

Who is planning our landscape?



An exploration of citizen's power to improve
their physical living environment

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Abstract

The increased attention on bottom-up projects like civic initiatives could be seen as a milestone in the process of increased influence of citizens on spatial projects. It is assumed that citizens have the lead in projects that are improving the physical living environment. However, since citizens have to be supported by professionals, these professionals have the possibility to influence the civic initiative. As a consequence, this research is exploring the power of citizens to realize their civic initiative in accordance with their visions and plans. Furthermore, also the power of governmental and non- governmental organizations to influence these projects is analysed. For this purpose, two Dutch civic initiatives have been investigated. On the basis of the study findings, organizations are able to influence civic initiatives because of their ownership of space, dependencies and governmental regulations. However, this research shows that citizens have the power to realize their civic initiative because of the current governmental discourse, their own knowledge and their strategies.

Keywords: Civic initiatives, power, active citizenship, resource- dependency perspective, spatial planning, the Netherlands

Summary

Since several years, more attention is given to bottom- up projects like civic initiative. In such projects, citizens are taking the lead to solve spatial issues as the improvement of the quality of the physical living environment. The starting point of this research was the assumption that citizens are in need of support by organizations to realize their civic initiatives. As a consequence of this support, professionals could get the change to influence the civic initiatives. This causes that civic initiatives are not realized in accordance with the plans and visions of citizens, but due to the interest of governmental and non- governmental organizations. The goal of this research was to explore the power of citizen groups to realize their civic initiative in accordance with their plans and visions. In relation with the power of citizens, also the power of organizations to influence the civic initiative on the basis of their interest is investigated.

For that purpose, two Dutch civic initiatives have been chosen. In both projects, citizens did take the lead to improve their physical living environment; in more detail these groups were developing public space. These cases were analysed through a theoretical lens.

The theoretical lens was assuming that power is a capacity of organisations, called actors. This capacity is grounded on the exchange of resources and causing dependencies. It was taken for granted that the support of citizen groups by organizations is resulting in a dependency relationship of citizen groups on these organizations.

However, by analysing both cases it become obvious that the theoretical framework could only partly explain the power of citizens and organizations. Therefore, both cases have also been analysed beyond the theoretical framework which resulted in a broader exploration of citizen's power to realize their civic initiative.

On the basis of this research, it can be stated that the power of citizens to realize their project depends on the strategies to contact organizations, the personal communication with representatives of organizations, the owned and received resources and the current governmental discourse. With the latter is meant that the government is in general the organization that has the power to decide about the influence and power of citizens. The government is able to regulate the influence of citizens through regulations, laws and the support with necessary resources. On the basis of the current context, it can be said that the Dutch government is supporting active citizenship which causes a powerful position of citizens in their projects. Moreover, citizen groups that receive and own relevant resources and are able to convince important organizations are able to realize their civic initiative in accordance with their plans and visions.

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Preface

“You cry two times: when you arrive and when you have to leave” (Translated statement of the film *“A bienvenue chez les Ch’tis”*). This statement of the French film *“A bienvenue chez les Ch’tis”* has been true for many situations of my study time, also for the time of my MSc thesis.

In the beginning, I worried about this challenge of doing research on my own for a period of six months. Fortunately, I have been supported by my supervisors in relation of my scientific work and by my family and friends in terms of emotions and motivation. Because of this great support, my worries were decreasing and I was able to conduct my research. During this research, I got to know many different people who had in common that they were highly motivated to change their living environment through their voluntary work. Furthermore, I also got the chance to meet enthusiastic professionals who are in love with their profession and the current and future challenges in relation to active citizenship. Without their openness to share their motives, stories and thoughts this research could not be successfully realized. Thank you all!

I started this research because of my personal curiosity on civic initiatives. I have to admit that I doubted about the real power of citizens. These doubts were based on my assumption that governmental and non- governmental organizations are influencing the civic initiatives in so far, that the possibility of citizens to realize their project is minimal. But, during my research I realized that citizens are seriously developing their physical living environment, they are able to realize their visions! Furthermore, it was also great to see that professionals of governmental organizations are seeking for finding the best way of dealing with civic initiatives, all with the same goal, namely that there will be an equal collaboration of citizens and professionals in the future. Even after six month of investigating active citizenship, I am still interested in these developments and I am curious to discover in which direction we as citizens and professionals are moving on.

In relation to the above mentioned statement, I also have to admit that I am a little bit sad that this research is finished now. It was a great time which teaches me a lot!

Now, I hope that the readers of my research are enjoying this investigation of citizen’s power to improve the quality of their physical living environment!

Sarah Nietiedt

March 2015

Who is planning our landscape?

An exploration of citizen's power to improve their physical living environment

1. Introduction

2015 will be the “Jaar van de Ruimte” (year of the space) in the Netherlands. This symbolic year was opened by the minister of Infrastructure and Environment with a speech in which she focussed on challenges in the context of spatial planning and development. One aspect she addressed was the development of space and the solving of spatial problems from bottom-up. By that, she meant that citizens and municipalities should get active to find creative solutions for spatial issues (Platform 31, 2015). One example of a spatial issue is the quality of the physical living environment, like the quality of public spaces. Citizens are invited to start up projects that are improving the quality of their public spaces and to redevelop these places on the basis of their own visions and plans. Such projects in which citizens taking the lead for the development of their living environment are called civic initiatives (Bakker, Denters, Oude Vrielink, & Klok, 2012; van Dam, Salverda, & During, 2014).

The minister mentioned in her speech also the complexity of spatial development and the need of professional knowledge to realize such projects (Platform 31, 2015). Consequently, citizens cannot improve their physical living environment on their own. They have to work together with professionals who are representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations and do have relevant knowledge and access to other needed resources like money or materials (Bakker et al., 2012; Denters, Tonkens, Verhoeven, & Bakker, 2013). By that, citizen groups are supported by professionals of governmental and non- governmental organizations. This support is not without consequences, but could result in adjustments of the project through these professionals (Kickert, Klijn, & Koppenjan, 1997; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Taylor, 2000). By that, it could be that civic initiatives are not realized on the basis of plans and vision of citizens, but on the interest of governmental and non- governmental organizations. Unfortunately, it is unknown in which extent organizations are supporting citizen groups for the realization of a civic initiative and how much influence organizations have on civic initiative. As a consequence, it is also unknown how much power citizens have to realize their civic initiative in accordance with their visions and plans. Then the question is rising: Who is planning our landscape?

Therefore, the aim of this research is to give an answer to this question by focussing on citizen groups, which are improving the quality of their physical living environment. The power of citizens is investigated on the basis of two Dutch case studies in the province of Limburg in the context of the elaboration of a Master thesis for the MSc program *"Landscape architecture and planning"* at the Wageningen University.

1.1 Citizen groups and their influence on the physical living environment

In this research, civic initiatives are defined as projects in which a group of citizens is taking the lead to improve their physical living environment. In these groups, citizens are collaborating as volunteers to improve their environment (Hurenkamp et al., 2006). Furthermore, this research is also focusing on projects in which citizens need to collaborate with governmental institutions or professionals of commercial offices to receive necessary information, knowledge and other resources (Bakker et al., 2012; Hurenkamp et al., 2006; van Dam, Salverda, et al., 2014).

Increased influence of citizens in spatial projects

The rise of attention for civic initiatives should be seen as a milestone in a long way of transition from the welfare state to a new definition of the role of government, market and citizens. This transition is already going on since the 1970s and defined by many authors as governance (Denters et al., 2013; Rhodes, 1996). The term 'governance' is characterized by the principle of 'two way' communication between actors; which is in contrast with 'government' defined as "one-way" communication between state and other actors. From this point of view, governmental and non-governmental organizations are increasingly working together for the elaboration of policies or the realization of projects (Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 1996). More specifically, all organizations with a stake in a certain policy or project are interacting together to realize a project (Kickert et al., 1997). One of the issues the government has dealing with is spatial planning. Issues like the development of housing, infrastructure, energy, nature and the development of urban, rural and in-between spaces has been seen as important for the society. Therefore the government has been an important initiator of spatial projects.

Hence, also within the field of spatial developments, the roles of government, market and citizens as actors in the governance network have been changing. Focusing on the role of citizens, it could be said that the influence of citizens in spatial projects has increased since the 1970's. In the beginning, citizens were allowed to protest against plans, then they were invited for participating in the process of spatial developments and today they are initiating own projects, the so- called civic initiatives (Beitske Boonstra & Boelens, 2011; Buizer, 2008; Healey, 2003; van de Wijdeven, de Graaf, & Hendriks, 2013; van Tatenhove, Edelenbos, & KLOK, 2010).



Figure 1 History of citizen engagement in the Netherlands(Hurenkamp, Tonkens, & Duyvendak, 2006)

Based on this transition, it can be assumed that the possibility of citizens to influence spatial projects has increased continuously since the 70's. But, does this mean that civic initiatives are realized by citizen groups only and are not influenced by other organizations? Since this research is focusing on civic initiatives in which citizen groups need to collaborate with other organization to receive necessary resources, this may be doubted.

Influence of organizations on civic initiatives

As former research show, many citizen groups collaborate with professionals of the government and market to receive necessary information, money, knowledge and other resources (Bakker et al., 2012; Hurenkamp et al., 2006; van Dam, Salverda, et al., 2014). These resources are necessary for the realization of their projects, especially in projects dealing with the improvement of public space. These projects are complex and require professional knowledge and financial resources and former research show that citizen groups do not possess these resources (Gallent, 2013; Kickert et al., 1997; Platform 31, 2015; Salverda, Pleijte, & van Dam, 2014). By that, the successful realization of these projects depends on the support of governmental and non- governmental organizations.

Based on theories of resource-dependency relationships, professionals are able to influence the projects of citizens because of their support. In other words, it can be assumed that the dependency of citizen groups on the support of professionals is increasing the power of these professionals to influence the civic initiative (Kickert et al., 1997; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). This would mean that the power of citizen groups to realize their civic initiatives could be decreasing if they are supported by professionals of governmental and non-governmental organizations. Unfortunately, the collaboration of citizen groups with other organizations has not yet been analysed and by that the power of citizen groups to influence the civic initiative and improve their physical living environment has not yet been explored.

1.2 Purpose and relevance of this study

In relation to the unknown power of citizens groups in civic initiatives, ***the purpose of this study was to explore the power of citizens groups to realize a civic initiative in accordance with their visions and plans. The exploration of citizen's power to realize their project was related to the exploration of the power that governmental and non-governmental actors in civic initiatives have to influence the civic initiative. The research focused on Dutch civic initiatives that have the goal to improve the quality of the physical living environment.***

With the exploration of the power of governmental and non- governmental organizations as well as citizen groups in civic initiatives more knowledge about current spatial development practices is gained. As was explained before, the development of space has always been seen as an important issue for the Dutch society. Through the missing knowledge about collaboration structures within civic initiatives, it is also unknown who is dealing with this important issue at the moment. It is important to know the actors that are planning “our” living environment like “our” public spaces since these actors are influencing the environment we have to live in. By that, the underlying question is: *Who is planning our living environment?* Furthermore, the rising attention on civic initiatives can be seen as a milestone in a transition process in the governance context. However, it is not yet stated in which direction this process is continuing. Through an analysis of the current practice, it could be possible to state the further stepping stones in this transition process. By that, the underlying question is: *What is happening at the moment and where does it leads us to?*

1.3 Research questions

As could be seen before, the goal of this research is to explore the power of citizens to realize their own projects in the Dutch context. Consequentially, also the power of governmental and non-governmental organizations to influence the projects of citizens needs to be explored. For reaching this goal and to guide this research, research questions are defined.

Which power do citizens have to realize their civic initiative and which power do governmental and non-governmental organizations have to influence these projects that are dealing with the improvement of the physical living environment in a Dutch context?

To answer the above mentioned main research question, four sub-research questions are defined which are used to split up the main research question in several parts.

1. *With which organizations do citizens interact for the realization of their civic initiative and why are these organizations important for the realization of the civic initiative?*
2. *How does the interaction between citizens and organizations can be described in relation to the exchange of resources and causing dependencies?*
3. *How much power do governmental and non- governmental actors have to influence a civic initiative and on which aspects are this power based?*
4. *How much power do citizen groups have to realize a civic initiative and on which aspect is this power based?*

The first sub research question is focusing on the exploration of organizations with which citizen groups are interacting. Next to the analysis of these organizations, also the arguments of citizens groups to contact these organizations should be investigated.

The second sub question is elaborating the interaction of the present actors and the citizen group in the civic initiative in the context of dependencies and exchange of resources.

The third sub question is focusing on the power of organizations to influence the civic initiative and the reasons for this power.

The last sub research question is exploring the power of citizens to realize their civic initiative in accordance with their plans and visions. Obviously, this question is highly related to the previous sub-research questions.

1.4 Readers Guide

To explore the power of citizen groups in civic initiatives in relation to governmental and non-governmental actors, this report is composed of three parts.

- I. The first part is presenting the scientific background for this research. This means that the theoretical framework is presented with the focus on power and its relation with actors, interactions, resources and interdependencies. In addition to the theoretical framework, also the research design strategy and a short introduction of the case studies can be found.
- II. Within the second part of this research, the case studies are presented. Additional information on organizations and the projects is given on the grey pages
- III. The third part of this research is focusing on the analysis of the cases. This analysis is done on the basis of the described research strategy and the theoretical background as described in part I.
- IV. The fourth part of this research is including the discussion and conclusion of this research. Logically, this part is based on the theoretical framework of part I and the analysis of the case studies of part II.

At the end of this report, supporting and additional information could be found.

Part I- Scientific background:

Presentation of theoretical framework and research strategy

2. Theoretical framework

This research is analysing the power of citizens, governmental and non- governmental organizations to influence civic initiatives that are improving the quality of physical space. To answer the mentioned research questions and to reach the stated research goal, civic initiatives in their real setting will be analysed (the research strategy is presented in chapter 3). For the analysis of the real setting, a theoretical lens is chosen. This theoretical lens is described in the following.

The main concept that is used within the study purpose and the research questions is “power”. As was elaborated, in this research power is seen as the ability of an organization to influence the project. However, this definition needs more explanation to elaborate a lens for the analysis of civic initiatives. The power of actors is investigated by different authors since many years and by that different approaches on power are investigated. This research is following an approach that is defining power as a **capacity of actors to influence other actors and their projects** (Hindess, 1996). This capacity is based on dependencies between actors that are interacting with each other and transferring or exchanging resources. This approach is related to some assumptions.

The first assumption is the **presence of actors**. Actors are governmental and non-governmental organizations who have a stake in the project (Kickert et al., 1997). Examples of governmental organizations are municipalities, provinces or the central government as well as water boards on national or regional level. Non-governmental organization could be commercial offices or businesses. Also, citizen groups belong to non-governmental organizations (Gallent, 2013; Kooiman, 1993). These actors are interacting with each other around a specific topic or goal like the development of space (Booher & Innes, 2002; Kickert et al., 1997; Kooiman, 1993).

This leads to the second assumption which is that **actors are interacting** with each other which means that **resources are exchanged**. Especially in complex projects like spatial projects, no single actor has the access to all necessary resources. Therefore, the actors are exchanging resources. Following the definition of Levine and White (1961) *“exchange is any voluntary activity between two [actors] which has consequences [...] for the realisation of their perspective goals or objectives”* (Levine & White, 1961). This definition assumed that actors are not forced to exchange their resources, but are willing to exchange their resources. Furthermore, this means also that only resources that are needed for the realisation of the goal are exchanged (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009; Levine & White, 1961). Examples of resources that can be transferred between actors are materials, money or information. Since resources can be diverse, three general categories are stated here: financial resources, material resources and human resources. Financial resource describes for example money that an actor is investing in the project or financial subsidies that actor A is receiving from actor B (Taylor, 2000). Human resources are understood as skills, knowledge and information that is transferred or exchanged by actors (Denters et al., 2013; Kickert et al., 1997; Taylor, 2000). The third category is ‘material resources’. Material resources are for example the physical space or building material (Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014).

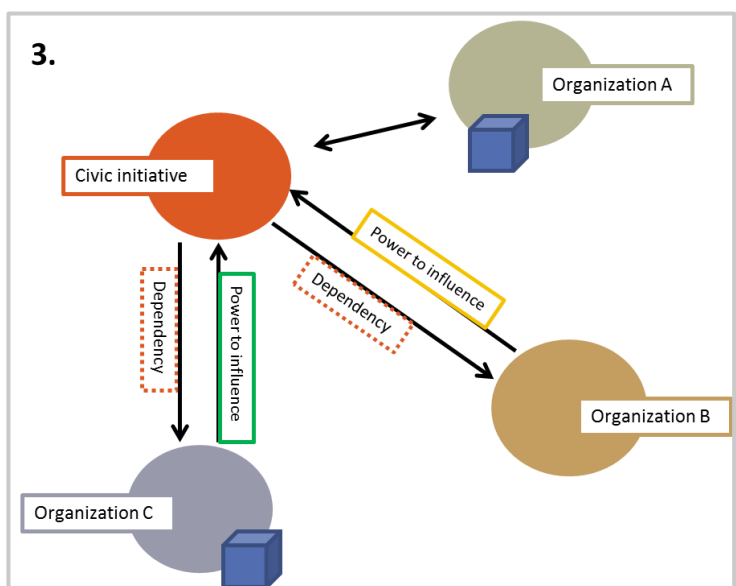
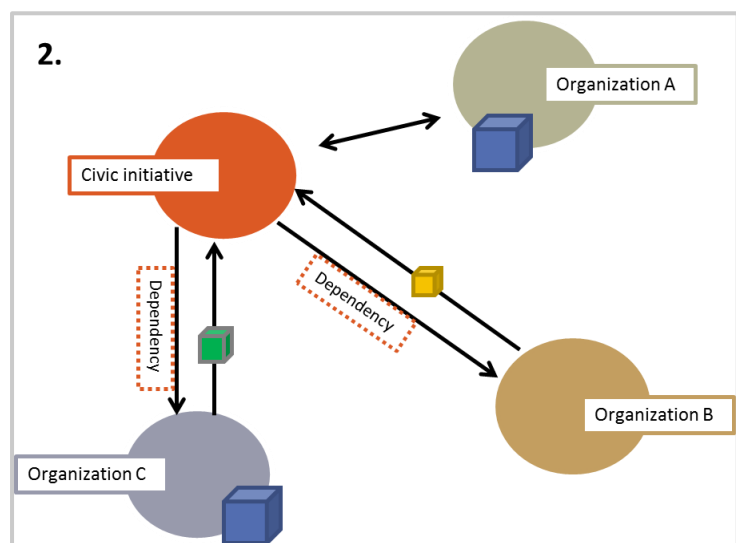
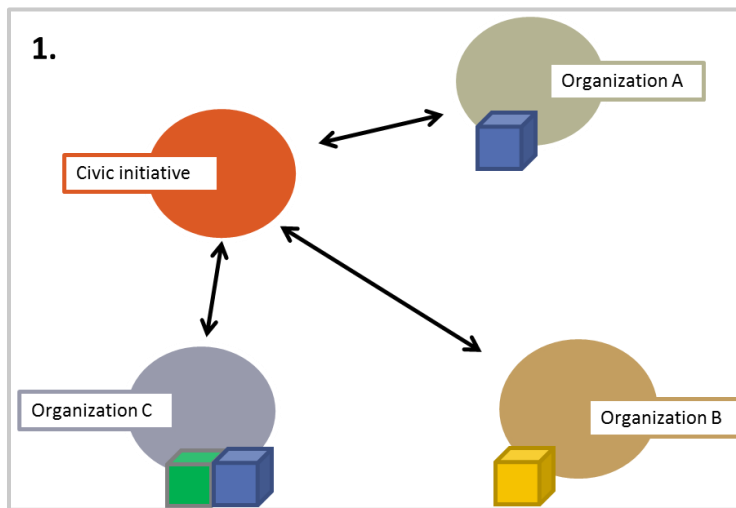
The third assumption is that these interactions between actors are causing **dependencies between actors**. One example of a resource-dependency relation could be that financial support is needed and transferred from actor A to actor B through subsidies. If the realization of the project is not possible without this specific resource, the realization of the project depends on this resource (Kickert et al., 1997). This dependency is based on two aspects, namely the importance of the resource and the

substitutability of the resource. In case that the importance of the resource is high and the substitutability is low, the dependency between actors is high (Emerson, 1962; Kickert et al., 1997). This means that if actor A is in need of (for example) financial resources to realize its project and only actor B is able to provide subsidies, the dependency of actor A on actor B's resources is high. But if another actor C is also able to exchange financial resources to actor A, the dependency between A and B is decreasing (Cook, 1977; Emerson, 1962). Following Emerson (1962), the dependency between actor A and B is the reason for the power of actor B (Emerson, 1962). This means that *"power derives from resource dependencies"* (Cook, 1977). By that, the power of an actor is not static in the same way as dependencies between actors are not static. The dependencies of actors and the power of actors are created and changed through the interaction of actors (Kickert et al., 1997; Selle, 2013). Each actor is able to decide if the resource should be transferred or not and is also able to define conditions for the transfer (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009). Through these conditions, the actor is able to influence the project (Bennis, Berkowitz, Affinito, & Malone, 1958).

By that, the **power** of an actor is not a given attribute of an actor, but the power is defined through the resource- dependency relationship. By that, the power of an actor is not related to the status in society (Hindess, 1996; Lambrechts, 1982). In this research, an actor has power because of the possessed resources and the dependency of other actors on this resource (Emerson, 1962; Hindess, 1996). By that, an actor has the power to influence a project even if other actors that are participating in the project do not agree, because of these resource-dependency relationships. This means that, for example, a municipality is able to influence the civic initiative if the citizen group is dependent on the resources of the municipality. As a consequence, the municipality is able to take decisions, even if the citizen group does not agree with this decision (Few, 2002; Hindess, 1996).

At this point, it should be strengthened that the possibility of an actor to **influence** the project of another actor is related to the possibility to influence the decision-making process (Lukes, 1974). On the one hand, a powerful actor is able to take decisions because of a resource- dependency relationship. On the other hand, a powerful actor is also able to influence this decision-making through the creation of conditions (Dowding, 1996). Dowding (1996) is calling these different types "outcome power" and "social power". With "outcome power", the outcome like the project is directly influenced through making decisions. In contrary to this, "social power" is describing a situation in which a decision is not made directly through a powerful actor, but the choice situation for the decisions of actor A are influenced by actor B. This means that the situation of actor A is changed in such a way by actor B, that a certain decision is the most logical decision in relation to the situation (Dowding, 1996).

As a conclusion, it can be said that the power of actor B to influence the project of actor A is related to the resource- dependency relationship between these two actors. This resource- dependency relationship can be explained in three steps (see figure 2). The first step is that different actors are interacting to reach a specific goal. The actors possess different resources that are needed for the realization of the project. This resource can be categorized as financial, human or material resources. Secondly, actors are exchanging these resources. Based on the exchange of resources, dependencies between actors occur. The following step is that an actor has the power to influence the project because of the dependency. These assumptions are integrated in the theoretical lens for the analysis of civic initiatives and the power of citizens and governmental and non-governmental organizations.



Legenda

Actors



Resources



Interactions



Figure 2 Power on the basis of resource- dependency relationships

2.1 Theoretical lens for the analysis of civic initiatives

As was described at the beginning of the theoretical framework, a theoretical lens is needed for the analysis of civic initiatives in their real setting. In relation to the theoretical explanation of power above, several points can be stated that will be important for the analysis of civic initiatives.

- Citizen groups as well as governmental and non- governmental organizations like municipalities or commercial offices are seen as actors that are interacting with each other. These organizations possess resources that are needed by the citizen group to successfully realize their project. Only organizations with needed resources are seen as actors.
- These organizations are able to voluntarily transfer their resources like information, space or money to the citizen group. In case that the resource is needed for the successful realization, the citizen group depends on the resources of these organizations. Since the dependency of the citizen group on the resources of one organization is also related to the resources of other organizations, the whole network needs to be analysed.
- Based on the dependency of the citizen group, organizations have power and are able to influence the civic initiative. Based on this power, organizations are able to take decisions that have consequences for the project even if the citizen group is not agreeing. A second possibility for influencing the project is that organizations are influencing the decisions of the citizen group indirectly.
- The power of citizen groups is decreasing with the support in terms of finances, space or information by other organizations. In the same time, the power of the organization that is transferring the resource is increasing.

3. Research design

Worldview

This research is based on a 'social constructivist' perspective which means that the researcher assumes that every person is trying to understand his or her surroundings. By that, every person is developing an interpretation about processes and objects in his/ her life. Based on this worldview, varied and multiple perspectives on a certain process or object are available and the researcher's goal is to understand the complexity of the reality by exploring the varied and multiple perspectives of individuals (Creswell, 2013).

Research strategy

For the exploration of the power of organizations to influence a civic initiative, a qualitative research methodology was chosen. The first step of this research was the elaboration of a theoretical lens for the analysis of the complex reality. This lens was developed through a literature study. Within this literature study, existing literature about civic initiatives and definitions of power were analysed.

After the development of a theoretical lens, two case studies were chosen. Within this research, a holistic case design is chosen. By that, two separated case were selected (Yin, 2013). The cases were selected on the basis of two criteria. The first criterion was that the case study had to deal with a civic initiative. For this research, it was seen as important that a group of inhabitants identifies themselves as the initiators of the project. By that, the units of analysis were the civic initiatives and the interaction between the citizen group and other organizations. The second criterion was that the civic initiative had to deal with the improvement of the quality of the physical environment. Based on the focus of the research on spatial planning, this was a necessary criterion. In practice, both cases had the goal to improve the quality of public space. More information about the background of both cases is stated in chapter 3.2.

The following step of this research was the collection of data. This was done by desk research and interviews. Within the desk research, information about the project like vision documents, timelines or applications for subsidies were collected and analysed.

In addition to the desk- research, representatives of the project group and organizations that are interacting with the citizen group were interviewed. A list of all interviewed representatives can be found in appendix I. For the interviews, general, open questions were defined which should lead the conversation with the representatives. These interview questions are presented in appendix II - IV. In both cases, the representatives of the citizen group were interviewed first. Based on these interviews, the representatives of organizations with which the citizen group was interaction were contacted. All interviews were conducted in a personal conversation with the representatives. Furthermore, all representatives were visited at their working location which allowed the researcher to visit the location of the case study personally. This field visit was also used for the collection of data and a broader understanding of the project.

Next to the collection of data of the civic initiative, also data about the context of civic initiatives in the Netherlands was collected. This was done for a broader understanding of the governmental perspective on civic initiatives and their relation to spatial planning. For that purpose, representatives of the national, provincial and local government were interviewed. The leading questions for these interviews can be found in appendix V.

After the data collection, the received information was analysed. In relation to the holistic case design, both cases were analysed on their own first. After that, both cases were compared to each other for answering the research questions. As a third step, the gained information about the Dutch context was related to the analysis of the cases. By that, a broader understanding of the civic initiatives and their local, provincial and national context was possible.

This analysis of the data was compared to existing scientific researches about power and civic initiatives. For that purpose, the former literature study was extended. During the analysis of the data, it becomes clear that the stated theoretical lens was too limited. As a consequence the theoretical lens needed to be extended. This was also done by an extended literature study.

3.1 Influences on the research

In order to enable the reader of this research to comprehend the background of this research, the underlying influences on this research have to be explained.

This research is carried out from September 2014 till February 2015. Necessarily, the interviews were taken within this timeframe and the analysis of the results has been realized in that time as well. This is of importance since both case studies are still in progress and not realized by the end of this research. Consequentially, it is possible that the interaction between the citizen groups and other organizations will be defined and characterised differently at another point of time during the progress.

The available time for this research has been of influence for the choice of interviewed organizations and the amount of interviews. For this research, the civic initiatives are questioned about their most relevant contact persons of other organizations. If it had been possible to perform this research in more than the available timeframe, more representatives of one organization have been interviewed. The choice to question the citizens about their most relevant organizations is of influence on the results as well. The results of this research could have been different if organizations which are less relevant had been interviewed. As a consequence, also the interaction between citizen group and the village council could be explored.

The last point which is mentioned here is related to the skills of the researcher. After each interview, the researcher reflected on the interview and the gained information. This reflection is used for following interviews to improve the interview questions. Consequentially, the outcomes of the interviews have been different if they had been planned in another order. In appendix II the order of the interviews are presented. In relation to this, it is also important to keep in mind that the interviews are done as face-to-face conversations with open question. Hence personal mood and the background of both, interviewee and respondent were influencing the interview.

However, even though several points are on influence on the outcomes of this research project, the researcher is convinced that the gained information is sufficiently representative to base the results of this research thereon.

3.2 Case description

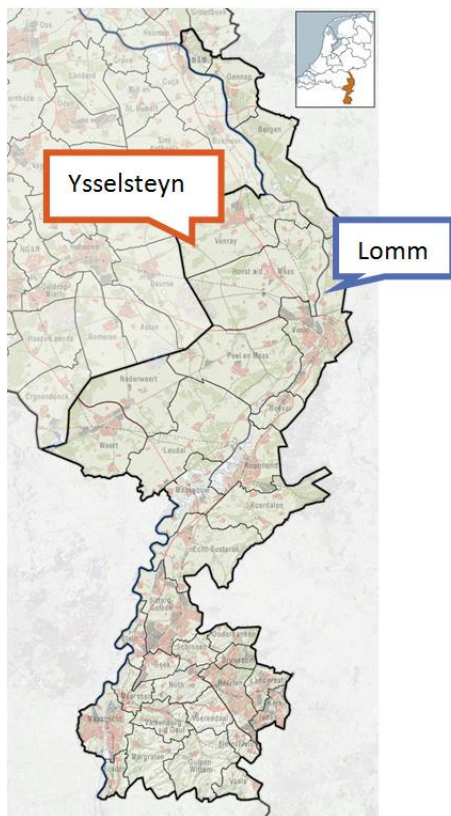


Figure 3 Location of civic initiatives in the province of Limburg (Aalst, 2010)

As was presented in the research strategy, two case studies were chosen for the exploration of the power of citizen groups in civic initiatives. Both case studies area located in the province of Limburg, one in the municipality of Venray and one in the municipality of Venlo.

The first civic initiative will be presented in chapter four and is the project “*Lovinckplein en herontwikkeling N277*” (Lovinckplein and redevelopment of the N277) in Ysselsteyn. The village of Ysselsteyn has 2.250 inhabitants (2010) and is located in the municipality of Venray (Gebiedspanel Ysselsteyn, 2010). In 2010, a group of inhabitants formed a project group to redevelop public space in their village. At the time of this research (2014/2015), a building company for the realization of the project is searched. According to the current time schedule, the project will be realized and finished at the end of 2015 (Werkgroep Lovinckplein, 2014a). A time scheme of the project can be found in appendix VI.

The second civic initiative will be presented in chapter five and is the project “*Rivierpark Lomm*” in Lomm. The village of Lomm has 1030 inhabitants (2010) and is located in the municipality of Venlo¹ (Dorpsraad Lomm). The first ideas for

this project were already stated in 2008, but a project group for the realization of this project has been started in 2012. The goal of this civic initiative is to develop public space outside their village. In addition, the citizens of Lomm area also seeking to maintain the space after its realization. The project is embedded in a complex background which is explained in chapter five. Based on this background the project will be probably realized in 2017. The second part of the project, the maintenance of the area will start at that point. At the time of this research (2014/2015), the zoning plan has been appointed in which the goals of the project group area integrated. In the upcoming time, archaeological researches will be carried out and the working activities which will result in the redevelopment of the area are going to start (Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, 2013b). A time scheme of the project can be found in appendix VII.

¹ Till 2010, Lomm belonged to the municipality of Arcen en Velden. This municipality merged with the current municipality of Venlo.

Part II- Case studies:

Presentation of civic initiatives and their context

The political context of the case studies

During the description and analysis of the case studies their local context will be explained and presented, but these civic initiatives are also embedded in a broader context.

In line with the speech of the minister of Infrastructure and Environment during the opening of the year of space, the Dutch government would like to see that more challenges are approached from bottom-up. The society should be stimulated to take the responsibility for their living environment (Platform 31, 2015). This seems as a perspective which needs to be applied in practical terms.

In the Netherlands, there are three layers of governments which have their own scale, responsibilities and focus. This is also true for the stimulation of active citizenship. Municipalities are focusing on the local scale and should be seen as the governmental organization that has the most contact with citizens. As can be seen in the following case studies, the municipalities are indeed important partners for civic initiatives. It can also be seen, that municipalities try to stimulate active citizenship through direct support of civic initiatives. Fascinating is that there is no standard support of civic initiatives by municipalities. In this time, municipalities are experimenting with different ways of

approaching civic initiatives (District manager; municipality of Venlo, 2014; Policy advisor ; municipality of Venray, 2014).

Interestingly, the province of Limburg is trying to support municipalities in their way of approaching civic initiatives. In line with this, the province is stimulating active citizenships in more indirect ways as can be read in chapter 4 (Policy advisor; province of Limburg, 2015).

Due to their national focus, the central government is supporting active citizenship on a broader scale. The ministry of Infrastructure and Environment for example is financing researches about active citizenship in relation to topics like demographic shrinkage. Furthermore, they are supporting meetings which are connecting citizen groups, municipalities or other interested persons with each other for the exchange of opinions, perspectives and experiences. By that, people and groups are able to learn from each other. In addition, they are also founding programs to train civil servants in the communication with (Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, 2014).

By that, it can be seen that civic initiatives are embedded in a context which is stimulating civic initiatives on the one hand, but also is experimenting and trying to find a good way to support civic initiatives.

4. Ysselsteyn

“Living in a lively, beautiful and comfortable Ysselsteyn”



Pictures and slogan can be found back in (Werkgroep Lovinckplein 2012) and the website www.lovinckplein.nl

4.1 The visions and plans of inhabitants for the improvement of their village

In 2010, a group of nine inhabitants of the village Ysselsteyn in the municipality of Venray formed a project group to redevelop their central square (*Lovinckplein*) and the provincial road (N277) which leads through the village along the village centre (Werkgroep *Lovinckplein*, 2011, 2012). From the perspective of the project group, car drivers who were driving on the provincial road did recognize the village only because of the reduced speed limit within the village and not because of its design. To improve this situation, the design of the provincial road should be changed so that Ysselsteyn is recognized as a village (Project group '*Lovinckplein*', 2014). This goal should be reached through an increased amount of bushes and trees along the road. The second part of the project is the village centre with its central square '*Lovinckplein*': a green public space in the form of a triangle which is surrounded by the provincial road at one side and two local roads on the other sides. Facilities like a supermarket, a restaurant, the church, a bakery, the school, an elderly care home (also a civic initiative) and a social community centre are surrounding the place as well. However, from the project groups' perspective, the village centre was seen as an island because it is disconnected from the surrounding facilities and the village (Project group '*Lovinckplein*', 2014). In addition, the local streets were used as a route for freight traffic to one of the businesses of Ysselsteyn. The use of freight traffic on the local streets was seen as unsafe for pedestrians and bikes. As a result of these arguments, a group of inhabitants was motivated to redevelop the public space with the result of a connected and safe village centre with a lively atmosphere. This lively atmosphere should also be recognized when driving on the provincial road (Project group '*Lovinckplein*', 2014; Werkgroep *Lovinckplein*, 2011, 2012; Werkgroep *Lovinckplein* 2012).

The members of the project group do have relevant knowledge of the project because several members have a professional background in project management, urban planning and design. The group was formed through personal relationships since the members of the project group are all active in several associations or clubs in Ysselsteyn. The first step of the project group was to write down their vision for the redevelopment of the provincial road and the village centre. This vision was supported by professional visualisations. Due to the professional background of one member of the project, the group had the skills to create such designs (Project group '*Lovinckplein*', 2014). This is an interesting point since the theoretical lens was assuming that citizen groups are just receiving resources. But the case of Ysselsteyn showed that also citizen groups possess resources which they can use for the successful realization of their project.

For the members of the project group it was important to redevelop a public space which represents the ideas of the majority of the people who are living and working in Ysselsteyn. Therefore, they organized multiple meetings where the plans were presented and discussed with interested inhabitants (Werkgroep *Lovinckplein*, 2012). In addition, the facilities that are surrounding the public village centre are supporting the plans. This support is seen in their actions since they are redeveloping their private space with the same criteria and with the same materials as the public space. Consequentially, the connection between public and private space is made through the collaboration between private inhabitants, businesses like the bakery and the government who is responsible for the public space (Project group '*Lovinckplein*', 2014).

However, the redevelopment of the village centre and the provincial road were not realized through the inhabitants and the local businesses alone. For the realization of the plans, also official partners like the village council, the municipality of Venray and the province of Limburg were needed. These

“Living in a lively, beautiful and comfortable Ysselsteyn”

This is the main mission of the civic initiative in Ysselsteyn. The redevelopment of the village centre and the entrances of the village on the provincial road are seen as an impulse for the improvement of the living environment in Ysselsteyn. The chairmen of the project group was stating his personal motivation as *“that [he] is visiting so many beautiful places in the Netherlands, and then [he] is coming home and lives in such a sad village”* (translated from Dutch)(Project group 'Lovinckplein', 2014).



Figure 4 Visualisations about the present situation and desired future situation (Werkgroep Lovinckplein 2012)

For that reason, the project should improve the provincial road through the plantation of trees and bushes along the road. However, the provincial road should not only be accessible for car drivers, but also the infrastructure for bikes and pedestrians should be improved. The improvement should be created through the development of bike lines and additional cross-overs.

The increased importance of bikers and pedestrians is also a goal for the village centre, the Lovinckplein. There, shared-space principles should be applied to limit the speed of cars and increase the walkability for people. In this context, it is also thought about the safety of elderly people and children who are using the street to reach the school and the elderly home who are located next to the Lovinckplein.



Figure 5 Surrounding facilities Lovinckplein (adapted from (Werkgroep Lovinckplein 2012))

In addition, freight traffic should be excluded from the village centre to improve the safety of the Lovinckplein. Therefore, the province, the municipality and the business that is in need of freight traffic did already found a solution. They are improving a road outside the village for the use by freight traffic. By that, there is no need for trucks to drive through the village centre to reach this business anymore (Werkgroep Lovinckplein)



Figure 6 Solution for freight traffic (blue line) (Werkgroep Lovinckplein 2012)

actors were needed because they own the needed space for the project and possess relevant financial resources.

4.2 The first contacts on the way of improving the physical living environment in Ysselsteyn

Also in 2010, the village council was developing a new version of their village development plan in collaboration with the municipality of Venray and other local organizations (Gebiedspanel Ysselsteyn, 2010; Policy advisor ; municipality of Venray, 2014). From the perspective of the project group, the village development plan needed to include a serious business plan with the appointment of specific goals and actions. In line with this perspective, the project group was presenting their project plan with specific goals, actions and a business case (Project group 'Lovinckplein', 2014). Since their ideas were welcomed by the village council, the project was integrated in the village development plan (Gebiedspanel Ysselsteyn, 2010). In a later phase of the project, it becomes useful that the project was integrated in the village development plan because the subsidy of the municipality was linked to the appointment of the project in the village development plan. Furthermore, after all designs were finished the village council had to sign the contracts with the municipality and the province for the realization of the project (Policy advisor ; municipality of Venray, 2014). As a consequence, the village council was an important partner for the project group because of the subsidy conditions of the municipality and due to the authority of the village council to sign contracts. By that, the importance of the village council for the project group is partly based on the municipality. Without this support of the municipality for the village council, the importance of the village council would have been minimal since also other organizations are able to sign contracts. The interaction between the project group and the village council has not been analysed within this research because no exchange of resources has taken place between these two groups.

The next step of the project group towards the realization of their project was to contact the alderman of the province of Limburg and the municipality of Venray. Since the village centre is owned and under responsibility of the municipality and the provincial road and under responsibility of the province of Limburg, these organizations needed to be contacted. Interestingly, the project group was contacting the aldermen and not the civil servants of the departments of spatial planning in both organizations. From the perspective of the project group this was an easier step because some members of the project group already had contact with the aldermen. After a presentation of the plans and visions and a field visit, the aldermen were enthusiastic (Project group 'Lovinckplein', 2014; Werkgroep Lovinckplein, 2014b). According to one of the aldermen (at that time), *“the people behind the project convinced [him] about the value of the project”*(Former aldermen ; province Limburg (2014), 2014).

These first contacts with the village council, the municipality and the province were the starting point for collaboration between these organizations and the project group which was needed for the realization of this civic initiative.

4.3 Financial support as a launching assistance on the basis of different perspectives

Stimulating active citizenship and its influence on the interaction with a civic initiative

Based on the first contacts with the province of Limburg and the municipality of Venray, the project group applied for financial support at both organizations. At that time, the municipality of Venray

The municipality of Venray

The stimulation of active citizenship, civic initiatives and self-governing projects is already a topic in the municipality of Venray since several years. To connect their organization closer to the citizens of the local government, the municipality is supporting villages and neighbourhoods in their area with the development of village development plans. Within these plans, the village councils should present their ambitions and visions for their village for the upcoming years.

Support of civic initiatives with knowledge and networks

Based on these plans and the mentioned goals and projects, the municipality is supporting the projects in situations that the support is needed. The municipality is offering two kinds of support for civic initiatives in their area. On the one hand, the municipality offers a process manager who is acting as a contact person between the citizens group and other relevant organizations. A process manager is a civil servant who is working in one of the departments of the municipality and is offered this function if his or her background is in line with the goal of the civic initiative. For example, if a civic initiative is dealing with the development of public space, the municipality is searching for a process manager in the department of spatial planning.

Financial support for civic initiatives

In addition to the support with knowledge and networks, the municipality offers financial support as well. For that purpose, the municipality originated the subsidy for the stimulation for self-governing projects in their villages and neighbourhoods. Civic initiatives that want to apply for this subsidy need to be mentioned in the village development plan for the specific village or neighbourhood. Additionally, the project group of the civic

initiative needs to present their project and meet five criteria of the municipality. For that, the project group need to prove that their project has (1) the support of the local society, that (2) the project is improving the community and that (3) the project is sustainable. Furthermore, the project group needs to state their performance for the project which means to elaborate the workload, the financial resources that are invested by the community and if the community is maintaining the project after its realization (4). Next to these four criteria, the project group needs to mention the connection of the civic initiative with the challenge of demographic shrinkage and its effects for the community (5). Each civic initiative needs to give answer to this five criteria and a commission of the municipality assesses the applications. Finally, the projects with the highest scores can receive financial support. The limit of subsidies for each year is 2 million euros and the deadline for the application is the 1st of February. This means that projects that are applying later then this date cannot apply for this subsidy. Furthermore, it also means that the project that scores on the second place is only financed by this subsidy if the first project does not need the whole 2 million euros.

The support of the civic initiative Lovinckplein

In the context of active citizenship, the civic initiative Lovinckplein was mainly supported by finances and less through a process manager. Due to internal redeployments, the function of the process manager was not fulfilled for this project most of the time. Finally, one person has taken over this function partially and supported the project group in the interactions with project managers of the municipality and the province (Policy advisor ; municipality of Venray, 2014).

was developing a subsidy system for active citizenship called “Stimulation of self-governing of villages and neighbourhoods” (*Stimuleren zelfsturing dorpen en wijken*). Projects which were mentioned in the village development plans of the villages and neighbourhoods of the municipality were allowed to apply for the subsidy. The projects needed to score points on several criteria and the projects with the most points were able to receive financial support of the municipality. The criteria were covering themes like demographic shrinkage, sustainability and the resources of the project groups in terms of finances and work load (Policy advisor ; municipality of Venray, 2014). Together with three other projects, the project ‘Lovinckplein’ scored enough points to receive the subsidy (Project group ‘Lovinckplein’, 2014; Werkgroep Lovinckplein, 2014b). With the received subsidy for the stimulation of active citizenship, the project group possess parts of the necessary financial resources for the realization of the project. This transfer of resources had an influence on the interaction between the project group and the municipality.

Interestingly, the transfer of financial resources influenced the interaction in two ways. Firstly, the project group was seen as an official partner in the project because they were controlling parts of the financial resources. As a consequence, their influence on the project was increasing due to the received resource, especially because the municipality did not influence the project as a condition of this exchange. By that, it is logical that the project manager of the municipality mentioned that “[he] was working as a professional, commissioned by the project group to realize their project” (Project manager; municipality of Venray, 2014). Secondly, the project group was also supported with human resources by the municipality as a result of the subsidy of the municipality. The human resource was a project manager that was supporting the project group with his knowledge about technical details and project management. This support with human resources was related to the subsidies for active citizenship. Consequentially from this type of subsidy, the municipality had an interest in the successful realization of this civic initiative. In a situation that the municipality would stimulate active citizenship through subsidies but is not supporting the project with other resources that are needed for the successful realization of the civic initiative, the perspective of the municipality would be implausible.

Redeveloping a provincial road and its influence on the interaction with a citizen group

Additionally to the subsidy for the redevelopment of the village centre, the project group applied also for financial support of the province of Limburg. In 2013, the province of Limburg confirmed that the project group received financial support based on the subsidy for the stimulation of building projects in the time of crisis (*Stimuleren bouw in crisistijd*). This subsidy was developed to support building companies during the crisis. Municipalities were able to apply with projects that were already planned but needed to be stopped because of the crisis. In total, the province subsidised 55 projects, one of them was the project “Lovinckplein” in Ysselsteyn (Province of Limburg, 2013; Werkgroep Lovinckplein, 2014b)². By that, the civic initiative was not supported by the province with subsidies for active citizenship. In addition to this subsidy, the province of Limburg was also financially involved in this project because of other reasons.

² Unfortunately, it was not possible to discover the whole background of this subsidy in the context of this research.

The province of Limburg

The province of Limburg is stimulating active citizenship and civic initiatives in several ways.

Civic initiatives do have the possibility to apply for financial support from the province of Limburg like the subsidy for liveliness and green. If projects want to receive this financial support, they need to fulfil specific criteria.

However, the province of Limburg does not only want to be seen as a cash cow for citizens and municipalities. By that, the province is stimulating active citizenship also on other ways.

“More than a cash cow”

The province of Limburg seeks for an open interaction between government and society. For that, they are trying to reorganize their internal structures. Therewith is meant that the bureaucratic structures of a provincial government should be simplified. As a consequence, citizens who are in need for support of knowledge, contacts of subsidies should easily find the correct contact person in the future.

Additionally, the province of Limburg is trying to find ways for stimulating citizens to find creative solutions for their needs. This means that citizens should be stimulated to think about alternative financial solutions for their projects through co-creation, crowdfunding or the financial support of non-governmental organizations.

Furthermore, the province of Limburg is financing researches on the field of social innovation and active citizenship to understand more the dynamics of these

trends and be able to react and stimulate active citizenship.

The province of Limburg is also offering support for municipalities who are seeking for active citizenship. For that, the province is bringing municipalities together. By that, present municipalities are able to exchange experiences about the interaction between civic initiatives and the municipality. There through, the municipalities are able to learn from each other's practices (Policy advisor; province of Limburg, 2015).

The province of Limburg and the civic initiative Lovinckplein

Interestingly, the civic initiative Lovinckplein is not supported by the province of Limburg on the basis of active citizenship. From the perspective of the province, the project is an infrastructure project with the participation of an active citizen group.

The redevelopment of the provincial road N277 was already planned by the province of Limburg. However, the redevelopment was programmed for 2017 instead of 2015. From that perspective, the province of Limburg has started their 'standard' procedures which are going along with the redevelopment of roads. Nonetheless, the project is not seen as a standard project due to the presence of the active citizen group (Project manager; province of Limburg, 2014).

The province of Limburg supported the project group with financial resources in two ways. On the one hand, they gave the financial subsidies for the support of building projects. On the other hand, they were financing the redevelopment of the N277 because they already programmed the redevelopment of this road. Within the planning of the province, the N277 should be redeveloped in 2017. Due to the initiative of the project group, the province agreed to redevelop the road already in 2015. The result of the financial support for the civic initiative was that the project was supported with financial and human resources. Without this support, the civic initiative was not able to be realized.

However, during all redevelopments of provincial roads, stakeholders are invited for the participation in the process. This is in one line with the explanation of the participation process that was presented in the introduction of this research (page 2). Because of that, the province of Limburg is used to invite citizens for the participation in their process (Project manager; province of Limburg, 2014). As a consequence, the province saw the redevelopment of the provincial road as their project and their responsibility. The project group was able to participate in so far as it was in common with the province's perspective

By that, the province's perspective on the interaction with the project group differs with the perspective of the municipality on the interaction with the project group. The project manager of the province was working 'with' the project group to realize the project. This stands in contrast to the project manager of the municipality who was working 'for' the project group (Project manager; province of Limburg, 2014). This is an interesting point for the analysis of the power of actors in the civic initiative which is not covered by the chosen theoretical lens. This case in Ysselsteyn shows that the power of a citizen group to realize their project is related to the perspective of the responsible government. This perspective is limiting or supporting the power of a citizen group to realize their civic initiative.

This chapter showed that the project group was supported in financial and human terms by the municipality of Venray and the province of Limburg. Furthermore, it was shown that the financial support and the perspective of the government are influencing the ability of organizations and citizen groups to influence the realization of the project. Moreover, the project group did not only need support by both organizations in terms of finances. Due to the responsibility and ownership of both organizations, they were also important organizations in the project planning for the practical realization of the project.

4.4 Support as assistance on the way towards the realization of visions

The support of the village council, the municipality of Venray and the province of Limburg were based on the vision and its detailed plans which were created by the project group. Notwithstanding, the plans needed to be translated into technical designs which are covering all pipes, lines and scales of the real situation. The preparation of the plans and visions into technical designs was done by the municipality of Venray and the province of Limburg. As a consequence, the project group was regularly controlling the progress and had to adjust the technical designs in situations that this was needed from their perspective. From their perspective, this causes additional time and effort by the governmental organizations and the project group. Moreover, in this phase of the project the project group could easily lose their influence on the project if they had not controlled the progress regularly.

In the beginning, both organizations were splitting up the project in one part of the municipality (Lovinckplein) and to one part of the province (N277). Consequentially, both organizations placed a project manager on their part of the project. The project managers were regulating all necessary procedures in their organization and informing each other and consulting the project group (Project manager; municipality of Venray, 2014; Project manager; province of Limburg, 2014). After a while, both municipality and province agreed that splitting up of the project was time consuming and inefficient in financial aspects. As a logical step from their perspective, they decided that the elaboration of the technical designs should be supervised and under control of the municipality. By that, the project manager of the municipality had to coordinate the creation of the technical plans and to consult and inform the province and the project group about the process (Project manager; municipality of Venray, 2014). This step of the project had an influence on the interaction between the municipality, the province and the project group.

Influence of the municipalities' role in the process on the civic initiative

The municipality's responsibility to coordinate the elaboration of the technical design was influencing the interaction between the actors and the project in two ways.

On the one hand, the project was supported with knowledge, information and manpower to regulate all necessary procedures and the collaboration between all actors. Without this support, the possibility for a successful relation of the civic initiative would have been limited. On the other hand, the interaction between the project manager of the municipality and the project group was not without any conflict. This conflict was based on the two different perspectives of the municipality. On the one side, the project manager needed to control the process of the project and arrange the collaboration with the project group and the province. In addition, he also needed to regulate all internal procedures that were necessary for the realization of the project. On the other side, he was representing the municipality that obviously wanted to support active citizenship. By that, he was working in commission of the project group. As a consequence of these two sides, the project manager was struggling with his task. Unfortunately, this struggles were also effecting the interaction with the project group (Project group 'Lovinckplein', 2014; Project manager; municipality of Venray, 2014). As a result, the motivation of the project group to collaborate with the municipality was threaten and by that the successful realization of the civic initiative was in danger. Fortunately, it was possible to solve these conflicts and the process for the realization of the civic initiative could be continued. Interestingly, this situation shows that the realization of a civic initiative is not only depended on the exchange of resources, but also on the personal interaction between actors.

Since the project manager of the municipality was controlling for the elaboration of the technical design, the project manager of the province of Limburg had to regulate the practical realization of the project.

Influence of the provinces' role in the process on the civic initiative

After that the technical design was finished, the project needs to be realised. This part of the project was organized by the project manager of the province of Limburg.

This role included that the province had to search for one building company and supervised their work. For the realization of this project, just one building company was hired. From the perspective of the governmental organization, this was a logical decision since their experience has been that multiple building companies that are working on the same area at the same time are disturbing each

other's working activities. According to the experience of the professionals, engaging two building companies for the same time frame could result in time delay of the realization and needless irritations between all concerned organizations (Project manager; province of Limburg, 2014). By that, the project manager of the province was supporting the project with his knowledge and manpower to regulate internal and external procedures. Moreover, the experiences of the province and the municipality were also used for a cost and time efficient realization of the project.

Since this step has not been finished at the time of this research, it cannot be said which influence the provinces responsibility for this step in the process had on the civic initiative. But it can be assumed that fewer conflicts than in the previous step are arousing. This assumption can be based on the different perspectives of the project managers on the collaboration with the project group as was presented before. Moreover, in this step of the process the project cannot be influenced that much anymore because all plans are made and these will be realized.

By that, the initial plans of the project group were translated into technical designs which covered technical details and guiding the working activities of the building company. The knowledge of the professionals of province and municipality were applied for the realization of the initial plans. However, the support with the knowledge of these professionals resulted in changes of details of the initial plans.

4.5 Adjustments of plans and visions through professional knowledge

The realization of the plans and visions of the project group were supported by professionals of the municipality and the province. They were creating the detailed technical designs and during this process the professionals of both organizations were consulting and discussing the progress with the project group. Two points of discussion ended with a decision by the government.

Decisions on the basis of ownership

The first point of discussion was finally decided by the municipality of Venray. The municipality and the project group were discussing about the materials which should be used on the local roads around the Lovinckplein. The project group had chosen materials that fit with their desired atmosphere for the public square. From the perspective of the municipality these materials were not acceptable because of the high maintenance and attrition level. This means that the materials which are chosen by the project group would be difficult to maintain and be destroyed after a shorter time than other materials which are used by the municipality. At the end, the municipality was able to decide about this question. The power of the municipality to take this decision is based on their ownership of the space. The municipality possess this resource and is also the organization that has to maintain the public space after its redevelopment. Based on these arguments, the municipality were able to choose their preferred materials even if this was contrary to the ideas of the project group. But it needs to be mentioned that the chosen materials are not changing the overall visions and plans of the project groups. By that, the municipality was using their power to influence the project only in details (Project manager; municipality of Venray, 2014). In addition to this decision of the municipality of Venray, also the province of Limburg was adjusting the civic initiative.

Decision on the basis of provincial regulations and knowledge

The second point of discussion was finally decided by the province of Limburg. While detailing the plans of the project group, the professionals of the province recognized that the assumed space in

the plan of the project group did not fit to the real space and scales. From the perspective of the professionals of the province, the plans of the project group did not take into account pipes and cables which are beneath the soil level. As a result, the assumed amount of trees and bushes along the provincial road were not realistic because these plants need a certain amount of space under the soil level. Furthermore, the assumed space in the visions of the project group for bikes lines, walking paths and lanes were not safe according to the perspective of the province. Based on this argumentation, the province was changing the amount of plants along the streets and the size of biking lanes and walking paths. By that, the realization of the plans will differ from the initial plans in the amount of green along the streets and the size of lanes for each road user. The province was able to take this decision because of their technical knowledge and because they are responsible for the safety of the provincial road. This means that they were following provincial safety regulations and there was no other option then their decision (Project manager; province of Limburg, 2014). Interestingly, the province was not able to influence the project as a condition for their exchange of their resources but as a result of this resource. In more detail this means that they were not given their knowledge to the project group and as a condition they were deciding about the project. Instead, the knowledge and regulations were used to decide about the project, the project group did not have any possibility to interfere into this decision.

By that, the adjustments of the plan of the project group are based on two organizational characteristics. The first adjustment is made on the basis of the ownership of space and the future maintenance of the public space. The second adjustment made on the basis of technical knowledge and the responsibility for the use of the future public space.

4.6 Conclusion

The redevelopment of the public space Lovinckplein and the provincial road N277 is a project that was initiated by a group of inhabitants of Ysselsteyn. The group was motivated to improve the quality of their physical living environment. To guarantee that the redeveloped public space and infrastructure is supported by the ideas of the majority of inhabitants, they started a participation process.

For the realization of their plan, they needed to collaborate with the province of Limburg and the municipality of Venray. After convincing the aldermen and made him enthusiastic, the realization of the project could start. Even though the project group has skilled people, they were in need of the permission of the governmental organizations and their resources. Projects like the redevelopment of a provincial road and a public place of the municipality require bureaucratic procedures, collaboration between organizations, financial resources and professional knowledge of the development of researches and designs.

The organization and supervision of all necessary procedures and the creation of technical designs was done by the province and the municipality. Both organizations were consulting and informing the project group regularly. By that, the project group had a serious and important position within this network. Based on this position, they were seen as the official owner of the project.

This strong position is based on skills and contacts of the project group. They were able to illustrate their ideas and to contact and convince the representatives of the organizations who have a serious position within the organizations. Partly based on these support, they were able to receive financial support. This financial support was also strengthening their position. The municipality had agreed on support civic initiatives. By that, they had an interest that the civic initiative was realized successfully. The perspective of the province was much more rational since they wanted to realize a project which was already planned for 2017. Furthermore, the position of the project group was also strengthened because the financial resources were received from two different organizations. By that, the dependency of the project group on the finances of the municipality and the province was less in comparison to a situation in which the project group would receive financial support by only one organization.

The province of Limburg and the municipality of Venray had the possibility to take decisions even if these were in contrast with the plans of the project group. This authority was based on their ownership, the role of the government after the realization of the project and the technical knowledge. In addition, it also needs to be said that the whole project would not be started or realized if the governments would not give their permission for the redevelopment of the infrastructure and places.

5. Lomm

*A leisure park for Lomm at
the riverside of the Maas*



Pictures are received personally by the project group. Partly, pictures can be found back on the website www.lomm.nl

5.1 A complex background for a civic initiative

The starting point of the civic initiative in Lomm can be seen in 2008. At that time, the inhabitants of the village Lomm mentioned their wish to connect their village with the river Maas. Actually, Lomm is located next to the river, but from the citizens' perspective this could not be seen and felt. Consequentially, the inhabitants wanted to connect their village with the river in symbolical terms. This wish was stated in the village development plan for the first time. In the village development plan, the inhabitants stated also that the connectivity should be increased through the opportunity to use the riverside for leisure activities. For this, the development of bike lanes that were located along the river should also cross the village centre. Furthermore, the design of hiking trails along the river was mentioned. In addition, the inhabitants seek for more leisure activities nearby or on the river like surfing, swimming, canoeing or fishing (Dorpsraad Lomm, 2008). In a later phase of the project, the plan was extended with two aspects. The first aspect was related to a historical water mill that is located near to the river. In the future, this monument should be made visible to give attention on the history of the area. The second aspect that was mentioned in later plans was a place for local events. The inhabitants stated their wish to develop a place next to the river on which local events could take place (Dorpsraad Lomm, 2014; Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014).

Interestingly, the inhabitants were mentioning these ideas because there was a probability that the ideas were realized since the whole area along the river was planned to be redeveloped. This area was directed to be developed into a flood channel of 80 hectare in connection with the development of a nature area. The project started already in 1998 and will be finished in 2022. Due to recalculations in 2010, the planned flood channel of 80 hectare needed to be extended with another 20 hectare. This extension will be realized in the form of a bypass and will be realized in 2017.

In the first phase, the citizens of Lomm were invited to participate in the redevelopment process of the flood channel and the surrounding nature. But after they were unsatisfied with the results of this participation procedure, they started their own civic initiative.

The flood channel Lomm and the engagement of citizens

Before analysing the power of citizen to improve the connectivity of their village with the river Lomm, the first phase of the project "Flood channel Lomm" (*Hoogwatergeul Lomm*) will be presented. This first phase has also an influence on the power of citizens in the second phase which is dealing with the civic initiative.

The first plans for the development of the flood channel were announced in 1998. From that point on the inhabitants of Lomm were protesting against the flood channel. At that time around 1700 protests were made against the development of the flood channel and the necessary building activities (Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, 2013b). The amount of protest is remarkable since the village of Lomm had around 1000 inhabitants at that time (Dorpsraad Lomm, 2010). This also shows that the inhabitants of Lomm are concerned about their living environment and by that it seems logical that they are initiating a civic initiative to improve their living environment.

Regardless of the protest, the provincial government decided the realization of the flood channel. Then the inhabitants started thinking about possible advantages of the redevelopment for their village (Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014). At that time, the citizens announced their ideas of an increased connectivity of their village with the river for the first time. This plan was supported

From protest towards a civic initiative

The development of the flood channel causes many protests of the inhabitants of Lomm. Their protest was mainly based on two aspects. On the one hand, they had heard that polluted soil should be stored at the ground of the flood channel. Due to this information, there was fear of possible damage on human and environmental health. The second argument against the development of the flood channel was the increased traffic of trucks which would be needed to transport the mined soil

After the protests were not accepted by the responsible governmental organization, DCM tries for a better information of the public as well as made proposals to minimize the traffic by transporting as much as possible materials over water (Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014).

On the basis of recalculations of the needed area for flood protection, the flood channel should be extended with a 20 hectare bypass

in the north of the flood channel. For this bypass, DCM commissioned *Grontmij Groenplanning*, a commercial office, for the development of designs for the future bypass(Grontmij).

The shape of this area is mainly influenced by the presence of a historical water mill. This water mill is recognized as a monument and as a consequence, the parcel on which the monument is located is protected. This monument is not visible from the ground and consequentially many inhabitants of Lomm do not know that there is a monument located nearby their village(Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014).

In the following, three plans for the bypass are presented. The first design which was made by *Grontmij Groenplanning* has been the basis for the alternative designs of the project group. As can be seen, the main differences of the design are the organization of the path structure and the biking lane. In addition, the row of trees changes into groups of trees and bushes(Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, 2011, 2012, 2013a).



Figure 7 First design by Grontmij Groenplanning (Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, 2012)



Figure 8 Initial design by the project group(Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, 2011)



Figure 9 Current design by the project group (Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, 2013a)

by the former municipality of 'Arcen en Velden' and the current municipality of Venlo who arranged that the inhabitants of Lomm could participate in the stakeholder representative group (*Klankbordgroep*) (Municipality of Arcen and Velden, 2009; Municipality of Venlo, 2011). The stakeholder representative group was founded for informing and consulting all concerned stakeholders about the progress of the development of the flood channel (DCM, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2014). As a consequence of this participation, the inhabitants of Lomm were seen as an actor with a stake in the project. Moreover, they had already been in touch with relevant actors when they were starting up their own initiative in 2012. Furthermore, the municipalities stated that the ideas of the inhabitants needed to be involved in the designs for the redevelopment. As a result of this, DCM integrated the ideas of the inhabitants into their designs for the future area. This will be explained in the second phase of the project. First, the interactions between actors for the realization of the flood channel Lomm will be presented since these interactions were also influencing the possibility of the citizens to realize their ideas.

Interactions between actors for the realization of the flood channel Lomm

The development of the flood channel in Lomm should avoid extreme floods of villages. For its realization, the government choose a cost efficient solution. The flood channel is realized by a commercial mining company (DCM) which is mining and selling sand and gravel. It was arranged by contract that DCM is allowed to mine in that area under the condition that they had to redevelop the area into a flood channel after their activities (Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014; Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, Diverse).

Based on this responsibility of DCM, the citizens of Lomm were collaborating strongly with this actor for realizing their civic initiative (Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014; Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, Diverse). This collaboration was also influenced by their former protests. Even if the citizens' protest was rejected by the provincial government, the concerns of the citizens become clear. As a reaction on the protests, DCM was investing in a clear and open communication with the citizens of Lomm from the beginning of their mining activities. The advantage for DCM was that the protests against their activities decreased. The advantage for the inhabitants was, that it was easier for the citizens of Lomm to find a strong partner for the realisation of their civic initiative because they already were interacting with DCM (DCM, 2014). As a result of this collaboration, DCM was supporting the citizens of Lomm with their knowledge about bureaucratic procedures. Therewith, the collaboration with DCM had a great influence on the realization of the civic initiative.

While redeveloping the area, DCM had to follow the regulations of the responsible authority Rijkswaterstaat. As a consequence of their authority, Rijkswaterstaat controlled the activities of DCM and has been influencing the future design of the area (DCM, 2014; Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014). In addition to the interaction with Rijkswaterstaat, DCM had also to interact with the municipality of Venlo and the nature management organisation Limburgs Landschap. The municipality of Venlo and Limburgs Landschap are both owning parts of the area. Because of this they are important partners for DCM and have an influence on the project (Limburgs Landschap, 2015). Next to the material resources of the municipality and Limburgs Landschap, also DCM owns parts of the area that will be redeveloped. Limburgs Landschap owns the area of the flood channel, DCM and the municipality are owning parts of the bypass (DCM, 2014). As a consequence of these interactions, the ideas of the citizens have also to "compete" with the wishes and ideas of Rijkswaterstaat, Limburgs Landschap and the municipality of Venlo.

A complex project with advantages for flood protection and nature

The development of a flood channel nearby Lomm is only one project of Rijkswaterstaat Maaswerken to avoid floodings as a result of high water in the river Maas. Maaswerken is an organization which is founded by Rijkswaterstaat and the province of Limburg after heavy floodings in 1993 and 1995 (Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, 2013b). In their



Figure 10 Design for flood channel (Unknown, 2011)

plan “Zandmaas”, they are presenting several developments along the river Maas to avoid floods of the river in the future (Maaswerken, Unknown).

The realization of the flood channel is combined with several other activities. The development of the flood channel is realized by the mining company Delftstoffen Combinatie Maasdal BV (DCM). This means that the DCM is allowed to mine the gravel and sand which is located beneath the soil next to the river. After their activities, the area

needs to be redeveloped considering the regulations and requirements of Maaswerken for the flood protection. Furthermore, while developing a flood channel also nature around the flood channel should be realized.

The development of nature

Due to this goal, Limburgs Landschap which is an organization that is managing and maintaining 8000 hectare of nature in Limburg, bought the area with the condition that the mining activities will be allowed. Through their ownership, they are able to develop the nature around the flood channel in accordance to their guidelines and perspectives. This means that the organization wants to develop a certain nature type which requires an infertile soil. Furthermore, they are requiring that the area is accessible for pedestrians and herbivores. The herbivores, in specific Galloway Cows will be used as an instrument to maintain the area (Limburgs Landschap, 2015).

Stakeholder representative group

The development of the flood channel and the bypass is related to many interests of different organizations. To keep the contact with all stakeholders and ensure that information about the project is reaching all stakeholders, DCM founded a stakeholder representative group for this project. Within this group, the municipality of Venlo, the village council of Lomm, the province of Limburg, Rijkswaterstaat Maaswerken, Limburgs Landschap, the local fishing association, the local association for local history, an interest group for farmers and a institute for nature education and sustainability are represented (DCM, 2012, 2013, 2014).

This means that the project group for the “Rivierpark Lomm” is also informing these stakeholders about their plans (Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014).

Moreover, DCM had not only interacted with the municipality of Venlo because they own parts of the area. Due to the nuisance of their activities for the inhabitants of Lomm and surrounding villages, DCM had to financially compensate the community. This compensation was also arranged by contract and means that DCM had to transfer money to the municipality of Venlo who is regulating this resource on behalf of the community. Since the compensation depends on the amount of mined sand and gravel, the total amount has not yet been announced. This compensation will be used for the redevelopment of the area like the realisation of the citizens ideas for an improved connectivity of Lomm with the Maas (Municipality of Venlo, 2011; Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014). By that, the financial resources for the realization of the civic initiative are transferred from DCM to the municipality who is managing this resource on behalf of the citizens. As a result of this, the realization of the civic initiative depends on the financial resources that are managed by the municipality.

5.2 The first steps of the civic initiative

As explained before, DCM is the responsible organisation for the redevelopment of the flood channel and the bypass. Therefore, they were creating plans for the future design of the area, including the ideas of the inhabitants of Lomm. By that, the requested beach, quay and a place for local events were integrated in the designs. Also, a biking lane along the river was planned and hiking lanes in the area were designed (Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014; Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, 2012). By that, all requested activities were integrated in the first designs of DCM.

However, the inhabitants of Lomm saw several critical points on the design that was presented by DCM. At that point in 2012, the inhabitants of Lomm were forming an own project group to develop alternative designs for the future bypass and starting up their initiative. The goal of the project group was to develop alternative plans which are covering the ideas and opinions of the inhabitants of Lomm to improve their physical living environment. This project group was formed on the initiative of the village council who was asking inhabitants of Lomm with a relevant background for the project group. By that, the members of the project group possess knowledge and skills of spatial planning and design (Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014). The participation of people with a relevant background in the project group was influencing the interaction with DCM and other organizations in a later phase of the project. Based on the professional background, the plans were seen as serious alternatives and the group was seen as a skilled partner for collaboration (DCM, 2014; District manager; municipality of Venlo, 2014). By that, the resources of the project group were an important aspect for the interaction with relevant actors for the realization of their project.

The first step of the project group was to develop alternative plans for the design of the bypass. This alternative design was called "*Rivierpark Lomm*" (River Park Lomm) because the area of the bypass should be developed as a park for the inhabitants of the village Lomm and the surrounding villages. This design was strengthening the visual connection between the river and the village through planning rows of tree between the village and the river instead of along the river. In addition, the attention on the historical water mill was increased and the hiking paths were reorganized. Moreover, the bike lane was planned through the village centre of Lomm instead along the riverside. The reorganization of the bike lane was done to guide bike tourists to the village centre of Lomm instead of along the village. From the project groups' perspective, this design respected the wishes of

The municipality of Venlo

The stimulation of active citizenship is a goal for the Dutch government on all three scales and by that also for the municipality of Venlo. The municipality of Venlo is supporting civic initiatives in financial terms and also on their way through the bureaucratic world of their organization.

Civic initiatives can apply for a financial support in the context of the subsidy "City of active citizens" (*Stad voor actieve mensen*). This subsidy is focusing on initiatives which are supporting the relationships between citizens and are improving the living environment. Initiatives which are accepted by the municipality, can receive maximal 5.000 Euros.

But, civic initiatives are also supported with relevant information. For this purpose, villages and neighbourhoods in Venlo have a specific contact person who supports citizens in finding the right department and civil servant in their organization. Furthermore, the contact person is also helping in finding organizations outside the municipality who could be relevant for the successful realization of projects.

However, even if the municipality of Venlo is trying to stimulate active citizenship for the last 10- 15 years, they are still facing problems in the realization of their visions (District manager; municipality of Venlo, 2014).

From a vision towards reality

Based on the experience of the municipality of Venlo, citizens are seeking for a framework in which they are able to start initiatives. This means that inhabitants of a certain area like to know which regulations, rules and other points of attentions they need to take care of in their project. For that purpose, the municipality has to develop a framework for civic initiatives.

The other point of attention is the interaction between citizens and the municipality. On the one hand, this means that the traditional structure of an organization like the municipality is not efficient in answering complex questions of citizens. It seems that questions of citizens do not only cover the expertise of one department of the municipality, by that several departments need to collaborate for the answering of one question. Due to bureaucratic procedures and ways of communications, this collaboration seems to be difficult and needs to be improved in the future.

Furthermore, it seems that the communication between citizens and representatives of the municipality needs to be changed for a successful stimulation of active citizenship. This means, that the communication between both needs to be clear and open. This point of attention is related to the personal skills and characteristics of civil servant. The municipality of Venlo is supporting their employees in training the communication with citizens (District manager; municipality of Venlo, 2014).

The contact with the village Lomm

The project group "Rivierpark Lomm" has not yet applied for financial support at the municipality of Venlo. But, they are in regular contact with their contact person who was also helping the group in contacting the right civil servants for their project (District manager; municipality of Venlo, 2014). Due to the phase of the project, the project group was mainly collaborating with DCM and not with the municipality. However, this could change in the upcoming period.

the inhabitants of Lomm more than the first design of DCM (Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014; Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, 2012).

This alternative design was presented to inhabitants of the village Lomm who were able to participate with their ideas and opinions. Furthermore, the project group was contacting other organizations to receive more information and opinions. Due to their participation in the stakeholder representative group, they were already in touch with several organisations. By that, they presented their plans to DCM, the municipality of Venlo, Limburgs Landschap and Rijkswaterstaat. Furthermore, they were also contacting the Cultural Heritage Agency (*Rijksdienst voor Cultureel erfgoed*) because this organization is responsible for the management of the historical water mill (Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, 2012). With all of these organizations, the project group was discussing their alternative plan. The discussion of the plans with other organizations had two advantages for the project group.

Firstly, their interest in developing own plans was recognized by these organizations. Consequentially, their position changed from a citizen group which is welcomed for participating, towards a project group with own ideas and plans. Due to this, also the interaction between the citizens of Lomm and DCM changed. From that moment on, DCM and the project group were collaborating and DCM was ensuring that the alternative plan of the project group was integrated in official documents like the zoning plan (DCM, 2014).

The second advantage for the project group to discuss their plans with other organisations was that their plan becomes more realistic and supported by other organisations. Through the discussion with other organizations, these organizations were able to state their opinion and points of attention for the further development of the plans based. These mentioned points of attention were based on the knowledge of the organizations. Due to their different perspectives and core businesses, the project group was receiving much professional knowledge for the improvement of their plans. By that, the organizations were exchanging their information with the project group. Interestingly, these organizations were not directly stating any conditions for their support. On the basis of this received knowledge, the project group adjusted their initial plan.

5.3 Adjustments of the initial plan due to formal regulations and plans

The initial plan of the project group had to be adjusted. In the following two major changes are highlighted; one was mentioned by DCM and another one by the municipality of Venlo. Furthermore, a possible adjustment in the future is presented.

Adjustments on the basis of a recreational network

The first adjustment was based on the discussion with the municipality of Venlo and changed the location of the biking path. As was explained before, the project group wanted to guide bikers through their village centre instead along the riverside. From the perspective of the municipality this needed to be changed because the biking lane had to be located along the river side. Their argumentation was that the biking lane is a part of a biking network on a higher scale. This means that the plan needed to be adjusted because of regional plans in which the biking network is integrated (Municipality of Venlo, 2014; Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014). The municipality was able to take this decision because they are responsible for the bike lane network. Moreover, the power of the citizen group in this situation was decreased since they do not have any resources that

were strengthening their position. This means, that the project group is neither owning the financial resources to redirect the bike lane nor they own the authority to decide about the location of a bike lane. But, it needs also to be said that the municipality is searching for a compromise with the project group. At the moment of this research, both municipality and project group are discussion if the bike lane alone the river could be connected with the village centre through a bypass (Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, Diverse).

Adjustments on the basis of national interest

The second adjustment of the plans was mentioned by DCM and based on obligatory regulations of Rijkswaterstaat. According to the regulations of Rijkswaterstaat, it is allowed to have only 10% plantation in dike forelands that are intended for flood protection. Since the area of the bypass is located in the forelands and the main function of the bypass is the protection of flooding's, only 10% of the area can be covered by plants. By that, the plantation in the area needed to be redesigned. As a consequence, no rows of trees are allowed and bushes need to be planned in small groups. As a result, the structure of plants needed to be adjusted. This adjustment of the plan was based on safety regulations that were stated by Rijkswaterstaat (DCM, 2014; Project manager ; municipality of Venlo, 2014; Werkgroep Rivierpark Lomm, 2012). Due to the contract between Rijkswaterstaat and DCM and the official purpose of the redevelopment of the area, Rijkswaterstaat has the power to state this regulation. By that, the plan of the project group is influenced by the interaction between DCM and Rijkswaterstaat. Also in this case, the project group has no power to discuss this decision

As a conclusion it can be said that the adjustments of the initial plan were reasoned by the context of the project and its relation to interests of a local, regional and national scale. However, the interaction between the project group and other organizations did not finish after these adjustments. In order to take the next steps towards a successful realization of this civic initiative, the project group needed to be in contact with other organizations as well.

Possible adjustments because of the future maintenance of the area

Another aspect on which the final design is depended is the future maintenance of the area. Since the nature area needs to be maintained after its realization the organization that is taken over this function is also able to influence the design of the area. This leads to the second part of the civic initiative. The project group did not only develop alternative plans for the design of the area, but they are also willing to maintain the area by themselves. In this second part, the function of DCM is limited since they are leaving the area after their mining activities are finished (Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014).

5.4 Uncertainties about the maintenance of the area

Since the development of the zoning plan has just finished, the second part of the project is going to be more important in the upcoming time.

However, the project group has already searched for citizens groups who are self-maintaining public spaces and contacting these groups for receiving more information. Furthermore, also local organizations for the maintenance of nature areas are already contacted. However, the possibility to maintain the area after its realization is also embedded in a context which results in uncertainties about the maintenance (Project group 'Rivierpark Lomm', 2014) .

Focusing on the context, the maintenance of the nature area along the flood channel is already regulated since Limburgs Landschap owns the area. Limburgs Landschap is managing and maintaining several nature areas in Limburg, by that they are a known partner for the maintenance of nature areas. The owner of the area around the bypass, the municipality of Venlo is seeking for an organization who wants to maintain the nature area in a professional way for as less as possible costs. This could be an argument to let Limburgs Landschap maintain the area (District manager; municipality of Venlo, 2014; Limburgs Landschap, 2015; Project manager ; municipality of Venlo, 2014).

As a conclusion it can be said that the success of the civic initiative is dependent on the ability of the project group to present a maintenance solution for the area which is satisfying the municipality. This would also result in more influence on the final design of the area.

5.5 Conclusion

The civic initiative “Rivierpark” has the goal to improve the physical living environment through the development and maintenance of a park. This civic initiative has risen up from a public participation process. The citizen’s dissatisfaction about the results of the participation process motivated the village council of Lomm to start up a project group.

The citizen group in this civic initiative has mainly been interacting with DCM. DCM was seen as an important partner for the realization of their project because DCM is responsible for the redevelopment of the area. Furthermore, DCM possesses human resources like necessary knowledge about procedures. In addition, DCM also owns parts of the area which are categorized as material resources. Based on this resources as well as the responsibility to redevelop the area, the realization of the civic initiative depends on this interaction. Without the interaction with DCM, the civic initiative could not be realized. Interestingly, the position of the citizen group to influence the plans is based on three aspects.

In the very beginning of the process, the municipality had arranged the participation of the citizen group in the stakeholder representative group. By that, the power of the citizen group to influence the project and to realize their ideas is partly based on the support of the municipality. This is an interesting point since it is not covered by the theoretical lens. Secondly, the possibility to realize the civic initiative is related to the willingness of DCM to integrate the citizens’ ideas and the acceptance of the alternative plan. This willingness is partly based on the organization’s perspective to collaborate with the local community. However, this willingness is also based on the professionalization of the citizen group. The professional background of the citizens in the project group is an important aspect for the realization of the civic initiative because this human resource influenced the willingness of DCM to cooperate with the citizen group. Interestingly, DCM has not used the dependency of the project group on its resources to influence the civic initiative.

A second important organization for the realization of the civic initiative is the municipality of Venlo. The municipality possesses the financial resources for the development of the area and owns parts of the area. By that, they are able to adjust the project and have also the power to decide about the future maintenance. This means that the realization of the civic initiative depends on the willingness of the municipality to realize the citizen’s ideas.

Part III- Analysis:

Analysis of cases through and beyond the theoretical lens

6. Analysing the reality through a theoretical lens

At the beginning of this research, a theoretical lens was chosen to explore the power of citizen groups and other organizations to influence a civic initiative. The theoretical lens was build up by four assumptions which were based on resource- dependency relationships between organizations. The dependency of actor's resources was causing power which leads to the possibility to influence the civic initiative. The theoretical lens as it was stated in chapter 2.1 was defined with these four points:

- Citizen groups as well as governmental and non- governmental organizations like municipalities or commercial offices are seen as actors that are interacting with each other. These organizations possess resources that are needed by the citizen group to successful realize their project. Only organizations with needed resources are seen as actors.
- These organizations are able to voluntarily transfer their resources like information, space or money to the citizen group. In case that the resource is needed for the successful realization, the citizen group depends on the resources of these organizations. Since the dependency of the citizen group on the resources of one organization is also related to the resources of other organizations, the whole network needs to be analysed.
- Based on the dependency of the citizen group, organizations have power and are able to influence the civic initiative. Based on this power, organizations are able to take decisions that have consequences for the project even if the citizen group is not agreeing. A second possibility for influencing the project is that organizations are influencing the decisions of the citizen group indirectly.
- The power of citizen groups is decreasing with the support in terms of finances, space or information by other organizations. In the same time, the power of the organization that is transferring the resource is increasing.

In the following, both cases are analysed and compared with each other on the basis of this theoretical lens in order to explore the power of citizen groups and governmental and non-governmental organizations to influence the civic initiative.

6.1 Necessary actors for the realization of a civic initiative

In both cases, citizens were collaborating within a project group to improve the quality of their physical living environment. These project groups were interacting with organizations to reach their goal. These organizations were seen as important partners due to different arguments. In Ysselsteyn, the municipality and the province were relevant actors because of their financial and material resources. Furthermore, also the human resources of the province and municipality were needed for the realization of the civic initiative. Interestingly, these human resources were not the most important argument for the project group to interact with these two organizations. Instead, the support with human resources of both organizations can be seen as a consequence of the exchange of material and financial resources. This means that both organizations first agreed on supporting the project group with their permission and finances to redevelop their space. As a consequence of this support, also human resources were exchanged for the realization of the civic initiative.

In Lomm, the project group was collaborating with the non- governmental organization DCM because of their responsibility for the redevelopment of the area. Furthermore, DCM was also an important partner because of their human resources. The municipality has been an important actor for the realization of the civic initiative because of their material and financial resources.

However, it needs also to be mentioned that both project groups possess human resources since in both project groups several members had a relevant professional background. This human resources of the citizen groups caused that the citizen groups were seen by governmental and non-governmental organization as relevant actors for the realization of the project. By that, the realization of the civic initiative depends not only on the resources of other organizations but also on the resources of the project group itself.

Regarding the theoretical lens, the resources of governmental and non- governmental organizations is causing dependencies between the citizen group and the organizations which cause a powerful position for the organizations. For that, the dependencies between the citizen groups and the organizations had to be investigated.

6.2 Decision making on the basis of dependencies on other organization's resources

In both cases, the realization of the civic initiative depends on space and finances. This means that the space was needed that should be redeveloped and that resources were needed to finance this redevelopment. Furthermore, it becomes clear during the process that the knowledge about bureaucratic procedures and technical knowledge were needed for a realization of the civic initiative.

High dependency on space

The citizen group did not own the needed space in both cases. By that, the realization of both civic initiatives depends on the exchange of this material resource. However, the resource itself has not been exchanged in both cases. Instead, both project groups did receive the permission to redevelop the space. Since both projects are spatially fixed which means that the project could not be realized on a different location, the substitutability of this resource is low. Following the argumentation of the theoretical framework, this low substitutability is causing a high dependency of the citizen group on the organizations that own the space. As a consequence, this resource causes in a powerful position of the organizations that own the space.

In both cases, this dependency is also used to take decisions that influence the civic initiative. In Ysselsteyn, the municipality owns the space and is going to maintain the space after its redevelopment. As a result, the municipality was able to adjust the project in relation to the chosen materials. By that, the dependency on the municipality's resource was used by the municipality to take decisions about the used materials for the project. That the dependency on a material resource could endanger the whole civic initiative can be seen in Lomm. In Lomm, the municipality has not yet been decided about the future management of the maintenance. In case that the municipality is deciding that the citizen group is not able to maintain the area in a proper way, the goal of the civic initiative could not be reached.

Decision making based on financial resources

The projects in both cases are including the development of space which is related to high costs. Not surprisingly, both citizen groups were not able to invest this money from their personal resources. By that, the realization of both civic initiatives depends on the financial resources of other organizations. In contrast to space, financial resources could be received by several actors. This means that the substitutability of this resource is generally high. Following the argumentation of the theoretical framework, this high substitutability is causing a low dependency on actors that possess this resource. This can also be seen in the case of Ysselsteyn. There, the project group received financial resources by the municipality and the province. Hence, the project group did receive money from two organizations which is lowering the dependency of the citizen group on the municipality and the province. By that, it is not surprising that the municipality and the province did not take any decisions because of the exchange of the financial resources.

However, in Lomm it could be observed that the financial resource of the municipality could influence the project. The municipality is still able to decide about the final design for the area because they possess the financial resources. By that, the difference between the case in Ysselsteyn and Lomm, regarding the financial resources, is that the financial resources are endanger the realization of the civic initiative in Lomm and did not lead to any decisions in Ysselsteyn. This difference could be explained on the one hand on the basis of substitutability. In Ysselsteyn, two actors were supporting the project with their finances. In contrast to Ysselsteyn, in Lomm only one organization is holding the financial resources for the realization of the civic initiative. Following the argumentation of the theoretical framework, this division of resources could explain the differences in power to take decisions about the project. However, another difference between the cases is that the project group in Ysselsteyn receive subsidy which means that the financial resource was transferred to the project group. In contrast to Ysselsteyn, the municipality in the case of Lomm is holding the financial resources and will finance the development of the area directly. This seems to be a slightly difference, but it results in a different power position of the citizen groups in the interaction with other organizations. After they received the financial resources by the municipality, the citizen group in Ysselsteyn was able to take decisions because they were seen as the actor that possesses parts of the financial resources. By that, it can be said that the transfer of the financial resources in the case of Ysselsteyn empowered the project group and limited the power of the province and the municipality.

Human resource

Next to the space and the financial resources to develop this space, also knowledge was needed for the realization of the citizen's plans. For the realization of spatial projects, knowledge about

regulations and procedures as well as technical knowledge for the realization of plans is needed. In general, the dependency on actors with this resource is low since knowledge could also be offered by multiple actors. Nonetheless, in the case of Ysselsteyn the province was able to take decisions that influence the realization of the civic initiative due to their knowledge. The technical knowledge of the professionals of the province was a reason that the design of the citizen group needed to be changed. Interestingly, the decision in relation to knowledge could only be made because the province owns the space and responsible for the safety of the road users. By that, the knowledge became a resource on which decisions could be made only in combination with another resource, namely space.

Another interesting point is that both citizen groups possess also human resources which they could use for the realization of their project. On the one hand, both citizen groups had manpower with which they were able to create plans, organize a participation process and participate in meetings. On the other hand, both citizen groups had several members with a professional background. Through these human resources, both citizen groups were seen as serious partners for the realization of their civic initiative. By that, the knowledge of the citizens is empowering the project groups and is helping to receive a serious position in relation to the other actors. Without this knowledge, the interaction between citizen groups and other actors may have not been started and the project may not be realized at all. This means, that the knowledge of the citizens can be seen as an important aspect for the start of the interaction between citizen groups and other actors.

Since both project groups have relevant knowledge due to their professional background it can be said that the knowledge of both citizen groups and actors are exchanged instead of transferred. The project groups developed plans which were realistic and supported by professional designs. Moreover, they were able to start up a (public) participation process. Since in both case studies some parts of the projects were developed also without the civic initiative; in Ysselsteyn the provincial road and in Lomm the whole project; the project group carry out the public participation process which had to be done by the actors in other ways. The professionals on the other hand, were regulating and managing the bureaucratic procedures on the basis of governmental procedures, regulations and laws. As a consequence both the citizen group and the actors were collaborating equally for the realization of the civic initiative.

6.3 Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the cases in Ysselsteyn and Lomm, it could be said that a civic initiative is realized by citizen groups but also partly influenced by other organizations. Citizen groups are searching for interactions with organizations that possess the needed space and financial resources for the realization of their project. In exchange to the possibility to realize their project, citizen groups are losing some influence on their project because of resource- dependency relationships with these organizations. Organizations like governmental institutions or companies which are performing governmental activities are able to take decisions or influence the decision making process because citizen groups are dependent on their resources. As a result of the case analysis, most influence is practiced in relation to the ownership of space and money. The cases also showed that the influence of organizations on the decision making process is limited if citizen group own the resources. On the one hand, citizen groups could receive resources by organizations and manage these resources on their own to use these resources as a basis for their power. On the other hand, citizens could already possess resources like knowledge from the beginning on. By that, they are seen

as serious partners for the realization of a project. This is an interesting point. The human resources of the citizen group are important for the realization of the civic initiative because there with the interaction with other organizations could be started. Without the professional background of the citizens it would be more difficult to start up interactions and receive support of other organizations. However, the human resources of the organizations like their knowledge and manpower are not important in such a way that dependencies are occurring on this resource. By that, also the possibility of other organizations on the basis of human resources is limited.

But, while collecting data about both cases and the interaction between actors and the influences on civic initiatives some doubts about the sufficiency of the theoretical lens occur. Several aspects attract attention that were obviously also influencing the realization of a civic initiative and the power of present actors. By that, the exploration of citizen's power to realize their civic initiative would be too limited if these aspects would not be mentioned and considered in this research.

7. Civic initiatives analysed beyond the theoretical lens

Both cases were explored through the theoretical lens. However, several aspects attract attention that were not covered by the theoretical lens but seems to be influential on civic initiatives and their successful realization.

The theoretical lens was not stating any assumptions about the start of the interaction between different actors. Within the theoretical lens it was assumed that the interaction is just present. Both cases show that the starting up process of an interaction between a citizen group and a relevant actor has an influence on the successful realization of the civic initiative.

7.1 Starting a relationship between citizens and organizations

Interestingly, citizen group seriously consider which organizations they need for the realization of their project. Therefore, the available resources of an organization are investigated and also the responsibilities of these organizations. In the case of Ysselsteyn, the municipality and the province were contacted because of their resources, but also because of their governmental responsibility for public roads and squares. In Lomm, the citizen group was forming an alliance with DCM because they were in charge to organize the redevelopment of the area. As a result, their plan was supported by an organization that was seen as a legal partner for the development of the area by other actors like the municipality. By that, the strategic choice of the project group to interact with DCM was an important step towards the realization of their project.

Next to the initiative of citizens to form relationships with organizations, both cases show that there are two aspects that are also important for the creation of interactions between citizen groups and organizations: personal communication and the interest of the organization.

Personal communication

The importance of personal communication for the creation of interactions between a citizen group and an organization could be seen in the case of Ysselsteyn.

In Ysselsteyn, the citizen group invited the aldermen of the municipality and the province for a visit in their village. Eventually, the contact between the citizen group and the aldermen was also positively influenced by the personal relationship of the aldermen and members of the project group. During the visit of the aldermen in Ysselsteyn, the project group was explaining their plans with presentations and excursions and convinced the aldermen of the importance of their project. On the basis of these personal contacts, both the municipality and the province agree on supporting the realization of the civic initiative. In the case of the province, financial support was even made possible by subsidies that were not that obvious. As was shown in the case description, the province gives subsidies for active citizenship. Nonetheless, the civic initiative in Ysselsteyn was supported by other subsidies. It could be assumed that the enthusiasm of the aldermen influenced this choice and made a financial support of the civic initiative in Ysselsteyn possible.

Interest of organizations

In both case studies, it can be seen that the own interest of the actors are an important aspect in formation of interactions between organizations and citizen groups.

In Ysselsteyn, the municipality wanted to stimulate active citizenship through the support in terms of financial and human resources. Based on this perspective, it seems logical that the municipality is

supporting the project group with realizing their project. Even if the province of Limburg had not supported the project with subsidies for active citizenship, they do have an own stake in the project. The province already had plans to redevelop the provincial road in 2017 and by that resources in terms of finances and manpower were already programmed. As a consequence, the province was just moving forward their project for 2 years.

In Lomm as well, the interaction between the citizen group and DCM was influenced by the motive of this organization. Since the area of the bypass is redeveloped anyway, it is not surprising that DCM started an interaction with the project group. In addition, the interaction between DCM and the village council had already been existing and the project group was able to use this connection to start their interaction with DCM. As a consequence, the organization's interest was an important aspect for the start of the interaction which causes in a support of the project group by organizations.

Therewith, it is seen that the starting process of an interaction with important organizations is influencing the successful realization of a civic initiative.

7.2 Influences on the process towards the realization of a civic initiative

Next to the starting process of an interaction between citizen groups and organizations, there are also aspects that are influencing the process towards the realization of the civic initiative. The theoretical lens was just focusing on the exchange of resources and by that aspects effecting the realization of the initiative and the power of citizens and organizations were not analysed.

However, both cases show that there are additional aspects that were influencing the power of actors in a civic initiative. Aspects that attract attention during the analysis of both cases were the personal communication between citizens and representatives of organizations, the different perspective on interactions and the importance of the governmental perspective.

Personal communication

Even if the personal communication between citizens and representative of organizations could positively influence the start of an interaction, it could also be seen that the personal communication could endanger the successful realization of the civic initiative. In Ysselsteyn, the communication between the project group and the project manager of the municipality was facing some struggles. These struggles were resulting in personal frustration which resulted in additional pressure on the citizens. Citizens are working voluntarily on the realization of a civic initiative. By that frustration about the interaction with an organization could endanger the motivation of citizens to continue with the realization of their civic initiative. As a consequence, struggles in the personal communications could easily endanger the realization of the civic initiative.

Perspective on interaction

Also in the case of Ysselsteyn, it could be observed that the project managers of the municipality and the province had different views on the relationship with the project group. The project manager of the municipality was working "for" the project group and the project manager of the province "with" the project manager. In this case, it could be observed that this difference had an influence on the power of the citizen group to take decisions for the realization of their project. In the interaction with the province, the province had the lead and the project group was consulted and informed. Therewith, the power of the citizen group was decreasing. Interestingly, this decrease of power is

partly based on the view on the interaction, but could also partly be explained through the province's ownership of space and knowledge.

Governmental perspective

The third aspect that is influencing the power of organizations and citizen groups during the process towards the realization of a civic initiative was the governmental perspective. In both cases, it could be observed that the power of citizens to improve the quality of the physical living environment depends on the government. The government has the power to decide how much power a citizen group should have.

In the case of Ysselsteyn, the province was able to adjust the amount of trees due to safety regulations. In the case of Lomm, the percentage of trees and bushes was limited on the basis of regulations for the flood prevention. Both adjustments of the civic initiative were based on regulations for the public safety. Since the government is a public institution that should regulate and manage the public safety, it seems logical that these adjustments are made.

However, in Lomm the municipality adjusted the alternative plan of the project group in so far that a biking route was not allowed to cross the village centre instead of be planned around the village. In this case the plan was adjusted because of a leisure network. Even if this adjustment is not based on public safety, the municipality was able to decide about this. On the one hand, the municipality was able to take this decision because they own the biking lane. On the other hand, a closed biking lane has not the same importance for the public as the safety of roads or the protection of flooding. By that, the perspective of the government was decreasing the power of the citizens to realize their vision.

7.3 Conclusion

This chapter stated aspects that are influencing the interaction between actors and the power of citizens and organisations. These aspects were noticed during the analysis of the civic initiatives and were not covered by the theoretical lens.

The cases showed that the start of an interaction with important actors depends on three aspects. First, the citizens need to strategically consider which organizations possess important resources or are needed because of other characteristics. This means that these strategic choices are already important for the successful realization of the civic initiative. However, since each organization is able to decide on its own if they want to support the citizen group, personal communication and the interest of the organization are important aspects for the start of an interaction.

These latter two aspects are also important after the interaction is started and during the process towards a realization of the civic initiative. The cases showed that personal communication could even endanger the realization of a civic initiative. Furthermore, the perspective of organization on the interaction and the related understanding of responsibilities are also influencing the power of citizens and organisations to take decisions for the realisation process. As a last point, but maybe one of the most important aspects in relation to the power of citizens to improve their physical living environment, is the power of the government. The government, unless of local, provincial or national, is able to regulate the power of citizens to take decisions that affect the environment.

Part IV- Reflection:

Discussion and conclusions of research

8. Discussion and conclusion

The starting point of this research was the observation that the possibility of citizens to influence spatial projects and policies has increased since the 1970's. Back at that time, citizens were invited to participate in the process, after that the government and citizens were collaborating for the development of projects and policies (Hurenkamp et al., 2006). Already since the year 2000, more and more attention has been given to bottom-up projects. In these projects, citizens are solving problems of their living environment on their own. Therefore, citizens are forming project groups and develop their own projects, these are called civic initiatives. However, the power of citizens to realize their civic initiative and the power of governmental and non- governmental organizations to influence these projects has been unknown. To enlighten this uncertainty,

the purpose of this study was to explore the power of citizens groups to realize a civic initiative in accordance with their visions and plans. The exploration of citizen's power to realize their project was related to the exploration of the power that governmental and non-governmental actors in civic initiatives have to influence the civic initiative. The research focused on Dutch civic initiatives that have the goal to improve the quality of the physical living environment.

The power of citizens to realize their civic initiative and the power of governmental and non-governmental organizations has been analysed within this research. On the basis of these findings, the power of both citizens and organizations is explained and discussed in the following. The first part of the explanation and discussion is focusing on organizations that are relevant for the realization of a civic initiative and the interaction between these organizations and citizens. Within the second part, the power of citizens to realize their project and the power of organizations to influence this project are explained and discussed.

8.1 Organizations and their interaction with citizens for the realization of a civic initiative

From the findings of this study, it could be concluded that citizens are inviting organizations for the participation in their civic initiative that have relevant resources for the realization of their project. By that, the resources of these organizations are the reason for their possibility to participate in the civic initiative. Also other authors state that resources are the reason for organizations to collaborate in the local planning system. Interestingly, this assumption was made for projects in which the government had the lead (Fox-Rogers & Murphy, 2013). By that, reasons for inviting actors to participate in the development of space do not differ if citizens do have the lead in the projects. On the basis of this study, the ownership of space and money makes organizations important for the realization of a civic initiative.

This means that organizations that own the space that should be developed are important partners for citizens. Since the focus of this study was on projects that are improving the physical living environment, it is not surprising that space is the most important resource for the realization of the civic initiative. Following the argumentation of Emerson (1962) and Pfeffer & Salancik (2003), the result of this importance is that the dependency on this resource is high (Emerson, 1962; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). As a consequence, this leads to a high dependency of citizens on the organizations that own the space.

Next to the space, citizens are also in need for financial support. The findings of this study are in one line with earlier researches that stated, that citizens do not possess all necessary financial resources (Bakker et al., 2012; Taylor, 2000). Logically, the need of financial support depends on the spatial project. In a case that a whole village centre is redeveloped more financial resources are needed then in a case in which a few flowers need to be planted for an improvement of the physical living environment. By that, also the dependency of citizens on organizations with this resource is related to the size of the project.

The resource- dependency relationship as presented in the theoretical framework of this study needs to be adjusted in one point. Within the theoretical framework, it was stated that the exchange of resources is leading to an dependency relationship between two actors (Kickert et al., 1997; Levine & White, 1961). However, in this research it is shown that the dependency on an organization is high if this organization is keeping its resource instead of exchanging it. Instead of exchanging the whole resource, just the permission is given to use this resource. In a case that the resource is exchanged which means that the resource is transferred from actor a to actor b, the dependency is decreasing. This is a consequence of the fact that actor b is the new owner of the resource and do not need to interact with any other organization for this resource.

The third category of support on which this study was focusing is knowledge, manpower and information. This research showed that citizens do have relevant information, skills and knowledge for the development of spatial projects. This knowledge is used for an equal collaboration with other organizations and also for the control of processes. By that, citizens are not inevitably in need for the support of information. Following the theoretical framework, the dependency of citizens on organizations with this resource is small (Cook, 1977; Emerson, 1962). This is an interesting finding because other researches stated that citizen groups are in need of professional information and knowledge to understand the bureaucratic procedures of the government (Denters et al., 2013).

Some researches even state that the perspectives and the knowledge of professionals that are working for the government differs that much from the knowledge and perspectives of citizen groups that they could be described as two different worlds (B. Boonstra, Vogel, & Slob, 2014). This study showed that several members of the citizen groups have a professional background in a relevant field and even graduated at the same study as professionals of organizations. Therewith it could not be said that citizens of the citizen groups and the professionals of the organizations do have a different worldview in relation to their knowledge that is needed for the realization of spatial projects. However, then the question is rising if professionals are still in need for the realization of spatial projects. The answer on the basis of this research would be yes. Professionals are not necessarily needed because of their knowledge, but because a paid professional has more time to use the professional knowledge than citizens that are realizing a project on a voluntary basis.

Within this research, organizations were seen as important partners for the realization of a civic initiative on the basis of resources. However, while looking beyond the theoretical framework it could also be observed that a citizen group is also interacting with other actors for the realization of their project.

Need for further research

While analysing the cases for this study, it become obvious that not only organizations with resources are important partners for the realization of a civic initiative. Because only organizations that were supporting the citizen group with resources were seen as important actors for the civic initiative, other organizations were not analysed for this research. This could be done in future research. Therefore the following actors could be an interesting focus of future investigations.

During this research, it could be observed that also organizations with an authority to sign contracts like village councils are important partners for citizens groups. Next to organizations with such an authority, also the interaction between citizen groups and the inhabitants of their village and local businesses are important for the realization of a civic initiative. All three groups (organizations with authority, local businesses and individual inhabitants), could be important for the realization of a civic initiative and could influence the realization of this project. By that, the interaction between citizen groups and their local surrounding could be analysed in future researches to understand civic initiatives in more detail.

Answering the sub- research questions

While explaining the organizations with which citizen groups are interacting for the realization of a civic initiative, the first sub- question of this research has been answered. The first sub- question was: *With which organizations do citizens interact for the realization of their civic initiative and why are these organizations important for the realization of the civic initiative?* To sum up citizens do interact with organizations that own important resources like the ownership of space or financial resources. These resources are important for the realization of the civic initiative. Furthermore, this resource shows also that citizen groups are supported with professional knowledge by different organizations. Interestingly, this research shows that the supporting organizations were mainly governmental organizations on a local and provincial level. Moreover, non- governmental organizations were also supporting citizen groups. Interesting to mention is that the interaction between this organization and the citizen group was arranged by contract by a governmental organization. Another

characteristic of organizations that were important for the realization of the civic initiative was the authority to sign contracts. However, this aspect has not been analysed in depth in this research.

In addition to the answer of the first sub- research question, also the second sub- research question of this research could be answered. This second sub- research question was: *How does the interaction between citizens and organizations can be described in relation to the exchange of resources and causing dependencies?* Summing up the previous chapters, citizen groups are dependent on the exchange of material and financial resources. In more detail, the realization of the civic initiatives is dependent on the permission to redevelop the preferred space and the financial support of other organizations. In relation to human resources, it can be said that the civic initiatives were supported through information, manpower and knowledge. But also the citizens were able to introduce this resource into the interaction with other organizations. By that, this resource is not causing dependencies between citizens and organizations, but resulted in an equal interaction between both actors.

8.2 The power of citizens and organizations to realize and influence a civic initiative

The main focus of this study has been the power of citizens to realize their civic initiative and the power of organizations to influence these projects. Looking from the theoretical framework, the power of citizens and organizations is grounded in the exchange of resources and dependencies. However, this study showed that the power of citizens and of organizations could only be explained in a limited way on the basis of resource- dependency relationships. As a consequence, also other aspects have been analysed and will be discussed in the following that are influencing the power of citizens and organizations to realize a civic initiative.

The explanation and discussion of the power of citizens and organizations is started with the general statement that the power of citizens to influence or realize spatial projects is always defined by the government. Consequentially, the government is able to decide how much power citizens are allowed to have. This statement is based on the findings of this research, but is also mentioned by earlier researches (Gallent, 2013; Taylor, 2000). The findings of this researched showed that the government is able to reduce or increase the power of citizens through regulations and laws and financial support. In relation to the Dutch context, it could be said that the government in general is supporting civic initiatives through subsidies and manpower. As a consequence, citizens could realize projects with limited influence of the government. Nonetheless, it could also be seen that the power of citizens is still limited on details that are seen as important by the government like safety or leisure networks. By that it could be concluded that the Dutch government wants to support active citizenship on the one hand, which is increasing the power of citizens to realize their civic initiative in accordance to their visions and plans. On the other hand, the Dutch government is still seeking for control and regulation of major and minor aspects of projects which is limiting the power of citizens. Following the argumentation of Taylor (2000), not only the perspective of the government is influencing the power of citizens, but also the complexity of the decision- making (Taylor, 2000). This would mean that complex decisions are made by the government and the power of citizens is limited. However, the government is also the organization that is determining if a decision is complex or not. By that, it could be concluded that the power of citizens is highly dependent on the governmental perspective. Fortunately for citizens in the Netherlands, the Dutch government is welcoming bottom- up projects and inviting citizens to start their civic initiative. Consequentially, the power of citizens could be high to realize their civic initiative and the influence of other organizations should be limited.

The findings of this study showed that this is actually true for the Dutch context in 2014/ 2015. Within this research, two cases are shown in which a citizen group was able to start up a civic initiative which is almost realized in one case.

As an extension on the theoretical framework, the successful realization of a civic initiative is already influenced at the beginning of a project. As this study showed, the strategic choice of citizens to contact organizations with necessary resources is important for the realization of the civic initiative. Next to the strategic choice, also personal communication and the interest of organization's are determining aspects for the start of an interaction, the exchange of resources and the causing realization of a project. Also other authors highlighted the importance of these aspects. These authors also mentioning that citizens develop strategies to convince representatives of important organizations to receive necessary support (Few, 2002; van Dam, Salverda, et al., 2014). Moreover, the observation that organizations are more likely support citizen groups that are leading a project

that has also advantages for their organization. Also in a case that visions and plans of a civic initiative correspond with the organization's visions and plans, the interaction between the citizens and the organization is realized faster (Buizer, 2008; Few, 2002; Taylor, 2000; Van Dam, Duineveld, & During, 2014).

The power of citizens to realize their civic initiative is not only influenced by these aspects of an interaction. Also the possession of resources is influencing the power of citizens. In relation to the theoretical framework, citizens would be able to realize their project without any influences if they would own all necessary resources. The cases that were realized in this study presented two citizen groups that did not possess all necessary resources. As was explained before, the citizen groups were in need of material and financial resources. This research showed that citizen groups that not only got the permission to use resources but actually received resources, were increasing their power and were able to limit the influence of other organizations on their project. Moreover, in cases that citizens also possess resources the interaction between citizens and organizations is equally and decisions are made on the basis of negotiations. Interestingly, the assumptions that were stated in the theoretical framework have not been sufficient for situations in which both actors do have resources and need to negotiate for a decision.

Additionally, this research showed that the definition of power as it was stated in the theoretical framework could not explain the complex reality. In the theoretical framework, it was stated that power is based on the exchange of resources and dependencies on these resources (Emerson, 1962; Hindess, 1996). In one line with the findings of this research, the power of organizations to influence decisions during the process of a civic initiative is partly based on their resources.

However, it could also be seen that the power of organizations to influence a civic initiative is also based on their authority as a governmental institution, public interest, different perspectives and personal communication between citizens and representatives of organizations. Moreover, this study showed also that also the governmental perspective and openness towards citizens is influencing the power of citizens. This cannot be fully explained by the definition of power that was stated in the theoretical framework. There, power was defined as a capacity of actors (Dahl, 1957; Hindess, 1996). After analysing the power of citizens and organizations, it can be stated that some decisions could be made by citizens or actors because they have power which is based on resource-dependency relationships. But, this is only a part of the complex reality and it needs also to be stated that power could also be grounded on other aspects like the discourse of the government or the interpersonal communication between individuals. This means that the governmental perspective on active citizenship is influencing the power of organizations as described above.

The relation between the interpersonal communication and power of organizations and citizens may be more detailed. As this research showed, the interpersonal communication could causes frustration. This frustration which is a subjective feeling could result in a power that decreases the motivation of citizens to continue with their project. On the other hand, their individual motivation is also the reason for citizens to continue with the process, to face challenges and to realize their project. By that, power is not only a capacity of an actor A to influence actor B, but as something that could not be assigned to one specific actor but is present in the sphere between actors. Moreover, this kind of power cannot be influenced by resources or dependencies, but is related to individuals that are the representatives of an organization and the situation in which they are meeting. By that,

power could not be influenced or analysed through simple schemes but depends on situations and factors that are effecting the interpersonal communication of individuals.

Eventually, these observations of power could be related to an understanding of power that is more related to Foucault than the understanding of power that was presented in the theoretical framework (Hindess, 1996). Foucault has not been developed one definition of power, instead his mind-set has been analysed and interpreted by different authors, also in the context of spatial planning (Crampton & Elden, 2012; Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002; Hindess, 1996; Lambrechts, 1982). Following their interpretations of power, power is not a 'thing' that is owned by someone, but should be seen in more philosophical terms. Following several authors, power is always present and is constructed by people (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002; Lambrechts, 1982). As vague as this definition of power is, it can be linked to the findings of this study.

Interestingly, this research shows that power is present within spatial planning projects. This is in contrast with collaborative planning as Allmendinger interprets it. In his interpretation, decisions in spatial projects are made on the basis of equal collaboration and negotiations between all actors with a stake (Allmendinger, 2009). On the basis of this research, it can be said that actors are collaboration for developing space, but that different characteristics of these actors are causing different positions within the interaction. These different positions are leading to a difference in power between actors which results in powerful actors that are able to take decisions even if other actors do not agree. By that, this research is supporting the research of Flyvbjerg and Richardson (2002) who are mentioning the presence of power within spatial projects (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002).

As a last point of this discussion, the meaning of the findings of this study for spatial planning in the Dutch context is mentioned. The analysis of both cases showed that citizens have the power to develop their physical living environment. On the one hand, this power of citizens is supporting the citizen's influence on their living environment. On the other hand, this increasing power is also questioning the connection of spatial planning projects on a broader scale. In a case, that each local community is developing space in accordance with their individual plans and visions the coherence between different developments could decrease. This is an interesting point for the role of the government in relation to active citizenship. The government needs to take a decision if a connection between spatial projects is needed and required and take the consequences of this decision.

Need for further research

The power of citizens and organizations has been investigated with an understanding of power that is defining power as the capacity of actors. As a consequence, the power of citizens to realize their civic initiative could also be explored in line with a different understanding of power. By that, future research could focus on this understanding of power to explore the power of citizens to realize spatial projects in more detail. Moreover, future research could focus on the relation between the governmental perspective and the possibility of citizens to develop their physical living environment. Therewith, the current practices of spatial planning could be understood and developed. Based on the observation that the Dutch government is struggling with active citizenship and their role in such projects, practice- oriented research could challenge this problems.

Answering the sub- research questions

While presenting the power of citizens to realize their civic initiative and the power of organizations to influence these projects, also the third and fourth sub- research questions were answered. The third research question was: *How much power do governmental and non- governmental actors have to influence a civic initiative and on which aspects is this power based?* The results of this study showed, that organizations are able to influence a civic initiative on the basis of a resource-dependency relationship. In a case that the resource is not exchanged but only the permission is given to use the resource, the organization is able to take decisions or to influence decisions that have a consequence for the civic initiative. The power of organizations is decreasing if their resource is also available by other organizations or the citizen group itself. This also means that an organization is able to decrease the probability that a civic initiative is realized if the organisation is possessing necessary resources, no other organization has this resources and the organization is not willing to exchange the resource. Furthermore, the power of governmental organizations to influence civic initiatives is higher than the power of non- governmental organizations. This is based on the possibility of governmental organizations to develop or remove regulations and laws that are affecting the realization of a civic initiative.

In addition, also the fourth sub- research question has been answered. The fourth research question was: *How much power do citizen groups have to realize a civic initiative and on which aspect is this power based?* On the basis of this research, it can be concluded that in these days citizens have the power to realize their civic initiatives without big limitations of other organizations. This is based on the current perspective of the Dutch government who wants to support active citizenship. As a consequence, citizens can receive support like for example subsidies without limiting conditions. By that, citizens do possess financial resources that are supporting the power of the citizens in relation to other organizations. Moreover, the power of citizens is also increasing of members of project groups do have a professional background and can use this resource during the interaction with other organizations. Furthermore, citizens choose their partners strategically and use personal communication to empower themselves for the realization of their civic initiative.

8.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, the power of citizens and governmental and non- governmental organizations has been presented and discussed. By that, also the main research question has been answered. The main research question of this study was:

Which power do citizens have to realize their civic initiative and which power do governmental and non-governmental organizations have to influence these projects that are dealing with the improvement of the physical living environment in a Dutch context?

To conclude this research, it can be said that citizens are in the fortunate situation that they can collaborate with organizations and receive support in terms of human, material and financial resources. In relation to the current perspective of the government, citizens are able to realize their civic initiative with the support of organizations without facing limitations that are changing their general project vision. This does not mean that all civic initiatives can be realized as it was desired by citizens in the first place, but that the influence of organizations is limited to minor adjustments of the plans and visions. This is not only based on the current governmental perspective, but also on the professional knowledge and motivation of citizens that leads to enthusiastic, professional and realistic plans.

This study was rooted in the desire to understand the current and future practices of spatial development projects with the focus on the influence of citizens on the physical living environment. Therewith this research answered the underlying questions of “Who is planning our living environment?” and “What is happening at the moment and where do we go to?” Answering the first question, it can be said that more and more groups of citizens are planning ‘our’ living environment. However, it could also be seen that these groups collaborate with professionals and interested inhabitants and by that it can be concluded that ‘we’ are planning our living environment. In relation to the second question, this study has presented a sketch of the current practices and trends. The future is uncertain. Either the government is limiting the power of citizens and will control and regulate everything by their own or the government is facing the challenges and an equal collaboration between interested citizens and professionals is becoming reality.

Supporting information

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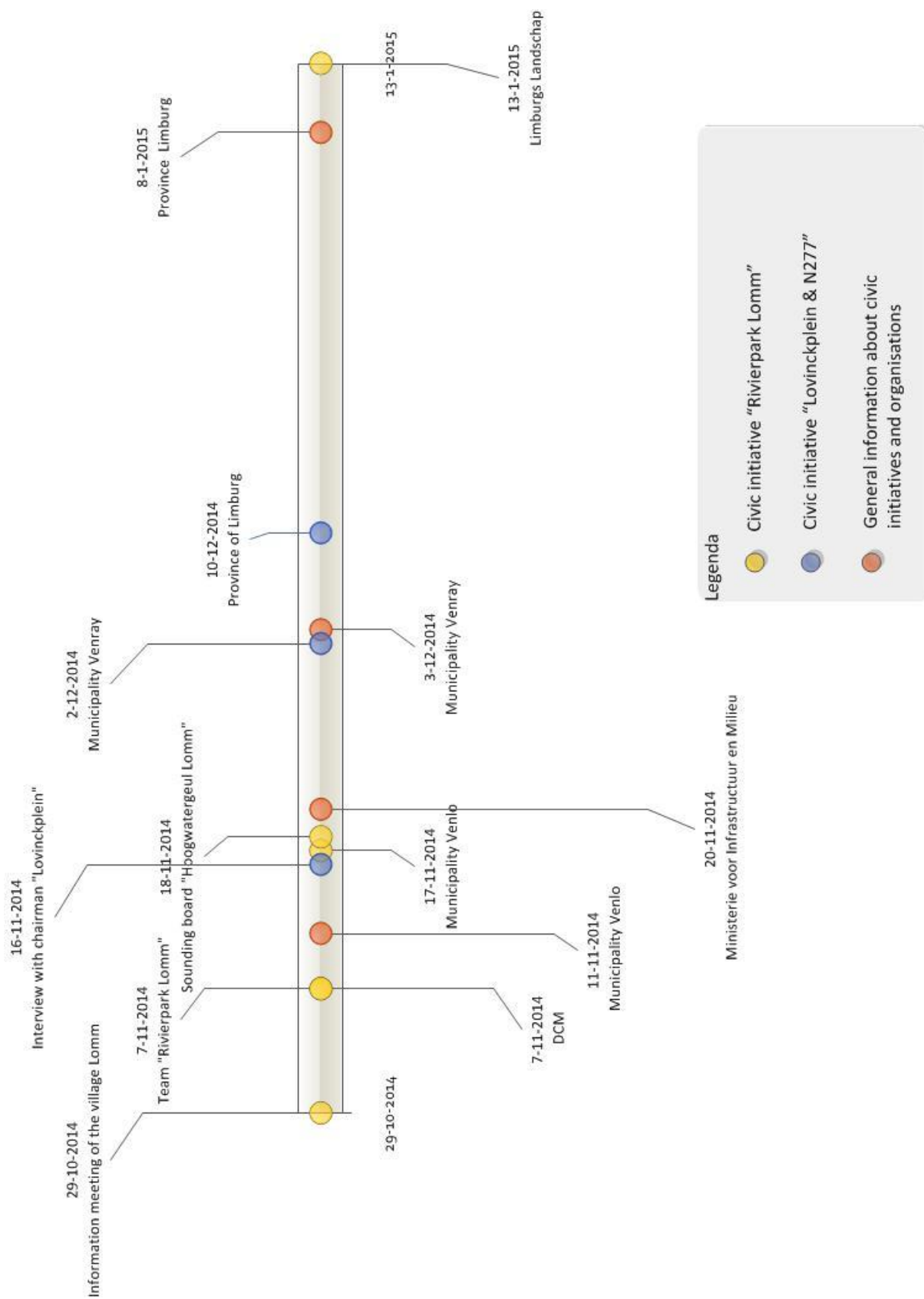
Appendix

Appendix I: Overview interviewed organizations

At the beginning of this research, an appointment was made with two representatives of the *Vereniging Kleine Kernen Limburg (VKKL)*. This appointment was used for a first introduction on active citizenship in the province of Limburg. Moreover, the representatives of the VKKL were mentioning the chosen civic initiatives. Based on this appointment, the civic initiatives were contacted and chosen as case studies for this research.

	Organization	Function of representative
Ysselsteyn	Project group "Lovinckplein and redevelopment of N277	Member
	Municipality of Venray	Project manager "Lovinckplein"
	Province of Limburg	Project manager "Infrastructure"
Lomm	Project group "Rivierpark Lomm"	Members
	Municipality of Venlo	Project manager "Flood channel Lomm"
	DCM	Project manager "Flood channel Lomm"
	Limburgs Landschap	Land agent
Government perspective	Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment	Project manager 'population decline and space'
	Province of Limburg	Policy advisor "Participation"
	Municipality of Venray	Policy officer "Social innovation"
	Municipality of Venlo	District manager
	Additional events/ appointments	
Lomm	Village information meeting Lomm	
	Meeting of sounding group flood channel Lomm	

Appendix II: Interview timeline



Appendix III: Ysselsteyn: Interviews

Interview with the representative of the project group “Lovinckplein”

Before the interview, much information was already available on the website of the project group (Lovinckplein.nl). On the website, it was also mentioned that the province of Limburg and the municipality of Venray were the most relevant collaboration partner. The representative of the project group was interviewed at his home in Ysselsteyn. The interview questions were seen as guidance through the interview. The interview was built up as a personal conversation to gain more information about the project and its context. The interview took almost 2 hours and was spoken in Dutch. Moreover, the interview has been recorded.

Project

- How does the project developed since the beginning?
- What is the current phase of the project?
- In which way does the project did change since the beginning?
- What are the current challenges of the project?

Collaboration

- Why does the project group collaborate with the province and the municipality, how does this collaboration started and how could the collaboration be described?
- Which organizations were supporting the project and does this support look like?
- Which persons/ organizations were asked for support and why?
- In which way does organizations were influencing the project?
- Which conditions were mentioned for the collaboration and the support of other organizations?
- In which way does the project changed through the collaboration?
- How does the project group deal with the collaboration with two different organizations?

Interview questions project manager “Lovinckplein” of the municipality of Venray

The project manager of the municipality of Venray was interviewed at the town hall in Venray. The interview took 40 minutes and was spoken in Dutch. Moreover, the interview has been recorded.

Project

- What is your function in the municipality of Venray and which role do you have in the project Lovinckplein?
- From your opinion: Who has which responsibilities and function in the project? Who is the owner of the project?

Collaboration with project group

- In which way could the interaction with the project group be described?
- In which way do you supported the project?

- The municipality owns the space of the Lovinckplein: In which way does the municipality have conditions for the redevelopment of the space?
- From the point of view of the municipality: Which aspects are important at the project?
- Which lessons can be learned from the collaboration between the project group and the municipality?
- What is your personal opinion about the stimulation of active citizenship?

Interview with project manager “Infrastructure” of the province of Limburg

The project manager of the province of Limburg was interviewed at the province hall in Maastricht. This interview was done as the last one in the context of the case study in Ysselsteyn. The interview took almost an hour and was spoken in Dutch. The interview has been recorded.

Project

- What is your function at the province of Limburg and which role do you have in the project in Ysselsteyn? Since when are you connected to the project?
- From your opinion: Who has which responsibilities and function in the project? Who is the owner of the project?

Collaboration with project group

- In which way could the interaction with the project group be described?
- In which way do you supported the project?
- From the point of view of the province: Which aspects are important at the project?
- Which lessons can be learned from the collaboration between the project group and the municipality?
- What is your personal opinion about the stimulation of active citizenship?

Appendix IV: Lomm: Interviews

Interview with the representatives of the project group “Rivierpark Lomm”

The first meeting with the project group “Rivierpark Lomm” was at a village information meeting in Lomm. There, they already presented their actual plan. The interview took place a week after this presentation. Three members of the project group were interviewed at the community centre in Lomm. The interview took almost 1 hour and was spoken in Dutch. The interview has been taped.

Project

- How does the project developed since the beginning?
- In which way does the project changed and which persons/ organizations are related to the adjustments? Why are these persons/ organizations important?

Collaboration with project group

- Which organizations are the most relevant and why?
- Which function did organization X (*depends on former answers*) has in the project and why did you contact them?
- In which way are you collaborating with these organizations? In which way could the interaction be described?
- Do you receive financial support by some organizations?
- Are there specific conditions for the interaction/collaboration/ support with the organizations?
- Which relation do the project group has with the organizations in the sounding group?
- In which way is the project influenced and why?

Interview with project manager of DCM

The project manager of DCM was interview in his office in Lomm. This office is located on the mining side. The members of the project group were present at the interview with the project manager. The group members did arrange the meeting with the project manager. The interview took 30 minutes and was spoken in Dutch. The interview has not been recorded.

DCM

- What is DCM for a company and what is your function in the organization? In which way does DCM has contact with citizens in other projects?

Project

- What is your function within the project “Rivierpark Lomm”?
- How could the interaction with the project group be described?
- Why DCM did started a collaboration with the project group?

Interview with project manager “Flood channel Lomm” of the municipality of Venlo

The project manager was interviewed at the town hall of Venlo. The interview took 30 minutes and was spoken in Dutch. The interview has been recorded.

Project

- What is your function in the municipality of Venlo and which function do you have in the project “Flood channel Lomm”?

Collaboration

- In which way are you in contact with the project group “Rivierpark Lomm”?
- How could the interaction with the project group be described?
- How could the interaction with DCM be described?

Interview with representative of Limburgs Landschap

The representative of Limburgs Landschap was interviewed at their office in Lomm. The interview took 1 hour and 20 minutes and was spoken in Dutch. The interview has not been recorded.

Limburgs Landschap and the flood channel Lomm

- What is Limburgs Landschap doing in what is your function in this organization?
- In which way is Limburgs Landschap involved in the development of the flood channel in Lomm?
- What is the opinion of Limburgs Landschap about the development of the flood channel in Lomm?
- With which organizations are you in contact about the flood channel?
- Which aspects are important for the design of the area?

Project

- In which way is Limburgs Landschap interaction with the project group “Rivierpark Lomm”?
- What is the point of view of Limburgs Landschap on this civic initiative?

Appendix V: Government: Interviews

Interview with the project manager “population shrinking and space” of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment

The project manager of the ministry of Infrastructure and Environment was interviewed at the ministry in Den Haag. The interview took 1 hour and was spoken in Dutch. The interview has not been recorded.

Perspective on active citizenship

- From the point of the central government: Which perspective has the government on active citizenship?
- In which way does the central government support active citizenship?
- In which way are civic initiatives important for spatial planning and in the context of population decline/ shrinkage?

Interview with policy advisor “Participation” of the province of Limburg

The policy advisor “participation” was interviewed at the province house in Maastricht. The interview took 1 hour and was spoken in Dutch. The interview has not been recorded.

Perspective on citizenship

- From the point of the province: Which perspective has the government on active citizenship?
- In which way does the province of Limburg support active citizenship? What are the conditions for this support?
- Which role does the province has in civic initiatives? In which way is the province interacting with civic initiatives?

Interview with the policy officer “Social innovation” of the municipality of Venray

The policy officer of the municipality of Venray was interviewed at the town hall in Venray. In addition to information about the general perspective of the municipality of Venray on civic initiatives, also detailed information about the project “Lovinckplein” was given. The interview took 1 hour and 30 minutes and has been recorded. The interview was spoken in Dutch.

Perspective on citizenship

- The political agenda, the vision report and the financial support of the municipality shows that the municipality is stimulating active citizenship. In which way is this vision related to the practice of the municipality?
- Which developments are still needed for the final realization of the visions?
- In which way is the municipality supporting civic initiatives?
- What is the procedure for the financial support by the subsidy? Which projects are supported? Did the subsidy changed during the last years?

Project Lovinckplein

- In which way are you involved in the project?
- How the municipality does supported the project?
- What can be learned from the interaction between the project group and the municipality?

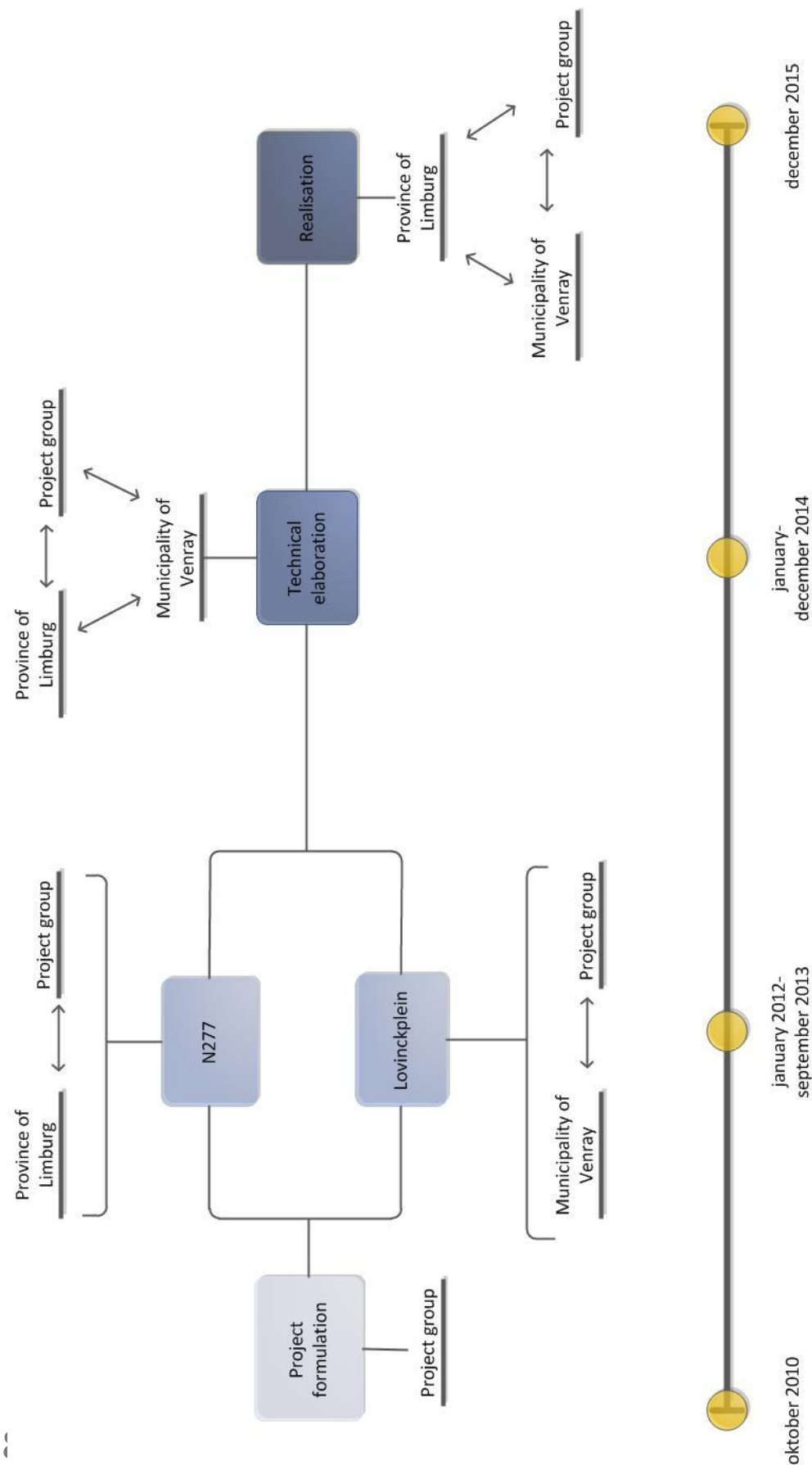
District manager of the municipality of Venlo



The district manager was interviewed at the town hall in Venlo. In relation to his function as district manager, he is also in contact with the village council of Lomm. The interview took 1 hour and was spoken in Dutch. The interview has been recorded.

Perspective on active citizenship

- From the point of the municipality: Which perspective has the government on active citizenship?
- Which developments are still needed for the final realization of the visions?
- In which way does the municipality of Venlo support active citizenship? What are the conditions for this support?
- Which role does the municipality has in civic initiatives? In which way is the municipality interacting with civic initiatives?

Appendix VI: Ysselsteyn: Project process



Ontwikkelingen Hoogwatergeul Lomm - door de jaren heen -													
1993		1995		1995		1997		1998		1999		1999	
2001		2002		2003		2006		2008		2010		2011	
2012		2013		2014		2015		2017		2021		2022	

