015). Whereas self-management implies that residents themselves take care of the green, the municipality had a supporting function, for example by providing materials. There were also possibilities that residents got an explanation from the municipality about self-management, for instance from an ecological gardener (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015).

In general, residents seem to agree with the municipality’s idea that residents should take some responsibility for the maintenance of the green that they helped design. One respondent notes that, in order to make self-management (in general) successful, residents need funding, plants, equipment and knowledge. She also considers the exchange of knowledge important. For this aim, there are some knowledge days in Utrecht every now and then. People are also often visiting and learning from each other about green self-management (resident 8, pers. comm. 5 June 2015). Another way in which residents are stimulating self-management of urban green themselves, occurs in the form of the annual *GroenmoetjeDoen-dag*, which is a promotion day for green self-management with all kinds of events. This event, organized by and for self-managers, has been there since 2008 and, thus, originates from outside the NGPs. It has expanded its scope and is now a citywide event (resident 8, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

Respondents argue that the NGP programme has also stimulated residents to establish a foundation, particularly for some larger projects, or triggered them to join a management group of a park (NGP project leader, pers. comm. 13 May 2015; Official at neighbourhood office Overvecht, pers. comm. 16 June 2015). One example of such a foundation that was established at an NGP location is for playground De Boog. This foundation was aimed at the coordination of self-management, which takes place in the weekends by volunteers. Every now and then, there is a kiosk and an activity once every month (resident 7, pers. comm. 17 June 2015).

Several residents observe that the NGPs have resulted in a cleaner street, firstly because less people leave waste on the street and secondly because the residents involved in NGP are triggered to clean up the waste on the project locations (resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015; resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015). Although self-management has been achieved at various locations, some initiating residents note that the active involvement of people in doing maintenance proves difficult (resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015; resident 7, pers. comm. 17 June 2015). One resident observes that, when the maintenance activity is accompanied by a drink, people are more willing to come (resident 1, pers. comm. 30 June 2015). This points to the idea that self-management and social cohesion are likely to go hand in hand. One respondent, though, argues that the unpredictable commitment of residents to self-management might threaten the continuity of green management (resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

5.9.5.2 Reflections on achieved self-management

It is notable that residents from several NGP projects argue that they were supposed to do (some) self-management, but that nothing has been formally arranged about this (i.e. in the form of contracts). Though, these same residents generally argue that they started doing self-management anyway and that they don't mind doing it. One resident considers the informality in making appointments with the municipality as a good way of doing things since, otherwise, people might resist (resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015).

One resident who was involved in the NGP project regarding playground De Boog experienced a bit of trouble regarding the issue of self-management. She tells that an arrangement was made about the tasks of the residents regarding self-management. Though, the municipality suddenly wanted the residents to also open and close the playground location during the week and to place the garbage bins outside. This resident considers these changing demands as difficult as the agreements about *social* management and *green* management are mixed in a confusing way (resident 7, pers. comm. 17 June 2015).

Another confusing reality regarding self-management occurred in one project where the residents had agreed that they would do the hoeing and were therefore quite surprised to see that also the municipality started hoeing the place. Another resident argues that self-management can become a mess when enthusiastic people just start doing things which are the task of the official managers. She also tells that the municipality accidentally mowed a strip of butterfly attracting plants on the project location, since this was the municipality's task (resident 7, pers. comm. 17 June 2015). These examples seem to suggest that the municipality deals rather carelessly with the issue of self-management of the NGP projects, even though, at the beginning, it was presented as an important aspect of the NGPs.

5.9.6 Attracting 'new' people

As the NGPs can be regarded as a one-off 'injection' to give the participation in urban green a boost, the question remains to what extent residents have really developed a relationship with the project location and started using and managing the newly created green. This more 'durable' effect of the NGPs on the urban green, is linked to the question to what extent actions like the ones above are done by 'new' residents or by those who were already engaged in urban green before. One resident thinks that the NGPs have succeeded in getting more people involved in shaping the public space. On the interviewer's question whether this respondent knew something about the municipality's motivations to start the NGPs, he said: *'Yes, I think that this also has to do with the attempt to increase the involvement of citizens in the design and policy regarding public space. I do have noticed that, although it was often also possible at other moments*

to realize smaller projects by means of the Liveability Budget or something like that, pushing the idea of the NGPs has nevertheless encouraged many people to think: "hey, now I should really start thinking about what could be done in our neighbourhood". In that sense, I therefore think that it has worked.' (member of neighbourhood council Binnenstad, pers. comm. 19 June 2015).

The idea that the NGPs have motivated people to stay involved in urban green in the future, is shared by more respondents. According to one respondent, it is known that new people have got involved during the NGPs, although it is not known how many (consultant, pers. comm. 2 June 2015). One resident confirms this view when he says that his positive experience with the NGP stimulated him to subscribe for resident workshops regarding the design of a park. He explains that, because he experienced that the municipality is willing to do nice things for residents, he is prepared to make a contribution (resident 5, pers. comm. 5 June 2015). Another resident, for whom the NGP was her first voluntary contribution, also decided to continue her involvement, by joining a new foundation that has been established with the aim to organize the self-management of playground De Boog.

Notwithstanding the positive examples mentioned above, the opinions of respondents on the stimulating and durable effect of the NGPs differ. Two municipality officials are sceptical about the ability of the NGPs in triggering people to become and remain involved in urban green on the longer term (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015; Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015). It is believed that particularly those people, who were already interested in green, got involved in the NGPs and that most people were merely interested in a specific piece of green (Urban Design official, pers. comm. 12 June 2015; Urban Works official, pers. comm. 11 June 2015).

6. Discussion

This study tried to understand the Neighbourhood Green Plans by means of applying the Policy Arrangement Approach. It was tried to construct a contextual account of the NGPs and the dynamics within the arrangement from the perspective of both *organization* (i.e. actors, rules and resources) and *substance* (i.e. discourse) of this participatory programme.

It was also examined to what extent and how neoliberal governmentality has been at work in the NGPs. In addition to this, it was examined how such a neoliberal rationality relates to bottom-up ideas and initiatives by residents. In order to be better able to apply governmentality theory, additional aspects were covered in the research framework, such as actor's aims and ideas, the political space for expressing and accomplishing these, and the organizational and discursive power (based on the PAA dimensions) employed within the arrangement to reach particular ends.

The first research question, which is about the four dimensions of the PAA, will be dealt with in section 6.1. The second research question addresses the interactions and interrelations between different actors within the NGPs, and also tries to examine how, if at all, bottom-up green initiatives (taking place *outside* the NGP programme) interrelate with the NGPs. It should be noted that in research question 1.5, these 'external' bottom-up initiatives would be addressed as input for the research questions 2 and 3. However, during the data collection it turned out that, although the NGP programme did have a relation with some other green initiatives, (intensive) interactions occurred only incidentally. Moreover, it was difficult to find sufficient data about these external initiatives among respondents involved in the NGPs. The little data that was obtained about these initiatives (see research question 1.5) is therefore included in section 6.2 which will elaborate on research question 2. Section 6.3 will address the third research question by discussing the obtained results from the point of view of neoliberal governmentality theory and a bottom-up approach. Since only little data was obtained about green initiatives *outside* the NGPs and a large amount of data about the NGP ideas or projects *within* the NGPs, the 'bottom-up approach' (as part of research question 3) will mainly comprise of those things happening *within* the confines of the NGP programme.

6.1 The policy arrangement of the NGPs

In the results chapter, the four PAA dimensions were used as analytical perspectives to look at the data and as a tool for structuring the obtained data. As may be expected, based on the theoretical premises of the PAA, the four dimensions were found to be very much interrelated in the NGP programme. However, the results chapter also had to cover additional themes for the purpose of the governmentality analysis. For the sake of clarity, the discussion chapter will make a more strict distinction between the different research questions and, hence, between the PAA and governmentality theory. The different sub-sections of the discussion on the PAA (see below) often integrate several dimensions of the PAA in such a way that most justice is done to the empirical reality of the NGPs. In section 6.1, research question 1 will be answered: *What are the characteristics of the policy arrangement of the NGPs in Utrecht, how has the arrangement developed over time, and how has it been influenced by the particular local context?*

6.1.1 Motivations and discourse

6.1.1.2 Municipality

The two main actor groups in the NGPs were the municipality and residents. The municipality proved quite flexible in determining the position and influence of the neighbourhood offices,

neighbourhood councils and third parties in the participation stage of the NGPs. The municipality's rationales for this flexibility are not easy to understand. On the one hand, the municipality expressed the intention to organize the participation in each neighbourhood in a way that best suits the characteristics of that particular neighbourhood. On the other hand, it must be considered that the NGPs can be seen as an experiment, in the sense that it is the first time that such an extensive green participation project was organized in Utrecht. Seen from that light, the municipality seemed to be exploring how to organize the participation process, whereby it opportunistically used several options that presented themselves.

Despite the perceived hesitance of the municipality regarding the organization of the NGPs, the municipality generally proved quite firm in its claim that the *contents* of green ideas really had to come from residents, so without any interference from the municipality. In fact, the municipality's primary goal during the NGPs is to 'green' the city's neighbourhoods, with the explicit intention to let residents decide upon the design of this green. This idea can actually be seen as the 'dominant interpretative scheme' (see Arts and Van Tatenhove 2004, p. 343) and, hence, the dominant discourse that led the municipality's course of action throughout the NGPs. This discourse can be regarded as a combination of the two theoretical levels of discourse (i.e. the mode of governance respectively substance). It can be described as *substantive participation* and implies that residents can participate on the contents of initiatives, whereas the municipality remains in charge of the organizational aspects. The specific goal to green the neighbourhoods together with residents, is underpinned by the broader ambition to realize a sustainable public space for multiple usage.

Other motivations that were mentioned for initiating the NGPs are the enhancement of social value and living quality. However, these are no more than occasional ideas that are sometimes mentioned as (potential) benefits of the NGPs. One other discourse that was found to be important for the municipality is a *sense of responsibility* for public space among residents. As became clear in the previous chapter, this responsibility is mentioned in relation to the social value of the NGPs and as an important requisite for realizing a sustainable and multifunctional public space. The importance of this sense of responsibility is illustrated by the rule (from the assessment criteria) that residents have to find public support for their ideas and, in some cases, take their project in self-management. Also the enhancement of social cohesion and physical green are mentioned as 'softer' criteria used for assessing the submitted ideas. In principle, the framework conditions therefore enable the municipality to assess submitted ideas on the basis of aspects that it considers important.

6.1.1.3 Residents

Among the many motivations that residents have for initiating or joining an NGP project (for more details, see section 6.3.2), one main storyline that could be identified in many NGP projects, is the wish for green that is significant in terms of structure and ecology. Besides from residents who explicitly aim at the realization of ecological functions, there are also several residents who would have liked to see a connection between their own project and a larger green structure. A discourse that catches these related ideas may therefore be called 'structural green'.

In the policy arrangement of the NGPs, a clear relation between the two levels of discourse could be observed. When looking at the example of NGP Leidsche Rijn, it can be argued that the municipality's discourse about the preferred role division (i.e. no steering on contents) proved incompatible with the resident's substantive discourse about ecological structures.

The shared idea among a group of participants to create more structural green, also resulted in the emergence of a 'discourse coalition' in the example of Leidsche Rijn. This coalition consisted of the pre-existing nature platform and a wider group of residents. Members from the platform made a suggestion about including ecological aspects in the NGP and received support from other residents when the municipal representative turned against this suggestion. The platform, being a coalition of residents with similar interests and relevant expertise, has proven important for putting alternative ideas on the agenda on behalf of residents. Individual residents alone may lack the organizational capacity or insight regarding the question how to propose realistic ecological ideas that are convincing enough for the municipality to adjust its approach. In the case of Leidsche Rijn (as described above), the particular context is important, since especially residents from some newly constructed sub-neighbourhoods expressed the wish for more ecological green.

A sentiment among involved residents in general is that, in order to make green participatory projects like the NGPs work, besides participation and a budget, also a wider substantive ambition is necessary. Only then, citizens can be involved in a way that, in the end, is also meaningful at the larger urban scale. In a way, it can therefore be argued that several respondents call upon the municipality's 'discursive power' to create an overarching ambition that makes it possible to realize particular types and functions of green.

6.1.2 Actors and their resources

An essential resource of the municipality during the NGPs was its legal authority to create rules and, subsequently, demand compliance to these. Moreover, the municipality deployed its various departments, as well as other actors, in such a way that important resources became available that could be used for putting the NGPs into practice. Already at the design stage of the different NGPs, the required resources were fixed within the arrangement by the municipality. The starting budget came from the department of Environment & Mobility; the necessary expertises, experience and labour power (for green maintenance) came from several other departments. Seen from the resource perspective, it can be argued that the neighbourhood offices were deployed for their network, co-funding (i.e. the Liveability Budget) and knowledge about participation, communication and the particular context of their neighbourhood. Likewise, the neighbourhood councils can be perceived as an important actor group for their network and, arguably, also for the legitimacy they may have given to the political decisions concerning their neighbourhood.

After the initial stage of an NGP, the programme developed in the sense that more actors entered from the sideline, either on the invitation of the municipality, on the invitation of residents or on their own initiative. The contribution of these actors can generally be linked to the additional resources (such as co-funding, land or particular expertise) that they could provide to the arrangement. Key resources were therefore acquired from several actors, albeit with a central role for the municipality. However, also the personal skills, knowledge, efforts and perseverance of individual residents proved important for successfully realizing an NGP project.

In terms of funding, the municipality had quite some power over residents as, in principle, the municipality could choose how the starting budget would be allocated and for which projects co-finance was sought. It can therefore be argued that the municipality created a dependency relation in the NGPs, due to its role as 'budget generator' and, additionally, due to its authoritative knowledge about the feasibility of green plans. For these things, residents were mostly at the receiving end.

6.1.3 Rules of the game

The main rules within each NGP consisted of a predefined organizational structure and procedures, a timeframe and particular roles of actors per stage. The list with 'hard' and 'softer' assessment criteria, concerning the scope and feasibility of the green ideas, was particularly important. Parks and urban agriculture formed two special categories of green that were mostly excluded (in case of the former) or decided upon per situation (in case of the latter).

In practice, the municipality made ample use of its role as rule maker and its capacity to modify its own rules. Whereas, on paper, the NGP budget could only be obtained when ideas conformed to the set criteria, the municipality sometimes dealt with these criteria quite opportunistically, with the result that also 'deviating' ideas could be honoured. The emergence of certain actors on the stage also allowed the change of rules by the municipality (e.g. the rule regarding land ownership when housing associations joined). The municipality noted that, when making these decisions, the spatial context of a proposed idea was sometimes taken into account, and that flexibly dealing with rules should be possible as long as an appropriate balance is maintained.

When looking at the dynamics at the street level, it can also be observed that the municipality had an important role as mediator and *ad hoc* rule maker in a later stage. Since the municipality hadn't sufficiently anticipated on the potential resistance against green plans, decisions often had to be made about whether to favour the arguments of proponents or opponents and about the possibility of a suitable compromise. These decision criteria were often decided upon on a case by case basis, mostly informal and therefore not always clear-cut.

Coalitions of actors in the NGPs seem to be scarce, which may be due to the fact that there are only two main groups of actors: the municipality and residents. During the major part of the process, these two groups remained rather separate with only few moments of face-to-face contact. Potential situations in which coalitions might have emerged are the projects where the municipality had to intervene during the implementation stage and act as a mediator.

6.1.4 The four dimensions combined

When linking the above to the first research question, it can be said that the discourse of 'substantive participation' describes the adopted approach in the NGPs. More specifically, the municipality was in charge of the organizational aspects of the NGPs throughout the process (e.g. by making rules, involving important actors and providing budget), whereas the contents of the NGPs (i.e. the design of green) were supposed to come from residents.

However, in between the submitting and implementation of the green ideas, the municipality played an important role as decision maker. While some ideas were simply included in the NGP, others were adjusted, rejected (in case of infeasibility) or moved to other budgets or projects. Although the assessment criteria delineated the substance of the NGPs to some extent, they also provided the municipality with the possibility to – dependent on the context – honour specific 'deviating' ideas. Depending on the type of project, particular actors were sometimes involved that brought new resources with them.

An important development in the NGPs occurred during the transition from NGP policy to practice. During this implementation stage, the specific spatial and social context of projects suddenly proved very important for the question whether an approved project could actually be implemented, which was due to factors like soil contamination, technical issues or a lack of public support. These situations also meant that, again, the municipality had to take the role of decision maker. Those projects that were eventually implemented, mostly corresponded to

residents' initial ideas and motivations for joining the NGP. Depending on the project, the municipality sometimes expected participating residents to take some responsibility.

6.2 Interaction between residents and the municipality

In section 6.2, the second research question will be answered, which is as follows: *How do actors interrelate and interact within the policy arrangement of the NGPs and how, in turn, does the arrangement interrelate and interact with related bottom-up initiatives?*

6.2.1 Interactions within the NGPs

In several neighbourhoods, residents criticize the NGP process for a perceived lack of communication by the municipality. The communication process is considered intransparent because residents don't know how decisions about their green ideas are made. In addition, the interaction with municipal officials is perceived as laborious, in the sense that residents often get the feeling that the municipality is lacking time and motivation to keep the process going. It can be argued that the NGP framework maintains a distance between the municipality and residents, where direct contact with the municipality only occurs on a few moments during the process. In between, residents often have to wait for long times and are dependent on the municipality for funding and information on e.g. the feasibility and implementation of their project.

As one respondent points out, a result the process was that conflicts may be prevented, as residents are kept in the dark and don't know whether they should protest against decisions. Although the municipality argued that it is necessary to have a budget in order to *get* residents involved in a green project – as was learned with the pilot – residents' experiences make clear that more is needed in order to *keep* residents involved throughout the process. More specifically, whereas residents were probably drawn to the NGPs by the favourable terms (e.g. budget, influence on the design of green), the NGP process tends to give them the feeling that, from the moment of submitting ideas until the implementation, they are continuously kept ignorant.

By looking at some specific projects, it can be argued that, despite the perceived difficulties, (especially) the initiators of an NGP project tend to go on with their project as it is 'their project'. However, when the desire of the municipality is to motivate residents to stay involved with urban green in the future, a bad experience with – in this case – the rather bureaucratic character of participation does no good.

Although it is difficult to comprehend the precise factors that are responsible for the perceived communication deficit by the municipality, the several given examples might suggest that the extensive character of the NGPs – in an organizational sense – impedes the tailored and prompt handling of (relatively small) green projects. Although it is not known how much faster individual green initiatives outside the NGPs are realized, a difference in this would raise the question whether the NGPs are a good way for showing residents the goodwill of the municipality to honour and support green citizen initiatives.

At the same time, it was also observed that there are examples of NGP projects where the communication between residents and municipality was much closer, more personal and (therefore) evaluated much more positive by residents. An often heard observation is that the success of an NGP project proves to be dependent on the particular municipality official that is in charge of the project. Some officials were found to be more motivated and qualified than others. Also the change of municipal officials in some projects and the miscommunication between municipal departments have contributed to the time-consuming character of interactions.

6.2.2 Linking up with other initiatives

In the NGPs, the municipality was in charge of bundling different NGP projects or linking them with other running green projects, initiatives or budgets. Considerations for doing this, were the increased spatial effect and the need to be economical with the NGP budget. As a result of this interaction, the boundaries of the NGP programme were sometimes ‘stretched’ in order to link up with these external initiatives. The municipality also decided to exclude some locations with running participation processes. Residents, in turn, sometimes succeeded in getting their already existing initiative included in the NGP, with the aim to obtain additional finance. Despite these occasional interactions, the NGPs should be seen as a one-off project with only little interrelations with other green initiatives. A related sentiment among some residents is that the municipality should have been more active in connecting different projects or in communicating about a broader green ambition for the NGPs.

About neighbourhood Zuidwest, it was argued that the NGP projects didn’t get off the ground. The communication by the municipality was largely absent and – possibly as a result of this – residents had a wait-and-see attitude and hadn’t start organizing themselves. It was observed that – in contrast – green initiatives that were initiated by residents themselves (i.e. outside the NGPs), *did* get off the ground in Zuidwest very well. When this is true, it would support the earlier made proposition that the rather bureaucratic and laborious NGP process, quite contrary to what it intends, might discourage residents.

Linked to this is the view that, already before the NGPs, the municipality welcomed and assisted private green initiatives and that it will keep doing so after the NGPs. Because of this, several residents seem to question the added value of the chosen NGP approach for the urban green. They point to the importance of a more active communication by the municipality about a green ambition in which the NGPs should be embedded. The reflections of respondents on the NGP process demonstrate that citizen *participation* and close *collaboration* are different things. Despite the motto of the current coalition agreement (i.e. ‘We make Utrecht together’), realizing more structural green ideas might require a more active and collaborative attitude of the municipality.

6.3 Governmentality

The dynamics within the policy arrangement of the NGPs can also be analyzed from the perspective of neoliberal governmentality. As was mentioned earlier, in this study ‘political rationalities’ are perceived as ‘broad discourses of rule’ (O’Malley et al. 1997) or, in other words, discourses about the preferred relation between state, market and civil society actors (see Arts and Leroy eds 2006). The premise of neoliberal governmentality is that governing occurs through a ‘constructed freedom of individuals’ (see Foucault 2004 in Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010) and an essentially top-down ‘imposition and allocation of responsibilities’. As such, neoliberal governmentality implies governing in such a way that individuals seem to be ‘governing themselves’ (see Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010).

In section 6.3, the third research question will be addressed: *To what extent are state and non-state actors able to exercise discursive and organizational power for achieving their aims relating to the NGPs, when examined through the perspective of neoliberal governmentality and a bottom-up approach?* In section 6.3.1, the aims of the municipality will be elaborated on, as well as the way in which governing takes place in order to achieve these (i.e. research question 3.1 and 3.2). Section 6.3.2 will discuss residents’ aims and the space that the NGP policy offers to residents for determining their aims and ideas (i.e. research questions 3.1 and 3.3). Section 6.3.3 will discuss the ways in which discursive and organizational power are exerted by both state

and non-state actors (i.e. research question 3.4). Instead of merely looking at the power expressed during the implementation stage (see research question 3.4), the whole NGP process (i.e. from the design stage of the NGP until the management of the finalized projects) will be examined. This way, it is possible to look at forms of discursive and organizational power from a governmentality point of view throughout the NGP process. Section 6.3.4 will discuss the extent to which aims and ideas of different actors were achieved (i.e. research question 3.5). Based on the previous sections, section 6.3.5 will elaborate on the question to what extent governing within the policy arrangement of the NGPs can be regarded as neoliberal governmentality and/or a bottom-up approach (i.e. research question 3.6).

6.3.1 The perspective and aims of the municipality

6.3.1.1 Governmentality through substantive participation

Within the NGPs, the municipality tried to abandon its own ideas and policy goals regarding public space. The only aim of the municipality was to green the city's neighbourhoods based on the ideas of residents. However, at a broader level, the municipality also aims at the realization of a sustainable and multifunctional public space.

The dominant discourse that led the municipality's course of action throughout the NGPs is *substantive participation*. This discourse derives from the fact that the adopted approach to participation in the NGPs is based on the idea that residents have the freedom to come up with their own, green ideas. The term 'substantive participation' already implies that the *organization* of the NGPs was controlled by the municipality. The NGPs must also be regarded as a state-driven participation policy, since the NGPs were embedded within local policy and established solely by the municipality. The participatory component of the NGPs was therefore not so much a demand from society as a desire from the municipality.

There seem to be some underlying rationales for letting residents participate in the design, management and use of the neighbourhood green. As became clear earlier, another important discourse that was identified is the *own responsibility of residents* (e.g. through self-management), which is sometimes associated with the realization of a sustainable and multifunctional public space and to the social value of the NGPs. In this respect, it is important to point once more to the idea of GroenLinks that – despite higher costs compared to regular management – self-management should be promoted for its stimulating effect on social cohesion and the commitment of residents to their neighbourhood. The general idea within the municipality seems to be that, in order to enhance the sustainability and use of public green, residents must develop a relation with it and feel responsible for it, which is possible when they are allowed to influence it themselves (e.g. through designing or managing it). It is for example argued, that this sense of responsibility is particularly important in neighbourhoods with nuisance and vandalism in order to balance those people who might negatively threat a place. This illustrates that the municipality has clear reasons why it tries to actively involve residents in the greening of their neighbourhoods.

6.3.1.2 Governing technologies & subject positions

If the municipality does indeed have clear rationales for stimulating the participation of residents in urban green, this should become expressed in the ways (i.e. technologies) in which the municipality governs its target population (i.e. the subjects) through interactions as part of the NGPs.

Earlier, it became clear that the municipality notes that, without residents' commitment and action, it would never be possible to create such diverse green: '*Voluntary commitment of*

residents makes green more diverse than the municipality could ever achieve on its own. A sustainable and diverse green public space is only achieved when you work together with residents and when you listen to their ideas.' (Municipality of Utrecht 2015¹ – for the full quote, see the chapter on results).

The dominant view within the municipality about green initiatives in general, is that the municipality should adopt a rather passive, facilitating role, for example by providing framework conditions. In the NGPs, this view is expressed to the extent that residents are given the control (only) over the *design* of the green projects. The municipality's underlying ideas that were identified above suggest that the NGPs can be considered as a governing project for realizing physical green and for stimulating residents to become active in and feel responsible for this green. In this respect, one resident argued that the NGPs are a promotion programme for new green initiatives and are supposed to show that the municipality is a proponent of a 'demand oriented approach' in its relation to residents.

The municipality indeed took various efforts to actively involve residents in the NGPs. Although the municipality seems to support *spontaneous* green initiatives, it was also argued that, in some cases, it may be necessary for the municipality to be more active and provoke initiatives itself. It became also clear that the municipality has the idea that citizens can be stimulated to become active 'subjects', as long as they are addressed in a way that is appealing to them, also expressed through the 'neighbourhood focused working' approach.

In the NGPs, the municipality deployed several 'agencies' in order to enhance the participation of residents. Examples are the neighbourhood offices, neighbourhood councils and third parties (e.g. social brokers) who were active at the neighbourhood level. A concrete example is that the municipality hired a social broker to assist in an exclusive information meeting that was organized for Moroccan women. Also the different means of communication about the NGPs (e.g. through information meetings, press releases and leaflets) can be considered as part of a strategy to provoke initiative by residents.

In order to be eligible for the privileges of the NGP programme, residents were asked something in return. In the NGPs, it could be observed that the municipality actively tried to create a sense of commitment and responsibility among residents concerning green space. The *budget* that the municipality provided can be seen as a governing technology that works both 'responsibilizing' and 'autonomizing' (see Rose et al. 2009). It might give residents the feeling that they have a certain autonomy in deciding upon the neighbourhood green in the way you want. At the same time, the feeling that your project costs public money may have the effect that people feel a certain responsibility to make it a success. In the NGPs, this success sometimes also entailed an active attitude in the form of self-management of the realized green.

Relating to this responsibilization, it can be argued that the rules within the NGPs already make clear how the municipality would like residents to behave. The assessment framework, for selecting the submitted ideas, contains the elements of 'self-management', the 'collection of signatures' and 'finding public support'. The fact that residents were, at least in principal, expected to collect signatures from fellow residents and take some projects in self-management, can be seen as governing technologies. Moreover, in some cases, residents were given the task by the municipality to organize information meetings for discussing their plan with other residents. From the perspective of governmentality theory, these rules and routines are in fact a 'productive' form of power. More specifically, by these responsibilizing rules, 'autonomous' residents are tried to be turned into active and responsible subjects when they join the NGPs (see Foucault 2003e in McKee 2009).

Related to this, the so called 'self-management contracts' can be seen as a governing instrument for realizing an active attitude of residents. Nevertheless, the municipality argues that it is already anticipated that self-management may stop after a while. It is claimed that, when this occurs, an extra effort is made to give the management a boost. If this doesn't work, the most logical consequence for the municipality would be that the project location is converted into something that is easier to manage for the municipality. This account expresses the idea within governmentality theory that activities (self-management in this case), that were previously done by a specialized state agency, are now conducted by residents who also have to take responsibility for the possible failure of their task (see Donzelot 1984, 1996; Burchell 1993; both in Lemke 2001).

In principle, the NGPs contained the promise that residents are given the autonomy to design the green as they like. Nevertheless, the assessment framework also exerts power over residents in the sense that it can be regarded as the 'management of possibilities' by structuring the actions of people in particular ways (see Foucault 2003d, p. 138 in McKee 2009 p. 471). Although until now, a distinction was made between those who are 'governing' and those who are 'being governed', a premise of governmentality theory is that subjects of governing are not powerless and may come up with alternatives as a response to the imposed governing regime. However, before elaborating on the response of residents to the governing practices of the NGPs, it will first be argued that, also within the municipality, alternative views are present.

6.3.1.3 Alternative views within the municipality

It may be relevant to refer once more to the idea that governmentality analysis presupposes the state to be heterogeneous and, as such, may reveal the different rationalities and technologies that are present *within* state authorities (Dean 1999; Howarth 2013; both in Blanco et al. 2014).

All respondents seem to agree that citizen participation is something beneficial and that it positively contributes to public green. However, there appear to be different opinions about the extent to which the municipality should keep an active and more stimulating role in the substantive part of the NGPs.

In the NGPs, the dominant perspective (i.e. the 'consensus' in daily practice) was to adopt a hands-off approach towards the design of the green ideas, possibly for the reason that residents might be particularly inclined to join when they can design the green entirely themselves. In a way, the chosen hands-off approach in the NGPs can be perceived as a rather *passive form of governmentality*, since the municipality – at least in principle – doesn't actively steer on the way in which the green will look like in the end. It can still be regarded as *governmentality*, because (as illustrated earlier) the NGP programme contained conscious governing technologies that were underpinned by discourses about participation and responsibility, which, in the end, appear to be directed to certain aims. At the same time, it is important to note that there may also be unknown, alternative explanations for certain ways of governing.

An alternative sentiment that exists within the municipality, is that the municipality itself has the ultimate responsibility over the design of public space and should therefore allow itself to balance towards the common value or to be more active in steering on the contents of the NGPs. Related to this, it is argued by respondents that the NGPs fit within the trend to involve residents in decision making regarding public space, and that the municipality is still exploring how to organize participatory projects and how all of this relates to responsibility. The abandoning of the initial, more *intensive* participation process after the pilot stage for the NGP, may indicate the municipality's hesitance towards the preferred form of participation.

Several respondents – officials as well as residents – had preferred a more active and steering role of the municipality in the NGPs. For instance, one municipal official noted that she would have liked to see that the responsibility had informed and shared its own vision on the neighborhoods with residents, which might have enabled residents to think on a larger scale. She also pointed to the fact that in NGP Leidsche Rijn, residents came with this structural green themselves.

It can be argued that the latter approach would be a more *active form of governmentality*. It would mean that – besides from merely stimulating residents' responsibility for the green they designed entirely themselves – the municipality takes an extra step by also stimulating citizens to start thinking about the particular design of green in the way that the municipality wants.

6.3.2 Residents' aims & opportunities for determining these

As will be clear by now, the municipality had the intention to leave the design of the green projects to residents as much as possible. At the same time, the defined rules delineated the substantive space for the green ideas to a significant extent. Ideas about, for instance, playgrounds, parks and existing green structures were, in principle, not or only partly allowed.

Residents often had very specific and personal reasons why they initiate or join an NGP project, that don't seem to be mediated from above. Their *motivations* for becoming involved often seem to coincide with one or more specific *aims* that they want to achieve. The most heard aims are: a greener neighbourhood, social safety, a reduction of nuisance, a meeting or relaxing place, eatable green, social cohesion, (creative) playing opportunities for children, biodiversity and (ecological) green structures.

In practice, it became clear that residents sometimes didn't agree with these substantive limitations posed to them. One important element that provoked controversy in the NGPs was the exclusion of green structures from the scope of the NGPs. In NGP Leidsche Rijn, the support from an ecological resident platform made it possible that, eventually, the issue of ecological structures was put on the agenda of the NGP.

Despite the above critique, within the limits of the assessment criteria, residents seemed to have quite some space to come up with their own green ideas. However, it can sometimes be difficult to understand the full implications of the rules, for instance whether or not a particular location is part of the existing urban green structure. This ambiguity seems a logical reason why many submitted ideas had to be rejected due to non-compliance with one or more criteria. Obviously, the aims of these residents couldn't be realized at all, and the question remains to what extent the reasons for this were clear to them.

Whereas many of the submitted ideas were rejected based on the assessment criteria, the municipality also *honoured* several ideas that didn't comply with some of the assessment criteria. The particular context of a neighbourhood was mentioned as a factor for the municipality in deciding whether to be relatively flexible or strict for ideas. It was also mentioned that, as long as a 'proper balance' is maintained, it should be possible to honour some deviating ideas from time to time. However, it is imaginable that making decision based on these rather subjective criteria might be perceived as intransparent and arbitrary.

In addition, the municipality had the intention that all selected, feasible ideas should always be realized at least to some extent. In order to be able to realize as many feasible NGP ideas as possible, it was also tried to link some green ideas to other programmes, projects and budgets. Although in most cases, the NGP budget was found to be enough in order to realize the approved ideas (according to the municipality), the municipality sometimes decided to adjust ideas to make them realistic enough.

6.3.3 Organizational and discursive power

6.3.3.1 *The municipality*

While the municipality's intention was to let residents decide on the green design of the NGPs, this simultaneously meant the imposition of rules and restrictions that delineated the playing field. In a way, the pre-defined rules of the game can be seen as a form of 'organizational power' to keep exerting influence on the contents of the plans, as certain categories of green were, at least in principle, excluded from the game. This power is also expressed in the observation that the municipality sometimes seemed to abandon rules quite opportunistically. For instance, one project regarding a playing ground received a lot of budget while – by being a playground – it actually breached the rules of the NGP programme. Also a compiled project (i.e. consisting of multiple parts) in NGP Noordwest received a very large share of the budget while one important part of the project was formed by a park. The official rule for one side of the city (including Noordwest) was that parks fell outside the NGPs. While, on the one hand, abandoning rules to give space to residents seems a benign gesture, it also means that the municipality can exert more influence than it claimed.

In practice, it turned out that residents sometimes resisted the plans that were made to green their neighbourhood. Opponents of projects emerged in several cases, as a consequence of which the municipality had to act as a mediator on the spot to balance between the arguments of proponents and opponents. Several municipality officials made clear that, when resistance occurred, the municipality should be able to balance towards the supporting majority and try to compromise the opposing arguments as much as possible. In at least one project, the municipality only intervened by sending a 'neighbourhood message' to residents on which they could respond. However, the account of one opponent in this project illustrated that the decision making in this case can be perceived as occurring within a black box, where it remains unclear to what extent their opinion has been seriously taken into account. At the same time, several examples make clear that the municipality sometimes also rejected a green plan due to a lack of support.

The municipality also argued that, when there would have been a necessity to choose between ideas (in case of too many ideas in relation to the available budget), this would have been done in consultation with residents. From the governmentality point of view, such a physical intervention would show that residents are not 'allowed' to tackle the issue themselves.

Based on the above, it must be considered that while on the one hand, the municipality wants to promote bottom-up initiative and merely provide framework conditions, on the other hand, professional interventions are often needed in situations where residents cannot handle the situation themselves. Such interventions automatically imply a form of organizational power.

Hence, in principle, the municipality seems to leave the substantive part of the neighbourhood green to residents. However, the organizational power of the municipality might actually have enabled the municipality to exert quite some influence on the resident's ideas as well, even though this may not have been the initial intention.

6.3.3.2 *Bottom-up perspectives*

The accounts of several respondents make clear that there were many residents who were reluctant to join the NGPs, especially among certain ethnic or social-economic groups. Another official said that, paradoxically, the least green neighbourhoods were often the ones that were also the least interested in the NGPs. One resident expressed his skepticism towards the model of 'self-efficacy' in his own multi-cultural neighbourhood, since, in his opinion, in some cultures,

people have a radically different view towards green space. In terms of governmentality, it can therefore be argued that there are different opinions about the extent to which residents can be 'turned into' active and responsible subjects in the field of urban green.

In some projects in which there were opponents of the greening plans, the municipality's decisions were fought against by these residents in a bottom-up way. This happened for example when residents started to collect signatures against a project and when a single resident won a lawsuit against a project. These actions can be seen as strategies in which residents express a certain form of organizational power – in the above case through finding public support respectively juridical support.

As was shown above, residents also had the power to contest and change dominant discourse, for example in NGP Leidsche Rijn, were residents, in conjunction with a resident platform, managed to convince the municipality that residents didn't mind that the idea for ecological green was addressed in a more central way (i.e. during a resident meeting) instead of bottom-up by individual residents. This platform functioned as a kind of mediator between residents and the municipality on the issue of ecology and, as such, made it possible that more structural forms of green were addressed and, at least to some extent, were included within the NGP document.

Most residents that were approached for this study were found to be willing to do some self-management for their project or become active in another way. It was argued that, as a result of the NGPs, some people initiated foundations, joined a management group of a park, subscribed for new participation processes concerning urban green or looked for support from local entrepreneurs. Earlier it became clear that, at one moment in time, around one third of the NGP projects had been taken in self-management. In that sense, it can be argued that many residents didn't resist the 'role' (i.e. as active, responsible subject) that was more or less expected from them. However, in at least one case (regarding playground De Boog), an involved resident made clear that she was hesitant towards the municipality's plan that the *entire* playground should be taken in self-management (i.e. *social* aspects) instead of only the physical *green*. However, the residents at this location received help from a social broker through a course called 'the peaceful neighbourhood' that provided residents with knowledge about handling troubled youth in the playground. This example is clearly a form of governmentality since the municipality stimulates the 'education' of residents through social brokers, with the result that residents are adopting governing tasks which the municipality otherwise should have done itself.

Residents also point to the drawbacks of the municipality's intention to stimulate an active and responsible attitude among citizens. One resident notes that, although he understands that he was given the task to organize a resident meeting himself, he thinks that a participation project could run dead when such things would be asked from residents who are less familiar with organizing things. He also argues that self-management might threaten the continuity of public green management. Related to this, it is striking to see that the self-management contracts often remain unused. In some cases this works out well, as residents often decided to start doing self-management anyway without formal agreements. However, it was also observed that self-management can easily become a mess when no clear agreements are made between the municipality and residents.

6.3.4 Achievement of aims

As became clear in the results chapter, many different types of green were realized in the NGPs, from small green plots with flowers or shrubs all the way to allotment gardens and parks. Most

involved residents were satisfied with the results in terms of physical green. However, it was argued that in some projects, the outputs differed to a greater or lesser extent from the residents' initial ideas. Despite from these green outputs, the NGPs have also resulted in playing opportunities, eatable green, nuisance reduction, a meeting/relaxing place and a cleaner public space. Respondents agree that the NGPs have enhanced social cohesion in the neighbourhoods. As became clear earlier, the realization of green structures and ecological functions didn't get the attention that several residents would have liked.

Municipality officials are very satisfied with the realized green in the neighbourhoods, although it is noted that the municipality would have liked to see more realized green in particular neighbourhoods. Municipality officials note that the 'soft' character of green makes the evaluation of the outcomes of the NGPs very difficult. Regarding the issue of self-management, it is observed that a large proportion of the projects has been taken in self-management by residents, which, according to the municipal project leader, illustrates a great commitment and sense of responsibility. This commitment is also expressed by the observation that the NGPs have motivated residents to establish foundations, join management groups or become involved in upcoming participation projects. There are divergent views about the extent to which the NGP programme has stimulated new people to remain involved in urban green after the NGPs.

6.3.5 Neo-liberal governmentality and a bottom-up approach

As became clear in previous sections, the governing through the NGP programme was characterized by the intention of the municipality to provide residents with a certain degree of autonomy over the design of public green. Also the enhancement of responsibility among residents was found to be an important underlying principle of governing strategies within the NGPs. It became also clear that the municipality had clear rationales for this that served its aim to green the neighbourhoods and, more in general, its ambition to realize a sustainable, green public space with a multiple use. When looking at the results in this way, it can therefore be argued that governing within the NGPs is characterized by a neoliberal governmentality.

Although the predefined rules of the game precluded the realization of certain categories of green, in practice, residents often submitted ideas that conflicted with these rules. Whether this occurred on purpose or because the rules were unknown or considered ambiguous is not clear. In some cases, it turned out that the municipality approved these deviating ideas while in other cases, these ideas were rejected. It can therefore be argued that residents could submit their own ideas for their project, but that the achievement of these entirely depended on the judgement of the municipality. Also in the implementation stage, certain projects suddenly had to be cancelled or adjusted. As these projects were embedded within the NGP programme, residents had to deal with this, and they had only little opportunities to contest these decisions.

It was also observed that the state-led and often bureaucratic character of the NGP programme implied that residents didn't know whether there was reason to be worried or not. The formal and lengthy procedures and the leading role of the municipality can therefore be regarded as a 'smoke screen' that may have mitigated bottom-up resistance. An additional factor is that most NGP projects were rather small with only a few residents involved, which makes it even more difficult to contest government decisions and procedures. The particular set-up of the NGPs therefore limited to emergence of a bottom-up approach. Outside the NGPs, a few spontaneous green initiatives could be observed that sometimes decided to strategically join the NGPs. In other cases, the municipality tried to link NGP to other running green projects and initiatives. However, the extent to which this intervening of the municipality influenced the

bottom-up character of these external initiatives (if bottom-up in the first place) could not be investigated.

In section 6.3.5, research question 3 has already partly been answered. Regarding the third research question, it can also be argued that the municipality had quite some means to exert organizational power over residents. Examples of this are the construction of rules (e.g. related to the scope of the NGPs and tasks of residents), the abandoning of these rules in particular situations, the allocation of budget and the deployment of social brokers. Moreover, since e.g. the issue of responsibility is expressed through the documented rules, a form of discursive power can also be observed. From the perspective of neoliberal governmentality, it can be argued that these governing mechanisms are 'technologies of power' (see Swyngedouw 2005). The same applies to the fact that the municipality chose to intervene during the implementation stage in order to mediate between the proponents and opponents.

Since the submitted plans of residents were subjected to a lot of criteria and procedures, which were mostly taking place out of sight of residents, it was difficult for residents to exert control on this. However, residents did find ways to influence the course of events in the NGPs. Opponents of projects were sometimes able to have a project cancelled, for example by finding support from other opponents or by juridical support. However, it is not known how often these kinds of struggle occurred. As became clear, residents also had the discursive power to challenge the approach and ideas of the municipality, which happened for example in Leidsche Rijn. From a governmentality point of view, these examples could be seen as governing in a bottom-up way. Eventually, the municipality succeeded in realizing self-management for many projects. The residents that were interviewed for this study generally didn't mind doing this. The active attitude of residents may be related to the observation that residents were mostly satisfied with the concrete outcomes of their projects.

6.4 Reflection on research framework and methodology

The chosen research framework for this study was rather ambitious in the sense that both the PAA and governmentality theory were applied. The idea was that an analysis based on the PAA would benefit the governmentality analysis. By capturing both organization and substance, the four analytical dimensions were able to provide a comprehensive account of the policy and practice of the NGPs.

Moreover, the inclusion of the PAA indeed proved very beneficial for the governmentality analysis. Governmentality theory is based on rather abstract notions about how the characteristics of contemporary forms of governing and the underlying rationales. However, one attribute of governmentality theory is its comprehensiveness when looking at how governing takes place. As such, the rather broad concept of 'governing technologies' is used to catch these diverse ways of governing. One premise of governmentality theory is that these technologies are embedded within discourses that typically relate to the principles of freedom and responsibility (see e.g. Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010) and, as such, that they are serving a neoliberal governmentality.

Despite the risk of oversimplification, it can be argued that, also within governmentality theory, the distinction between organization and substance can be observed. The discourse dimension of the PAA is able to capture the rationalities and discourses of governmentality theory, while the organizational dimensions (actors, rules and resources) can be used for identifying the prevailing governing technologies. Forms of organizational power identified in the NGPs such as allocating budgets, rule-making and employing specialized agencies to educate residents, can simultaneously be seen as governing technologies.

However, one crucial issue with these governing tools in governmentality theory is the issue of 'intentionality'. It may be difficult to be sure whether particular forms of governing are really an expression of neoliberal governmentality. In this respect, it is relevant to repeat that governmentality analysis is about '*the invention, contestation and operationalization of various rational programmes and techniques that try to conduct behaviours so that specific results can be obtained*' (Rose 1999, p. 20 in Cotoi 2011, p. 112). When perceived in this way, the NGPs can be seen as a 'rational programme' with certain 'techniques' (e.g. pre-defined rules on self-management and finding public support) that, by applying these techniques, tried to stimulate a responsible attitude of residents for realizing a sustainable and multifunctional green space. Although in this study it was tried to look for alternative explanations for particular ways of governing, this proved difficult. At least, it was tried to provide sufficient and accurate evidence for the arguments that were made.

For the governmentality analysis, additional elements were included in the research framework (i.e. on top of the PAA dimensions), such as actors' aims, the space for determining these and the achievement of aims. During the analysis, it became clear that the framework was maybe too extensive and that there appeared to be some overlap between different research questions. For instance, it became clear that, in the NGPs, it was very difficult to distinguish between actors' motivations, aims and discourses. In addition, these were mostly closely interlinked. The point is that motivations, aims and discourse were included in different research questions, with the result that there was a tendency for overlap during the analysis.

Moreover, while the participation policy of the NGPs would be the focus for the PAA analysis, an intention for the governmentality analysis was to also look at some bottom-up initiatives outside the NGPs that were closely related to the NGPs. The idea was to examine how the top-down initiated initiatives (as part of the NGPs) related to those initiatives that were initiated by residents themselves. This would have given the relation between the local government and residents an extra dimension as it could illustrate how residents come up with alternatives to state-driven participation policies and how, in turn, the local government deals with these alternatives. However, in this study it turned out that, on the one hand, the interactions between the NGPs and these bottom-up initiatives were scarce and, on the other hand, the timeframe for this study proved too short to focus more on these scarce examples of bottom-up initiatives.

The above doesn't mean that governmentality couldn't be analysed. To the contrary, the governing dynamics between the municipality and residents in individual projects turned out to be very interesting and complex. The way in which the NGP policy was put into practice was power-laden. Also the perspective of residents could be given a lot of attention, which makes me conclude that it would have been better to limit the research framework to the NGP policy and its translation in practice, without looking at initiatives beyond this policy arrangement.

However, since the relation between the NGP and private initiatives was mostly kept outside this study, the second research question lost some of its relevance. In retrospect, the interrelation and interaction between actors (see research question 2) could also have been included in the first research question about the PAA.

Regarding the methodology, one important consideration in this study was the delineation of the case that would be analysed through the PAA. The choice was made to analyse the NGP programme in its entirety instead of focusing on a single or maybe two neighbourhoods. The implication of broad scope was that information could be obtained from a great variety of respondents from different NGPs. It was therefore possible to catch the complex governance dynamics within the NGP programme including the success stories, failures and a great diversity

of opinions. Gradually, it became clear that there were quite large differences between the way in which different NGPs functioned in practice. Because of this, the broad scope of this study is beneficial as, in the case of a narrow focus, a lot of issues and aspects would have been excluded.

The chosen approach also had a downside. While doing the research and especially during the analysis, it became clear that, due to the very wide scope of this study, many of the encountered issues and examples could not be studied in-depth. Certain issues were only mentioned and explained by a single respondent. This way, quite some loose ends remained for which it was not possible to substantiate these by asking other involved people about it and by looking at the context of these specific cases. The results of this study are therefore influenced by the particular respondents that were selected. Obtaining the contact data from key respondents within the NGPs was not difficult, as respondents know each other through their network. It was therefore possible to interview a wide variety of respondents with a relatively important role in the NGPs (e.g. municipal officials, people from third parties and other local green experts). However, I was mostly dependent on municipal officials to receive the contact data from residents, since these people tend to fall outside this 'green network' in Utrecht. The residents that were prepared to take part in the study were not representative as they mostly turned out to be the initiators of an NGP project instead of people that were 'merely' asked to join a project. It is also striking that these respondents typically belong to a high social-economic category.

7. Conclusion

This study showed that public participation is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to put into practice in a straightforward way. Through a state-driven participation programme like the NGPs, a completely new political space is invented where the dynamics in practice often prove to be different than expected. When the intention is to promote public involvement in urban green by means of a centrally led participation programme, the design of such a programme is crucial for the further development and perceived success of the programme by participants. The NGPs showed that centrally planned participation almost automatically brings about the creation of all kinds of rules and conditions that delineate the participatory space for residents, not only in terms of organizational aspects but also in terms of the substantive scope.

As the rules of the game of the NGPs were solely defined by the municipality, these sometimes conflicted with the actual intention of the programme, namely to let residents decide upon the design of the neighbourhood green and, by doing so, to enhance their commitment to and responsibility for parts of the public space. When a green participation programme is supposed to have a durable effect on the involvement of residents in urban green, it is important to think about the implications of the centrally defined rules and conditions, in relation to the motives and expectations of residents. The point is that these implications may differ per context. Due to the great differences that generally exist between neighbourhoods, the requirements for successful participation may be dependent on the situation. In some neighbourhoods, the need for e.g. structural green or green playgrounds may be relatively high, while in others, vegetable gardens might be particularly desirable.

On the one hand, the municipality limited the scope of the NGP projects by setting all kinds of hard and softer rules, while on the other hand, the municipality also noticed that the exclusion of e.g. parks, vegetable gardens and playgrounds was sometimes conflicting with the aims of the NGP programme. It was therefore decided to abandon these rules in some cases. This definition and abandoning of rules meant that the municipality still had an important role as decision maker. The same was shown for the implementation stage in which new challenges showed up where the municipality had to intervene and act as a mediator in order to handle the situation. These decisions were sometimes likely to be perceived as intransparent by residents, since *ad hoc* rules sometimes had to be decided upon on a case by case basis.

This was even amplified by the logistically challenging character of the NGP programme, which involves the risk that bureaucracy prevails over face-to-face contact. Especially in a city like Utrecht, where spontaneous green initiatives were already abundant for some time before the NGPs, the added value of a participation programme must be carefully considered. Green initiatives taking place outside a participation programme might just start and proceed on their own, with their own goals and without the necessity to wait for decisions by the municipality.

The large organizational role of the municipality, which was decided upon in the beginning, resulted in a sometimes time-consuming interaction between the municipality and residents, in which the residents were often kept ignorant and became unmotivated. A more intensive collaboration between municipality and residents throughout the process would probably have led to more positive reactions, as could be observed in at least one project covered in this study.

As became clear, an important sentiment among respondents was that the municipality should communicate an overarching green ambition when initiating a green programme like the NGPs. Although, in general, participating residents were willing to take responsibility for actively contributing to their own green project, this doesn't mean that the municipality should abandon its own responsibility of assuring the common interest and the realization of

structural, street transcending types of green. As became clear, this view seems to be present among both residents and municipal officials. It is therefore likely that, when residents had been allowed to participate in an earlier stage of decision making, another conclusion would have been reached about the preferred way to green the neighbourhoods with the participation of residents. On the other hand, it is also important to acknowledge that there are probably also many residents who are mainly aiming at the realization of a particular piece of green in their own street. As expected benefits like living quality and social value are also related to this small-scale green, it is important that the municipality tries to find a balance between these different interests of residents.

Because of the composite character of the NGPs and the different approach that was adopted in some neighbourhoods, the programme provides a very interesting opportunity to look at the successes, the points of improvement and the underlying factors for these. It is therefore striking that the municipality doesn't really see the merit of doing evaluations for the NGPs as well as for some other (green) projects. When these evaluations would be done among involved residents and other actors, it might become clear what these people consider as the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. During the current NGPs, residents were only called upon in a later stage of the project, with the result that residents were sometimes wondering about the wider relevance of the small NGP projects. When these residents would be involved in an earlier stage, the municipality and residents could make clear what they consider to be important in urban green.

It became also clear that the residents involved in the NGPs were not representative of the population. Conducting surveys about green preferences of people from different cultures might be very relevant to find out how people can be motivated to become involved in a programme like the NGPs and under what conditions they are prepared to do so. The existing governance network at the neighbourhood level, e.g. the neighbourhood councils, neighbourhood offices or welfare organizations could fulfil an important role in this.

Due to the perceived lack of communication by the municipality and the time-consuming procedures, the municipality ought to make a clear city-wide outline of the approach to be taken, including an ambition per neighbourhood. Officials should know what they are expected to do regarding the interaction with residents and in particular situations. This way, a uniform approach and acceptable degree of citizen involvement and communication throughout the process can be obtained.

One important recommendation for future research is examining the effects of green participation programmes on the longer term. It would be relevant to examine to what extent citizens remain involved in urban green after a participation programme and what the decisive factors are. A second relevant research opportunity would be an analysis of the differences between initiatives that are embedded within a state-led participation programme and similar initiatives that emerge and proceed on their own. By comparing these and taking account of the contextual factors, the strengths and weaknesses of each form might become apparent. The knowledge that would be gained with this could subsequently be used for policy making on public participation concerning the (green) public space.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Interview schedule for residents

(Questions are in Dutch)

Achtergrond respondent & deelname aan groene initiatieven

- Zou u kort iets kunnen vertellen over uw persoonlijke achtergrond (bijv. baan/opleiding/interesses)?
- Bij welke groene burgerinitiatieven bent u in Utrecht betrokken geweest, en wat was uw rol daarin?
- Wat zijn uw voornaamste drijfveren om hieraan deel te nemen?
- Wat zijn uw specifieke persoonlijke ambities/doelen die u met deze groene initiatieven wilt realiseren?

Wijkgroenplan: deelname/doelstellingen/ideeën

- Hoe bent u betrokken bij uw wijkgroenplan (Overvecht)?
- Wat zijn uw motivaties om aan het wijkgroenplan deel te nemen?
- Wat waren uw persoonlijke ideeën en doelstellingen die u binnen het wijkgroenplan wilde realiseren?
- Wat vindt u de belangrijkste functies van groenvoorziening? Welk type groenvoorziening is volgens u belangrijk voor deze functies? (voor functies: bijv. recreatie/esthetiek/welzijn/voedselproductie/ecologie/klimaatadaptatie – voor types: bijv. stadsparken/bomen/groenstroken/hagen/grasland).
- Biedt het wijkgroenplan genoeg vrijheid en mogelijkheden voor burgers om hun wensen en doelstellingen te realiseren? Wat kan er beter?
- Wat zou voor u de ideale rol van de lokale overheid zijn in groene burgerinitiatieven?
- In hoeverre ziet u dit 'ideaalbeeld' terug in het wijkgroenplan?
- Heeft het wijkgroenplan u gestimuleerd om andere groene initiatieven op te zetten/hieraan deel te nemen? In hoeverre komt dit bijv. doordat het wijkgroenplan niet in al uw 'groene wensen' kon voorzien?
- Wat doet de gemeente met afwijkende ideeën en ambities binnen het wijkgroenplan?
- Welke ideeën, principes en waarden wil de gemeente volgens u overbrengen op burgers d.m.v. het wijkgroenplan? Wat vindt u hier zelf van?
- Hoe was de communicatie tussen bewoners en gemeente/andere instanties?

Zelfbeheer

- Vindt u dat burgers die met een idee komen voor het wijkgroenplan ook verantwoordelijk zijn voor het zelfbeheer van het stukje groen?
- Onder welke voorwaarden bent u bereid om een stuk stedelijk groen in zelfbeheer te nemen?
- Wat hebben buurtbewoners er voor nodig, en moet er volgens u iets tegenover staan?
- Komt dit overeen met hoe het zelfbeheer in het wijkgroenplan is geregeld?
- Weet u wat de gemeente doet indien burgers zich niet aan de regels voor het wijkgroenplan houden of als ze hun eigen verantwoordelijkheid niet nemen?

Initiatieven versus het wijkgroenplan

- Kent u groene burgerinitiatieven (eigen deelname?) die in aanraking zijn gekomen met een wijkgroenplan?

- Hoe gaat de gemeente met deze initiatieven om, die zich dus buiten het wijkgroenplan afspelen?
 - Worden deze bijv. 'overgenomen' door het wijkgroenplan?
 - Is het bijv. zo dat de gemeente haar werkwijze t.a.v. het wijkgroenplan aanpast om deze groene initiatieven te ondersteunen?
- Denkt u dat het wijkgroenplan de machtsverhoudingen tussen de gemeente en burgers beïnvloedt?

Initiatieven vs. gemeente (*Alleen vragen in geval van deelname aan andere initiatieven*)

- Heeft u het idee dat de gemeente groene burgerinitiatieven, buiten het wijkgroenplan om, stimuleert?
- In hoeverre worden groene burgerinitiatieven in Utrecht daadwerkelijk geïnitieerd en geleid door burgers?
- Welke strategieën, acties en ideeën gebruiken deze groene burgerinitiatieven om maatschappelijke of overheidssteun te verkrijgen en om hun wensen te realiseren?

Effecten

- Wat zijn voor u belangrijke tastbare en waarneembare uitkomsten van het wijkgroenplan?
- Wat zijn voor u belangrijke effecten van het wijkgroenplan?
- Zijn deze effecten uw persoonlijke indruk of is er hiernaar onderzoek gedaan?
- Zijn er effecten geweest die u niet had verwacht, positief dan wel negatief?
- In hoeverre ziet u het wijkgroenplan als een succes wanneer u de effecten vergelijkt met uw eigen doelstellingen en wensen? Was het volgens u voor alle betrokkenen een even groot succes?
- Is er binnen het wijkgroenplan ook sprake geweest van mislukkingen of zaken die niet zo soepel verliepen?

Actoren

- Welke actoren waren er betrokken bij het wijkgroenplan, en wat was hun relatie?
- Zijn er actoren geweest die binnen het wijkgroenplan coalities zijn aangegaan met anderen? Zo ja: welke specifieke ideeën hebben deze actoren samengebracht?
- Kunt u personen, groepen of organisaties bedenken die niet vertegenwoordigd zijn in het wijkgroenplan maar dat volgens u wel hadden moeten zijn?

Hulpmiddelen

- Was er voor het wijkgroenplan behalve de standaard €420.000 euro nog ander geld beschikbaar?
- Beschikten bewoners over genoeg niet-financiële middelen (bijv. ecologische of onderhoudskennis/inzicht in procedures) om met goede, haalbare groene ideeën te komen?
- Hadden bewoners voldoende middelen tot hun beschikking voor de uitvoering van de ideeën (bijv. materiaal/begeleiding/capaciteit)?
- Hoe zijn de verschillende actoren van belang om te voorzien in deze middelen?
- In hoeverre is er sprake van afhankelijkheid tussen bepaalde actoren op basis van de specifieke hulpmiddelen waarover zijzelf beschikken maar anderen niet?
- Heeft deze afhankelijkheid invloed op de machtsverhoudingen en mogelijkheden van actoren binnen het wijkgroenplan (bijv. in onderhandelingen of bij meningsverschillen)?

- Zijn er tijdens de implementatie van het wijkgroenplan discussies/conflicten opgetreden m.b.t. de hoeveelheid, verdeling of gebruik van hulpmiddelen?

Regels

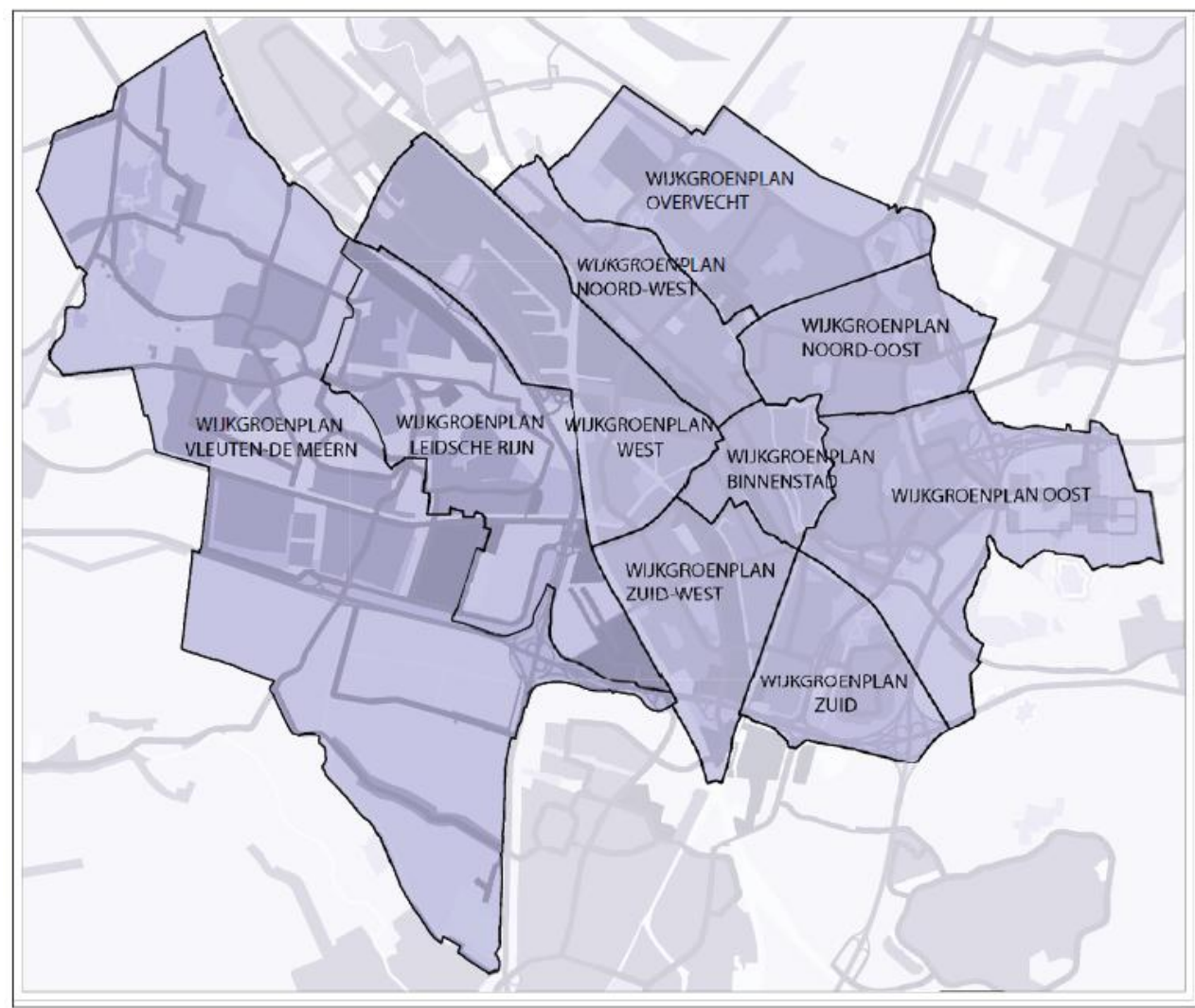
- Met welke formele regels van het wijkgroenplan kreeg u te maken? Wie heeft deze regels vastgesteld? Wat vindt u er van?
- Ervaart u binnen het wijkgroenplan verschillen tussen betrokken partijen in de manier waarop zij denken over informele regels/routines/omgangsvormen en hiermee omgaan?
- Zijn er binnen het wijkgroenplan tijdens de implementatie regels/routines veranderd?
- Zijn er tijdens de implementatie discussies/conflicten geweest m.b.t. regels/routines? (bijv. na het niet houden van afspraken en bij de aanpassing of interpretatie van regels). Hoe is met deze conflicten omgegaan?

Context

- Hoe zijn specifieke lokale factoren en ontwikkelingen in Utrecht van invloed geweest op de totstandkoming en ontwikkeling van het wijkgroenplan? (Denk hierbij bijv. aan sociaal-economische, politieke, culturele of milieufactoren).

Annex 2: Map of the study area

Bijlage 3 Kaart uitvoering Wijkgroenplannen 2011-2017



The ten neighbourhoods of Utrecht, each of which has an own NGP (Source: Municipality of Utrecht 2015¹).