Master's Thesis
Exemplary practitioners in shrinking regions

Examining the role of exemplary practitioners in citizens’ initiatives in the dawn of the Omgevingswet

Master's Thesis in Economic Geography
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‘Van wie is de stad?’

‘Whose city is this?’
Preface

On October 4th – just two weeks before I submitted this final version of the thesis, the Dutch programme EenVandaag showed an item about Gebrookerbos, a citizens’ initiative that is more a network than a singular initiative and which is exemplary for the further goal of the thesis. It highlighted the challenges a shrinking region is facing and shows that it still is a very ‘hot’ topic. Hence, I hereby present to you my master’s thesis ‘Exemplary practitioners in shrinking regions’. The thesis has been written in the context of complementing my Master’s programme of Human Geography at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. Specialising in Economic Geography.

This thesis is a result of doing research and finishing the master curriculum in Economic Geography, it has been written in different contexts and above all different places. These places have been inspiring and helpful whenever I had struggles or did not find the right inspiration; ranging from places in The Netherlands: Nijmegen, Sittard-Geleen, Eindhoven & Maastricht, in Belgium: Lommel, and above all in inspiring places in France: the hills in the pays de Langres, near the lake Lit au Roi in Massigneux des Rives in the Rhône Alpes, on the mountain slopes of the Col de La Croix de Fer in the Pays de Maurienne. Next to this, a special thanks goes to the dynamic places where data material was gathered, and where people were interviewed.

I also want to thank a number of people for their help, patience and insights. Firstly, I would like to thank the professors and supervisors at the university; Professor Arnoud Lagendijk for his comments and fresh new ideas, Simone Pekelserma for her patience, the guidance and the flexibility whenever needed. I thank my colleagues at the internship organisation RUIMTEVOLK – especially Janneke Rutgers for her supervision during my internship, the brainstorm sessions we had and her support and feedback on my progress. I thank the rest of the colleagues for their input in my thesis session, and the overall support in the five months of internship – especially for giving me the space and time to conduct my own research. Not to mention all the inspiring events, meetings and regular talks during the lunch breaks.

Now the time has come to present my research and for the reader to absorb the findings and results which have been gathered in many different places in the country. I sincerely hope that it will provide for you, and others, some very interesting findings, possibilities and eye-openers.

Jordan Jansen
October 2018
Executive summary

Shrinkage, also known as population decline or demographic transition is present in many places around the world. It is persistent and is manifesting itself mostly in rural areas in Europe. In The Netherlands a number of specific shrinking areas are denominated. These are amongst others: Zeeland, Limburg, de Achterhoek and Groningen. These shrinking regions are notably manifesting themselves on the edges of the country. A large part of these shrinking areas are rural but a variant of urban shrink does also manifest itself. This can be seen in the old industrial area of Parkstad-Limburg which is comparable to for example the Ruhr area in Germany.

The issue is met with thorough discussion and scientific research and debates. Next to this, municipalities, regions, provinces and the national government have their hands full trying to put the issues on the national (political) agenda. Today, we notice a shift in the ‘shrink-thinking’: from negative to tackling it and from tackling it to seeing the opportunities. The shrinking areas often possess of many positive aspects that in the past remained unused. Think of more space for green developments such as the energy transition, vacant buildings that can be used for citizens’ initiatives and which can serve as experiment area. There is ample space, there are often less congestion issues and there is no need for more housing – these are often places that serve very well for recreational purposes. The network-city Netherlands comes into its own. Considering the scale of the Netherlands, it can also be considered as a ‘city’ in which shrinking areas serve as hinterlands meant for recreation and tourism, but they can also provide an important contribution to certain industries, logistical branches and the energy transition.

Next to these developments, jurisdiction and spatial planning has an important role in the country: turning the negative shrink-thinking into one with a more positive approach. Together with these developments the citizen is also becoming more visible and more participatory. Citizens’ participation, the participation society and decentralisation of governance plays an important role. The citizen has, and did often have, the feeling that he or she was not being taken seriously in important (spatial) developments that affect their own livelihoods. With the rise of citizens’ initiatives, we see that the citizen is becoming more empowered and starts to claim his or her space more and more. In places, where in the opinion of the citizen, policies have not been implemented properly. Places that are afflicted by social, economic and societal problems such as shrink and all its consequences, note that the citizens are taking matters into their own hands. The citizens’ initiative is hip.

Within these citizens’ initiatives there are several important elements that lead to success. On the one hand the context in which these initiatives are manifesting themselves and on the other hand the specific characteristics of the people who feel so involved with the local issues or initiatives. These so called ‘exemplary practitioners’ are exemplary persons that make a difference. Their motives are different in each context but also have something in common: wanting the best for their own livelihoods. The scientific and societal question is then, how far does the influence of the citizens’ initiative reach and what makes it to become successful? The main question arises: What can be the role, in the spirit of participation in the Omgevingswet, of so called ‘exemplary practitioners’ in the citizens’ initiatives in shrinking regions?

Jurisdiction has not always made it easy for citizens but neither for municipalities to handle with and approach new initiatives, that often emerge bottom-up. Citizens often stumble at a certain stage, for instance on getting permission for grants or to cope with a formalised procedure such as bestemmingsplanwijzigingen (zoning plan changes) where a municipality does not always offer the space, nor have to possability to align with the citizens’ needs and desires. The municipalities are tied to their own zoning plans and regulations, but also to politics, higher level governance such as the province and the national government. This will hopefully change. With the coming into effect of the Omgevingswet, a number of complex laws will be bundled, clearer and above all requires a mindset change. Governance officials, on all levels, are more closely linked to the citizens and participation gets a formal role in the law. Participation is a prerequisite; the shape is free.

As a recommendation we look back at the role of an exemplary practitioner – in which a number of cases are representative for the success. Hence, the ‘Gebrookerbos’ case in Parkstad-Limburg provides the ‘best
practice’. The unique role of a ‘broker’ together with the municipal account managers create carrying capacity, a formal construction of an informal get together. It makes the citizens’ initiatives feel heard. In the spirit of the Omgevingswet, this would be a step in the good direction, with a number of additions that are distinctive for exemplary practitioners. This exemplary practitioner, (e.g. broker) is not in service of governance nor in service of citizens. He or she is not biased and does not have all the necessary information or expert knowledge. He or she is not the ultimate professional – no, this exemplary practitioner is locally embedded, knows what is going on in the region, does have relevant contacts in important places, is politically sensitive and above all feels very much involved to the local problematics. He or she wants to make change happen through means of providing a safe space for interaction, transparent communication and consequently aligning different needs and desires. This exemplary practitioner connects the formal with the informal and importantly underlines the importance of the citizens themselves: they need to do the work and the talking. The exemplary practitioners operate in a network, not a project – that has an ending point: developments are never finished. Things are always open for improvement. But, this also requires a good portion of realism, expectation management and patience. In short, the exemplary practitioner is a bundling of good qualities that are often already visible among citizens and these qualities are deployed for the benefit of proper interaction between the formal and informal.

Executive summary (Dutch)

Krimp, ook wel geassocieerd met bevolkingsdaling of demografische transitie is aanwezig in vele regio’s over de wereld. Het is hardnekkig en komt vooral voor in landelijke gebieden in Europa. In Nederland zijn er een aantal specifieke krimpgebieden aan te duiden. Deze zijn onder andere Zeeland, Limburg, de Achterhoek en Groningen. Opmerkelijk aan deze krimpgebieden is dat deze zich vooral manifesteren aan de randen van het land. Een groot deel van deze krimpgebieden zijn landelijk maar een vorm van stedelijke of urbane krimp doet zich ook voor. Dit is vooral te zien in het oude (industriële) gebied van Parkstad-Limburg. Het is vergelijkbaar met bijvoorbeeld het Ruhrgebied in Duitsland.

Het probleem is onderhevig aan stevige discussie en wetenschappelijke debatten. Daarnaast zijn gemeentes, regio’s, provincies en de nationale overheid druk bezig met het agenderen van het krimpdebate. Momenteel zien we een omslag in het krimpdenken: van negatief naar aanpakken en van aanpakken naar kansen zien. De krimpgebieden hebben vaak veel positieve aspecten welke in het verleden vaak onbenut bleven. Denk hierbij aan meer ruimte voor groene ontwikkelingen zoals de energietransitie, lege gebouwen die gebruikt kunnen worden voor burgerinitiatieven en kunnen dienen als experimenteergebied. Er is nog ruimte genoeg, er zijn vaak minder fileproblemen welke in drukke plekken zoals de Randstad wel veel voorkomen, er is geen woningnood en het zijn vaak mooie plekken om te recreëren. De netwerkstad Nederland komt zo steeds meer tot zijn recht. Gezien de schaal van Nederland kan het ook wel gezien worden als ‘stad’ waarbij de krimpgebieden dienen als achterland bedoeld voor recreatie, toerisme, maar ook een belangrijke bijdrage leveren aan bepaalde bedrijfs- en industrietakken, energietransitie en als logistiek doorvoerhaven.

Naast deze ontwikkelingen speelt ook de wetgeving en ruimtelijke ordening in het land een belangrijke rol in het omzetten van negatieve krimpdenken naar een meer positieve insteek. Samen met deze ontwikkelingen speelt ook dat het de burger meer inspraak krijgt. Burgerparticipatie, de Participatiesamenleving en decentralisatie van de overheden speelt hierbij een grote rol. De burger heeft en had vaak het gevoel dat zij niet serieus genomen werden in belangrijke (ruimtelijke) beslissingen die hun eigen leefomgeving beïnvloeden. Met de opkomst van de burgerinitiatieven zien we dat de burger steeds mondiger wordt en steeds meer zijn of haar ruimte en rechten gaat claimen. Zeker op plekken waar het, naar de mening van de burger, wel eens op beleidsmatig vlak mis is gegaan. Plekken die geteisterd worden door sociale, economische en maatschappelijke problemen, bijvoorbeeld krimp en alle gevolgen van dien, zien dat de burger steeds vaker het heft in handen neemt. Het burgerinitiatief is hip.

Binnen deze burgerinitiatieven zijn er een aantal belangrijke elementen die tot successen leiden. Enerzijds de context waar deze initiatieven zich afspeлен, anderzijds de specifieke karakteristieken van de mensen
die zich betrokken voelen bij een probleem of initiatief. Deze zogenaamde ‘exemplary practitioners’ zijn voorbeeldige personen die een verschil maken bij hun initiatief. De beweegredenen zijn voor ieder verschillend maar ook weer identiek: iets willen betekenen voor zijn of haar directe omgeving. De wetenschappelijke vraag is dan ook, hoe ver rijkt de invloed van het burgerinitiatief en wat maakt het burgerinitiatief zo succesvol? Hier bouwt het onderzoek op een eerder uitgevoerd onderzoek naar de zogeheten ‘exemplary practitioner’. De hoofdvraag wordt dan als volgt omschreven: *Wat zou de rol kunnen zijn, in het gedachtegoed van participatie in de Omgevingswet, van de zogeheten ‘exemplary practitioners’ in burgerinitiatieven in krimpregio’s?*

De wetgeving heeft het echter niet altijd gemakkelijk gemaakt voor burgers maar ook voor gemeenten om met nieuwe initiatieven, die bottom-up ontstaan, om te gaan. Vaak struikelen de burgers bij een bepaalde stap, dat kan bij het aanvragen van simpele vergunningen zijn of bij het aanvragen van meer uitgebreide bestemmingsplanwijzigingen – waar de gemeenten niet altijd bereid (of de mogelijkheid hebben) om met de burgers en hun vraag mee te gaan. De gemeenten zijn gebonden aan hun eigen bestemmingsplannen en regelgeving maar ook aan de politiek, provinciale verordeningen en ruimtelijke visies en vervolgens aan de nationale overheid. Hier komt (hopelijk) verandering in. Met de komst van de Omgevingswet worden een aantal wetten gebundeld, overzichtelijker en moet er bovenal een mindset verandering doorgevoerd worden. Ambtenaren (op welk niveau dan ook) komen meer in aanraking met de burgers en participatie krijgt een formele rol in de wet. Participatie is vereist; de vorm is vrij.

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Introduction

The Netherlands is steadily growing in population size, from 15 million inhabitants in the beginning of the 21st century to over 17 million in 2016 (CBS, 2017). This brings along both positive as well as negative developments. The need for more proper housing such as social housing, family housing, child-friendly neighbourhoods, good public transport connections and green spaces consequently also increases. When thinking about this growth in the Netherlands, the bitter contrast of shrink also becomes more evident: a number of regions face a large-scale decline in population numbers and have to face some of these consequences. (Urban) shrinkage is furthermore a European issue likely to continue (Bernt, 2009; Ročak, Hospers & Neverda, 2016).

The topic of shrinking cities has thus been addressed quite frequently in the past decade(s) and are often focussed on examining the causes and effects, describing trajectories and discussing planning responses (Haase, Rink, Grossmann, Bernt & Mykhnenko, 2014). Both local and national governments as well as experts and scientists struggle to find a proper solution towards the increasing amount of (urban) problems that might arise.

Shrink is a broad topic; hence, the focus will be upon different layers and interaction of governance and civil society who are devising methods of proper cooperation and future-resilience within a shrink context. The research will investigate the pre-existing knowledge of shrink and moreover focussing on the future approach. It will look into the governance side, discussing the Omgevingswet, municipal and regional (‘best’) practices in participation and institutional arrangements, and will emphasize the methods of how ‘civic’ society can be involved. Furthermore, considering the role of for instance the regional image, the mindware of the people living there and the more intangible software (Ročak, Hospers & Neverda, 2016; Hospers, 2013).

The ‘thesis’ is that there is a specific role that could be filled by so called ‘Exemplary Practitioners’ – people who ‘make a difference’ in their or other’s livelihoods (Hulst, de Graaf & van den Brink, 2012) In the wake of a new spatial law, and in the context of a shrinking region, governments, citizens and local entrepreneurs are creating and influencing their own livelihoods. Their living environment is threatened by issues that shrink represents. The question remains how local, to regional and national (participatory) practices can be shaped to provide a sufficient answer to the future questions of shrink and adopt a method of ‘smart’ shrink and right sizing the region or city (Schilling & Logan, 2008). Consequently, trying to find new methods of coping with shrink in the framework of the Omgevingswet and considering the role of the earlier mentioned ‘exemplary practitioners’. Next to his, the Netherlands is facing a new planning paradigm shift. Partly being constituted through the new Omgevingswet. In this law, participation by civilians is one of the core methods.

The research is conducted within the framework of a local to regional knowledge institution – RUIMTEVOLK - whereby an emphasis will be placed upon the current developments regarding a new, integrated Planning and Environment Act, the Omgevingswet.

This research will start off with a description of the scientific and societal relevance regarding the issue of shrink in general and will propose how this research can contribute to the large amount of existing knowledge. Secondly, the research questions and objectives are outlined, followed by a critical literature review and conceptual framework. Lastly, I touch upon the methodology and the further research plans.
1 Relevance in economic geography

Economic Geography is a field of science that is studying the role of regions as locations for economic activities, which leads to socio-economic dynamics that are highly unequally distributed across regions. As a consequence, people, firms and organisations face very different challenges and opportunities depending on their location. Combining the above with an institutional perspective, Gertler (2010) advocates a reconstitution of institutional economic geography, one that has more ‘geography’ in it. It needs to “illuminate the processes by which institutions are produced and reproduced at a number of spatial scales, from the local to the national to the global, as well as promoting one’s understanding of how these institutions shape and constrain (but do not determine) economic action” (p.6).

1.1 Scientific relevance

Since the beginning of the 21st century, shrink -or ‘demographic transition’ in terms of population decline (shrink hereafter), has been widely discussed across Europe (see Haase et al., 2013; Hospers, 2012; Verwest & van Dam, 2010), however it remains persistent and overall considered as a broad societal issue. Policy and scientific responses have been met with modest success but fail to effectively address shrink issues such as vacant properties (Schilling & Logan, 2008) and urban (economic) decline; this means that there is a call for a broader and strategic approach and an institutional ‘change’. Not based on a single formula such as countering or anticipating shrink, providing temporal solutions, but on a durable approach that needs to be found. Durable in the sense that it builds on existing approaches and methods and formulas but that it also stands on its own and provides a new perspective which can provide handles for future developments. This sustainable approach requires a well-supported base among all stakeholders; this means all layers of society, including institutions, need to be involved and participate. In the past decade, a shift from top-down to bottom-up approaches has occurred (SCP, 2014) whereby an emphasis is placed on the public and their participation.

Shrink is considered place bound, and if we wish to understand it in a specific location, it is essential to integrate theoretical explanations with historical trajectories combined with studying specific impacts caused by shrinkage (Haase et al., 2014; to a lesser extend Gertler, 2010). Thus, considering the specific contexts (e.g. economic/social frameworks and background) of the issue. This will eventually lead to an analysis of the policy environment (institutional framework) as Haase et al. (2014) state and of the functioning of (economic) action by the involved actors.

Ročak, Hospers & Reverda (2016) furthermore state that research on more social aspects of (urban) shrinkage remains relatively underdeveloped within the literature. Even though shrinkage has proven to have a strong impact on the functioning of social institutions, social cohesion and inclusion. The authors stress the importance of also including a sociocultural view into the discussion on shrink. Consequently, it is imperative to address these different contexts in the field of policy responses, however, Haase et al. (2014) state that the larger part of the literature on policy responses is limited to planning, reuse or strategy perspectives and general assessments. Currently, the missing links remain with the policy debates regarding actor interests, civil society and governance issues (Haase et al., 2013).

In (economic) Geography, analysis and institutional analysis also requires more room for agency (Gertler, 2010). The common pitfall of an institutional approach is the constant ‘temptation’ to want...
to derive agencies such as individual behaviour and actions from national or local institutional structures. Considering the agency as an outcome of these structures. The agency, in economic geography terms, is asserted by so called ‘individual economic agents’ – managers, workers, entrepreneurs and venture capitalists; but also, larger organisations such as firms, unions, regional governance groups and universities (Gertler, 2010). The importance of these forms of agencies in combination with institutionalised change will be discussed in the framework of the Omgevingswet. In the context of shrink, agency of certain (economic) agents influences the way of coping and approaching shrink. The Omgevingswet can be considered as the institutional framework (and policy response) which needs a proper method of application in a shrink context; it requires the individual economic agents to act accordingly. Hence, the link is that agency of the different agents is currently being derived from the local or national institutions but that the Omgevingswet will possibly mark a change in this interplay. These individual economic agents could also be ‘exemplary practitioners’ – these specific individuals can play an important role in citizens’ initiatives and have not yet been researched in this specific context. Hence, the Omgevingswet requires thorough scientific exploration since it is a relatively new approach and is ought to be of a large impact to the long existing procedures, methods and approaches in Dutch urban policies, development, spatial planning and on social arrangements such as public participation. The Omgevingswet can provide the room for agency as Gertler (2010) intended. These aspects also play an important role in shrinking regions and their contexts, therefore, combining both the Omgevingswet and shrink in one research context will provide a relatively new and unexplored research topic.

This research will be explorative in the sense that the Omgevingswet has not come into effect yet, however preparations must be made by governance for the definite implementation – and influence on shrinking regions. The state of knowledge - on the Omgevingswet in relation to shrink - is currently still lacking and is in the process of becoming but nonetheless still requires an explorative research to fill the gap that currently exists in Dutch context. The research frontier lies in the need for more context specific knowledge and conceptual knowledge (Haase et al., 2013), this knowledge will make contemporary key challenges regarding shrink more clear. Here, the focus will be on the challenges of one of the main themes in the Omgevingswet, namely, citizens’ participation and the role of the aforementioned exemplary practitioners as important agents. It is important to find out where the current scientific and policy debates are at this very moment and above all what methods could be adopted. Consequently, this thesis can add more insights into the current ‘best practices’ of coping with shrink and prepare for the imminent future with the Omgevingswet.

1.2 Societal relevance

This research is set up as a rather practical research with a scientific backbone: the matters at hand are reviewed thoroughly in scientific literature, but the goal is to provide practical perspectives and methods of approaches to the aforementioned scientific gaps: participation in a shrink context in relation to the Omgevingswet. Practical perspectives mean that handles can be provided for citizens, practitioners and governance, in short, all stakeholders, to cope with the demographic changes certain regions face. These handles can be implemented via a method which is suited in a shrink context and which can become an integral part of participation in the ‘spirit’ of the Omgevingswet.

The societal relevance might not be initially evident, since the overall world’s population number is still growing, with an emphasis on a select number of countries. But, decline (both urban and rural) is also on the verge of becoming a larger societal issue. The urban population in for instance Japan (Tokyo) and the Russian Federation are projected to face larger scale population loss after 2020 (UN, 2015). Rural decline however, is mostly an issue in European and North-American countries and does not necessarily imply urban growth instead (UN, 2015, p.p. 16). This rural decline is also more visible
in Dutch rural regions such as the Achterhoek and Oost-Groningen, whereas the urban decline is more visible in urbanised regions such as Parkstad-Limburg (rapid urbanisation during the mining period).

The Netherlands is characterised by its intertwining of urban networks, cities and hinterlands. The daily urban systems of working, living and recreation have mutual relations (Tordoir, Poorthuis & Renooy, 2015). These relations have led to such an interwoven network that The Netherlands arguably functions as one large city-state or network-city. Also referred to as the ‘B.V. Nederland’ (Netherlands Ltd.) in regard to the economic interrelations (Nederland in Balans, 2017). In this network-city, there is ample space for multiple purposes such as recreation, nature, industrial activities and agriculture, which normally is not as evident in conventional cities. These ‘unique selling points’ are also present in shrinking regions but are not always successfully utilized or uncovered. The shrinking regions can fulfil different purposes to the whole of the Netherlands (such as a recreational function) and thus play a large role in the network. Consequently, the topic of shrink in these regions should not be ignored, whereas a reduction in contribution to the network could have consequences for the Netherlands in its whole.

Numerous regions in this network-city are shrinking or ageing rapidly and facing issues such as economic decline, vacancies and other socioeconomic issues. Different approaches to these shrink related issues have not been very successful in countering or coping with shrink: it is still happening, more problems arise and numerous cities are anticipating this shrink to happen in the future. It is time for a new, fresh look, upon the future development of a region. Both for society as science it is imperative to find out how, for instance, bottom-up initiatives, initially not affiliated with city-government, can influence the development and generate long-lasting, durable solutions and opportunities for a region such as Parkstad Limburg, the Achterhoek or Zeeuws-Vlaanderen.

Hospers (2014) furthermore stresses the importance of civic engagement in general, since the ‘locals’ are proven to have the best local knowledge and are thus imperative for creating more carrying capacity and coping with local issues. Hospers (2014) states that (urban) shrinkage ‘requires also a rethink of the division of tasks between the public sector and civil society’ (p.1519). In this context, we will look into the role of the so called ‘exemplary practitioner’. These are, in short, people who ‘make a difference’ for others and for instance in improving their own local livelihoods. Exemplary practitioners, as discussed by van Hulst, de Graaf and van den Brink (2012) touch upon both the scientific relevance: it has hardly been researched in this specific context, and upon the societal relevance: what role can an exemplary practitioner play in different methods of participation and bottom-up development in shrinking regions. And how can this exemplary practitioner provide a rearrangement of the division of tasks between the public sector and civil society? Consequently, elaborating this in the spirit of the Omgevingswet.
2 Research objective and questions

Shrink; its duration and arrangement in a certain point in time depends on several contextual factors (Wolff & Wiechmann, 2017). For some cities or regions, shrink can be only temporal phenomenon, for others it remains structural. Consequently, the context will mostly be based upon Dutch shrinking regions in which shrink is a broadly discussed topic and is considered as creating problematic issues (e.g. Verwest & van Dam, 2010; Hospers, 2014; Ročak, Hospers & Reverda, 2016). The objective is to find out what practices related to citizen participation can be used best, to devise an adequate approach and methods of coping with shrink in the spirit of the Omgevingswet. In this research, I aim to provide new insights into the literature and research on shrink, its socioeconomic and cultural contexts, and the Omgevingswet. With the ultimate purpose to make it easier for (local) governments as well as ‘civil society’ to cope with shrink and become more future resilient.

The research aims firstly towards an explorative overview regarding the possibilities of participation in the institutional framework of the Omgevingswet, today there is still little practical experience. More importantly, the research focuses on public participation in the context of shrinking regions and looks into the role of so called ‘exemplary practitioners’: “civil servants, professionals and active citizens – who make a difference” (van Hulst, de Graaf & van den Brink, 2012, p. 434).

The research is not one that aims to explore the Omgevingswet in its whole - (each) aspect - but it considers its emphasis on participation and how to possibly fill the gap of knowledge and add new insights and ideas to the ‘inspirational guide’ – which provides ‘best practices’ on civic participation: this ‘inspirational guide’ provided by long term researches on citizen participation in general (aandeslagmetdeomgevingswet.nl, n.d). It will look into how local practitioners and policymakers can fill the ‘free’ space that the Omgevingswet will offer and what role exemplary practitioners can play in this context. Hence, building on the question asked by Hospers (2014) on how (urban) shrinkage requires a rethink or rearrangement of the division of tasks between the public sector and civil society. Herewith, the thesis is that citizens’ initiatives can be aided in their participation process by involving an exemplary practitioner. This leads to the following main question:

*What can be the role, in the framework of participation in the Omgevingswet, of so called ‘exemplary practitioners’ in the citizens’ initiatives in shrinking regions?*

To answer the main question, a number of sub-questions will be addressed. Firstly, it is imperative to find out what methods and practices, in the context of public participation have been adopted in the past. Examining a number of particular cases where ‘exemplary practitioners’ play an important role: what are the methods of success, what are the difficulties and what are the lessons learnt from them?

- What practices are considered as ‘best practices’ of citizens’ initiatives in shrinking regions: what are considered successful methods and practices and what difficulties arise?

These best practices relate to the field of public participation in shrinking regions, what lessons can we learn from them? Concluding with a handful of recommendations, or better: ‘handelingsperspectieven’, which can be used as guiding line for similar cases in the future.

Secondly, the exemplary practitioner comes into play. Their role, their views upon participation in shrinking region and their specific characteristics that are important for a successful initiative.
• What is the role of exemplary practitioners in citizens’ initiatives in shrinking regions, and how is the interplay between the different stakeholders characterised?

• What characteristics of these exemplary practitioners are important for the success of the initiative – what are the ‘best practices’?

Thirdly, the framework of the new Omgevingswet opens new possibilities, such as public participation and a decentralized approach, how can this serve as an instrument to cope with shrink? In this subject the research will take into account specific themes in the Omgevingswet such as public participation, civic action, co-creation and bottom-up initiatives and the space the Omgevingswet might offer.

• What space does the Omgevingswet offer for exemplary practitioners: how can the exemplary practitioner play a role in the participation section?

Taking into account the interplay, overlap or discrepancy of the exemplary practitioners and the framework offered within the Omgevingswet.

The research goal has become clear: a practical recommendation for municipalities or regions in shrinking regions to cope with shrink in the context of participation in the Omgevingswet.

Consequently, the research will:

1. Consist of thorough desk research on shrink, demographic transition and the ‘common practices’ that already exist and are implemented in different cases.
2. Examine the planning paradigm shift through desk research and interviews with experts on planning and shrinking regions.
3. Examine the possible consequences of a (formal) law in an informal setting (bottom-up civil action) and adaptation methods: what space is left for people like exemplary practitioners?
4. Look into the formal versus informal character of on the one hand the Omgevingswet and governance and on the other hand the civic action, participation and initiatives.
5. Recommend the use of exemplary practitioners in shaping participation in shrinking regions.

By answering the questions above, the research will lead to recommendations for on the one hand governance (municipalities or regions) and on the other hand civic society to cope with shrink in the context of the new Omgevingswet.
2.1 Research model

Consequently, these questions will be answered along to this preliminary research model which is the next step of the research. It provides a clear image and overview of the research, its aims and purposes and the contents of the thesis (Doorewaard & Verschuren, 2010).

Part (A) examines the relevant theories about shrink and will provide the main theoretic framework. It will expose the core issues via desk research and provide an overview of relevant ‘common’ practices, themes and discourses. Furthermore, it focuses on the interaction between formal and informal practices of both governance and civic society. Next (B), on the basis of the theoretical framework multiple cases will be selected and their individual actors will be mapped. Mostly focussing on the importance of ‘exemplary practitioners’ and their role and essential characteristics in the specific cases. Consequently, there are two main groups of focus in the case study: Governance and Civil society. The next step (C) is the conducting of the research via the input of the cases and analysing the findings, e.g. via grounded theory, interviews and focus groups. These results will eventually lead to output for the end-result in which a recommendation and complementation to the existing scientific knowledge will be made and a more practical approach to the participation aspect of the Omgevingswet. Concluding with practical perspectives and recommendations (D).
3 Theoretical framework

Shrink, in Dutch ‘krimp’ is defined in terms of the PBL (Planbureau Voor Leefomgeving) in threefold: decline of population, decline of households and decline of potential labour force (Verwest & van Dam, 2010). Whereas developments in potential labour force can be just as important for the regional economy and housing as the general population numbers. Notably, the ‘public debate’ often only mentions the population decline (Verwest & van Dam, 2010).

In general, the PBL has broadly defined three main causes to demographic shrinkage: social-cultural developments (e.g. individualisation and emancipation), regional-economic developments (employment opportunities, de-industrialization and level of innovation) and spatial planning (housing supplies) (Verwest & van Dam, 2010).

Furthermore, shrink can be a larger scale issue as there are multiple krimpregio’s or shrinking regions (see Appendix II). A region is classified as shrinking region when multiple adjacent cities and municipalities are facing or will face a structural decline in any form of demographic shrink. In The Netherlands these shrinking regions are Parkstad Limburg, de Eemsdelta and Zeeuws-Vlaanderen (Verwest & van Dam, 2010). Regions that are not (yet) facing a structural population or household decline, but where a change from growth to decline is projected are called ‘anticipeergebieden’ or anticipation regions (Rijksoverheid, n.d.).

3.1 The current discourse on shrink

The issue of shrink is not always immediately evident: Europe experienced a population increase of over 3% between 2000 until 2010 (Wolff & Wiechmann, 2017). However, national differences are also playing a part, whereas several countries and regions faced rapid decline. Municipalities with declining population numbers can even be found in growing countries (e.g. The Netherlands), see map 1.

However, Europe is faced with an increasing number of shrinking towns and cities characterised by population decline (Ročak, Hospers & Reverda, 2016). Future projects for EU populations display a shrinking and ageing population which (possibly) leads to a more geographical polarisation from less to more successful cities and regions (Ročak, et al., 2016). Ročak et al. refer to so-called ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ (p.407).

Ročak et al. (2016) furthermore argue that the origins of urban shrinkage can be found and are deeply interrelated in the process of globalisation, whereas population decline is a core indicator of urban shrinkage (p.408). There is a difference between shrinking cities and shrinking regions, in Dutch terms, the term shrinkage is often referred to on a regional scale rather than in terms of individual cities. Hence, different regions are classified as shrinking regions. However, the south of the Netherlands faces the most issues regarding shrink in cities. One can see good examples of population decline in (older) industrial areas. Examples rise from cities such as Detroit in the US as in the Rhur Area in Germany to the once very successful mining city of Heerlen in the south of the Netherlands (Ročak et al., 2016). Shrinking cities can be identified as older industrial cities with significant sustained population loss and increasing levels of vacant and abandoned and neglected buildings, residential, commercial and industrial (Vey, 2007 in: Schilling & Logan, 2008). Notably, the lowest-income cities are much more vulnerable to population decline. These cities are often characterized as having a legacy of de-industrialization and lacking innovative capacity. These cities tend to lose talent and youth to higher-income cities, this generates a negative demographic dynamic (European Commission & UN Habitat, 2016). These cities could face long term decline in working-age population.
The current debate on shrinking cities has shifted from a ‘one theme issue to a policy field that incorporates a range of issues’ (Wolff & Wiechmann, 2017, p.3). The topic regained in attention after the 2007 Economic crises, even though the topic is not new, the major causes have changed in post-industrial times. Wolff and Wiechmann (2017) state that the major drivers are currently rooted in changing demographic and economic conditions, reinforced by shifting spatial configurations (e.g. suburbanisation).

Haase et al. (2014) developed a heuristic model explaining key processes and conditions regarding urban shrinkage. Speaking of clear causal relations is in the context if urban shrinkage not possible, it requires various complex processes (Ročak et al., 2016). Hence, the model does ‘not ‘explain’ shrinkage in every case: instead, it builds a framework into which place-specific and time-specific explanations can be embedded’. It is furthermore ‘a heuristic that enables communication, if not comparison, across different contexts’. In this way, shrinkage can be studied both conceptually as historically specific: ‘Instead of an invariant ‘process of shrinkage’, they portray a pluralist world of shrinkages’ (Haase et al., 2014, p. 1). Consequently, it is imperative for this research and its cases, to identify the core issues which are identifiable in a specific case in a specific context.

![Figure 1. Heuristic model of urban shrinkage (Haase et al., 2014)](image)

The abovementioned heuristic model will be used to elaborate on the context of a case and its place and time specific explanations.

### 3.1.2 Policy responses

Shrink creates challenges: surplus in blighted and vacant properties prove to deter reinvestment (Rybczynsky & Linneman, 1999 in: Schilling & Logan 2008), which in the end creates issues such as market dysfunction and depresses land prices and property values. But, it also influences liveability and the (equal) distribution of facilities, ranging from social facilities such as hospitals to economic facilities such as (new) businesses and shops (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu, 2017/18).

These problems have created incentives for policy makers and the academic world to devise approaches and strategies towards, mostly coping with the issues that arise. Hospers (2014) identified four types of policy responses in Europe: trivializing, whereby the governance does not react, and status quo is maintained; countering, which means that policies are implemented to foster urban growth, to promote new building and to promote the area by means of place marketing; accepting, which implies that policies are adapted to mitigate the negative effects of shrinkage (Verwest, 2011;
in Hospers 2014). Lastly policies are implemented to ‘utilize’ shrink, this perspective starts with a positive view on shrinking cities (or regions) and tries to take advantage of it, whereas the starting point is that the quality of life does not depend on population density. The advantage of the latter approach is that it is future oriented and stimulates local entrepreneurship (p.p. 1511-14). Furthermore, the emphasize seems to shift more to the opportunities - such as more space for the energy-transition and recreational purposes - that shrink can offer for regions currently facing these changes (Ruimtevolk session, March 2018).

3.1.3 The Omgevingswet and shrink
When discussing policy responses, inevitably the Omgevingswet comes into play; in the Netherlands, this new spatial legislation is expected to come into effect in 2021. This law is expected to make the rules and regulations in Dutch spatial policy and planning easier, better accessible for all stakeholders and above all more decentralized, which gives local governments more possibilities for customization. This means that cities or regions devise their own strategic views (e.g. an Omgevingsvisie) and a local approach towards issues (such as shrink) is facilitated much better. Furthermore, participation of citizens is one of the core themes in the new Omgevingswet (Omgevingswetportaal, n.d.). As shortly mentioned, part of the Omgevingswet is the formulation of the Omgevingsvisie, this is a strategic vision for the longer term applicable on the entire physical living environment in a certain region. Themes that are discussed are for instance related to the coherence between space, water, environment, nature, mobility, infrastructure and cultural heritage (aandeslagmetdeomgevingswet.nl, n.d.). The basis of the plans always lies in the principle of environmental awareness. The Omgevingsvisie needs to be formulated in three different governance layers: National (Het Rijk), Regional (Provincie) and local (Gemeente).

With the arriving of the Omgevingswet, a number of laws are bundled together and become more clear. The government officials have to interact with the citizens and participation gets a more formal role in the law; participation is a prerequisite, but the interpretation and implementation of it is free.

As mentioned before, shrink can also offer opportunities, currently, the national government is in the process of formulation a national Omgevingsvisie (NOVI) in which the shrinking regions of the Netherlands are also represented have gained a special position. Positioning the regions along with their specific qualities, ambitions and opportunities in the framework of the future Omgevingswet (Ruimtevolk Session, 2018). The four main strategic pillars: towards a sustainable and competing economy; towards a climate-proof and neutral society; towards a future resilient and accessible living environment and towards a valuable living environment, are connected to the issues and challenges the shrinking regions are facing (Ruimtevolk session, 2018; Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu, 2018)

3.1.4 Right-sizing cities
Another physical- policy related approach in shrink is suggested by Schilling and Logan (2008); they emphasize the importance of investing in local assets (somewhat similar to grasping the opportunities that shrinking regions have to offer) for the revitalization of cities. Central is the concept of right-sizing the city (which in this case can also be adopted on a regional scale); which means that dysfunctional markets and distressed neighbourhoods are stabilized through means of a better alignment between the city’s built-environment and the needs of the current and future populations (p.453).

One of the ways right-sizing comes into play can be in relation with planning green infrastructure, Schilling and Logan (2008) address this case and the benefits green infrastructure can have on a shrinking city with an abundance of vacant buildings:

“A green infrastructure network for shrinking cities will involve the regeneration of vacant properties for new parks, community gardens, restored habitat, flood mitigation and storm water treatment sites, and urban agriculture plots linked with existing green spaces” (p.454)
Currently we can see this trend emerging in urban areas in general (e.g. urban farming and green spaces) but it is also a method in shrinking regions. Numerous citizens’ initiatives are focused on emphasising the green in the area. An example thereof can be the Dutch city of Heerlen, whereby there have been numerous initiatives regarding urban farming¹ (Damoiseaux & Reinders, 2017) and currently initiatives have been undertaken to demolish a number of vacant buildings in the city centre in favour of more green spaces (IBA-Parkstad.nl, 2018).

Solution-wise, Schilling and Logan (2008) propose several approaches. A network of shrinking cities (regions) can be a possibility. For the diffusion of policy innovations, not remaining a local solution but providing options for different contexts. Essentially, the Netherlands is on its way of creating a similar network, a recent example of this is the common cooperation between the provinces in the Netherlands for the formulation of the National Vision on the environment (Nationale Omgevingsvisie a.k.a. NOVI and Nederland in Balans, 2017²). They build on the power of networks; in the research by Booher and Innes (2002), collective actions can achieve goals that initially were not attainable without cooperation. The transfer and diffusion of these innovations can unite individual stakeholders and interest groups whom can now act together and significantly influence their own livelihoods.

Lastly, they discuss Planning Innovative Neighbourhood design, where the planning system needs to be re-evaluated and designed differently. Essentially, this is being tackled through the new Omgevingswet. Whereby new instruments are brought into being, one of them being the Omgevingsvisie: this instrument can make strategies and regional visions clearer and will make it possible for municipalities and provinces to provide a more local approach in accordance with the specific contextual needs. This shift from centralized to decentralized government has become more evident in the last decades and is in line with the need for so called ‘maatwerk’ in which local governments, local issues and challenges require thorough reconstitution and evaluation of needs in line with their specific contexts.

3.2 Connecting the ‘systemworld’ with the ‘lifeworld’

From focusing on policy responses, we move to the ‘social’ in a shrink context. Since this thesis focuses on both the formal (e.g. rules & regulations, procedures and jurisdictions) and the informal (e.g. the citizens, bottom-up initiatives & local empowerment), one can derive two main parts of society based on humanistic perspectives. One of them being the ‘Lifeworld’. The Lifeworld focuses on the interconnectedness of people and their situatedness in everyday environments, the nature of human experience (Aitken & Valentine, 2014). Jürgen Habermas (1984) argues that society is split in two main realms: ‘system’ and ‘lifeworld’ whereby the system is made up of the institutions of government and (capitalist) market (Ingles & Thorpe, 2012). The lifeworld is constituted through the social relations between individuals and as Habermas puts it, the communicative rationalization involved in these social relations. In practical terms: people’s taken for granted everyday life and practices. It is imperative, when issues are arising in the case of shrink, to connect the lifeworld, the daily issues people face, with the ‘systemworld’, which relates to the practices of the ‘system’ such as institutions, experts, governance etcetera. Habermas’ aim was to reverse the process of the system taking over or ‘colonizing’ the lifeworld. Whereby certain negative rationalization comes to dominate the lifeworld’s communicative rationality. Through means of communication and rationalization, it is possible to create changes: communicative rationality, its democratic impulses and potentials, can move out of

¹ Gebrookerbos, van weiland naar wij-land, publication on public initiatives in the municipality of Heerlen. Cooperation with the municipality, IBA, NEIMED, the Province of Limburg, INTERREG and the Open University.
² Sources retrieved from RUIMTEVOLK sessions with 7 ‘shrink provinces’ about the framing and positioning in the NOVI
the lifeworld and restructure the system: institutions can be reshaped for the ‘discursive democracy’. Practically this means increasing the input of the informal (lifeworld) to the formal (system), here one could look into the importance of intermediary organisations or persons, these are considered ‘exemplary practitioners’ (van Hulst, de Graaf & van den Brink, 2012). One of the few researches that investigated these kinds of ‘brokers’ that connect the formal with the informal. Current Dutch ‘Participatiesamenleving’ shows more practices between the formal and informal where citizen participation for example is encouraged in policies and decision-making. This participation is being conducted in ‘invited spaces’ (Cornwall, 2004).

3.2.1 Systemworld as formal and lifeworld as informal
Earlier, the formal and informal were briefly touched upon. In this thesis one of the central focuses is how the local (e.g. communities and individuals and exemplary practitioners) in both urban and rural shrinking areas have responded to the challenge of shrink. Spatial planning - a formal policy instrument - is only one way of approaching the issues arising by shrink. Next to a government who responds to issues, civic society is also responding, and more different actors are entering the playing field. Here the exemplary practitioner is also playing his or her part.

There is no clear-cut demarcation of where formal strategies stop and informal strategies begin (Hospers & Syssner, 2018). However, it is feasible to demarcate a clear distinction and therefore the following is argued: formal strategies emerge from formal institutions, these institutions are primarily based on explicitly defined rules and norms, rights and duties to enable and limit social interactions and to achieve certain goals and structure the distribution of power (Meyer, 2006 in: Hospers & Syssner, 2018). Informal institutions involve the social aspects such as codes of conducts, norms and values and norms of behaviour and conventions. Furthermore, informality is often portrayed as ‘the other’ (a residue) to formal institutions: what cannot be dealt with via formal regulations is left to informal institutions (Porter, 2011 in: Meijer & van der Krabben, 2018)

Formality is a concept to understand context-specific arrangements, be it public or policy arrangements. Furthermore, conceptualizing the role of different actors other than primarily the governance side. Characteristics of the formal are described along the lines of predictability, rationality and regularity. The abovementioned conceptualisation of formal and informal will be taken as starting point for the remainder of this thesis, in the next paragraphs this will be elaborated more thoroughly.

3.3 Participation, civic action and engagement
Participation, civic action and engagement are all different denominators for a core notion that is derived from complexity theory – namely self-organisation. This makes it possible to provide and understanding of the rise and becoming of citizens’ initiatives (Boonstra, 2015). This complexity theory will be discussed in chapter 5. This self-organisation is a pivotal part of the research and requires theoretical elaboration.

In the framework of the Omgevingswet, participation by citizens is a core value and the role of an ‘exemplary practitioner’ is facilitated through participation. Through means of participation (by citizens, region, province, city or village) different perspectives are given more opportunities to be heard, knowledge to be spread and creativity to bloom. The Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu (IenM) (2017)³ describes participation as ‘involving stakeholders at an early stage (civilians, companies, societal organisations, governance) with the process of decision-making about a project or activity’ (p.1). This happens to increase the carrying capacity and improve decision-making which would require less time than it currently needs.

³ Currently the Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat
Important to note is that these aspects are guidelines and that participation in a particular context requires customization e.g. ‘maatwerk’ and therefore the law does not prescribe ‘how to’.

The Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (SCP) defines two ways of civil participation: self-reliant and policy-influencing. The self-reliant participation relates to people who actually take matters into their own hands and are actively working themselves (e.g. cleaning the neighbourhood or running a community garden). The latter refers to influencing policies or institutions, this happens via voting, lobbying, and using public participation (van Houwelingen et al., 2014).

Participation is not a new topic in Dutch policy, rather, it has been showing up frequently in policy literature since the second half of the past century. The SCP published their first document on the ‘ideal of the participation society’ in 1974 and there were talks about the ‘verzorgingsstaat’ being transformed into a ‘participatiestaat’ (van Houwelingen et al. 2014). However, attention has thoroughly increased after the turning of the century, whereby the most notable is the 2013’s troonrede (King’s speech), where the King, for the first time, formally addressed the aspect of the ‘participatiesamenleving’ (participation society) and thus brought the topic into the larger public sphere and as subject for debates (van Houwelingen et al. 2014).

The SCP noted that on a national scale, it is still very difficult for citizens to have a direct influence on national issues, notwithstanding petitions, blockages, manifestations and internet-campaigns. However, the upcoming of new media forms such as the internet (Facebook, Twitter) have made it easier for people to form a collective citizen force. Also, it is possible for people to place a topic on the policy agenda through means of a citizens’ initiative (Burgerinitiatief).

Conversely, van Houwelingen et al. (2014) noted that on the local level, more has happened regarding citizen influence (Loots et al. 2013 in van Houwelingen et al. 2014). The national government is expecting more and more of citizens to become (publicly) active and to take matters into their own hands, whereas the government on the other hand does not want to give up their part of their authority. This is where tension is created between the citizens and their initiatives on the one side, versus the government(-fed/led) initiatives on the other side.

Consequently, in the past decades, the level of self-reliant civil participation remained quite at the same level. Even though Dutch citizens have proven to be less involved in unions in (local) clubs such as labour unions or churches, people are more often taking part in smaller and informal ways (van den Berg et al. 2011 in van Houwelingen et al. 2014). However, the SCP stated that the level of policy-influencing participation does not show large shifts. Whereby a difference can be noted in the amount of contribution to (inter)national issues, which has lowered, in opposite to the percentage of people that are actively involved in the local issues in their community or municipality (van Houwelingen et al. 2014). Today, new initiatives such as the ‘Right to Challenge’ are aimed at improving the policy-influencing participation, this will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.3.1 Civic action and engagement

Hospers (2014) also stressed the importance of engaging citizens, the intrinsic value of citizen involvement has been emphasized for many years (van Houwelingen et al. 2014, Arnstein, 1969; Maier, 2001; Kirkpatrick, 2007; in: Hospers, 2014). In theory, several advantages can be described. Starting with more local knowledge, greater acceptance and carrying capacity for (unpopular) decisions. Increasing place-attachment which motivates civic engagement which in the end can lead to a “keep”-factor: residents are less likely to move out (Jacobs, 1961, in: Hospers, 2014). Lastly, civic participation and social capital in the community are linked together whereby (urban) shrinkage can act as ‘trigger’ that brings people together to prevent further deterioration, this can lead to more social cohesion and improved quality of life (Specht, 2013 in: Hospers, 2014)

The (ought) participation is influenced by a number of indicators. Ročak et al., (2016) identified
three indicators regarding human motivations and social connections. These social aspects should also be discussed in the debate regarding shrink. They identified Hardware, software and mindware: Hardware refers to the visible (physical) aspects of shrink which are more tangible such as vacancy or oversized infrastructure. Secondly, mindware refers to the image of an area which can affect current trends and even impact future developments and trends. Whereas a more negative outlook upon developments can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy and a certain (negative) image or reputation a shrinking region or city has acquired may result in a less attractive atmosphere for both newcomers as well as the inhabitants themselves. Lastly, software refers to the social structure of the area (p.p. 408-409). The software is important since it concerns social capital. Which Ročak et al., (2016) define as ‘the capacity of a society to form interactions and networks among its member, which is based on mutual trust’. The authors stress the importance of attention towards these sorts of social transformation in shrinking cities to understand social dynamics and influences on civic society.

![Diagram of three scenarios of civic action](image)

**Figure 2. Scenarios of civic action in the case of urban shrinkage. Source: Ročak, Hospers & Neverda (2016)**

Furthermore, there are roughly three scenarios when it comes to civic action. In short: increasing civic action when there is a sense of urgency among the public, secondly no change in civic action whereby ‘business as usual’ (Zero-Alternative) is the stand point and lastly a reduction in civic action, where a loss of morale is an issue.

### 3.3.2 Citizens’ initiatives

The upcoming of citizens initiatives demarcates a change in the spatial planning paradigm in The Netherlands (Meijer & van der Krabben, 2018). The formal planning tasks are subject to devolution and a loosening in regulations. These overall developments have led to decentralization of planning tasks (e.g. from active policies towards facilitating policies in land-use). As shortly mentioned before, this change is characterized by new terms and concepts such as the ‘participatory society’ and ‘do-democracy’. Similar examples can be found in other countries such as ‘big society’ in the UK and ‘burgerkommunen’ in Germany (van Houwelingen et al. 2014)

This transition means in the first place a reallocation of tasks and duties, but it also means a transition in responsibilities and redistribution of planning roles and power position (Meijer & van der Krabben, 2018). Consequently, citizens are taking matters ‘into their own hands’ more and more, and start to develop planning initiatives themselves, which seems to be a long-lasting trend. Citizens are found to have a more active and critical role on development -and policy processes and demand getting involved more. Primarily, citizens were ‘merely’ consulted in planning processes, nowadays, as Meijer
& van der Krabben call it ‘the latest generation’ concern “self-organization, whereby collectives of citizens develop and implement their own initiatives” (Boonstra, 2016 in: Meijer & van der Krabben, 2018, p. 746).

The urgency and desirability of active participation also relates to economic reasons. As Boonstra (2015) emphasized the effect of a vibrant civil society which can have an overall impact on the performing of a city, region or country. Whereas large involvement has proven to stimulate both the social and economic participation of individuals and improving their overall capacities and connectivity (Min VROM 2007a, WRR 2012, in: Boonstra, 2015). Furthermore “Some economists even argue that a vibrant civil society is of crucial importance for economic growth (Putnam, 2007), and that through a diversity of initiatives and self-employment, a well-functioning civic society with economic robustness will emerge (Adriaansens & Zijderveld, 1981; Reverda, 2004)” (Boonstra, 2015).

3.4 Social Capital

When researching the role of certain individuals e.g. citizens or in specific ‘exemplary practitioners’ – it is crucial that the way they operate in, both formal and informal ways, can be explained by a crucial factor. Social capital is a crucial element, it is usually defined as the resources available by individuals and groups through their social networks (Wentink, Vaandrager, van Dam, Hassink & Salverda, 2017) and the interaction and development of informal and formal personal ties (Meijer & Syssner, 2017). These forms of social capital could mean certain friends or professional networks that possess a specific kind of knowledge that can be utilized as capital. Wentink et al. (2017) state that social capital has found to be an important resource for communities’ and individual health and wellbeing. It can furthermore facilitate the flow of knowledge and information, hence making it more accessible and more trustful, and leading to positive impacts on aspects such as community cohesion and engagement (Granovetter, 1985; Tiepoh and Reimer, 2004 in: Cabras & Mount, 2017). Consequently Wentink et al. (2017) formulated a number of different sub-constructs through which social capital in constituted: shared norms and values; connectedness, networks and groups; reciprocity and exchange and lastly trust. These sub-constructs may come in useful when conducting this research with different (exemplary) practitioners who (potentially) build on their own social capitals. Arguably, taking into account the umbrella of ‘Social Capital’ significantly helps to understand the interaction between governmental and non-governmental actors and is thus imperative for the aim of this research. As is with many theories, definition of social capital are not singular but has been attributed numerous different meanings. Social capital can be considered a resource (Bourdieu, 1986) or as networks that enable cooperation (Putnam, 2001).

Social capital can be examined in two variants, namely bridging social capital and bonding social capital. The difference between the two is that the first refers to relationships between individuals from different groups and the latter to the opposite: within groups. However, a mix of these two can provide an optimal platform for further community development: it may enhance community cohesion whereas this is one of the most essential aspects of communities and the feeling of contribution to the local area (Cabras & Mount, 2017). A lack in understanding of the process of building social capital is currently an issue. How social capital plays a role within citizens initiatives is a subject that to date has remained rather unexplored (Wentink et al. 2017) and opens possibilities for the remainder of this thesis.

Emerging themes

The research conducted by Wentink et al. (2017) found out that an emerging theme within social capital is the presence of human capital. This refers to capitals such as knowledge, information, ideas, skills and health of individuals. A link to the role of human capital and the way citizen initiatives possibly deal with various challenges and their successes can be found. However, this human capital also
requires communication to be successfully transferred to another person. Following the lines of Jürgen Habermas (1984), he argues that there are certain essential elements to human language and that a person implicitly makes the following claims:

- Intelligible; a meaningful statement that can be understood by others
- True assertion; what one is claiming is indeed truthful (or believed to be)
- Justifiable; that the person says something with good reason
- Sincerity; the person is not intending to lie to another

When all these claims are met, it results in ‘undistorted communication’. Habermas (1984) argued that anyone who uses language, always implicitly presumes they can justify themselves according to the four criteria above. This aspect he denominates as ‘communicative rationalization’. It is important to keep this theory in mind when addressing themes such as social capital and the transference of knowledge.

Secondly, the research has also pointed out that the element of time plays a role within different aspects of social capital. The different sub-constructs as discussed earlier seem to evolve differently over time. For instance, the sub-constructs of trust; trust is built upon working together for a longer time, this interaction can lead to an increase in trust and thus in more successes but can also lead to the opposite: when people have certain expectations, and these are not met, trust decreases and so does the positive influence of the social capital.

Lastly, Cabras & Mount (2017) emphasized the importance of so called third spaces, which are places that are not first (home, family place), nor second (school, work) but are places that are considered as in between. Examples are public libraries, a public transport station or coffeeshops. These third spaces have proven to impact economic wellbeing, community cohesion and social capital in peripheral and remote areas (Cabras & Mount, 2017).

3.4.1 The importance of social capital

“Understanding social capital can contribute to public health by adding new knowledge on how social network interventions may be designed” (Wenting et al. 2017, p.6). Whereby urban citizens initiatives based on social capital require spaces for encounters, the celebration of successes and above all a government that facilitates rather than steers the local communities. This is in line with the current vision regarding the Omgevingswet, which aims at less steering and more facilitating the public participation.

Perhaps even more applicable to a case in a shrinking region is the influence social capital can have on the economic health of a region. Zhang et al. (2011) and Fisher (2013) (in: Cabras & Mount, 2017) emphasize the social capital and social networks that can affect economic wellbeing as they help maintain good market order through reward and punishment mechanisms, fostering trust which reduces transaction costs and facilitates economic action.

Wenting et al. (2017) however also acknowledge the shortcomings of the research, whereas they’ve drastically simplified the inherent complexity of the social capital concept. Due to the lack in any prior research, social capital has been limited to four sub-constructs, in this way it is still possible to facilitate a comprehensible analysis of the role of social capital. Wenting et al. (2017) stress for an extension of their research into multiple different cases, whereby an opening could be at similar cases within the framework or a shrinking region. With this in mind, a better understanding of the different mechanisms at work may help practice that aims to increase social capital for the improvement of community health and wellbeing, which are two very important themes in a shrinking region.

3.4.2 Linking social capital to informal planning practices

Meijer & Syssner (2017) set out to understand the interaction between governmental and non-governmental planning practices in depopulating areas. Social capital plays in important role in the
Spatial planning has a history of emergent interests in others’ involvement, by others we mean others than government actors. This has led to the informal turn; the informality introduced to planning (Meijer & Syssner, 2017). Informality can have numerous different meanings, however Meijer & Syssner (2017) attribute informality in planning to ‘planning practices that are unregulated, uncontrolled, spontaneous planning practices performed by any actor’ (p.60), largely focussed on bottom-up initiatives, primarily based on social contacts (part of social capital) and the ‘strategic cultivation of actor-networks’. Social capital is thus one of the core aspects of informal planning practices and an emerging theme relates to the importance of (social) networks. Adding informality to planning can chance quite drastically the outlook of planning practices and the way ‘planning is practiced’. By the implementation of the Omgevingswet, planning and informal practices will arguably become inherent to one another and therefore requires thorough examination and conceptualisation. Formal planning practices and informal practices are seldomly practiced in isolation (Meijer & Syssner, 2017), moreover, both sides of planning often need each other for the legitimization of decisions and practices or for financial (both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’) support.

3.4.3 Exemplary practitioners

Governance practices are inherently formal ways of practicing policies and interaction, however, today one can see more examples of informal practices (see: Meijer, 2018; Meijer & van der Krabben, 2018; Meijer & Syssner, 2017; van Hulst, de Graaf & van den Brink, 2012). When looking into the synergies between the formal and informal, van Hulst et al. (2012) addressed the importance of what they named ‘exemplary practitioners’ in neighbourhood governance. These are individual actors who play an important role in (local) governance and make a difference in (notably) neighbourhoods and the public sphere. Dealing with messy, ‘wicked problems’ is part of their everyday lives. These exemplary practitioners range from civil servants to professionals and active citizens – the ones that ‘make a difference’ in neighbourhood governance. The research has shown that ‘the different workings of exemplary practitioners show a mix and a dose of entrepreneurialism, strategic networking and empathic engagement that differs from standard bureaucracy’ (p.434). These characteristics have proven to fit very well with the needs of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, consequently, we might consider utilizing this approach for cases in shrinking (which are often also in a disadvantaged position) regions.
3.5 Conceptual Framework

Consequently, the review of the existing scientific knowledge, practical knowledge and the (general) literature leads the thesis to the following conceptual framework:

Model 2: Conceptual Framework. Source: own

Above, the grey area refers to the specific context in which the research will be conducted. This is a shrink context in different cases studies. Next, the research context will refer (and keep in mind) the Omgevingswet, and in particular the ‘participation’ section of the Omgevingswet. The research will be conducted preferably multiple case studies and does not intend to generalize but to find specific methods of approaching shrink with the help of public participation in general and exemplary practitioners specifically. The theory will provide the support of the claims that will be made and therefore will also be applied whenever it is applicable. This results in a final conclusion in which the arguments that have been made are supported by previous theoretical insights. The theory will also help guide the research into the direction in which merely theory does not suffice. The result is two sides: the theory supports the practical insights but the practice also supports the theory and arguments made in specific theories.
4 Methods

A number of methodological approaches are suitable to carry out this research. A wide diversity in stakeholders are involved in this issue and are involved in each different case. Hereby the main focus becomes clear: a number of case studies will be selected to investigate and to provide the research with data. The research will be mostly based upon Grounded Theory, whereby the constant analysis of data material, looking for patterns and comparing different pieces of data are key features.

4.1 Case studies

For this research the use of qualitative methods is considered the best option. Starting off with the main desk-research and a case study: what specific issues are there and in what context do I want to do the research? A case study offers possibilities, moreover multiple case studies will lead to better triangulation: more information from different sources lead to better and solid research outcomes. Whereby the minimal requirements are at least one document and two interview sources that are in line with statements or findings.

Qualitative methods and case studies in general are suitable for a number of reasons: first of all, the use of a case study does not intend to generalize results (Creswell, 2013; Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007), but aims at finding particular answers to the needs of a particular case and contexts. Which, in the context of the Omgevingswet, corresponds to one of the core starting points. This being that the Omgevingswet makes it possible for a more direct and individual approach towards policies and developments which a particular place or region needs (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). Furthermore, it could provide opportunities for other (similar), most likely Dutch, cases in the future. Not necessarily becoming a generic method but it could help in creating a method where certain elements of that ‘method’ can be applied to the specific cases and their specific contextual needs.

The aim of the case studies will follow the steps of the heuristic model mentioned before (paragraph 3.1), it will firstly provide an explanation for the issue and thoroughly describe this leading to an exploratory method of considering possible options and questions (Yin, 2014 in: Clifford, Cope, Gillespie & French, 2016). However, the case study can also be instrumental in illuminating the wider issue (Stake, 1995 in: Clifford et al., 2016). Since shrink does not limit itself to particular case studies but is essentially the context in which these case studies are situated.

Evidently, semi-structured interviews are a crucial part of the research. This will go more in depth whereas available statistic data (from CBS) will provide a most suitable framework in which to perform the research and to place the research and its results into context. Furthermore, in case studies it is possible to use multiple sources of information. These range from observations and interviews to pre-existing documents (Creswell, 2013). Interpreting views of important actors such as exemplary practitioners will provide more insights regarding their interaction and positions in the particular case.

A focus group-setting is also part of the methods: experts on urban, regional development and shrink (RUIMTEVOLK) have been invited to meet in an informal setting and discuss their own experiences and issues with the research theme. Discussion and involvement is a core value of participating in the Omgevingswet and therefore can be of use in the form of a Focus group for this research. It is also possible to bring together people (from the field) from different cases. However, due to practical issues, arrangements were made to conduct a focus group session solely with the experts of RUIMTEVOLK, numerous of them working on topics related to shrink and citizen participation.
To answer the main question the aim is to look into a number of bottom-up initiatives that started in a shrinking region (prerequisite 1), which have proven to be successful (from a lesser extent to more). Civil participation is the starting point. For example, making use of old (vacant) buildings with a social component. But also starting new (from scratch) initiatives. In the cases the next prerequisites for selection

1. Location (shrinking area)
2. Example of successful participation (non-successful also possible for comparison)
3. Physical component combined with social incentive

A source from the Internship organisation is: http://dorpenacademie.nl/; an initiative by RUIMTEVOLK to aid bottom-up initiatives in small villages throughout the Netherlands.

**Data collection method: Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews with:

- Initiators and intermediaries a.k.a. ‘exemplary practitioners’
  Through these initiators (snowballing) to 1 or more users each case (possibility for street-interview). Starting point is three, but can be more (aim for a diverse selection of exemplary practitioners)
- Municipality official(s)
- Market parties (possibility) that did not interfere in developing in the shrinking area, in favour of a civil initiative. Or one that won/lost from a civil initiative (what makes an initiative ‘civil’ or ‘entrepreneurial’?)
- Expert (for background and theory mostly)
  1. On civic action and engagement
  2. On shrink and participation
- Focus Group/Brainstorm with experts from RUIMTEVOLK
- An interview with an expert on Omgevingswet would be more suitable in a follow-up study. To provide an unbiased view on the developments, a very conscious decision was made to not interview an expert on the Omgevingswet at this stage of the research.

**4.2 Mapping of stakeholders**

As starting point, the network-perspective is important: looking at interaction between different parties and if there is any mutual dependence. This interaction is important for the creation of carrying capacity in the field of policy implementation and new urban (re)developments. The government faces a structural knowledge gap when working top down and civil society needs to be actively involved. This explains one of the core issues: a multi actor level, where governance is divided between law-making, controlling and executive governments, NGOs, market parties and above all citizens. Importantly the governance is negotiating with the exemplary practitioner as connector between the different levels of policy making and urban planning.

**Desk research**

Lastly, the desk research will also contain a thorough review of contents and processes of the policy making design (Omgevingswet) and regional vision documents and current and past initiatives regarding participation in shrinking regions. Whereby mapping the different actors and describing the role of the government with a focus on relevant societal groups is essential.
Consequently, (policy) documents such as participation methods but also regional/local policies are a reliable and suitable source of information. Next, documents provided by institutions such as the CBS (Central Bureau of Statistics) will provide a good framework and will put the case into the light of a larger context. These data will also be used to be able to place the case and compare it with other similar initiatives in shrinking regions.

**Inspiration guide**

The thesis can also serve as a complementation to the *Omgevingswet inspiration guide*⁴. Formally participation is a prerequisite, however, the way a local authority implements participation is (partially) a free choice.

**Interview questions and themes**

To answer the main question, I am investigating a number of specific cases, experts and ‘exemplary-practitioners’ from which (broadly) the following themes can be derived:

- What kind of people are involved (entrepreneurs, market parties, experts, ‘ordinary’ citizens) in a certain initiative, case or in case of multiple stakeholders.
- What are specific characteristics that make these people successful in what they do?
- What are the driving forces from which the participation is set in motion and what are the motives for this (obligation, commitment, relatedness)?
- What are the bottlenecks in the process (space, jurisdiction, money, stakeholders, competition: why a civilian and not a market party – or are these, practically, the same)?
- What makes these specific initiatives successful? Or unsuccessful?

**Data processing and analysis**

For the application of Grounder Theory, the semi-structured interviews have all been recorded with an audio-recorder and are transcribed accordingly via the qualitative methods software ATLAS.ti. Whenever relevant, the interviews were transcribed completely, however some parts which were deemed not essential for the contribution to the results have been paraphrased or summarised: line-by-line coding is highly time consuming and could by very tiresome, however it provides space to build a detailed structural conceptual data model. However, when the analysis does not anymore provide the thesis with new concepts or ideas, it starts repeating the existing labels and it is advisable to stop the overly-detailed and time-consuming analysis. This is where the bigger picture comes in and we have to distillate the essential codes, ideas and concepts from the larger categories.

After transcribing, coding and categorizing the most important codes and parts of the texts is the next step in the process of researching and analysing findings. This resulted in the creation of code-networks. Coding is the process of organizing and sorting the data collected, labelling, compiling and organizing them. Coding is useful for the creation of a summary and synthesis of what is happening in the data material. Thus, coding becomes the basis for the development of the analysis. Starting with a-priori codes, which are the codes derived from the theory, research questions and conceptual framework and consists of the prior knowledge of the subjects. Secondly, the emergent codes are the ones that came up during the interview, the concepts, ideas, actions, relationships etcetera. However, it could then be the case that many start-codes had initially been coded otherwise; for example, the code ‘persoonsafhankelijkheid’. This emergent code eventually belongs to a larger code group or

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⁴ Inspiratiegids Omgevingswet
category such as ‘struikelbokken’ but becomes surprisingly interesting and revealing that the code itself forms an emergent code and a major part of the storyline.

It is important to develop a storyline throughout the interviews, therefore in the analysis part, a short paragraph will be added to sum up the overall results and add relevant information to the ‘bigger picture’. Furthermore, making clear what I want to find out in each interview in line with the sub-questions of this thesis. The strategy is to start coding with an idea of the bigger picture, what I want to achieve, and keeping in mind the main -and sub questions. Consequently, categorizing the codes accordingly. In this way, end-use strategizing will prevent a lack of coherence in the end and will allow the analysis to analyse truly what it needs to analyse. After re-reading the transcripts; coding, categorizing and setting up networks have significantly contributed in analysing the results. The steps of the analysis are found in the appendix (interview-questions) and in the primary data folder (audio, Atlas.ti files).

Finally, on the basis of the responses in relation to the main questions of this thesis a conclusion is formulated, and the sub-questions are answered in chapter 6 and 7. Concluding with the reflection upon the working process and further recommendations.

The semi-structured interviews were all conducted in Dutch, since all respondents are Dutch and the case is related to Dutch context. Therefore, all transcripts are also in Dutch. Furthermore, all transcripts have been put in a single document and in individual Atlas.TI files which are submitted as appendix.
5 Operationalisation

Operationalising means providing the steps after which the research can be conducted in its entirety. Gertler (2010) emphasized the reconstitution of institutional economic geography, hereby one of the key focuses is related to the question of how individual institutions – as well as their interaction with other institutions – evolve and change over time (p.6). Hence, in the context of governments and interaction with the public, an institution such as the government and the specific lower tier institutions are subject to influence, change and evolution from (worldwide) trends and developments. To make this reconstitution clear, the literature review has given the first insights into these changes, the operationalisation will continue to build on this. The operationalisation consists of theories that are necessary to provide the framework in which the research is conducted. The specific elements influence the way for instance formal-informal interaction is shaped.

5.1 Context: the spatial structures of the Netherlands

The Netherlands finds itself in a unique position: a small country with over 17 million inhabitants do not compare with huge metropolitan cities and urbanised areas in other parts of Europe or the world. However, the good part of the daily life happens in the context of regions and city-parts (stadsgewesten) whereby companies also function regionally. Here we can think of the main economic areas of the Netherlands: de Randstad and Brainport Eindhoven. The spatial structures are the result of slow processes with long histories and path-dependencies. The changes in spatial patterns are hardly immediately visible but are manifesting themselves in time. However, these have large influences on the quality of life, functioning of the economy and the daily lives of many people (Tordoir, Poorthuis & Renooy, 2015). Tordoir et al. (2015) see the Netherlands as “a closed, but strikingly strong structured mosaic of higher-than-local networks that is being driven from the emerging knowledge-and-service economy and increasing mobility” (I) which consist out of several societal and geographical changes:

- Geographical upscaling of markets (real estate markets, labour markets and facilities) whereby an inter-city network structure becomes more evident.
- However, this upscaling has proven to be imbalanced and unevenly spread across the country: some places benefit whereas some places do not. Growth established in some parts such as the Randstad and Noord-Brabant and some parts (e.g. Limburg, Groningen) face stagnation or decline: mostly the areas on the edges of the country and the shrinking regions.
- And integrated, interregional and intercity system is being formed which is mostly recognizable in the daily urban systems and the transmigration of higher educated youngsters. The city parts (stadsgewesten) and the regions (which differ in size) remain the most important live, work and market environment, the so called daily-urban system.
- More people move from the region to the city than within the city and its parts.

Tordoir et al. (2015) furthermore describe, next to the city-parts and the inter-city, three different types of regions:

1. Regions with powerful social, economic and cultural ties: the glocal economy and society
2. Regions that are profiting of the leisure class and private consumption and care economy. Often the place of retired people but also the place where the network-urban dweller goes for recreational purposes.
3. Regions where the economic activities and the economic active people are leaving; the gaps in the network. These areas can be found in both suburban areas near the urban hubs as in the rural areas.

The abovementioned developments lead to changes in policy fields, a more interwoven form of scale levels and authorities and require intersectoral and interregional approaches. Hence, stakeholders and actors with different backgrounds and stakes (government, market and civilians) in different locations (regional, city) are working together to cope with their mutual issues. Therefore, the scope of this thesis is also more regional, and taking into account the inevitable relationships within and between regions and rural versus urban areas.

5.1.1 The regional scope

The Netherlands functions more on a regional level than on a primary local level: the daily-urban system is mostly regionally embedded. As the Omgevingswet is also focussing on maatwerk (customization) it is important to consider both the local and the regional. An important institution on regional level is the IPO also knowns as Interprovinciaal Overleg, which is in essence an organisation that resembles the interests and stakes of the different Dutch provinces (http://www.ipo.nl/over-het-ipo, nd.). Schematically, the Dutch regional system can be displayed as follows:

![The regional system](image)

*Figure 3. The regional system. Source: own*

The issue of shrink is also present on a regional level and influences the economic dynamics and vitality of a region which has an impact on the physical environment (e.g. vacancy) which in its turn influences how the social and cultural quality is shaped and experienced. Regional shrink is thus a better denominator than merely urban or rural shrink for the specificity of this thesis - even though these two latter are present in regions. The Netherlands consists out of multiple regions (e.g. Parkstad Limburg or Achterhoek) next to the official provinces. This thesis will then foremost refer to regions – since most developments are manifesting themselves regional. Next to this, it makes working with CBS data easier since they also denominate shrink, and the typology of shrink on a regional level.
5.2 Governance Complexities and planning changes

Planning is a complex process, in order to properly take into consideration the complexities at play, it is imperative to operationalise the backgrounds of institutional changes and formal and informal interactions. The two most “prominent rationalities in planning – technical rationality and communicative rationality – are now considered incapable of addressing [...] increased social complexity” (Boonstra, 2015, p.57). Complexity theory is useful since it enables planners to acknowledge uncertainty regarding certain causes and effects, their relationships, perceptions, interpretations and ambitions of the multi-actor playing field (Zuidema, 2012). Hence, it is useful for this research, where relationships and above all interaction plays an important role.

The two most prominent rationalities, technical rationality and communicative (see 3.2) are considered incapable of addressing the increased social complexity (De Roo, 2010; 2012; Klijn & Snellen, 2009 in: Boonstra, 2015). Technical rationality is deemed more suitable for single fixed goals with central guidance, which implies a single proven solution. This research is then more focussed on communicative rationality, which implies that there are no single fixed goals but multiple composite and interdependent goals in which participation and interaction have a pivotal role (e.g. De Roo, 2004; Zuidema, 2012)

In contrast, communicative rationality is also still mostly focused on reaching a single shared outcome of planning process through negotiation and is foremost aimed at the stabilization of networks and setting rather than on the emergence and change of relationships (Klein & Snellen, 2009, p.22; in Boonstra, 2015). The difference here is that technical rationality focused on single and proven solutions while the communicative relationality would be providing single, agreed upon, solutions (Boonstra, 2015). Remaining quite linear towards the most optimal solution. Thus, for this thesis, the communicative rationality still fits best with the planning processes and the multi-actor processes, networks, settings and relationships. It is also aimed it elaborated on a single, optimal solution, without excluding different interpretations and different solutions to issues in different contexts.

The last side note refers to the disregarding of complexity, whereas technical rationality disregards it completely, Boonstra (2015) argues that communicative rationality is also unable to meet “contemporary societal complexity due to its governmental-led disciplinary and inclusionary premises” (p.57).

5.2.1 Bureaucracy in institutional organisations

Part of the complexities arise from different kinds of hierarchical organisations that are present within a government institution (Coolsma & Montfort, 2014). Operationalising this means taking it into account when interviewing case study respondents and aligning the questions with having these aspects in mind. The hierarchical organisations function in a playing field where there are different factors that determine the amount of freedom within the sector of the civil service (‘ambtenaarrij’). This freedom of expression and of policy-making depends on many factors; ranging from individual actors to the influence of a ‘majority of decisions’ and to the freedom left within confines of the law: what freedom does a specific law leave for a government official to their own interpretation. Hence, Coolsma & Montfort (2014) talk about the degree of automatization (less personal influence by officials and more goal-wise and efficient processing of complex issues) in which three different organisations are to be distinguished:

- System level bureaucracy: this type is characterised by little (individual) freedom by government officials. This type of bureaucracy is even ‘predictable’ when run through a
computer simulation. Examples of these kind of organisations are: DUO (Services for student loans) or the CJIB (processing of traffic fines).

- Screen level bureaucracy: the officials have some degree of personal influence on the decisions and on the working activities combined with a high level of automatization. Within the framework of a law, an official is able to deviate from the law to suit his or her organisation’s best interests.

- Street-level bureaucracy: in this organisation the official has quite some freedom of acting in policies. Here the official needs to refine the execution of a policy or decision to match the specificities of a case. An individual assessment is common, and the officials often work closely with people.

These different forms of organisations influence the way that citizens’ initiatives are approached and how interaction is shaped between the different actors. This will become clear in the findings and results paragraphs.

5.2.1 Institutional change and planning paradigm shift

On the basis of the aforementioned developments lies the so-called ‘planning paradigm shift’. It is both a catalyst as it is a result. Approaching this shift requires considering the role of agents, organisations, economic practices and relationships in which these engage, and leading to social institutions, the dynamic relationships, different spatial and non-spatial scales. A relational perspective, to provide this overview of dynamic relationships is deemed necessary (Glückler, 2014) and the knowledge that all cases in this thesis are not merely on its own but are constantly influencing others or influenced by others. From a relational perspective, economic geography focuses on analysing economic practices on the micro level, in particular in relation with specific actors and their social relations (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003, 2011; Yeung, 2005 in: Bathelt & Glückler, 2014). Central questions arise regarding the relationship between structure and agency and the role of macro-economics and social conditions.

Institutions and their composition and agency are subject to debate, from the fields of sociology to economics and political science. These institutions and the extent of institutionalisation of governance, organisations or society as a whole have been given much attention. This institutionalisation debate considers both the formal, such as norms and rules and the informal: values, conventions and codes of behaviour (Buitelaar, Lagendijk & Jacobs, 2007). Institutions exert an influence on the character and emergence of national to local economies, sometimes subtle and sometimes more dominant (Gertler, 2010). Economic social action is both guided, enabled and also constrained by institutions. These institutions operate with patterns of interaction that are accepted and existing for a longer period of time. Bathelt and Glückler (2014) consider the role of ‘rules and regulations [and] conventions of social and economic life’ (p.340). However, the definition of an ‘institution’ or multiple ‘institutions’ remains relatively unclear and very context dependent. Bathelt and Glückler (2014) also refer to this as the becoming of a ‘Black Box’ in terms of Actor-Network theories (e.g. Rydin, 2013) whereby the influences remain unexplained and considered as relationships that are more or less ‘taken for granted’.

Furthermore, a more relational approach focuses on the role of agents, organisations, economic practices and relationships in which they engage. This imminently results in social institutions with different dynamics at both spatial and non-spatial scales (Bathelt & Glückler, 2014)

Institutional change has thus been discussed thoroughly in scientific literature (see e.g. Buitelaar, Lagendijk & Jacobs, 2007). The studies come up with diverging views on how institutional change occurs, evolves and is steered over the years. Institutions are actively shaped, created and maintained by the actions of individuals. Which implies that actors have some form of transformative capacity, however this is bounded by internalized constraints (Meijer & van der Krabben, 2018).
Institutional change is subject to changes from two directions: exogenous driving forces and endogenous driving forces.

Exogenous driving forces are characterised by topics like shock events, revolutions, economic crises, wars and natural disasters (relatively short span) but also general social changes such as an increase in interest in self-organisation and individualisation. Endogenous driving forces are driven by agency of individual and collective stakeholders: think of path dependency and manifestations of informal institutions or planning cultures. Notably, these changes consist out both formal and informal actors and change. To provide an overview of how institutional change has developed and influences certain developments, Meijer & van der Krabben (2018) list a number of concepts and definitions for their study (table 1). These changes are impacting the planning paradigm shift in the Netherlands and will have its impact on how the Omgevingswet is coming into existence and how it will be implemented by the many different agents. In the findings and results paragraph a short recap will be made in which these concepts will also become clear and show their importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Operationalization (for this study)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal institutions</td>
<td>Laws, procedures, regulations, written rules (North, 1990)</td>
<td>Written planning procedures, policy reports, planning laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal institutions</td>
<td>Norms, values, traditions, unwritten rules, that shape and constraint human interactions (North, 1990)</td>
<td>(Implicit) expectations, shared beliefs, local cultural traditions, social appropriateness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal institutional change</td>
<td>Change characterized by formulation and implementation of (new) formal institutions (Helmke &amp; Levitsky, 2004)</td>
<td>(1) Laws and planning regulations are changed and enforced by higher-level authorities,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Demand alteration of planning practices by local governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal institutional change</td>
<td>Change characterized by changes in the shared beliefs and collective expectations (Helmke &amp; Levitsky, 2004)</td>
<td>(1) Changing attitude towards planning challenges and practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exogenous driving forces</td>
<td>External events and general social change that lead to institutional change (Buitelaar &amp; De Kam, 2012; North, 1990)</td>
<td>(2) Bottom-up initiated change (by local governments and non-governmental stakeholders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endogenous driving forces</td>
<td>Institutional change driven by the agency of individual and collective stakeholders (Tsai, 2006)</td>
<td>Change can be traced as a result of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path dependency</td>
<td>Inheritance of professional, bureaucratic and political institutions that constrain current practices and future developments (Lowndes &amp; McCaughie, 2013)</td>
<td>(1) Persistence of traditional institutions and practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive informal institutions</td>
<td>Result of deviance between formal and informal institutions, to circumvent unproductive or unwanted formal institutions (Tsai, 2006)</td>
<td>(2) Current practices are traceable as the result of a chain of earlier events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning culture</td>
<td>A set of informal institutions that guide and are (re)-produced by decisions by governments, private actors and citizens (Buitelaar et al., 2011)</td>
<td>(1) Appropriation of rules to meet (local) interests and goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of institutional change</td>
<td>The rate at which the institutional change has gained robustness and resilience (Buitelaar, Gronmen, &amp; Van der Krabben, 2017)</td>
<td>(2) Complying with alternative rule-sets (for example within other policy domains), to circumvent certain formal institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Operationalization of institutional changes. Source: Meijer & van der Krabben (2018)
5.3 Formal and informal planning

Next, a number of concepts regarding formal and informal (institutional) change will be discussed because these are pivotal in providing a framework for the research. It is the backbone on which the developments e.g. citizens’ initiatives are built.

Changes in spatial planning are not uncommon, in fact spatial planning needs to continuously ‘reinvent’ itself (Reimer, Getemis & Blotevogel; 2014). While this refers both to the formal and informal institutions and practices that determine the planning practice. The formal institutions are constituted through legal and administrative fundaments present in spatial planning, while informal institutions are comprised primarily out of “cognitively anchored patterns of perception, beliefs, shared values and behaviour of the actors involved” (Reimer, Getemis & Blotevogel; 2014 p.1). Spatial planning practices are thus shaped by the dialectic of formal and informal institutions (Meijer, 2017), this furthermore implies that the performance of formal practices on the one side and informal practices on the other should always be understood in relation to a wider set of institutions and social contexts (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Van Assche et al., 2012 in: Meijer, 2017). An assemblage of practices that emerge from the planning efforts of governments, communities and other actors affect and shape the spatial organisations of society. Consequently, the next part will elaborate on the interchange between formal planning practices and informal practices. It will then explain why the interchange of formal and informal is (contextually) important for this thesis.

5.3.1 Formal Planning

The Dutch planning culture is renowned for its initial ‘active’ position in land policy – whereby municipalities steer the spatial developments, active land policy is complementary to other formal jurisdiction and instruments such as the bestemmingsplan (Buitelaar, 2010). However, the active role of municipalities has been under pressure since the last decade of the twentieth century; this has forced the municipalities to adopt a more facilitative or in some cases passive land policy. More private (market) parties are developing land and municipalities rely mostly on public instruments – such as the bestemmingsplan – to support the private initiative.

The traditional role of governments focused on formal planning practices: procedures, rules and regulations and more importantly top-down decisions – the formalisation of planning (Meijer, 2018). This includes the abovementioned bestemmingsplan, general zoning and allocation plans, the use of property rights, policy development and procedures for citizen participation (Meijer, 2018).

Consequently, the Dutch public sector and governments in general, which thus previously handled in a more formalised manner, were facing more issues regarding governance complexities, characterised by more eloquent, fragmented and dynamic issues. Formal governments were also facing decreasing power – which meant the rising of private parties and the decrease in societal support or ‘draagvlak’ (Zuidema, 2012 in: Boonstra, 2015). Thus Boonstra (2015) noted that planning became more entangled with a plurality of involved actors and stakeholders or agents. Ranging from public to private and voluntary sectors and institutions. The government is working more and more with parties from all corners of society; this change indicates a shift to more informal forms of planning. This is for instance being expressed through the denominators such as “participation society”, “do-democracy” or “energetic society” (Van der Steen, Scherpenisse, Hajer, van Gerwen & Kruitwagen, 2014) and in spatial planning a good example is the so called “uitnodigingsplanologie” (invitational planning) – whereby entrepreneurs and citizens are playing an important role. With these concepts, governance praises the movements and active interaction of citizens in the public sphere. Van der Steen et al. (2014): “The movement from below, out of own their own, is undeniable – but on the other hand the government is also increasingly active – from above – in keeping an eye on the
implementation of public tasks” (p.5). With new instruments of decentralization, a large number of tasks, for instance on the fields of health and wellbeing, has shifted from national level (Rijk) to local levels (municipalities), where participation plays an important role.

This increased complexity asks for new modes of governance, paradigm shifts from formal to informal methods of planning. These modes are ought to acknowledge non-linearity, fuzziness and multiplicity (Hillier, 2007; Jessop, 1994; Van Wezemael, 2010; 2012; Zuidema, 2012 in: Boonstra, 2015).

5.3.2 Informal Planning

This brings us to Informal planning, which was briefly touched upon in the paragraph before. It has thus become more popular in the Netherlands in the first half of the 21st century and is expressed through different ways of participation and planning practices. Informality is often understood to be “territorialised within (...) the legal, political, economic, social and environmental margins of the city” (p.18). Which means that a formal way of planning could also include a more informal way of planning, e.g. the formal allows space for the informal to operate.

Informality is also considered as a mode of organisation: in terms of processes and a characteristic of policy making at the local level (Walter, 2013 in: Hospers & Syssner, 2018). The informal, as opposed to the formal, deals mostly with spontaneous, tacit and effective elements. Informal planning is more difficult to pinpoint than formal planning; it moreover involves perceptions, beliefs, shared values and behaviour of different involved actors (Reimer, Getemis & Blotevogel, 2014).

Meijer & van der Krabben (2018) distinguished three main functions of informal instructions in established democracies, based on Azari and Smith (2012). They state that informal institutions: (1) fill the gaps left by formal institutions, (2) coordinate overlapping or clashing formal intuitions (mediate), (3) operate parallel to formal institutions in regulating political behaviour.

Informality is approached with formality as starting point. This will be no different in the new Omgevingswet, it implies that informal is not necessarily a counterpart of the formal but can also be a part of the formal arrangement. Altrock (2012) states that informality only makes sense “if there is something like formalisation that has led to informality” (p. 188). However, Altrock (2012) also states that “acting informally does not necessarily mean a deviation from the formal rules”.

5.3.3 Actor-Network theory and planning practice

In this research, human and non-human elements, in a Latourian sense, form the institutions and the legislation, the citizens, the exemplary practitioners and all other actors. Actor-Network Theory focuses on both social (human) and material (nonhuman) elements (actants). These actively connect with each other to produce knowledge via ‘social construction and material resistance’ (Rydin, 2012). ANT is useful to consider institutions, the formal and informal as actants in the large playing field of shrink and the Omgevingswet which will become clear in the answering of the main question. Institutions and rules & regulations then can be considered as so-called obligatory passage points (Rydin, 2012). An ANT approach would consider the role of the ‘material world’ next to the standard actor-centred network. In her discussion, she comprehensively elaborates on the key social actors and material actants in the case of the relationships between actants in regulating low-carbon commercial development (see Rydin, 2012). Rydin (2012) then argues that “it is necessary to consider how these actants operate in relation to each other, how they enrol each other into the network and the role that
intermediaries play in bringing actants together and defining their relationships” (Rydin, 2012 p.31). Three key elements in this planning process are identified; starting with planning policy documents as ‘intermediaries’, the planning consent as an ‘obligatory passage point’, and the energy-modelling exercises as a form of ‘black-boxing’ (Rydin, 2012).

Furthermore, documents such as planning policies are very important in determining the behaviour of different social actors. These planning documents can serve as intermediaries. The specific relationships between different social actors and the material elements of certain developments are shaped and defined by the (weight) of the policy documents – think of specific jurisdictions or frameworks in which actors must operate and must take into account. The more detailed a certain policy is, the more influential agents shape the agency of ‘lower-level agents’ (Rydin, 2012). It is even so that some social actors can have an influence from far away, while they are physically not even proximate – in concrete terms one could think of national policies where decisions are made at certain ministries in the Hague which influences the agency of social actors on a local site.

Next to planning documents as intermediaries, the planning consent can also be considered as an obligatory passage point. Next to the numerous social actors that are involved in planning (consent) processes, material actants also play an equally important role. Hence, one could think of material actants such as a specific location (and its properties: grass, land, soil, infrastructure) and its physical forms. Money plays an intermediary role, it is often necessary to have a certain amount of money to be able to reach a certain goal or development, next to this it is also inevitable to come in contact with the municipality, the guidelines, frameworks, rules and regulations that are applicable to a certain development. Therefore, a municipality and the important actants within that municipality (ranging from documents to government officials), can be considered as obligatory passage points in the process of planning practice.

Figure 5. Obligatory Passage Points. An example. Source: Donnely, 2010
The figure above shows a schematic view of an obligatory passage point where there are a number of actors who each have to pass, at one point, the obligatory passage point to reach a certain goal. This obligatory passage point can also be considered as obstacle (and is also referred as such in the interviews).

The relevance of ANT is limited to the application of the obligatory passage point in the case descriptions. The obligatory passage point is considered a more adequate denominator for certain ‘stumbling blocks’ in jurisdiction and processes of interaction between citizens and governance parties. Jurisdiction and policies lead to institutions and processes that need to be run through before one can actually accomplish a certain goal. The municipality (local), the province (regional) and het Rijk (national) are considered as obligatory passage points in certain policy developments and in establishing a (physical) citizens’ initiative. Consequently, in the analysis and findings, whenever there is a reference to stumbling blocks and obligatory procedures the reference will be made to the obligatory passage point.

5.4 Relevant jurisdiction
Policy instruments are aimed at achieving a certain policy-goal. A differentiation can be made between policy-instruments (beleidsinstrumenten) and administrative instruments (bestuursinstrumenten). Basic types of policy instruments can be differentiated in prescriptions (jurisdictional instruments such as zoning plans), financial incentives (economic instruments such as funds and subsidies) and material aids (physical instruments). These basic types can also be refined by making a distinction between limiting (less freedom) and expanding (more freedom) instruments and by distinguishing general (applicable for all) or individual instruments (more ‘maatwerk’ and depending on the specific context). The matter of operating of policy instruments depends very much on how the people and organisations to whom the policy is aimed are influenced by the instruments.

5.4.1 Zoning plans
One of the most important policy instruments in Dutch spatial planning is the zoning plan, ‘bestemmingsplan’. The zoning plan is considered as a jurisdictional instrument since it prescribes certain frameworks and possibilities within a delineated territory. It is influential since all physical initiatives at one point have some relation to the local zoning plans. The zoning plan describes:

1. The specific functions that are allowed within a specific territory such as ‘living’ ‘company’ ‘agriculture’.
2. The rules and regulations that are applicable to the specific function, such as maximum building space, annex-buildings

It has two main functions: to capture and manage that what is already present and to make new developments possible. When an initiator (that could be the municipality itself but also a citizen or commercial project developer) wants to develop – the zoning plan needs to be adjusted to make it possible. For the revision of the zoning plan a procedure needs to be run through. When there are no developments, the zoning plan establishes the spatial situation (https://www.bestemmingsplan.nl/Bestemmingsplan/Inhoud_bestemmingsplan.html, n.d.).

A zoning plan always describes the arguments for a ‘good spatial planning’ which lies at the essence of Dutch spatial policies. Furthermore, the interaction between urban development, planning, policy and environmental and economic aspects are also elaborated. The rules are binding, but can in some cases, be overruled by the local municipality via the use of a an uitgebreide omgevingsvergunning.
(environmental permit). Which is granted by the college of Burgemeesters en Wethouders (B&W). The interaction with a zoning plan or with plans on regional to national level also depends on the acting of the officials that are involved in the planning process. Their interpretation and execution of their function can influence the initiative and its prospects during the process.

Next to the local zoning plans, there are also spatial planning policies on higher levels. This is for example arranged at the regional scale through the provincial zoning plans which is often also a large player regarding planning developments. Furthermore, there are also local and regional visions on developments, ‘structuurvisies’ and other lower tier vision documents – left out of the scope of this research.

5.4.3 Omgevingswet
Participation is an important, if not one of the leading, aspects of the ‘spirit’ of the Omgevingswet. In the Omgevingswet the participative aspect is described as:

“het in een vroegtijdig stadium betrekken van belanghebbenden (burgers, bedrijven, maatschappelijke organisaties en bestuursorganen) bij het proces van de besluitvorming over een project of activiteit”

Which translates as ‘the early involvement of stakeholders (citizens, businesses, societal organisations and governance institutions) in the process of decision-making in regard to a project or activity. The law involves specific rules and regulations for participation regarding the projectbesluit and the omgevingsvergunning. The Omgevingsbesluit includes rules to safeguard participation. An example of this is that for the projectbesluit and for the omgevingsplan the guideline states that it should inform about the approach towards the participation trajectory. Furthermore, there is a motivatieplicht (motivation duty) where the authorized authorities indicate how the direct environment is involved in preparations and how the results are implemented. This accounts for the instruments omgevingsvisie, programma, omgevingsplan and projectbesluit (see table 2).

One of the core starting points is the space for maatwerk or customization, which implies that certain rules, regulations or approaches should always be in line with the specific context in which they are being applied. Regarding the arrangement of participation, the law gives ample freedom to the authorized authorities and the initiator to make their own choices: the location, the nature of the decision, the surroundings and the people involved, and the starting points of participation differ in every case, which makes the maatwerk part even more essential (Twynstragudde, 2018).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Rules</th>
<th>Who is responsible for compliance with the participation rules?</th>
<th>Where is it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omgevingsvisie</td>
<td>Motivational duty*</td>
<td>Authorized authority</td>
<td>Omgevingsbesluit (art 8.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programma</td>
<td>Motivational duty*</td>
<td>Authorized authority</td>
<td>Omgevingsbesluit (art 8.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omgevingsplan</td>
<td>The authorized authority indicates during the informing of an omgevingsplan how participation is shaped</td>
<td>Authorized authority</td>
<td>Omgevingsbesluit (art. 8.1, eerste lid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivational duty*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Omgevingsbesluit (art 8.1, tweede lid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projectbesluit</td>
<td>The authorized authority provides an information notice at the start of the reconnaissance of the projectbesluit. The notice elaborates on: - Who is involved, about what and when</td>
<td>Authorized authority If an other than the authorized authority is initiator, then the participation</td>
<td>Omgevingswet (art. 5.47, 5.48 and 5.51) and Omgevingsbesluit (art 4.2 and 4.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- What is the role of the authorized authority and the initiator?
- Where will more information become available?

During the reconnaissance, anybody can suggest possible solutions for the challenge. This actor can ask the authorities to inform with an independent expert.

Both for the voorkeursbeslissing and for the projectbesluit a motivational duty is obliged. The authorized authority signify how third parties are involved, what the results are of the reconnaissance and discusses the suggested solutions and advice.

Table 2: central starting points of Participation in the Omgevingswet.

5.5 Participation

Crucial for the answering of the main questions is the notion of ‘participation’. As it is used thoroughly throughout the thesis, it is imperative to shortly discuss it. Participation can come from two sides: government participation and citizens’ participation. When discussing the latter, quickly the question arises as to why there is such a large emphasis on participation in the Netherlands (and beyond) and above all what is the role of participation in the Omgevingswet?

Citizens’ initiatives or public participation in short: active citizenship, has become more and more popular (e.g. SCP, 2014, Boonstra, 2015). For a long time, it has been a small movement and sometimes even considered as a barrier for planned urban developments. However, today active citizenship is seen as a valuable strategy for (urban) development. It is considered as particularly useful for regions facing any form of demographic transition (Boonstra, 2015).

Until recently spatial planning focused mainly on participation instead of ‘active citizenship’; through participative planning citizens can also influence goals and plans made or presented by governments through formal procedures. However, Boonstra (2015) concludes that participation processes often are not as open as is assumed. The processes are for instance limited by thematic, procedural and geographical boundaries. Citizens’ initiatives differ in the sense that they are often dedicated projects aimed at a specific issue and with attention to community dynamics (Boonstra, 2015). Active citizenship is more aimed at the participation of citizens in plan-making trajectories and citizens’ initiatives.

As stated in chapter 3.3, the Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu describes participation as ‘involving stakeholders at an early stage (e.g. civilians, companies, societal organisations, governance) with the process of decision-making about a project or activity’ (p.1). However, there are many, slightly different, operationalizations of the concept. There are a number of participation arrangements regarding citizen’s influence on government policy developments: when a citizen is only involved after the decision-making has already taken place it is referred to as ‘first generation citizen’s participation’ – this implies procedural influence on policy determination such as a public consultation procedure (inspraakprocedure) and objection procedure (bezwaarprocedure).

When a citizen is involved at the earliest possible stage, it is also called ‘second generation
citizen’s participation’ – characterised by forms of coproduction (see SCP ladder) and interactive involvement by citizens.

The ‘third generation’ is the citizens’ initiative itself (such as the ‘do-democracy’), hence the initiative comes from the citizen instead of the government and is characterised as ‘bottom-up’. The latter is in line with the notion of ‘active citizenship’. In general, most definitions emphasize that citizen’s participation is a complementation to the ‘representative democracy’ in which the citizen is empowered to exert (extra) influence on government policies (SCP, 2014). Citizens’ participation can thus be characterised in many different ways, as stated above and in short as ‘an initiative by civilians that is started, without obligation, for the benefit of others or society as whole’ (Blirom, Bosdriesz, van der Heijden, van Zuylen & Schamp, 2011). The Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (SCP) has described the so called ‘Participatieladder’. This is based on a number of models of participation that have been used in scientific research and the distinction between different generations of citizen’s participation. The SCP formulates the ladder as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informs</th>
<th>The participant is merely a listener. This happens through information evenings, house-to-house magazine, campaigns and excursions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consults</td>
<td>Politics and governance define the agenda to a high extent, but they also consider the involved as conversation partners in the policy-development. However, politics does not bind itself to the results of the conversation, these are without obligation. The participant is considered as the ‘consulted’. This primarily happens through public consultation evenings, hearings, digital polls and queries, price contests, debates and group conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advises</td>
<td>Politics and governance start with determining the agenda but the involved have to opportunity to make new suggestions and formulations for solutions. These ideas are ought to play a full-fledged part in the policy development. Politics are in principle obliged to act according to the results, but in practice they do not always do so when a good argument is provided. The participant is seen as advisor. This happens through advice councils, community and village councils, expert meetings and round-table conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coproduces</td>
<td>Politics, governance and involved are establishing a mutual agenda from which they together look for solutions. Politics are tied to these solutions in the eventual decision-making. The participant is working partner. This happens in meeting-groups, covenants, workshops and project-groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-decides</td>
<td>Politics and governance leave the development and the decision-making to the participants. The government official device (ambtelijk apparaat) fulfils a mere advisory role. Politics adopt the results, after being tested along the lines of the conditions set in advance. The participant is hence co-decision maker. Here the decision-making takes place in a steering-group, a (binding) referendum or a participation council (medezeggenschapsraad).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manages</td>
<td>Groups take the initiative themselves for the better of their own livelihoods. They manage the creation of new amenities and services and are responsible for the own underkeep. Politics and governance are not involved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initially, the ladder was considered as specific steps towards the ultimate ‘self-management’. The initial Ladder by Arnstein (1969) was used to describe the road to the ultimate ‘citizen’s power’ on top of the ladder. The first five steps of the ladder were considered as merely symbolic participation e.g. ‘tokenism’ because the citizen has too little power to exert their will. Citizens’ participation only started from the level of coproducing. However, the ladder described by the SCP considers each level of participation as ‘true’ in contradiction to Arnstein’s initial version. It is used to make clear in which level of participation a certain initiative finds itself. And is not depicted as a bad-good situation.

Counter wise, there is also an ‘overheidsparticipatietrap’ (ladder of participation by governments). This is similar to the participation ladder but is now aimed at the role of the government. The ladder ranges from ‘letting go’ at the bottom to consciously managing activities and regulation. The ladder will be used to explain where the case studies are situated, and in which stage the exemplary practitioner can play an important role.

5.5.1 Right-to-challenge

As participation becomes more important in Dutch planning, the Right to Challenge (RTC) implies that a group of (organised) citizens must be able to take over tasks otherwise handled by the municipality. These people can do it if they think they are able to do it differently, better, smarter and/or financially more attractive. The conventional relationship of government – citizen changes with RTC to the relation client-contractor (https://vng.nl/wat-is-het-right-to-challenge, n.d.)

The right to challenge is ‘implemented’ to fit the dynamics in the current society in which municipalities (or formalised institutions) realise that citizens can add tremendous value and quality to services, amenities and their own livelihoods. It fits the trend in the Netherlands that coincides with the increased importance of citizens’ initiatives, citizen’s participation and societal initiatives. Hence, a municipality can merge the ‘energy’ that civil society provides together with their own force of power and execution. Consequently, the formal institutions also affirm the ‘rights’ that civil society can lay claim to and the rights and powers of the individuals in that same society (Vereniging Nederlandse Gemeenten, n.d.).

5.6 How to find the ‘exemplary practitioner’?

In the different (levels) of citizen’s participation and initiatives, there are also a number of important individuals that play a role, these are considered as the exemplary practitioners (van Hulst et al., 2012)

The exemplary practitioner consists out of a variety of different individuals each possessing different identifiable characteristics. They do however have one specific characteristic in common: they all participate for the better of (their own) livelihoods or for the larger whole that being the society or community.

Not all individuals participate in (public) decisions, in policy making or in ‘societal’ issues. The SCP (2014) defines five groups of participation whereby a striking more than 50 percent of the Dutch population does not participate and is characterised as ‘non-active’: one does not or barely participate in activities. 15 % of the population is characterised as ‘writer’ which means sending letters or e-mails to government institutions such as municipalities. However, 14% is considered as ‘buurtactivist’ or local activist which entails that these people often participate in community meetings or are active in a community/neighbourhood organisation. A mere six percent is politically engaged and participations in public administration and thus maintains social connections with local government and politicians. The SCP (2014) concludes with the last seven percent that participates both politically and socially and denominates them as ‘allrounders’ (SCP, 2014). For the aspect of exemplary practitioners, the last three are most of interest, the local activists, the politically engaged and the allrounders.
Part of this research is to uncover certain characteristics of exemplary practitioners that are relevant for the success of an initiative. These might also offer possibilities for approaches in the context of the participation in the Omgevingswet.

Firstly, it is imperative to describe the different characteristics that have already been uncovered by Van Hulst et al. (2011 and 2012). They describe six different typologies of exemplary practitioners; however, this list is not complete and definite in their research. This is due to their desire of focusing and thoroughly describing which would otherwise become more difficult, secondly the kind of practitioners are varied and range from the mid-1970s to recent times.

Van Hulst et al. (2012) described a number of exemplary practitioners: reflective practitioners, deliberative, street-level bureaucrats, front-line workers, everyday maker, everyday fixers, boundary spanners and (policy) entrepreneurs. Their specific characteristics are shortly listed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Function(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflective practitioner</td>
<td>Combine thinking and acting (reflection-in-action)</td>
<td>Architects, managers, engineers, psychotherapists, town planners, music teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set the problem before trying to solve it (framing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiment (conversation with situation/reframing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Try to learn by doing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberative practitioner</td>
<td>Try to get to know people and their problems (through listening)</td>
<td>Planners, mediation facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work on relationships, rituals, networks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take values and emotions into account</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street-level bureaucrat</td>
<td>Diminish emotional involvement and aspirations</td>
<td>Police officers, teachers, counsellors, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop routines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Construct stereotypes and simplifications of reality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cope with uncertainties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front Line worker</td>
<td>Interact and engage with citizens</td>
<td>Police officers, teachers, counsellors, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work bottom-up and intuitively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look for the essence of concrete situations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on effective interventions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Try to understand (“read”) the situation deeply</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take action on the spot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have a collective ambition; need the commitment of selected persons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work on relations with the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Maker</td>
<td>Do it themselves</td>
<td>Active citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do it where they are</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do it for fun but also because they find it necessary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do it ad hoc and part-time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do it concretely rather than ideologically</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do it responsibly and show trust in themselves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do it with tact and with respect for the differences of others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do it by looking at expertise as the other rather than as enemy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Fixer</td>
<td>See everyday maker, but work less isolated and less ad hoc</td>
<td>Active citizens/public entrepreneurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary Spanner</td>
<td>They deal with people on both sides of the boundary and specialize in negotiating the interactions between systems. Boundary spanners are characterized by their ability to engage with others and deploy effective relational and interpersonal competencies (Williams 2002, p. 110). They might be called in when a conflict arises between groups of actors in a different network. Active listening and</td>
<td>Boundary spanners work in positions between two or more systems (e.g. the juridical system and the health system, different organizations).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table on exemplary practitioners will be used to identify the kind of exemplary practitioner the research will be dealing with in the different within cases. A combination of characteristics is possible. The typologies do not exclude characteristics from different denominators. To find the exemplary practitioner in each case the model below is helpful for the proper distillation of findings and leading to results:

| Policy entrepreneur | Various characteristics from all of the above. Mostly active with policy-making. | Various |

Table 3. Typologies of exemplary practitioners. Source: van Hulst et al. (2012)

(A) From the cases examining the specific contexts (heuristic model by Haase, et al.), distillate ‘best’ or ‘common’ practices of participation, bottlenecks, methods and describing the role of an exemplary practitioner.

(B) What kind of exemplary practitioners are there (or how do they differ)?
   a. What are the characteristics

(C) Leading to an approach towards participation in shrinking areas

(D) The Omgevingswet with the ‘free space’ of participation: how to shape participation in a specific context?

(E) Result: Leading to approaches, methods & new ideas for other (similar) cases. Bundling of suitable characteristics of exemplary practitioners that lead to recommendations for the shaping of participation in shrinking regions, in the context of the Omgevingswet.

In short: the theory and operationalisation have made a number of aspects clear. Firstly, we will take into account the specific contexts (e.g. heuristic model) and the factors at play: the trends, developments and history of a case (e.g. demographic and social changes). Leading to a complex
governance system in which formal and informal interaction is constantly taking place and obligatory passage points have to be passed. Next, the role of participation in these aspects is examined— with an emphasis on the role of specific ‘exemplary practitioners’ according to the table discussed in paragraph 5.6. The functioning and emerging of an exemplary practitioner is very much depended on these contextual factors. As a result, this will lead to the answering of the main questions and recommendations for shrinking regions to handle with both the Omgevingswet and participation.
6 Case study findings and results

Shrink is persistent, this is what appears from the many case studies that have been visited and the diverse pool of respondents willing to provide information, ideas and insights into the activities and challenges of the much-discussed citizens’ initiative. Shrink manifests itself in different ways: from physical impacts such as vacant buildings to more social impacts such as an ageing population. The findings will show the diverse driving forces, perspectives and outlooks upon the future of shrinking regions. The people that were interviewed can be characterised as ‘exemplary practitioners’ in their own specific contexts but they face certain challenges and require thorough interaction on the large playing field.

The chapter will elaborate on the findings from the different cases and will lead to a results paragraph in which conclusions will be made. Based on the cases and the individual talks with the practitioners, the chapter will conclude with a matrix of characteristics (of the exemplary practitioner) which are deemed ‘most successful’ in coping with citizens’ initiatives in shrinking regions. For the best possible data material and triangulation, a number of cases have been selected in the Netherlands. Each in a different ‘shrink’ context, these are shortly described in the next table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Short overview</th>
<th>Location and denomination (BZK, 2018)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stadsboerderij Heerlen (urban farm) Peter Erkens</td>
<td>Local based products and animals, multifunctional spaces for tourism, businesses and creating local awareness.</td>
<td>Heerlen-Noord, Limburg Parkstad Limburg region Shrink region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens’ initiative Yageo Gert-Jan van Walsum</td>
<td>Vacant property by foreign owner requires new attention and investment.</td>
<td>Roermond, Limburg Midden-Limburg region Anticipation region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rendiz (de Fabriek) Peter Broekmans</td>
<td>Social entrepreneurship for people with disabilities and with specific social care needs. Offering second chances to both people and (vacant) buildings.</td>
<td>Horst &amp; Panningen, Limburg Noord-Limburg region Anticipation region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMV Mariënvelde Freek Jansen</td>
<td>Broad societal amenity for the enhancement of liveability in the village.</td>
<td>Mariënvelde, Gelderland Achterhoek region Shrinking region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasteel de Keverberg Har Timmermans</td>
<td>Renovation and rebuilding of a castle ruin on a prominent spot in the small village. Citizens took matters into their own hands and transformed it to a modern, multifunctional space for all kinds of events.</td>
<td>Kessel, Limburg Noord-Limburg region Anticipation region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vereniging Kleine Kernen Limburg (VKKL) Ralph Tangelder</td>
<td>Association of villages, communal councils, municipalities and initiators for the support and preservation of small citizens’ initiatives in (mostly) small towns and villages in Limburg (also a nation-wide association: LVKK).</td>
<td>Horst, Limburg Mostly in regions of Midden-and Noord-Limburg (but also nationwide associations and overarching organisations) Anticipation region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next chapter will be structured as follows: the interviews and the concerning cases will be elaborated foremost in chronological order. This will lead to a saturation of data material in the final paragraph of the chapter. Consequently, Gebrookerbos as ‘best example’, will be elaborated upon in the final part because the case material has made clear that the formal-informal construction with the help of a ‘brooker’ in Gebrookerbos is most exemplary and comes closest to an ideal situation. Each case will keep in mind the heuristic model by Haase et al. (2014) and it will briefly discuss the outlooks on the Omgevingswet. In the final paragraph, a summation of research findings and results will be presented which then leads to the final chapter of conclusions and recommendations.

In each case, shortly the context will be elaborated. Leading to a number of pre-set themes in line with the research questions, which have been coded into the same categories in each case or interview. These general themes or categories are (see also the interview-guides in the appendix I):

- The process of forming the initiative (e.g. a real physical case or a project/enterprise);
- The interplay between the formal and informal (e.g. between the initiator and stakeholders in the municipality or local to higher governments);
- The role of the municipality and their approach towards these kinds of initiatives;
- Slightly connected to the above category: the role of relevant jurisdiction and procedures by either the local, regional or national government
- The obstacles or barriers that need to be bridged, hereafter ‘obligatory passage points’ will be more suitable for the denomination of this aspect, it will become clearer why this has been chosen throughout the chapter;
- The awareness and knowledge about the developments happening regarding the Omgevingswet;
- Lastly the specific characteristics and practices of the initiators, hereafter ‘exemplary practitioners’ which have led to a successful initiative and practice; this part will also form the final paragraph with a table and personae of the ‘ideal’ characteristics of an exemplary practitioner.

Consequently, emergent themes or themes that were of specific interest to the case have come up; these are also added to the description and will be part of the findings and analysis.
The first case that was visited in the light of the research was the urban farm owned in Heerlen by Respondent Peter Erkens. The urban farm has multiple goals, ranging from providing own grown, local products and letting people get acquainted with the local products. This trend we can see emerge throughout the globalised world, were people want to become more acquainted with the local products, and instead of globalising ‘glocalising’ which is expressed through for instance ‘anti-globalisers’ becomes more and more the trend (Dicken, 2015).

**Context**

The ‘urban farm’ is located in Heerlen, part of the region Parkstad-Limburg. The region faces many challenges regarding the large demographic changes occurring ever since the closure of the mines. The region is active in tackling the large transformation challenges regarding living and space, economic vitality and (urban) amenities and facilities (de Vries & Rutgers, 2017).

The *stadsboerderij* itself is founded with a number of goals in mind, these are considering larger (economic) trend, locally but also globally, such as the increased attention to local products and a decrease in intensification of agriculture and farming. Within the shrink context, as respondent Erkens also referred to, it is imperative to look for the opportunities a certain context can provide: “when the whole shrink story started, the city was a real threat, however with the passing of time I saw that the same city also offered opportunities – I try to seize them” (personal communication, Peter Erkens, 16-05-2018).

Larger developments are influencing the operation and functioning of small farmers and they become subject to local, national or even international policies such as zoning plans, quota’s and world-market economy. However, small farmers often cannot cope with all these demands while they are also expected to provide for themselves for a living and to provide, healthy, fair (e.g. animal health and local) products. Next to developments on policy and planning levels, society itself has also become very demanding, as Erkens stated that citizens are speaking up more and more these days and have become more empowered – this results in the fact that whether you are a municipality or in any other governing function, or if you are a local initiative with ‘good’ ideas, it is practically impossible to please and satisfy all actors involved (personal communication, Peter Erkens, 16-05-2018).

**Initiative in retrospective**

Shrink is not always considered a problem (RUIMTEVOLK session, 2018), neither does Erkens consider shrink an issue. When the shrink issue first arose, Peter Erkens found the opportunity to take his chance of bringing about change, be it on a local scale but with an above-local impact and driving force. New impulses are needed in the region, since the region had known numerous of socio-economic problems in the past few decades. On the other side of the coin, these issues also create possibilities. Large vacant lots require (and inspire) new initiatives and above all a cooperative municipality. Since land-use policies are foremost aimed at a growth-scenario and are not constructed to cope with shrink issues, it is often difficult to find an opening in the jurisdiction and zoning plans.

Spatial development and the real-estate market characterised by the high financial stakes and many stakeholders. The property developer often has a powerful role and a (lawful) claim to a certain piece of land or real-estate property – the municipality often has no say and is placed at the side-line. Even when there are vacant lots that could be benefit from a renovation or re-use – developers still choose for the more profitable solution which implies building a solely new property on a different place. This results in more new buildings (with often still vacant spaces waiting to be bought or rented) and a surplus in unused properties and vacant lands.
To cope with these developments, the urban farm tries to fill certain gaps in the shrink context. The initiative is ought to be more than a regular farm, or specifically an urban farm. Erkens also wants his urban farm to be multifunctional in the light of modern trends and the local needs. The urban farm then has the following purposes:

- Bringing people, citizens, closer to the origins of their food and products;
- Becoming a local producer and providing local stores with these locally produced products;
- Being more than just a farm but also serve as exhibition site with guided tours and lectures;
- Providing services such as drinks, ice-cream and small bites on the terrace;
- The tourism function will even increase with the addition of a bed & breakfast;
- Lastly, serving as a multifunctional space that can house events or even business meetings and offices;

What can be derived from the abovementioned is that the urban farm also requires a certain business model to be successful. However, Erkens does not consider himself as an ‘entrepreneur’ he states: “an enterprise is aimed at results, I am aiming for the creation of a farm and the experience of that farm” (personal communication, Peter Erkens, 16-05-2018). However, it is deemed necessary to find activities next to agriculture since agriculture on its own does not provide for a living. Therefore, he has chosen to involve other activities, a different business-model and all in all a new concept from which one can make a living.

**Interplay between the formal in informal**

As discussed earlier, the formal and informal consist out of a large number of different stakeholders. In this case, there are five main stakeholders identified: the municipality, the Gebrookerbos initiative, the initiative by Peter Erkens, the locals (citizens) and not to mention the role of large real-estate developers.

This interplay also creates tensions between the different layers; when a citizen (such as Erkens) for instance becomes politically active, he places himself more in the formal part of the interplay and even though this can be beneficial for the representation of the local needs – and his own – being politically active also implies a certain bias and can even result in local conflicts (personal communication, Peter Erkens, 16-05-2018). This has made him decide that both being politically active and as an initiator of a citizens’ initiative is not the ideal situation. Therefore, he has decided to let his political ambitions be – for the good of his initiative. In this way he prevents an image of being biased, being a person who shows up everywhere, furthermore he draws attention to the aspect of integrity. In his opinion, integrity is important but often goes too far. Hence, it becomes clear that an initiative in the informal sphere, is subject to politics and initiators find it important that their image to the outside world shows transparency and unbiased functioning.

Another example of the interplay between the citizens and the local government can be seen in the way that the municipality can have certain ideas on development and on the role of the citizens: a vacant property would be demolished and transformed into a parc, but at the same time kept under maintenance by the citizens (very much cost neutral) – however this idea came into being while the citizens had totally different ideas for the spaces. They also saw the space as a parc, but a space where the municipality itself was the responsible for the main underkeep - a very different view on a quite similar development. Consequently, the interplay between both sides is subject to interpretation of individuals, of communities and also very much dependent on the political atmosphere of the time and period at stake. Actors in the ‘formal’ system such as Aldermen (wethouders) but also government officials (ambtenaren) are also subject to willekeur (random subjectivity) and their decisions are not always in line with what the majority of people want. Some have their own agenda, and some simply
do not effectively listen to what the citizens want. To bridge the abovementioned gap and difference in expectations, the role of a person like Peter Erkens comes into play: he is a local who is known among the other locals and has been visibly active in local developments and small activities such as planting seeds and the upkeep of the gardens: “The people know me, I worked with them and we had some occasional chit-chat […] I broke the ice [between municipality officials and the locals]” (personal communication, Peter Erkens, 26-05-2018). Next to this important connection role, the role of the broker and other important people in the bridging between both sides will be discussed later on, the same counts for the concept of ‘expectation management’. As the initiative is now part of the larger whole of ‘Gebrookerbos’ – formal and informal are being bridged through the role of the ‘broker’ and the assigned account-managers from the municipality.

The role of the municipality
Erkens has stated that he is subject to a number of jurisdictions in the formulation of his plans and ideas for the urban farm. These laws and permits, such as zoning-plans (bestemmingsplannen) and recreational permits. Whereby these rules and regulations form the largest obstacle. As he is intending to combine multiple functions on his farm, zoning plans are very restrictive instead of open and interpretive. He, on the current day, still does not have permission to change the zoning plan on some subjects such as permits for ‘horeca’ (Hotel-Recreation-Café) purposes while his neighbour ‘on the other side of the road’ did get the permission due to, as he stated, unexplainable causes. In his view, the municipality often works with ‘negative’ zoning plans, which approaches new initiatives from the perspective of what is not possible instead of approaching initiatives with the possibilities and slight deviation from rules within the frames.

The municipality as obligatory passage point
Certain expertise is missing in the municipality, Erkens refers to the lack of knowledge regarding agriculture – the municipality does not have this background. Furthermore, he states that in his opinion the municipality does not place priority in having this specific expertise to sufficiently aid people like him.

Openness towards new initiatives and people with different views is lacking at times, however Gebrookerbos is a method to bridge the gap, and for municipalities to see possibilities in doing and thinking different. This ‘method’ came into being through cooperation between different parties, one of them being the municipality. The municipality appointed a number of account-managers who are responsible for multiple initiatives – this will be elaborated more thoroughly in 6.6. One account-manager aids Erkens whenever he needs guidance or when he counters upon stumbling blocks.

The Omgevingswet: awareness and a mediator
In terms of the Omgevingswet, Erkens states that he is not fully up to date but has the capacities to walk through a certain plan procedure and has the capabilities to hire a zoning-plan expert to aid him in his process. Also, to ‘fight’ the municipality for his rights. Jurisdiction is sometimes very difficult to overcome and there is little space for small initiatives. This is where there still is work to do for the implementation of the Omgevingswet. Erkens argued that the biggest task still lies with the municipalities and the officials to open up and to see the possibilities. Importantly to move away from the known paths and to overcome the fear of ‘letting go’.

He states, in the past everything was regulated, and people got aid and help from the local and national governments (e.g. after the closing of the mines, social support, medical support and financial

5 Reference to Gebrookerbos in paragraph 6.8
supports). Today people are more and more on their own, intentionally but then the municipality should also give the people ample space. But, today, deregulation is a much bigger issue and municipalities and officials are still finding it difficult to let parts of their authorities go – for the good of the empowerment of the citizens initiatives.

**Success factors of the exemplary practitioner**

When talking to respondent Erkens, the aim was also to find out which characteristics and traits of himself as an actor are considered important for the functioning and or success of the initiative. The following findings can be noted:

- Thinker and doer, being resourceful; finding possibilities where others do not.
- Integrity and rightfulness; justice and fairness for all people, no-one has more right on something than another person.
- Authenticity and experience; wanting to accomplish something authentic, true and being true to yourself and others. Above all, offering experience for others.
- Sociable and close to the people; working with the people and being visible among them (on a frequent basis).
- Social ‘entrepreneur’; undertaking a business with foremost a social driving force at mind.
- Making choices and taking chances; e.g. seeing possibilities where others do not.
- Taking into account that an initiative requires quite some time and is very influential on one’s daily life.
- Having a background with sufficient (financial) capacities; coming from an entrepreneurial family and having a good amount of own (financial) capital to handle with backdrops.
- Winners’ mentality; not giving up when things do not go completely as planned.
- Intelligence to a certain degree – being confident in yourself and what you can achieve.

However,

- There is no real use of a network; being very independent of others. Even though his story throughout does imply a certain form of network, but more in being a known person in the field. Thus, a slight contradiction can be seen in this respect.
- Erkens states that he is not a planner and does not always plan and think things through, this can be an issue at times, but often gives him the drive to effectively go on with a plan: “if you think too long, eventually you will see enough obstacles in your path” (personal communication, Peter Erkens, 16-05-2018)
- Sometimes the municipality or jurisdiction in general is that negative and there are so many stumbling blocks that Erkens does not see the benefits anymore to move on with his initiative.

**Emergent themes**

Self-reliance or ‘zelfredzaamheid’ is considered as a vital part of the new approach towards (planning) developments and the formation of initiatives and continuation.

*The category of EP Erkens has the most in common with: Every-Day Maker*
6.2 Citizens’ initiative Yageo

The citizens’ initiative belongs to a quite different category than the case discussed before; other than a single initiator aimed at the development of one’s own or local enterprise, the initiative is comprised of more individuals aiming for a change in use of physical infrastructure. However, when talking about exemplary practitioners, it is possible to distinguish different kinds of exemplary practitioners and an initiative such as the Yageo initiative consist out of several different people, e.g. practitioners, that each have specific characteristics that, when assembled, create the whole.

Origins
The interviewee, Gert-Jan van Walsum, is part of a group of six people who form the citizens’ initiative Yageo (referred to as ‘Yageo’ hereafter), since 2012. Yageo is the name of the current owner of and old Philips location in Roermond. Roermond’s demographic situation is slightly different than the region discussed the paragraph before; Parkstad-Limburg. Roermond is situated in the middle of Limburg and is denominated as ‘anticipation-region’ this means that the region does not (yet) face the rapid demographic changes and transitions that the south of Limburg has been facing for many years, but that trends and prognostics are indicating demographic transition to occur in the region of Roermond as well.

Returning to the case Yageo, the industrial site has been vacant for over ten years and due to its prominent site in the middle of neighbourhood and near to the city centre, it has become a thorn in the eye of many inhabitants. The Phillips site used to be a very important place for many people, as Phillips was one of the most important employers in the city for over eighty years (dorpenacademie.nl, n.d.). When the manufacturing shifted to mostly low-cost countries, chip-manufacturer Yageo from Taiwan laid claim to the property and also Yageo, not long after the takeover, shifted its production elsewhere. As a consequence, in 2008 all the activities stopped – and the site remained vacant up until present day (Personal communication, Gert-Jan van Walsum, 18-05-2018; dorpenacademie.nl, n.d.).

‘Yageo’ consist out of people with different professional backgrounds in for instance (spatial) development. The group is aiming for a proper re-use of the industrial site. As the site has a large
amount of (immaterial) value for people in Roermond and it can also be of cultural-historical value to the city. Telling the ‘story’ of what the site has meant for Roermond and properly connecting it to its new function. Contrastingly, ever since Yageo became the new owner, the site has been under strict supervision by a large security company – the question arises as to why the owner would invest money in security? While, at the same time it is evident that the owner does not have plans nor an idea of what to do with the site, and even so does not want to give it away unless a large amount of money is put on the table.

**Initiative as ‘spreekbuis’**

In the years that ‘Yageo’ has been active, it has become renowned for its presence, (political) agenda setting and political involvement. As Gert-Jan van Walsum states: “We were able to put politics in motion quite well during last council-elections, [which resulted in the fact that] Yageo became part of electoral programmes and was included in the coalition accords” (personal communication, 18-05-2018). The involvement of ‘Yageo’ is, as van Walsum states, considered as positive by the citizens and there is a high degree of carrying capacity among the citizens of Roermond.

As ‘activator’ and spokesperson of their interests, one of the points that ‘Yageo’ makes is that the municipality has authorities that it should make use of more; for instance, in the possibilities to expropriate (onteigening) the current owner. However, the reality is that the municipality remains quite passive and ‘Yageo’ affirms that they remain reluctant in undertaking action. Furthermore, ‘Yageo’ tries to be a helping hand and for instance tries to show the formal authorities (e.g. municipality) the possibilities in expropriation - in being ‘creative’ in finding methods of discourse and negotiation such as looking for starting points that eventually could lead to expropriation, for instance ‘soil contamination’ or ‘safety of the neighbourhood’. They are thus trying to offer (new) perspectives.

‘Yageo’ considers the vacant site as waste of space that could be properly utilized for multiple functions otherwise. They see the location as a place for combining functions, first of all more green space in the heart of the city, but also spaces for businesses, flex-work places, work and living spaces and – above all, the site should use the present qualities and honour its industrial past.

One of the starting points of ‘Yageo’ is to always involve the local population in these new (planning) developments in the city. Interaction between, and effectively listening to them, is essential. However, in practice the municipality still has difficulties in arranging proper interaction between the formal and informal. This becomes clear via cases where it does not effectively work or where citizens are only involved in the final stages of a development, which implies a kind of ‘symbolic’ planning. Sharing a (planning) vision is already a good step into the direction but it requires more than just sharing when changes are nearly impossible to implement. When involving the locals or the community, ‘carrying capacity’ is created and there is a lot more added value to the living environment.

**Municipality as ‘passive’ intermediary**

The municipality fulfils the role as obligatory passage point in ANT terms. One cannot achieve certain goals without first consulting the exiting (zoning) plans created by local to national governments. In the case of Yageo, the role of the municipality becomes clear in different ways;

Contrastingly, the municipality has also left matters out of their hands and preferred to leave it to the ‘market’. It is in line with the idea that the municipality and city politics are very much right-wing oriented and focused on economy and market. Not taking ‘grondposities’ and involving and acquiring lands for the spatial development of the municipality is an example of leaving the developments to the market.
‘Yageo’ points out that the municipality has a certain amount of responsibility and is able – or rather, should be able - to set up initiatives for changes and to become active in an otherwise standstill development. ‘Yageo’ argues for the municipality to take that responsibility instead of staying passive in the development process. When leaving the developments solely to the real-estate developers, an implicit risk emerges of a developer that does not communicate with the outside nor engage in (participative) interaction.

The municipality is afraid of letting go of their authority – being interactive means that the planning process will take longer and will lead to higher costs, at least that are some of the arguments. Being more open is something that, in the eyes of van Walsum, should be a core task of the municipality, “that amount of adulthood is still missing here” (personal communication, 18-05-2018). It is somewhat culturally determined. Both the government side as well as the population – are characterised as less assertive and often state that things are “good the way they are”.

**Driving forces**

‘Yageo’ is an initiative with a high societal and local cause in mind – in a more physical way such as the re-use of vacant properties but also with a social goal in mind: appreciating and emphasizing the local history of a location. These are the main goals of ‘Yageo’, however, the individuals who are a part of it also require their own driving forces next to these over-arching goals. These driving forces vary, one of them is just the “need for ‘something’ to happen”; instead of a particular goal, some members are already satisfied when they see things set in motion, whereas others prefer to see a particular goal or achievement to be accomplished. Time is not one of the most important aspects, it is more important, as abovementioned, that there are things happening and that a certain development does not lose attention, rather, it should stay in the spotlights.

Van Walsum is involved in real-estate at Rijkswaterstaat (Dutch Royal Land Policies) where he is responsible for the acquisition of land and the sales of land for large infrastructural projects. This implies that he has quite some professional expertise in spatial planning and jurisdiction. Hence, he is able to put his work experience into practice for a more societal (local) cause. However, he is no expert in spatial laws such as the Omgevingswet – even though he does have his opinion on the matter which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Part of the team are: an architect, a spatial developer and importantly, someone handy with (online) communication. The latter has proven to be important since he is the liaison towards the (local) press. This communicator takes care of the image to the outside; this often results in the idea that ‘Yageo’ is a large, highly influential, initiative. With the publicity that is generated they achieve interaction and awareness regarding the issue at stake.

Difficulties arise when certain cases demand a position as an ‘activist’ but at the same time, some are also relatively delicate and require to be approached highly sensitive. Often these are related to politically-sensitive matters. The question often arises then do we as ‘Yageo’ take a position as the opposing party or do you try to rope them in and keep them happy? The last difficulty arises when things do not go as planned or take too much time; consequently, too little is set in motion and individual motivations also risk decreasing.

The discussion with van Walsum has led to a short list of specific characteristics that are of importance to the workings of an initiative and its practitioners:

- Involvement in municipal politics; having and underkeep of connections and arranging discourse.
• Involved in groups of interests; having connections with different parties (market, public and municipal) and engaging in discourse.
• Involved with ‘society’ as a whole; being curious to the outside world, keeping up with local to national and international trends and developments.
• Acting with durability in mind: the core from the inside is rotten and the new developments are coming from the outside – this is wrong. One should start from the inside and keep this vital and active.
• A proper vision should be present on developments, with keeping in mind the newest trends and developments (local and national) – “nothing is easy, everything is difficult” is one of his motto’s.
• Determination and not giving up quickly. But staying realistic: what can and cannot be achieved? Knowing when to stop.
• Time; able to spend some of the (free) time for the initiative.
• Having a group in which there is a good balance between serious business and fun
• Always consider the specific context and situations: ‘maatwerk’.

Omgevingswet: danger of falling into the trap?

The overarching topic of the discussion is of course the legal jurisdiction and the implementation of the Omgevingswet. The Omgevingswet will be put into practice to, one the one hand formalise participation, and on the other to facilitate initiatives such as ‘Yageo’, giving them more space and grounds on which they can operate. Van Walsum states that he is happy with this development and that the initiator (government or public) is obliged to engage in interaction with its environment. The Omgevingswet is very supportive in the back – however the municipality should already start approaching new developments in the ‘spirit of the Omgevingswet’ (also see documents on ‘Aan de slag met de Omgevingswet’, 2018). Here one can think of simply being more cooperative which creates more carrying capacity and opening up (changing perspective) towards developments from the outside. However, involving the community, and thinking more social rather than economically is possibly less part of the ‘DNA’ of Roermond (personal communication, Gert-Jan van Walsum, 18-05-2018). This is part of why the municipality will have to bridge certain path-dependencies and formalised structures, procedures and approaches.

As stated before, van Walsum is not an expert on the Omgevingswet, but he nevertheless states: “some people in politics are shouting out that the Omgevingswet is the ‘Walhalla’ – then everything will get better – then we’ll be able to take matters into our own hands and control the levers” (personal communication, Gert-Jan van Walsum, 15-06-2018). However, one should be aware of the fact that this is a dangerous stand-point and that things are not always that evident. It is thus imperative to not consider the Omgevingswet as the all-encompassing problem solver to which one can endlessly refer, but, that the Omgevingswet formalises certain forms of interaction and is mostly supportive in favour of participation and formal to informal interactions. The Omgevingswet not an instrument that serves as a single solution to a problem or issue, but it serves as backbone and framework of the formal and informal interactions. It will not be the case that “society asks, and initiator does” (personal communication, Gert-Jan van Walsum, 18-05-2018). However, the municipality (or initiator for that matter) will always have an obligation to always engage in interaction with its citizens.

The spatial frameworks are often unclear, especially when a large (real-estate) developer has interests at stake. A financial framework should not be left undisussed, since these are always at play and can influence the acting of the municipality. This is the last aspect that also should be addressed when the Omgevingswet comes into effect, unclear rules and frameworks make it more difficult for (citizens’) initiatives to operate and make interaction with the locals even more challenging.
Key themes

- Interactive process
- Watch out for the Omgevingswet
- Working with frameworks and ‘maatwerk’ or customization

The category of EP van Walsum has the most in common with:
Front-Line worker, reflective practitioner

6.3 Rendiz – a social initiative by Peter Broekmans

Rendiz is a social initiative aimed at combining commercial and social care services. Here, entrepreneurship is combined with good (local) cooperation with a social (maatschappelijk) goal in mind. Thinking creative, seeing opportunities and offering new perspectives is key. Rendiz furthermore aims at developing an individual’s qualities, driving forces and developing talents.

Rendiz operates mostly in the region Noord-Limburg (around the city of Venlo) which is, like Roermond, and anticipation region (Rijksoverheid, 2018). It is also facing challenges such as a surplus in buildings resulting in vacant properties and decrease of functions. Most challenges are related to the real-estate market and the regional economy (de Vries & Rutgers, 2017).

Peter Broekmans is founder of the Rendiz initiative, together with his wife, he started to renovate and rebuild old (often vacant) properties in the northern part of Limburg. Renovation is the first step; finding a proper function, underkeep and management of the enterprise follows from this undertaking: each location has its own ‘face’ and this person oversees the operations of the location. This is necessary since Broekmans cannot always be present at all locations. ‘Good’ entrepreneurship from Broekman’s side has been very crucial – the different properties, locations and their functions require a certain business model (and qualified people) to thrive and to satisfy both the funding organisations (mortgages with the bank) and the municipality. As a small organisation, it has now grown into a business with over 100 employees and about 80 volunteers (rendiz.nl/over-rendiz, n.d.). These people work together in different participation- and development-trajectories – all with a social starting point. Rendiz wants to offer people new chances by combining commercial and societal care services, it is aimed at being societal relevant and positively impacting society and those people with special needs.

One of the first projects of Rendiz is ‘de Bekkerie’ – a property (old bakery) with a representational character for the village Boekend. Locations with important local functions and amenities in the village were declining and there was an increased need for new ideas and functions. De Bekkerie was one of these solutions; today de Bekkerie serves as a restaurant, a library, creative atelier, an information point and a bakery. Furthermore, there is space for events and it serves as ‘house of the neighbourhood’ where all kinds of people meet.

However, the location in which the interview has been conducted is ‘de Fabriek’. There are currently nine of these kind of locations (one of them being de Bekkerie). De Fabriek fulfils an important local function for the elderly and especially for people with specific care needs such as dementia, physical limitations or intellectual disabilities. De Fabriek will be the main context in which the findings have been made.
Driving forces

Providing care services is the red-thread in the story of Rendiz, even though initiator Broekmans does not have his origins in care-business. He does have ample experience of working with for instance the provincial government and jurisdiction. This, in the end, proved to be very beneficial for the success. Furthermore, Broekmans is very much locally involved (with the local soccer-club) and he is chairman of a societal foundation and a number of local initiatives.

Important (unique) starting point of Rendiz is the renovation of buildings with an important representational character. These large buildings (such as old train stations, post offices, bank offices, churches or schools) have often been of high importance to the local communities. By renovating them and providing them with a different function, renewed pride and vitality can be created. Furthermore, providing new jobs and day activities for all kinds of people.

Important for the success of an initiative is that it comprises of a variety of people with all kinds of expertise, knowledge, backgrounds and needs. If the organisation is new or has existed for a longer period of time, this influences the way people work in an organisation and what kind of changes can still be implemented; is there a system? Furthermore, it is important that there is a good connection between the employer and employee; this means have the same ‘world outlooks’ and thinking in line with the views of the organisation. The selection of good people is imperative for the success of a social enterprise such as Rendiz. One should value each other’s different qualities.

Lastly, it is important to be able (and wanting) to think out of the box and bring up new ideas and perspectives. Even when this is not specifically the planning of a certain meeting. The network an employee or the employee has is also important: people (local) need to like an initiative and be open to it. To achieve this, having good connections with relevant (authorities) parties is very helpful. When an initiative is being different than others, this will give an initiative ample carrying capacity. Sometimes it also means that the smaller the things are, the more impact it could have.

The general driving force of Broekmans is that he sees developments happening in his living environment (e.g. demographic transition, social exclusion) and he wants to bring about change. He feels an obligation to help those in need and with special needs. Otherwise these people are left to market/political chances and economic cuts. Rendiz provides a helping hand to the other, traditional care-services.

**Formal and informal interplay: coping with the municipality**

Rendiz can be considered as in between the formal and informal. It aids new (bottom-up) initiatives and it mediates and negotiates with the formal institutions such as the municipality and the province. In this unique position, the interplay between the formal and informal is shaped by complex strategies and intensive discourse.

**Strategies**

When an individual or organisation comes with a good idea and starts a petition for action – Rendiz can choose whether or not to support the initiative, and if so, the steps will take them to the municipality. Coupling of on the one hand a representational building and on the other hand approaching the municipality. Terms mostly are that Rendiz renovates a building with the help of people with a ‘distance’ to the labour market; people with certain disabilities.

Frequent consultation with important stakeholders is important along with the creation of a ‘brand’ or becoming renown in the sector; many care institutions found it interesting to work with Rendiz, also because Rendiz is not seen as a competitor for regular care but as complementary to their work. Rendiz offers day care where a regular care institution would not be able to do this, for instance because of limitations in funds, economic cuts or limited care-personnel.

Realism can be considered as a strategy; by experience, Broekmans (Rendiz) knows quite quickly which initiatives are achievable and which are not. A successful initiative is not the result of a singular approach which can be applied to all cases, taking into consideration the specific contexts and providing ‘maatwerk’ is crucial.

An initiative often stumbles upon financial shortcomings; when a certain business model is simply financially unattainable, Rendiz, knows when to opt out and step aside. Making good and thoughtful choices is imperative and requires patience and cooperation between different parties. Financing an initiative is often one of the largest stumbling blocks, not all parties have the necessary expertise nor entrepreneurship to successfully exploit the initiative. Broekmans also refers to the economic crisis from 2008, which influenced the success of initiatives as well, before the crisis just ‘having a good story’ was often already enough to convince a bank for financial support. Today, a new initiative has to prove itself and provide certain guarantees before a bank is willing to provide a loan.

As Rendiz today has become renown locally, it can also count on attention from local press offices. However, this is not always beneficial, since negative press can also result in stabbing the initiative in the back. When stepping to the press, one should be very careful and considerate of (political) sensitivities.

**Jurisdiction**

Broekmans considers the jurisdiction and the handling of the municipality often as a stumbling block. The large number of rules, regulations and procedures make it very difficult for bottom-up initiatives to become successful or to start a business in the first place. He pointed out “You don’t believe how many permits I have, eighteen! And I can name them all [...] hardly anybody is willing anymore to start such an initiative” (personal communication, Peter Broekmans, 19-05-2018).
Furthermore, in the field of social entrepreneurship, a specific entity is in the process of being erected. However, Broekmans states that he does not see the benefits of this possible entity. As entrepreneur the many different jurisdictions have made the whole field so very complex that a new entity will only make it more complex than it already is.

The role of the municipality
The jurisdiction leads to the (immanent) role of the (local) government, which is often responsible for providing subsidies and funds, given the initiative is in line with their own goals and often also political aspirations. They (municipality) call the market parties who want to take part in the development and in this way they arrange mutual obligations into an initiative. An example of this is providing ‘municipal guarantee’ which makes it for a bank easier to provide funds for a development since the municipality is a guarantee when an initiative goes bankrupt. It is imperative for an entrepreneur to see these possibilities and use the strategy wisely to involve all the different parties.

For a party such as Rendiz, they use both sides and to speak out the terms on both sides. The municipality is often prepared to work together since Rendiz offers possibilities with a specific win-win situation: successful exploitation and restauration, a new function to an otherwise vacant building and day care and activities for people with a distance to the labour market. Consequently, Rendiz creates a renowned image for (successful) cooperation and initiatives, leading to partnerships with different municipalities.

The national government demands more and more of the local governments, this is part of the decentralization of planning and governance. However, local governments often do not have the means or expertise necessary for understanding a complex situation – or a long-lasting development trajectory. Furthermore, the municipality often has to deal with financial shortages, cuts and crises – not all people and municipalities are sufficiently equipped to handle these issues. External advisors are appointed, but these are often more a burden than helpful: each new advisor needs to be informed over again about the situation, the history and the arrangements that already have been made. This only takes more time and often these advisors do not have any attachment to the location which makes it even more difficult to come to an agreement. This also implies that a certain approach is often very much dependent on an individual (persoonsafhankelijkheid) and is subject to subjectivity.

The other obligatory passage point is the province – and specifically the POL (Provinciaal Omgevingsplan). In the POL certain frames and guidelines are set, different habitat visions (woonvisies) and the social agenda are also of influence on the operation of initiatives – local politicians aim at this social agenda for their own goals.

Bureaucracy is a different issue – political changes after each official term are frequent. This leads to different aldermen (wethouders) who all have different ideas and stakes for their party. This makes the decision-making trajectory even more complex. With each alderman, an organisation such as Rendiz needs to re-evaluate the possibilities and inform the current political parties. Furthermore, bureaucracy, different departments, people and difficult communication and evaluations are very time-consuming

Characteristics
When examining the case, a red thread regarding the important characteristics can be examined. These characteristics are derived from the interview and the paragraph above.

- Investing a lot of time in the initiative (e.g. presentations) to become renown and finding volunteers
- Experience in working with the government – working at the province for many years
- Realism; knowing when to opt out
- Financial experience and knowledge
- Keep the government official as a friend and being sensitive to politics
- Perseverance; believing in your own capacities
- Affected by social issues
- Entrepreneurialism, thinker and doer and being able to think out of the box
- Mediator and connector between parties; having a large pool of connections

Lastly, Broekmans considers himself as an entrepreneur “I have to make a living... but that is very difficult, I am social entrepreneur”. But he also states that the difficulties that arise with local politics, bureaucracy, guidelines, jurisdiction etcetera are also very tiresome. Even he states “there will be a time that is the last – we won’t do it anymore – there is no fun it anymore” (...) “You’ll have to find those fools who like to do it [starting an initiative and working with in a complex framework] – there aren’t many” (personal communication, 19-05-2018).

Key themes

In short, the key themes of the Rendiz case are:

- Working with the municipality and using strategies
- The benefits and stumbling blocks of being a social entrepreneur
- Being different than others, offering out of the box thinking and providing win-win situations
- Time and hardship spent on the development of an initiative
- Social initiative to re-use prominent representational (vacant) buildings

Emergent themes

- (Social) Entrepreneurship
- Complexities in governance and strategies
- Realism in management

The category of EP Broekmans has the most in common with: boundary-spanner

6.4 Mariënvelde BMV: a broad societal facility for the wellbeing of the village

Mariënvelde is located in the Dutch province of Gelderland in the region Achterhoek. This region, is very much like the region Parkstad-Limburg, denominated as shrinking region by the national government (Rijksoverheid, 2018). However, the context is fairly different than in Limburg. Here, there is no such thing as ‘urban’ decline since the region is fairly rural. Even so, one of the main challenges of the Achterhoek is the quality of the existing supply and transformation of real estate. The main culprits are agricultural properties, social properties such as community buildings, religious properties but also regarding shops and office spaces (de Vries & Rutgers, 2017).

BMV Mariënvelde (meaning: Brede Maatschappelijke Voorziening; Broad societal facility) was founded with the idea of a community building for the village. Initial plans did not work out, due to minor (regarding details) disagreements among the locals “[eventually] they got into an argument regarding the colour of the wall tiles” (personal communication, Freek Jansen, 23-05-2018). Freek Jansen, played an important role in the erection of the new plans and the further process. To cope with demographic changes a new (meeting/functional) place was deemed necessary (which came out as a result from inquiries in the village and in the opinion of the main initiators) for the people that are living in the
village. BMV Mariënvelde today, functions as the main community building with multiple purposes for daily activities for people of all generations (and mostly) from the village itself. It has essentially become the largest ‘business’ of the village.

The role of Freek Jansen is quite substantial, even though he was originally not from the village but came to live there because of his relationship. He brought new life into the old plans that did in the end did not see the light of day. In his position, he brought people together and formed a structured steering group. With the goal of going into fruitful discussions and meetings. Connecting both the formal and informal.

**Formal and informal interplay: strategies of involvement**

The process of emergence of BMV Mariënvelde is also characterised by the thorough interplay between the formal and informal. Within the initiators, regular discussions and meetings were organized. The meetings with the steering groups were characterised as fairly informal. The two ‘best practices’ of these meetings were that it was ‘fun’ in the first place (with some bites and drinks) and secondly it needed to accomplish a goal (instead of meet to just meet). Therefore the meetings proved to be very fruitful in the end.

Along the process, the municipality also appointed process managers to ‘help’ the initiators, however Freek argued that this often does not work. These people come from the outside and are very eager to work with ‘forms’ whereas this is not the style in which the Mariënvelde development has come into existence. It is thus important to stay close to the way the initiators have been working in from the beginning. Jansen furthermore used the context (political, economic) of the situation to the benefit of the process for the initiative. He therefore used a number of ‘strategies’; these are derived from the interview and put into categories as follows:

**The (societal) question as leading**

He found it imperative to firstly put the question on the table: what do you, as inhabitants of the city, want? Consequently, providing concrete and feasible actions and solutions, ideas and possible stumbling blocks. Along with these, it was imperative to provide concrete examples of places where developments such as the demographic transition (e.g. shrink) are happening and what kind of effects it can have on the living quality of the neighbourhood. The answer to these developments was fairly simple: the inhabitants wanted a place for sports, a place to meet other people, and a place for the different community unions (vereniging). It appeared that the union-life (verenigingsleven) was still very vibrant and influential in the village, and therefore also required a new place to meet.

The next step was to promote the ideas in the village: via large adverts and meetings in the local pubs. This created more attention, more involvement and more new ideas. As a consequence, the carrying capacity increased. The initiative showed what possibilities a certain multi-functional building can have for the village.

**Organizing the organisation**

When it comes to the people working with the initiative, organizing the ‘organisation’ becomes imperative. Jansen started this by creating a steering group consisting out of different people with all a different expertise. These people are local people with a heart for the cause, and above all, people who also have relevant professional experience. Jansen made good use of his on network, he knew many people in many different positions that could be of help to the initiative. His network is comprised of people he knew from the professional world but also of friends (with relevant expertise).
Involving the locals meant letting them also do the talking during presentations or meetings: a local with a true and heartfelt story has more impact than an outsider with a good (sales) story.

Involving the local officials

Consequently, convincing and involving the local municipality officials formed a new challenge. Informing them about the plans (already made by the inhabitants themselves) is pivotal: the locals need support (financial and political) from the local government, otherwise the financing of the building would never be covered. This can for instance be done in showing the officials that there are win-win situations to gain: carrying capacity, vitality in the village, economic benefits and taking over some of the tasks of the municipality. The ideas at this moment had already shown a large carrying capacity with the locals, therefore the municipality’s only task remained in approving the plans and appointing financial aid in terms of subsidies. However, the officials needed to get used to the idea that from now on, these kinds of developments, were to be approached hand in hand with the inhabitants.

When inviting and involving new people (both formal and informal) to the plans, the strategy Jansen adopted was to make them enthusiastic about the plans and providing them with a possible win-win situation. Only afterwards telling them that the financial plans were not always fully covered. This resulted in cooperation that remained open-ended (vrijblijvend); which in the end resulted in beneficial situation for both sides.

Jansen also stresses the importance of transparency: to both the political side and to the inhabitants and within the steering group. It is imperative to always keep corresponding and informing the involved parties to avoid negative discussion about the developments, and to avoid expectations that cannot be met in the end.

As stated before, Jansen also made good use of the time and situation at the time of the developments. Whereas local elections were soon to be held and the list-leaders (lijsttrekkers) were eager for more votes. This could be beneficial to the village’s needs and desires. Jansen ultimately used this situation to bring people to his (the village’s) side. Also using the press and publicize in the local papers, in favour of the current list-leader debate.

- Creating involvement and ownership is pivotal for the carrying capacity and success
- A large development needs (Fruitful) discussions about the future of the development and what impacts it will have on the livelihoods.
- Learning from other places and taking the ‘best practices’ into account for Mariënvelde.

The role of the municipality

The municipality had been fairly supportive after the convincing of Jansen. It was imperative to find win-win situations and to make use of the political situation in the area as stated before (local elections). However, some people in the municipality still found it difficult to leave matters into the hands of the local populations and required a little push in the back. Jansen often knew how to convince them by showing the benefits for both sides (specifically during election times). However, the different coalitions after each term made the whole process more difficult since each new alderman or municipality official needed to be convinced and informed again.

Another stumbling block is the governing role of the province. Since they are also at play and are able to provide substantial financial support in terms of subsidies. Here Jansen stated that he often stumbled upon the bureaucracy and standstill of the people working there; people who often did not have any attachment to the region and people who are afraid of moving away from their familiar paths.
In the case of the province, the role of deputies (gedeputeerden) remains quite biased, one can make certain promises and grants (possibly politically coloured), but in the end can not live up to these promises. On the one hand due to sensitive political issues, but on the other hand the (slow) bureaucracy plays an important role. The many procedures, rules, regulations and different people and departments often make a ‘simple’ decision very complex. The officials often tend to think in terms of rules and regulations (what is allowed and what is not?). Jansen pleads for thinking in frameworks instead: how can we use a certain framework to provide certain allowances. It requires some degree of creativity, thinking along with an initiator and having a degree of empathy. Rules are important and directive but mostly have to serve as guidance and need to be able to deviate from. In this way, both sides will be able to work things out, on the terms that both sides are prepared to work together and be open to each other. However, one should always keep in mind that it is always ‘human work’; this implies that mistakes can also be made, and that it is process that can take a substantial amount of time.

Jansen also referred to the government that needs to participate, as he referred to the government official ‘3.0’ where the most important characteristic is to ‘listen’ (personal communication, Freek Jansen, 23-05-2018). Considering the wishes and desires of the ‘people’ for whom the official is working – whereby simply ‘ticking boxes’ (afvinken) is not sufficient anymore. Letting go is imperative; in the end, the officials also will see more of their own ideas and interpretations back in the ‘new’ set of decisions, this makes letting go even more attractive in the opinion of Jansen (23-05-2018).

Characteristics
Freek Jansen has proven to be very crucial in the ‘success’ of BMV Mariënvelde and therefore he showed quite some entrepreneurial (due to his professional experience in a wooncorporatie) characteristics. But he also has proven to be capable of running a smooth organisation by for instance setting up the different steering groups, strategies and creating a (profitable) business-model for the BMV Mariënvelde to earn its existence right. He also states “BMV Mariënvelde is the largest company in Mariënvelde” with a total revenue of 150.000, - each year. Today, Jansen is advisor in the initiative, next to his new job as council member. He has chosen to be only advisor since any more activities will be negative for his position as council member and will imply a (political) bias and a conflict of interests. He is very sensitive to organisational structures and politics, hence, he is not afraid to confront people, to go and talk to (government) officials for his cause and also to point out to them that when promises are made, one should keep these promises.

He is not one of the ‘books’ and following the procedures and writing it all down, however, the official way requires to do so. As a result, he has to set aside his own preferences for the good of the initiative and to satisfy the officials. This all requires a great deal of patience, since he also acknowledged that the whole process takes quite some time (next to his own work). Even though he does not have all the time in the world, combining it with his own work, patience is important. Bureaucracy and procedures do not make it any easier but are obligatory passage points for an initiative such as Mariënvelde BMV to become successful.

The final core characteristics relates to inspiring others: in each village, no matter what the scale, there are people who feel very much attached to what is happening in their environment. The core here is to tell the story of what is happening, to be authentic and to dare to speak out. Telling an unjust story is one of the biggest mistakes one can make: people will see through it within only a matter of time. You need a good and just story to become successful and above all, you need the good ideas, people and a business model. Lastly, Jansen is hopeful in respect to the ‘right to challenge’ where politics
should become closer to the people and the people have more options to form an initiative. He is sure that this will happen more in the future, even with the Omgevingswet in mind.

Emergent themes

- Ownership, involvement and carrying capacity
- Strategies
- Politics
- Informing and transparency

Category of EP: Boundary spanner/front-line worker/deliberative practitioner

6.5 Kasteel de Keverberg – bringing life into a castle-ruin

Kasteel de Keverberg, hereafter ‘Keverberg’ is also located in the Northern-Part of Limburg. Demographic trends are thus the same as mentioned before. However, Keverberg is located in the village of Kessel, which fused in 2010 with the villages of Helden, Meijell and Maasbree. Together they form the municipality of Peel en Maas (CBS, 2010). The fusion of small villages into larger municipalities happens fairly regularly today (Rijksoverheid, n.d.)

The municipality, due to the mixture of different villages, had been familiar with the notion of ‘self-steering’ (zelfsturing). The largest (former) municipality of Helden even saw it as a tradition (personal communication, Har Timmermans, 01-06-2018). However, it was more a common practice and considered as taken for granted than a specific method. Consequently, when the new municipality formed, both self-steering and civic participation became two of the core starting points which the municipality was eager to facilitate.

Back in 2008, the castle Keverberg was a ruin at a prominent spot in the village of Kessel. The first ideas came from a ‘smart’ mayor as Timmermans referred to (01-06-2018). However, no funds were available. As a result, it became part of the negotiations of the municipal fusion; the rebuilding of castle Keverberg became denominated as ‘important project’ for the entire municipality. The province provided partial funds for the benefit of important regional projects such as Keverberg, the municipality provided a second part and the rest is the responsibility of the initiators. The entire project was thus co-financed. During the process it became clear that the project would in the end be completely independent and self-supporting on the basis of the notion of self-steering. This meant that the municipality did not need to provide any subsidies hereafter, which made it even more attractive to them to invest in the rebuilding of the site. With the help of many volunteers (mostly locals) and a different path for the rebuilding (not simply rebuilding an old castle to the way it was) new life was brought into Keverberg (personal communication, Har Timmermans, 01-06-2018; https://kasteeldekeverberg.nl/historie, n.d.).

Today, the castle serves as local (touristic) hotspot with many different functions. From hosting parties and weddings to hosting large scale business events, meetings and serving as a place to have a beer, coffee or Limburgian cake. It is completely self-supporting and can be seen as the most ‘modern’ castle of the Netherlands (https://kasteeldekeverberg.nl/historie/, n.d., personal communication, Har Timmermans, 01-06-2018).

Strategy of success: three-part unity
Timmermans played a crucial role in the development of the plans. During the development process he emphasized the role of self-steering by the initiators, and the facilitating role of the governing
parties (e.g. municipality and province). Timmermans talks about a three-part unity, being: the initiators (citizens), politics and the governing parties. All three parts need to be in line to reach success. Alignment of ideas (such as self-steering), visions and funds is very crucial. Each initiator (e.g. citizen) has to cope with the governing parties in the end: as an obligatory passage point. This coping can be related to money-related issues such as grants or to local policies and politics. An initiative requires certain insurances: that the set goal will be reached with the means available, but contrastingly there are no guarantees. This happens on all sides of the unities. However, here it is crucial that one should be convinced that the goal is attainable from the start.

Next to these goals, it is wise to combine them with a business model. In the case of Keverberg, this is expressed through tourism and providing a mix of activities to get repeated visits. The idea is commercial; however, it should be in ratio to what other activities and other similar locations (such as cafés) offer in the village. At the same time, the idea is to keep the location accessible to everyone – on the one hand being commercial (slightly more expensive than the local cafes) but also keeping in mind the people who do not have so much to spend.

Ownership also remains an important aspect, the initiators emphasized the ownership by leaving the marks that were scraped into the ruin’s walls since these represent people who use to ‘hang out’ in the ruin when they were young. In this way, a part of the identity was kept alive and people have more emotional attachment to the (new) castle.

The core of the strategy is to let the municipality enjoy the ‘fruits’ that the initiators planted. In terms of economic benefits e.g. through tourism. The municipality facilitated the development, provided confidence and determination – within the frameworks of what is possible – which resulted in (renewed) pride and a boost for the regional image. Hence, it is imperative to find these win-win situations on both sides of a development.

Role of Har Timmermans
As explained before, Timmermans played a pivotal role in the development of the plans to rebuild castle Keverberg. Timmermans was chairman of the working groups that were formed during the development of the plans: the working groups consisted of 6 people with different expertise, one of them being a municipality official. Timmermans confirmed that his role was very important for the initiative. The official was part of the growth-process and with his amount of authority (within the municipality) and knowledge he was able to set things in motion that were otherwise very difficult. He did it because it mostly was his job, but also because he had worked with similar initiatives and is living in a different village part of Peel en Maas.

Timmermans and the working-group took over the role of the advisors, due to the diverse expertise in the group and the volunteers. These volunteers also brought their expertise to the initiative. Here we can think of people working in the construction, interior-architecture, technicians, communications and even in archaeology. It was imperative for both the volunteers as the initiators that they were still active in the working life and not all retired, as Timmermans explained that this is this time when they still have active (and up to date) knowledge of everything that is going on in (business) life. Which is just as important for the development of Keverberg. The complementation of these people had proven to be very cost-neutral and gave more possibilities to spend the available money otherwise. Lastly, all people involved had a connection to Kessel in any form; Timmermans emphasized that an emotional attachment of any kind is essential for the motivation of the people involved.
Interplay formal and informal: acting of the municipality in a self-steering framework.

Self-steering is considered a ‘tradition’ in the municipality and has therefore been crucial in the development of castle Keverberg. As mentioned earlier, the interplay between the different parts developed more smoothly because of the role of the municipal official. The official was part of the working-group; hence he had a so called ‘dubbele pet’ which implies that he needed to work on both sides of the field and needed to be aware of possible conflicts of interests. In his position he was very influential when it came to municipality matters and he could provide insights and ideas of how to cope with the municipality on the other side.

Next to self-steering on its own, Timmermans emphasizes the importance of two aspects: providing ‘maatwerk’ (literally customization) and transparency. This means that one should always take into consideration the local context of each case. No singular approach or solution can be applied to all (similar) cases. The ‘best’ practices of other locations can be adopted to fit with the right solution in the case present. It should be translated to the needs than a specific case requires.

Transparency implies that the initiators themselves control (and keep control of) the communication and the process; this means that the ‘linking pin’ – the official – was able to inform the municipality about prospects or issues that might arise. By keeping all sides informed, you can keep the process into your own hands and create confidence on the side of the other parties. “Surprises should be utilized, to go from something negative to something positive” (personal communication, Har Timmermans, 01-06-2018).

Timmermans argued that politics should stop ‘screaming’ and calling for changes or ideas, instead, they should step aside from time to time and then create good conditions in which the process develops itself. The initiator (self-steerer) should be given freedom of acting within the confines of jurisdiction (the castle falls under national cultural heritage jurisdiction) – this is often very difficult in politics and within municipalities (personal communication, Har Timmermans, 01-06-2018). But it can be considered as ultimate condition for success. Instead of going through protocols, the exceptions are generally considered as a ‘sin’. Self-steering requires letting go of certain responsibilities, standing on the side-line and facilitating self-steering. This is a change in mindset, which not all municipalities have it in them to do so; a crucial role lies with the officials who need to be open for new ideas and thinking outside the box.

However, the municipality has had a crucial role in the success of the development. Since they granted the initiators 100% freedom of acting. They let the initiators decide about practically everything, as long as it was within the frameworks of the jurisdiction and as long as the initiative would remain self-supporting.

Characteristics

- Being confident and eager to accomplish a goal
- Being born and raised in the region; travelled a lot but always come back to the place: this makes it that you never want to see bad things happen in your direct environment
- Timmermans is convinced that handling with politics is the same as in business life. The advantage of politics is that it (mostly) happens publicly and everyone has ‘an opinion’. In business things happen behind closed doors. It is thus important to have the feeling of how it all works, to be able to think in processes and to be experienced in long during projects.
- He has experience of running a company and stresses that one should find the balance between thinking commercial & economical and keeping in mind the personal feelings and emotions.
- Have the right amount of humour
• You need to be able to see through an entire (decision-making) process and to guide the meetings properly to always reach the desired results. To be able to steer, and to do the necessary pre-work.

**Emergent themes**

- Ownership
- Transparency and ‘maatwerk’
- Three-unity in interaction
- Self-steering citizens and governance

*The category of EP Timmermans has the most in common with: Boundary spanner and everyday fixer*

6.6 Connecting the dots

The paragraphs before elaborated on the specific cases of the thesis. They highlighted the type of exemplary practitioner that played an important role and explained the specific contexts of the cases. One case has not yet been elaborated upon, this is because the case is considered as red-thread and ‘best’ example for the answering of the thesis’ questions. The case which is deemed as ‘exemplary’ for the answering of the main questions is the case of ‘Gebrookerbos’, located in region Parkstad-Limburg.

**Context**

Parkstad-Limburg, or Heerlen in particular, has faced rapid demographic changes and is in rapid transition today. From a small village, rapid growth followed during the flourishing days of the mines and industrial importance of the south of the Netherlands (CBS, 2018). However, when the mines closed, rapid decline and socio-economic problems started to arise. Many people were not able to find a new job and remained under government support (Structuurvisie Heerlen 2035, 2015).

However, under influence of many societal trends such as the ‘participatiesamenleving’, many new initiatives are starting to see the light in the region. Many of these micro-initiatives form the basis of Gebrookerbos. Gebrookerbos, as a project on its own - initiated in 2016 and is expected to last four years - is a cooperation between the Open University, Neimed (Dutch knowledge institute for demographic transition) and the municipality of Heerlen. Gebrookerbos is part of the revitalization, restructuring and stimulation of micro initiatives in Heerlen-Noord. Consequently, transforming the region for better economic and social functioning. It takes a pivotal role in recovering the macro structure and stimulating micro-initiatives (Damoiseaux & Reinders, 2017).

Unique about this approach is the function of the ‘brooker’ (derived from the dialect of the town Hoensbroek: *Gebraak*) – a traditional broker is affiliated with financial activities: someone who arranges sales or business agreements for other people and makes certain deals or settlements for mutual agreement (Found in: Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2009). But in this case, his specific function is facilitation of initiatives whereby the core aspects are providing information, inspiration and connection between initiatives, inhabitants, the municipality and other important actors in the process and development of an initiative (heerlen.nl, n.d.).
The micro-initiatives are foremost aimed at three different themes with the most potential in the area (context dependency): nature & wildness, urban farming and tourism & recreation. Gebrookerbos is looking for solutions for the vacant and abandoned spaces in the region between the main axes of Kasteel Hoensbroek and the Brunssumerheide (north of Heerlen) (see map 2).

The difference between Gebrookerbos and other initiatives with influence of a municipality, is that Gebrookerbos explicitly does not function top-down: denoting certain vacant areas to the citizens, instead, the initiatives start bottom-up and afterwards come to Gebrookerbos for support.

The ‘brooker’

As stated before, the role of the ‘brooker’ is the aspect which makes Gebrookerbos a truly unique initiative. The ‘brooker’ is a linking pin in the development of - and interaction between citizens’ initiatives. In Gebrookerbos, Jos Reinders is ‘appointed’ as ‘brooker’. He has been appointed in the sense that the cooperating institutions, e.g. municipality, research institution NEIMED wanted to find a bit more structure within the many citizens’ initiatives that were emerging in the region. In short: they wanted someone to aid and guide the initiatives and to arrange the interaction between the different levels, hence they opened a vacancy. The primary activities of the brooker is simply working with the citizens, this ranges from actually working together on difficult issues to providing the link between the citizen and the municipality. As Reinders stated that it is one of his main tasks to ‘connect two worlds’ and changing perspective on both sides. Reinders also stated that he is explicitly not situated ‘above’ the citizens but in between the network of an initiative. The network refers to the notion that an initiative does not have a specific end or start (like a ‘project’) but that it is an ever-ongoing process (personal communication, Jos Reinders, 18-05-2018).

In Reinders’ work, he foremost emphasizes the importance of so called ‘expectation management’ (verwachtingsmanagement). This means that citizens should be informed at all times of the realistic feasibility of an initiative. One should remain realistic in what can and cannot be achieved with the time, means and possibilities that are available. Next to this, it is imperative to make clear what all involved actors can expect from one another: what are the different roles and in how far does one’s
Consequently, when a certain idea or plan seems unattainable from the beginning, it is important to remain honest and show why the idea or plan is unattainable and above all, what can be done to adapt the idea to something that is indeed achievable.

Increasing ownership and social cohesion is yet another part of the his ‘function’, but also seen as crucial from the perspective of the municipality. The citizen should always remain owner of the initiative, even when a larger institution or company provides some form of assistance (and possibly wants to claim their ownership). This ownership will result in more pride – this can also be done by promoting the developments and giving them a stage in which they can show others what they have achieved. More affection with the local cause but also in more carrying capacity among citizens.

In the case of Parkstad-Limburg, an important catalyst of the urban (re)development is the IBA initiative (Internationale Bau Ausstellung). IBA has created a lot of new synergy in regard to the (urban) developments in a shrinking region (IBA, 2015; Jansen, 2017). As positive as it is, one should remain vigilant that a large initiative such as IBA does not take over the ‘ownership’ of small initiatives. IBA works with the municipality to aid small initiatives and for them to become ‘part’ of the IBA projects – this is what Gebrookerbos explicitly does not want: they want to remain locally bounded and ‘owned’ and developed by its inhabitants. An IBA initiative should only support the smaller initiatives with for instance financial aid or knowledge sharing “do not place stickers and banners with the IBA logo – ‘look at us!’ – no, ask what do you need?” (personal communication, Jos Reinders, 18-05-2018).

Personal story
Reinders has a long history of professional experience as social-worker; working with different projects and people in the social sphere. Working with people who for instance do have a certain distance to the labour market, who have a loss of dignity and need to find self-confidence again. In his previous work, he had been given the opportunity and space to innovate in activities and the possibility of doing things differently; this is what he now implements in his new working sphere.

Reinders has always been involved in the social sphere and has been working with people for a long time. Hence, he has learned that not everything needs to be ‘big’, but instead, the small things and initiatives can mean large things and have large impacts on people’s livelihoods. Small things can be activities for the local communities such as a culture night or a soup dinner with a story, importantly these things should remain close to the people and do not have to be of the highest standard (personal communication, Jos Reinders, 18-05-2018) An initiative’s success can be very low key but still be of large influence and meaningful to many people.

Next to his function as brooker with Gebrookerbos, he is also one of the initiators of the citizens’ initiative Werkplaats-K. As starting point for citizens’ initiatives, he asks the question of “whose city is this?” (van wie is de stad?). The answers that are found are applicable to both initiatives, however, the answers are not always found: it is also sufficient to be able to ask this specific question. This implies a conscious questioning of one’s current position, specifically if the person asking this question is affiliated with the municipality.

When Reinders came into picture for the ‘function’ as brooker, he did not know what it would entail and still he says “how do you that, stimulating citizens? – I wouldn’t know!”. This implies that he is not working according to a formula or implementing a single ‘best practice’ and that he does not have the most knowledge or is necessarily the most professional and experienced, but that the success of a brooker in relation to a citizens’ initiative depends on multiple (contextual) factors in which a broker mainly serves as linking pin between different sides.
Acting of the municipality

Engagement with the municipality is often characterised as very formal and of course business-related. However, sometimes it goes too far in terms of limitations, following procedures and regulations. Instead, should ask himself what is the worst thing that could happen? – if we were not to follow a certain regulation and instead think in a different perspective and out of the box. When taking into consideration certain ways of acting, Reinders noticed that even in a small region, there are large differences between the acting of two municipalities. In this case Heerlen and Kerkrade. He noticed that one municipality is able to cope better with approaching citizens’ initiatives; e.g. providing more space and aiding the initiatives, whereas the other municipality has many difficulties of letting go of their previously own authorities. This has to do with the DNA and culture of a municipality and the degree of ‘arrogance’ within a municipality.

One should realise that a group of initiators or an individual is a part of the ‘people’ a municipality official is working for; when there is an idea, one should make space for this idea – not only in defining boundaries and demanding specific plans in documents, but also staying close to the people and their desires and practical usability “[we made a document] fourteen pages long... it lies somewhere in the closet here – I haven’t looked at it since” (personal communication, Jos Reinders, 18-05-2018). This form of bureaucracy is mostly experienced as asphyxiating and paralyzing.

Heerlen has appointed several accountmanagers that ‘are getting it’ – these people know what is going on, what developments are at play and how to cope with both sides of the playing field. Somewhat like a street-level bureaucrat as discussed in chapter 5). As a result, the citizens feel like they are being heard and being taken seriously. The municipality, and the accountmanagers in particular, are pro-actively seeking opportunities that otherwise were not visible (due to for instance rules and regulations). These rules and regulations are guiding but should not always be completely leading and above all limiting the acting of on the one hand the municipality and on the other hand the citizens. One should always keep in mind the margins of the jurisdiction. When a citizen is involved the way that Gebrookerbos does it with the accountmanagers, the citizen can have a larger impact on developments in the city: he or she becomes effectively part of the city. One of the answers to the question “whose city is it?” becomes clear: the citizen is a part of it; his or her plan is being taken seriously and a positive climate is created for all citizens and future projects.

The citizen does not need to participate in things the municipality wants but the citizen should come with ideas themselves before the municipality starts to become a part of the plans. This is always necessary as the municipality is an obligatory passage point when it comes to (physical) changes in infrastructure, land-development but also when it comes to social enterprises with an effect on the local well-being or with a competing effect to other health-care providing institutes.

Vereniging Kleine Kernen

Next to the large initiative such as IBA, the bottom-up cooperation Gebrookerbos and many social institutions there are also other unions active that are trying to aid the small-scale citizens’ initiatives; the Vereniging Kleine Kernen Limburg (VVKL hereafter) (Unity of small village cores) is one of these initiatives. The VVK is a nationwide union of village cores that together serves to support citizens’ initiatives for the benefit of the vitality of the small cores in specific parts of the country. Ralph Tangelder (VVKL) noticed that ‘citizens’ initiatives’ is currently rising in popularity, along with the idea and necessity of small communities to take matters into their own hands where the municipality is decentralizing more and more. However, he affirms that the role of VVKL is mostly to facilitate knowledge sharing and to serve as independent ‘companion’, VVKL does not have all necessary expertise themselves.
The VVKL aims specifically at the small village cores in Limburg with an emphasis on the north of the province. It operates by exchanging knowledge and experience, by activating (starting a flywheel ‘vliegwiel’), advising and mediating (https://www.vkkl.nl/over-ons, n.d., personal communication, Ralph Tangelder, 04-06-2018). The stumbling blocks of the initiatives is often the continuation of an initiative, the municipality and formal rules and regulation and the accountability of financial matters. VVKL provides the mediation and a final helping hand.

VVKL thus works with the locals (i.e. community councils and citizens’ organisations) and also involves the formal side of the playing field: municipalities, province and even national governments. It has mostly an advisory function, but they also facilitate meetings, personal guidance and pilot-projects whenever there comes a specific (societal) question.

As for the role of exemplary practitioners, Tangelder emphasizes the importance of affinity with the working field: implying that it is important to consider that one is often working with volunteers instead of merely professionals. Next to this, the ‘practitioner’ should also do some volunteering jobs him-or herself, this leads to useful contextual knowledge and ‘feeling’ with a case. One should above all be able to cope (and bring knowledge) with both sides of the working field: that is the professional and the ‘local’ side.

Omgevingswet
In respect to the Omgevingswet, VVKL is mostly ‘following’ the developments that are happening nationwide. Whereby they try to arouse their constituency to also do so and to keep in mind the consequences such a law can have. Considering it a similar impact as the large-scale government decentralisation that has already, and is still, occurring. Pilots are very important at this stage. The frameworks and the mindsets that might (must) change to sufficiently cope with the changes the Omgevingswet will bring. Anticipation on these cases is key. VVKL aims at the following questions:

- What does it mean in general; what does it mean for us as organisation?
- What specific role should we take then?
- Are we considered as the ‘knowledge’ realter – that provides the ‘best practices’ – or should we also advise the municipality on a higher level?

In Gebrookerbos, the actors al stated that they are not completely up to date regarding the developments, but also affirm that they are willing to learn since the Omgevingswet can drastically change the way an initiative is formed and what obligatory passage points need to be bridged. Importantly, with the Omgevingswet in mind, the largest challenge lies with the municipalities who need to become more open to ideas from outside be prepared to let go some of their previous authorities.
6.7 Results

In this paragraph, the main themes that emerged from the case studies along with the most important findings per theme and sub-questions will be addressed. As the paragraphs before presented the cases in a hierarchical and descriptive way – it is now time to provide clear findings in a more structured manner; the findings will lead to the final ‘results’ chapter in which the main question will be answered. The structure will be as follows: firstly, discussing the importance of contexts. Secondly, the main driving forces of the initiatives. Third, the interplay between the formal and informal, followed by the ‘best’ practices and methods that are used for the benefit of an initiative. Consequently, leading to the important role of an exemplary practitioner and finally involving the Omgevingswet as a framework.

6.7.1 Contexts and roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What practices are considered as ‘best practices’ of citizens’ initiatives in shrinking regions: what are considered successful methods and practices and what difficulties arise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is the role of exemplary practitioners in citizens’ initiatives in shrinking regions, and how is the interplay between the different stakeholders characterised?</td>
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</table>

The best practices that can be distilled in shrinking regions differ on many levels, depending on the context of the situation; e.g. its location (rural or urban), specific challenges, the way that shrink manifests itself (population decline, economic shrink, large scale vacancies etc.) and the extent of a pro-active governance and civil society. The context differs (e.g. physical or social) in each case, but as they are all located in shrinking regions, enhancing and keeping a place liveable becomes one of the greatest challenges; this counts for an urbanised region such as Parkstad-Limburg, or for a rural region such as the Achterhoek. In retrospect, eight cases in different contexts have been discussed. Their best practices and interplay are elaborated upon in paragraph 6.1 to 6.7 and summed up at each end paragraph. In these cases, there are specific people that play an important role: the exemplary practitioners. Both sub-questions can thus not be answered within a single paragraph but requires looking back at the case findings. They are multiple due to the different contexts at play. The roles and interplay of these practitioners is characterised by a long trajectory of many ‘obligatory passage points’ – discussion, challenges and by a large range of important actors.

However, it is possible to derive a certain structure or network from the different cases, this results in a network in which the interaction and position of the exemplary practitioners is shown. In the next scheme their roles and importance for the research are elaborated upon in the ‘level network’ as it emerged from the research findings. This is displayed on the next page.
The scheme makes clear that the exemplary practitioner is present in the 1st and 2nd level and is limited in governance (grey area). The green dotted line shows the aim of the research this is considered as the key level: the 2nd level exemplary practitioner. In the research, this 2nd level practitioner is embodied by the ‘broker’. Hence, the broker is considered as ‘best’ example and therefore added to the scheme. Three ‘levels’ have been examined: citizens (e.g. citizens’ initiatives) and governance (e.g. the municipality). The exemplary practitioner can be present in all three levels however his or her scope of action is limited within the field of governance. He or she is essentially not a part of governance.

The ‘level network’ is read as follows: the ‘1st’ level practitioners consist out of cases in which there is an exemplary practitioner as described by van Hulst et al. (2012), which has most characteristics in common with the typologies (e.g. boundary spanner and front-line worker). These practitioners are often citizens with a specific goal in mind. The “2nd” level are the practitioners who are in between – consequently, the ‘broker’ provides the best example. The ‘3rd’ level are persons who are an important linking pin within a government institution, but as stated before, remains limited. An exemplary practitioner is foremost not part of a formal institution, with the exception of a few (e.g. accountmanagers as discussed in 6.6). These accountmanagers help the 1st and 2nd level practitioners in coping and working with a governance institution. Numerous characteristics of 1st and 3rd level practitioners are present in the role of the broker. This 2nd level practitioner is the linking pin between the three levels, which are all bound by the relevant rules and regulations of appliance to a certain case.

6.7.2 Driving forces

The exemplary practitioners, on different levels, all have a certain driving force in the shrink context. They are driven by exogenous (e.g. social change) and endogenous (path-dependencies) driving forces (Meijer & van der Krabben, 2018) (see table 1). But, as the many cases (mostly 1st level) have made clear, a singular driving force that accounts for all cases is difficult to find. Each case depends on its specific context and each exemplary practitioner is exemplary in his or her own way. A number of pivotal themes however can be distilled from the examined cases e.g. physical vacancy, aging population and inadequate policies. From the first to the last case it has become clear that the ‘societal’ question (maatschappelijk vraagstuk) is always one of the main motives – evidently this is because the initiatives are all in a shrinking region, but also because initiatives often emerge because there is a certain discontent, a problematic issue or a larger challenge at play (such as shrink). The people
involved in the initiatives see that it is part of their duty both for others and for their own benefit that this situation will be improved.

6.7.3 Formal and informal interplay

The formal and informal interplay is characterised by an intensive interaction between individuals (citizens), private entrepreneurs and commercial organisations, non-commercial organisations such as health care services and governance on the three existing levels. These different actors are bound by the large number of rules, procedures and regulations, including relevant jurisdiction – especially on the physical side of planning (see the grey area at the back in figure 6). Thinking of local to provincial zoning plans, national frameworks and general laws. These are often considered as an ‘obligatory passage point’ (with an emphasis on the municipality), in the sense that the presence of rules and frameworks is necessary, but that rules and regulations are not always interpreted and implemented as they should be – customized to the context-specific needs with a basic framework. Leaving little space for the small initiative and deviation of the existing (zoning) plans. The ‘DNA’ and culture of both the municipality as a whole and of the municipality officials plays an important role in changing perspective and opening up for initiatives from the outside. The municipalities and the way of interaction is often very much path-dependent in the sense of Meijer & van der Krabben (2018) characterised by “persistence of traditional institutions and practices” and as “recognizable practices as a result of a chain of earlier events”. ‘Opening up’ then means more than merely listening and receiving information and ideas, it also means providing actual physical space for initiatives, entering debates, changing plans and providing ‘maatwerk’ – in which it is pivotal that the municipality not only listens but actively works with citizens for the benefit of the cause.

Citizens (1st level) often have little experience with the ‘system-world’ in which the formal parties such as the municipality operates, people like the accountmanagers (3rd level) are considered the ‘missing’ link (figure 7). They support the citizens in their trajectory. Involving the citizens in early stages of a development (second generation citizen’s participation) is not sufficient, hence coproduction, active citizenship and bottom-up is considered as pivotal for the working of an exemplary practitioner (various steps of the participation ladder, paragraph 5.5). Guiding an initiative, regarding procedures of spatial planning, acquaintance with the goals, tasks and different departments and activities of the municipality – and helping them with applying for grants is an important function of the 2nd level and 3rd level practitioner. In meeting groups people can talk informally with the municipality officials and the officials make it a priority that the citizens feel heard within the municipality. Sometimes the officials also counter stumbling blocks such as bureaucracy or departments that do not really work ‘with’ citizens yet. But, having an official on the inside and who is able to bridge the differences and provide accessibility on both sides is already a large step in the good direction.

Participation can thus happen from both sides. This means that participation can be shaped by governance (there is a certain question and citizens can help) or shaped by citizens themselves. The latter is applicable to the functioning of a 2nd level practitioner: self-management (participation ladder, chapter 5.5) occurs first – later governance is involved either because the initiatives are in need of guidance, advice or (jurisdictional) help or because governance wants to guide and help the initiatives. The 2nd level practitioner consequently plays the role of fine-tuning this interaction.

Unique role of ‘broker’

The unique aspect of a this ‘broker’ (2nd level practitioner) is that he or she is working with, or rather, next to citizens instead of working top-down. The ‘broker’ is neither working bottom-up; hence, he or she is ‘in between’. He or she can be considered as a link in the network that makes citizens’ initiatives possible and successful. When one is talking about participation, it has to come from both sides: one hand the municipality and on one hand the citizen. A broker in the financial world is quite different...
from the ‘social’ broker. The ‘broker’ in Gebrookerbos fulfils an important role in connecting parties, sharing knowledge and providing a listening ear to citizens. More importantly, the broker does not fulfil the role of the ultimate expert and professional – he or she simply does not have all the knowledge and the capacities to teach or inform others completely.

When bridging the formal and informal, so called expectation management is a key aspect. Both sides make clear what they can expect from one another and what is seen as a bridge too far or an impossible goal. Remaining realistic - on both sides - in goals that can or cannot be achieved with the available capacities in terms of financial capacities (such as capital, entrepreneurship, subsidies), in human capital (knowledge, perseverance, time) and political carrying capacity (coping with different parties and interests) is key to a proper interaction between the many different actors.

6.8 The 2nd level exemplary practitioner

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<th>Sub-question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What characteristics of these exemplary practitioners are important for the success of the initiative – what are the ‘best practices’?</td>
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</table>

The exemplary practitioner can come in many different shapes on many different levels. They can range from active citizens who make a difference in their own initiative, they can be policy entrepreneurs who know how to work in politics, but they can also be the ‘broker’ in terms of providing a place for knowledge sharing and importantly unbiased. To the latter I provide a bit of extra attention (e.g. chapter 6.6). This ‘broker’ possesses many different characteristics that are present in diverse descriptions of the exemplary practitioners by van Hulst et al. (2012).

The latter finds itself positioned between the 2 levels as mentioned earlier (green dotted line) and displayed here once again.

![Figure 7. ‘Level Network’. Recap. Source: own](image)

Importantly, there is a difference in roles & functions and characteristics. The characteristics can be applicable in different roles and functions. Therefore a ‘best’ practice is suggested. This best practice is a combination of the characteristics and can be described in one level. This 2nd level practitioner, in this case highlighted via the role of the broker, requires a number of character traits that are necessary to become successful. This is how an ‘ideal’ 2nd level exemplary practitioner, according to the research findings, should be characterised. They are summed up as follows:

**Locally embedded, having place attachment and being authentic (e.g. just, truthful), involved with the (local issues) and visible and present among the citizens**

The initiators and EP’s all were very locally embedded. Which means that they all live in the same region (some even born and raised) or even in the same village and therefore are very attached to the place. Next to this attachment they are also visibly present in communion meetings and working.
groups. This implies transparency and willingness and authenticity: aiming for a just goal and wanting the best for the initiative (e.g. place or region), with a communicative strong and rational impact.

Using the (social) network and (professional) connections, e.g. social capital

The social network and connections of the initiators often led to better results, more carrying capacity and a realistic and attainable goal. Using the connections can be very beneficial and is therefore seen as an important part of the success. As the theory also acknowledges: this part of social capital can be examined as both bridging social capital and bonding social capital. The best option is to provide a mix of both: interaction between individuals in groups and within groups. This community development is crucial for the sustainable development of networks (of initiatives in cooperation). This can also aid in finding the 2nd level practitioner. By using the different connections and networks of the people who are already involved in an initiative – or who can be involved in a later stage. These 2nd level practitioners do not ‘fit’ a certain function profile but are in the picture because of what they have visibly achieved in the past and how they are visible (or emerging) as we speak.

Open for anyone: seeing possibilities instead of limitations – but also remaining realistic

Keeping an open mind for new ideas, trying to find the possibilities but at the same time staying realistic and providing the ‘expectation management’ to all sides. This also requires the necessary experience (e.g. from a former profession) and a (limited) amount of relevant case-specific knowledge. Realism is possible if the 2nd level practitioner possesses of ample experience in similar cases and if he properly uses the characteristics as described in this section.

Some (basic) knowledge of relevant (e.g. spatial planning) jurisdiction and economic aspects (financial insights)

The initiatives all benefitted from people who had a certain amount of relevant (economic and jurisdictional) knowledge. Next to this, a diverse group of people of different backgrounds is pivotal. These people can supplement the 2nd level practitioner whenever he or she does not have the required knowledge. By gathering a diverse pool of people, the chances that one possesses over knowledge about a specific part of the development becomes even bigger. However, a 2nd level practitioner should also have this basic knowledge and experience to be able to cope with the different actors and frameworks. Keeping in mind the Omgevingswet. The 2nd level practitioner is more a generalist than a specialist.

Being able to find a business model for an initiative; e.g. showing signs of entrepreneurship

In many cases, a business model was and is still necessary to ensure durable continuation of the initiative. Strikingly the practitioners in question mostly affirm that he or she is not an entrepreneur by heart: if this were to be the case, it should all be about the money and their activities simply do not provide enough money to earn a living. Earning a profit is then even more difficult. However, the 1st level practitioner is often forced to shape his or her initiative to something that is (financially) achievable: a certain form of a business-model is almost a prerequisite. This can be shaped by adding more different functions to an initiative when one function is not sufficient; think of becoming a multifunctional centre with food and drinks, meeting rooms and flex-workspaces. Next to this, recruiting volunteers is helpful (financially most attractive) and obtaining funds and subsidies is sometimes crucial for the sustainable continuation of an initiative – this is mostly applicable to the 2nd level practitioner.

The background of the 1st level exemplary practitioner is often an important factor: history in business or coming from an entrepreneurial family shows that some of the practitioners have
entrepreneurialism by nature. Therefore entrepreneurialism, some to a lesser extent than others, is considered as an important characteristic of the 1st level practitioner. Lastly, this entrepreneurship can also be shaped and described as social-entrepreneurship, at least in the case of shrink and citizens’ initiatives: a good business-model combined with a socially responsible goal.

Able to handle and cope with the formal side, e.g. the municipality

The 2nd level practitioners always function in between the 1st and 3rd levels. Therefore, they should be able to bridge the differences between the informal and formal. The challenge here lies for the 2nd level practitioner to align the needs and knowledge of the 1st level practitioners to match the sustainable development of an initiative, and to provide a place for interaction between the different levels. For instance: aiding a 1st level practitioner who is very capable of devising business-models for the initiative but who does not have the necessary authority of connections to properly introduce the ideas to the important other actors such as the municipality. An important aspect is then that they should be able to cope with political sensitivities, with procedural issues such as bureaucracy and to have an idea of how to work with governance complexities.

Communicative arranger

What all the above characteristics have in common is that there is a large part dependent on proper communication between the many different levels. Communication, from simply informing parties to arranging complex interaction, is considered as pivotal for the success of a 2nd level practitioner. He or she does not have all expert knowledge but is able to bridge differences between different levels and he can use is network, knowledge and ‘gut’ feeling to arrange interaction and provide a place for knowledge sharing and learning. This communication is characterised as open, transparent and truthful, managing expectations and providing a realistic view upon certain developments.

6.8.1 Character traits of the ideal 2nd level practitioner

Consequently, the next page will show a table (3) based on the most important characteristics of all exemplary practitioners in a shrink context. Each practitioner is shortly described based on a number of themes that have proven to be very important for the individual practitioners. These being: communicative action, knowledge & profession, the network, the local attachment, their (social) goal, entrepreneurship and political sensitivity. Not all practitioners possess characteristics that are in line with these themes, these boxes have been left empty. The results of the different themes have led to seven signs of the ‘ideal’ practitioner. These characteristics should, in theory, improve the chances of being a successful exemplary practitioner – in the context of a shrinking region.

The ‘best’ practice as mentioned before in 6.8 is the implementation or rather, the search, for a 2nd level practitioner in the case of a shrinking region. By finding this 2nd level practitioner, a region, city, village or neighbourhood can benefit tremendously of his or her approach towards citizens and governance. The interaction that this 2nd level practitioner can trigger is seen as crucial in the development of citizens’ initiatives and in working within certain lawful frameworks such as the to be implemented Omgevingswet.
### Table of the ‘ideal’ exemplary practitioner and characteristics (table 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes*</th>
<th>Practitioner*</th>
<th>Communicative action</th>
<th>Knowledge &amp; profession</th>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Local attachment</th>
<th>Social goal</th>
<th>Entrepreneurship</th>
<th>Political sensitivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter (1) Erkens</td>
<td>Communication with neighbours and asking help from external parties</td>
<td>Above average amount of knowledge regarding planning and jurisdiction Farmer &amp; chairman agriculture organisation</td>
<td>Living, born &amp; raised</td>
<td>Shrink, entrepreneurialism, societal goal, working with people</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial family and background; hence combining functions and seeking business-model for his (sustainable) farm.</td>
<td>Medium level of sensitivity – not active in local politics (anymore)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gert-Jan (1) van Walsum</td>
<td>Communication as crucial: informing all possible stakeholders</td>
<td>Working for Rijkswaterstaat Politics and business world</td>
<td>Living</td>
<td>Image and valued prominent location – benefitting city ‘spreekbuis’</td>
<td>Knowing what plays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter (1) Broekmans</td>
<td>Informing all stakeholders, expectation management</td>
<td>Business knowledge, social business Politics, business world, social care and communal organisations</td>
<td>Living</td>
<td>Proving different social/health care Working with dem. transition</td>
<td>Started (social) business on his own, leading to a successful formula.</td>
<td>Knowing what plays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freek (1) Jansen</td>
<td>Involving all stakeholders, transparency, honesty</td>
<td>Business knowledge Housing cooperation Politics, business world and communal organisations</td>
<td>Living, moved to Mariënvelde</td>
<td>Benefitting place, keeping liveable</td>
<td>Found a business model to become the ‘biggest’ company in Mariënvelde.</td>
<td>Knowing what plays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Har (1) Timmermans</td>
<td>Involving all stakeholders, open and transparent, expectation management</td>
<td>Former Business owner In politics and local entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Born, raised and still living</td>
<td>Image and valued prominent location – benefitting region</td>
<td>Used to be the own a business and now found a business model for the upkeep of the castle.</td>
<td>Knowing what plays, knowing important people in local politics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ralph (1, 2) Tangelder</td>
<td>Involving all stakeholders, expectation management</td>
<td>Facilitator in knowledge sharing Many different parties need to be connected and informed</td>
<td>From the region</td>
<td>Helping villages and initiatives with their struggles</td>
<td>Knowing what plays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kelly (3) Damoiseaux</td>
<td>Listening to the issues, open for informal discussion and expectation management</td>
<td>Municipality official Municipality, initiatives</td>
<td>From a nearby city Regionally attached</td>
<td>Coping with shrink, activating citizens. Open view of municipality Keeping region liveable, creating carrying capacity. Providing solutions.</td>
<td>Knowing what plays, important interactive role in municipality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jos (1,2) Reinders</td>
<td>Involving all stakeholders, bridging differences, arranging interaction</td>
<td>Social worker Business, education, initiatives</td>
<td>Living</td>
<td>Keeping liveable Activating citizens, carrying capacity &amp; Knowledge sharing</td>
<td>Ideas with a social impact – connecting different parties with different business ideas</td>
<td>Knowing what plays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ideal type (2)</td>
<td>Communicator, arranger and bridge builder</td>
<td>Basic business Knowledge due to professional background Use of network and social capital</td>
<td>Attached to the locality</td>
<td>Social driving force: improving the livelihoods</td>
<td>Showing signs of entrepreneurship and aligning needs and stakes</td>
<td>Politically sensitive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Practitioner: shows in what level the practitioner is operating (1 is citizen), (2 is broker e.g. middle), (3 governance)

*Characteristics: show horizontal the main traits and a short description of the traits – show vertical the specific characteristics that have proven most important for an initiative.
werkplaats

VRIJE AKADEMIE
KUNSTencentrum

VRIJE AKADEMIE
ADMINISTRATIE
LESLOKALEN
1E VERDIEPING
6.8.2 Prospects and recommendations for the Omgevingswet

The research has been conducted with the ‘spirit’ of the Omgevingswet in mind. Research on the Omgevingswet is in its early stages, as the Omgevingswet has not come into effect yet, it is difficult to predict how this will effectively impact the way governments, citizens and all other stakeholders on the playing field will act and behave. However, when remaining in the ‘spirit’ of – we provide an idea of how the Omgevingswet could be – rather than how it will be. Participation, both from citizens as from governance, plays in important part in this spirit. Hence, this paragraph will provide a number of practical recommendations to implement successful participation for municipalities, (exemplary) practitioners, citizens’ (initiatives) and even for scientific researchers – with an emphasis on shrinking regions.

Mindset change
The first recommendation arises regarding the less tangible aspect, this being the ‘mindset’ that is often present among the different actors. In general, both opportunities and challenges arise when taking into consideration the changes, trends and developments of citizens’ initiatives, the different roles of the people working in those initiatives; the exemplary practitioners such as the ‘social broker’. These developments all go hand in hand with the formal side of coin: the municipality and even the higher tier governance. When a formal institution such as a municipality is open to citizens’ initiatives and is prepared to learn how to give ample space for the development of the initiative within the municipality’s borders along with a sustainable growth – only then it provides the best possible (starting) situation for a proper interaction. However, simply being ‘open’ for ideas is not sufficient – being open also requires realism, clear communication, transparency and interaction that leads to results. A municipality can be open to initiatives, but if no initiative has a chance of succeeding it results in ‘symbolic’ participation and in discontent among the involved actors.

The mindset again comes from two sides: the citizens who feel negative about certain (non)developments in their region – but also from the governance side; ‘negative’ planning and ‘symbolic’ planning and involvement should be avoided when it is not in the general public interest.

Whose city is this?
In line with the aforementioned mindset change, one could always ask the question: whose city is this? (or whose village, region etc.). The answer to this is no singular but consists out of multiple dimensions and is depending on many factors; showing that one is aware of the people he or she is working for it can improve the carrying capacity and can lead to alignment of needs and results. ‘Whose city is this?’ lies at the heart of participation in the Omgevingswet. Participation happens from two sides: governance and citizens – hence ownership and cooperation are encouraged and improved. Citizens involve governance or governance involves citizens at the earliest stage possible.

Ownership and participation
If the mindset changes (and the question ‘whose city is this?’ is asked), it opens possibilities for other important factors in the success of an initiative. The citizen should have the feeling that an initiative is part of his or herself – that it is part of who he or she is. He or she has played a large role in the development and emergence of a (physical) initiative. It defines and redefines one’s own identity and that there is a certain amount of pride when an initiative becomes successful. This ownership is
important on both sides: the citizen for the willingness to cooperate and for the attachment it creates, the government side for the willingness to cooperate as well, to provide financial aid, to provide political support and for (renewed) pride when an initiative becomes successful. This pride can be considered as beneficial for the (image) of the entire region.

Maatwerk
The notion of ‘maatwerk’, hereafter customization - which does not honour the name in English, is an often-recurring aspect in respect to citizens’ initiatives. As many initiatives originate in different places and contexts, it is important to always take into consideration the local needs and developments, next to the trends and developments on a larger scale. These are still important, and on the basis of these trends, general approaches or methods can be formulated. An example of this is the Gebrookerbos ‘method’ – one can devise a method that is suitable for other ‘similar’ shrinking regions but in each case needs to be reevaluated according to the specific case’s needs.

Use of an exemplary practitioner and practical implementation
As the paragraph before has made clear, an exemplary practitioner can play a crucial role in citizens’ initiatives. Therefore the ‘use’ or rather, the ‘search’ for an exemplary practitioner is recommended. He or she is able to bridge differences, link the different levels and has a true heart for the cause.

It is imperative to implement the ideas within a specific (spatial) planning framework. The 2nd level practitioner is usable in ‘omgevingsmanagement’ (how do you engage with citizens, how do you inform and activate citizens for a certain initiative or idea?) and for instance for implementation with the Omgevingsdialogoog – which is an essential part of decision-making and spatial-planning review (toetsing bestemmingsplannen) (communication with participants of Gemeente Meierijstad, September 2018). An omgevingsdialogoog requires communication between a certain initiator and the people that might be affected by his or her plans that impact the physical environment. The 2nd level practitioner could play a role in the sense that he or she provides a listening ear, not affiliated with governance, and can provide sufficient communication between the sides and give, non-binding, advices and manage the mutual expectations.

Next to this, it is also possible to implement certain ‘free-zones’ in terms of rules and regulations. This means that acting within the confines of the law and a specific framework is made possible. In essence the Omgevingswet allows a certain amount of free space within its boundaries – and a free way to shape for instance the local participation.

Implementing ideas always means in an interactive way. The exemplary practitioner is not someone ‘governance’ can appoint but is someone who is already active in citizens’ initiatives and should be found - sometimes by sheer coincidence - but through interaction with citizens. It is possible to open a vacancy for a specific function (as was the case in Gebrookerbos) but is also possible to let the ideas (and initiatives) grow organically and devise a construction through interaction, mutual interests and stakes, and in line with the needs of all stakeholders. Participation should remain participation in its essence: participation from all sides, keeping in mind the participation ladder and forms of participation. Governance is participating in ideas from citizens, and citizens also participating in ideas from the governance side.

As many municipalities are already starting with pilots in Omgevingswet – and have already set up constructions regarding citizens’ participation, it is imperative to also start testing with the exemplary practitioner in time. Some municipalities might not even be aware of the fact that they have been discussing and working with some budding exemplary practitioners in the past. The challenge is to challenge them to come out of their bubble and extract these people from a pool of engaged citizens. As the core is to let the initiatives grow organically – at a certain stage, initiatives need help from the
higher tier stakeholders (e.g. municipality) this is the moment when a municipality and citizens could go in conversation about needs, desires and support – the exemplary practitioner comes into play.
7 Conclusion

The final chapter leads the thesis to a conclusion, recommendations and reflections. On the basis of the large amount of diverse case studies and respondents it has now led to the answering of the main question:

*What can be the role, in the framework of participation in the Omgevingswet, of so called ‘exemplary practitioners’ in the citizens’ initiatives in shrinking regions?*

With the rise of citizens’ initiatives, we can see that citizens are becoming much more (verbally and visibly) present and are speaking out more and more. The citizen is claiming his or her space and rights – since they have become aware of their leverage and potency: they have a large transformative capacity. They can form adaptive informal institutions (paragraph 5.2, Meijer & van der Krabben, 2018) which, as endogenous driving force impacts the institutional changes in planning. Hence, the question for ‘maatwerk’ (customization) becomes an important factor – solutions and policies that are applicable to a context-specific situation. This can come from adaptive informal institutions as discussed in paragraph 5.2 but can now also be expressed through a formal institutional change: the Omgevingswet. In shrinking regions there are also different developments at play: a demographic transition (population decline), a governance that (sometimes) has made difficult choices to cope with changes and policies that are not always in line with the specific needs of the people living in the regions. These are exogenous driving forces that (e.g. increased interest to self-organisation and participation) are pivotal for the need of institutional change.

The institutions are both formal and informal within the playing field of the Omgevingswet – referred to as actants by Actor Network Theory and considered as pivotal for the conceptualisation of the complex interaction that takes place between different levels of involved actors (e.g. the level-network). Obligatory passage points are in the sense obligatory that they always need to be passed but, in the framework of the Omgevingswet, should become more transparent, accessible, justified and aligned with the contextual needs. The different actors operate in line with the non-human actants (such as formal procedures) but find it often difficult to operate freely (restricted and bounded by obligatory passage points) – with the Omgevingswet, and the recommendation of an exemplary practitioner – a 2nd level practitioner in particular – the aim is to improve the relationships of all actors, stakeholders and the non-human aspects e.g. actants. In this sense, the 2nd level practitioner can also be seen as an intermediary in bringing actants together and defining their relationships.

The role of the intermediary (2nd level practitioner) provides a number of elements that together can lead to success of a citizens’ initiative. In the framework of the Omgevingswet and within a shrink context we have examined a ‘model’ that is applicable to a number of cases. This ‘level-network’ displays the three main players in the field of citizens’ initiatives – on the one hand the citizens themselves, on the other hand governance parties – and in the middle; as intermediary, as broker who is connecting and bridging levels: the 2nd level practitioner.

Successes are dependent on several factors: the specific contexts (how persistent is shrink and the specific challenges, non-human aspects) and the involved actors – with a special emphasis on the role of the exemplary practitioners: people who make a difference by their involvement, attachment and approach to an initiative. The ideal practitioner is a 2nd level practitioner, who possesses of specific characteristics, which are in short: communicative action, knowledge & professionalism, the network, the local attachment, their (social) goal, entrepreneurship and political sensitivity. They work in the
middle, not top down and not merely bottom-up. And above all they do not have the ultimate knowledge and they are not the true professionals who ‘know it all’ – instead, they provide a (safe) place to connect different people, to spread ideas and arrange proper knowledge sharing; along with their own specific knowledge and experience, they are able to bridge differences between the different levels. They are able to arrange interaction, to set up (sustainable) networks of initiatives and to provide a listening ear. The exemplary practitioner in a shrink region is somewhat comparable to a financial broker – he or she can be a social worker, a municipality official or a social entrepreneur.

As most representative the case of ‘Gebrookerbos’ came to mind. The unique role of a ‘broker’ not in terms of the financial world but as a ‘social broker’ in interaction with citizens’ initiatives and the municipality (account-managers). This unique construction creates involvement from all parties and creates the important carrying capacity: the citizens have the idea that they are being listened to and they see this return in physical developments. The construction is in a sense a formal construction an informal gathering of citizens’ initiatives: an adaptive informal institution as explained by Meijer & van der Krabben (2018) in chapter 5. It results in adaptive ways to circumvent unproductive or unwanted formal institutions and often occurs more tacit and unintentional (see table 1). In the spirit of the Omgevingswet, this construction can already be a step in the good direction. With the level-network in mind and with a number of supplemental characteristics that are present in the 2nd level exemplary practitioner.

As discussed in the findings chapter, the ‘most successful’ 2nd level exemplary practitioner possesses of several character traits that can be used for the benefit of his or her own activities and for the benefit of the interaction between the many stakeholders on the different levels. These characteristics are:

- Communication: from simply informing parties to arranging complex interaction, is considered as pivotal for the success of a 2nd level practitioner. This communication is characterised as open, transparent and truthful, managing expectations and providing a realistic view upon certain developments;

- Basic business knowledge due to (professional) background: using professional and practical skills, but also expressed through being realistic and implementing expectation management;

- Proper use of network and the social capital: using the (relevant) people one knows; he or she above this, knows how to align the needs of a 1st level practitioner (entrepreneur) with the local policies, visions and goals. Connecting the actors and actants and aligning them.

- Local attachment: having heart for the cause, wanting the best for the improvement of the local livelihoods;

- Social driving force: improving livelihoods, wanting to make a difference and facing (societal) challenges;

- Showing entrepreneurship: finding business models in good ideas and in less good ideas, also being realistic;

- Politically sensitive: having ‘feeling’ with working with complex bureaucratic and political systems, different people, stakes and personal images.

These practitioners have to work within a planning culture in which obligatory passage points are shaped through formalised procedures and standardisation. This shapes the specific spatial planning system and culture in the Netherlands. Ranging from lower tier individuals grants, function specific rules and regulations to municipal and provincial zoning plans (e.g. bestemmingsplannen), regional visions and local to national policies. The planning paradigm shift is becoming more evident and is even more shifting in the future which will result in a restructured planning culture. An active government makes place for passive and facilitating government; the citizens themselves are influencing local to national policies more and more. This imminently also creates struggles: jurisdiction sometimes does
not provide ample space for citizens - under the influence of municipal decentralization - to come up with their own initiatives and to effectively implement their ideas and perspectives. The initiatives emerge bottom-up and this also requires more space, while the other stakeholders e.g. the municipality does not always provide this space (for instance due to path-dependency). Part of this is the complex bureaucracy which leads to many procedures, evaluations and people which an initiative has to pass through in order to come into existence formally. The jurisdiction, bureaucracy and ‘politics’ are often considered as a stumbling block for citizens initiatives, or better, have become practically institutionalised that they are considered as an obligatory passage points. The municipalities are also bound by their own zoning plans and regulations but also must take into account the (local) politics, provincial zoning plans and structure plans, spatial vision documents (ruimtelijke visies) and the national government and budgets and funds (e.g. non-human actants).

In 2021, the Omgevingswet is expected to come into effect. As many municipalities and governance parties are already in the process of preparing for the Omgevingswet (e.g. Pilots Omgevingswet and Pilots Omgevingsvisies) now is the time to give some practical recommendations for the imminent future and the struggles as explained before. The Omgevingswet will mean formal institutional changes and some form of formalisation leads to informality. The large amount of jurisdiction will be made more accessible, more applicable to specific contexts and it also means a reduction in jurisdiction and that municipalities can start to provide ‘maatwerk’ according to their own needs and challenges. The informal appropriations of rules to meet the local interests and goals are becoming facts. The laws are bundled, are clearer and above all: a mindset change is imperative. This mindset also refers to always involving citizens in (physical) developments, citizens’ participation is highly valued and a core starting point of the Omgevingswet. Reconsideration of specific roles and functions which shape interaction is imperative: who fulfils which role? Who is considered as ‘knowledge realter’ and who has to more advisory function? Participation (informal) is given a formal role – hence it is a prerequisite, but the shaping of is open to interpretation. It also opens up more to the street-level bureaucracy of officials working closely with people. As explained in chapter 5, in such an organisation the official has quite some freedom of acting in policies and matches a policy or decision to specificities of a case.

Consequently, the goal of the thesis was to find a practical recommendation for participation in the Omgevingswet. As a ‘solution’ the exemplary practitioner, and in particular the 2nd level practitioner comes into play. This exemplary practitioner can provide a rearrangement of the division of tasks between the public sector and civil society as inquired by Hospers (2014). A number of cases in shrinking regions have served as inspiration and as ‘best’ practice. These are representative for the possibilities an exemplary practitioner can offer and the ‘2nd level practitioner’ is seen as a key player in this context.

This 2nd level exemplary practitioner (e.g. broker) is not in service of the government nor only in service of the citizens, he or she does not have all information and is no ultimate professional on his or her area. The exemplary practitioner is from the region, knows what’s going on, has the necessary connections, is politically sensitive and is above all involved in the local challenges (e.g. shrink). He or she connects the formal with the informal and lets the citizen and governance do the talking. The practitioner is a bundling of good qualities that different people possess which are in the core connecting and sharing information. It is a network (of people and plans e.g. actants) and not a project: the latter has an ending point, but the developments are never finished. Citizens are never finished, and governments are never finished. Therefore, one should also be aware of the fact that the Omgevingswet is not the all-encompassing solution to governance complexities and will not tackle all challenges. However, it is an opportunity to involve citizens, or better, to involve governments in ideas by citizens – to provide a new, interactive approach and to improve the interplay between the many levels on the playing field.
7.2 Research limitations

The major limitation is evidently that the Omgevingswet has not come into effect yet. Hence, it is difficult to predict certain outcomes or practical examples. It is even more challenging to give a recommendation, when not knowing how a certain municipality is approaching the Omgevingswet and how much progress they have already made in their own plans in shaping participation.

Secondly, a bias can be found regarding the gender of the respondents. All but one exemplary practitioner was male. Even though the cases have been carefully sought out – they were all ‘led’ by a male character. The question is of this implies a certain male ‘dominance’ in the activation of citizens initiatives and in ‘leading’ a certain initiative. In further research this would be a part of the question – what is the role of the male-female division in citizens’ initiatives in general and what role does it play in the sense of exemplary practitioners?

7.2.1 Further recommendations

The research has not captured all facets of the theme – there is space left for further research. For this research there has been a conscious choice not to interview a ‘Omgevingswet expert’ this due to the fact that the research does focus more on the social aspects of the Omgevingswet and the geography of the theme. And because interviewing an Omgevingswet expert would imply a biased view upon certain development in the Omgevingswet, it would mean moving into a certain direction based upon pilots of the Omgevingswet and would mean limitations to the research.

However, for future research it is advisable to use the findings and results of this thesis to consider it in different contexts and to find out what the possibilities and best practices are for the implementation of the ideas that have come about. I have provided a handful of recommendations and advice – now is the time to look at how this can be, practically implemented; in what time-span this is possible and if an exemplary practitioner can indeed be provided with a formal or informal role in the Omgevingswet. The more policy-related research can start here: finding the practical implementation policies in for instance an Omgevingsvisie, Projectbesluit and Programma. The Omgevingswet is not in effect yet, therefore the best results can be made after it has come into effect and an exemplary practitioner can perform his role – evaluation of the process can only be done afterwards. This requires again new scientific research.

Scientific research also needs to be done on a number of emerging themes: being entrepreneurship in citizens’ initiatives, the role of social capital and the impact of ‘maatwerk’ in Dutch policies.

Lastly, Gebrookerbos is currently under research by NEIMED and the Open University in Heerlen. It is advisable to keep their research in mind to find out whether the ‘method’ Gebrookerbos can also be implemented in other places or regions. A method in times of customization ‘maatwerk’ is quite an antithesis, but this then provides ample material for new research. How can one, practically, implement a method in the framework of a customized policy or approach?
In this final chapter I will reflect upon my own research process. The writing of the thesis took about ten months, starting in the autumn of 2017 with the first ideas and concepts. Finding the ideas was not that difficult, building on the bachelor’s thesis and using the themes of shrink as a starting point. The difficulty was to find a specific research frame.

The research started off with finding relevant information on shrink in general and citizens participation, however, the issue arose that this was still a very broad and well-researched topic. Demarcation remained a challenge; when looking into the available literature, I found a number of suitable theories to accompany my research and narrow the research down a bit. At this stage, I had some more concrete ideas and at the same time I was in talks with the internship organisation RUIMTEVOLK. When talking to them, they recommended a new perspective: the Omgevingswet – in the beginning I probably was too excited which led to the fact that the Omgevingswet at the end got a smaller role in the research: merely as a framework. The Omgevingswet is a difficult and broad topic that influences so many layers of society that it is almost impossible to completely grasp the essential aspects – hopefully I made a successful attempt.

In February, I submitted the first versions and the research plans and ideas. However, feedback took quite some time, which meant that my topic had changed drastically over time already. In this period of time I also found the last missing component in the scientific literature: the ‘exemplary practitioner’ – this gave me enough handles to grasp the exact theme and topics of research and gave me a clear idea of what I wanted to research. What kind of cases and people would be of importance. However, since a lot had been written already since then, the literature review and theoretical frameworks saw numerous adjustments, deletions and improvements to align them with the new perspective. This provided challenges even up until the last moment: what is the connection of certain theories to the final results and findings?

Finding respondents was luckily not an issue, due to the many connections in the internship organisation and due to the time they gave me for the research I found quite a lot of cases and respondents. In the end, maybe even one or two cases too much: as I noticed that more of the same was being told and saturation started to occur. However, this made it easier to code and analyse the interviews since I could already name a number of often occurring themes and topics in nearly all cases. Transcribing, coding, categorizing and creating networks and analysis of the interviews went quite within the time I had planned. However, I did need a ‘refreshing’ of my memory since I hadn’t worked with Atlas.ti for quite some time. The coding and transcribing mostly served as an overview of results, whereas I perhaps could have used the codes and networks in a more efficient way. I noticed that a number of aspects of coding and analysing did not provide the necessary results, for instance creating networks appeared to have no added value in this specific case. Consequently, this has not been adopted through all cases. For instance, coding all interviews the same way. Which in the end would make the connections and findings more clear.

The describing of the findings and results took the most time, this was the period in which the summer holidays were around the corner, the final courses were being wrapped up and when I was already soliciting for a ‘real’ job at the municipality. Time-management was not at its best, this led to the fact that even when I started working in September, the thesis still was not finished, and I had to cope with work-life and research. It has been a tumultuous ride but today a result can finally be handed over.
Concluding, I am satisfied, to a certain extent with my working process and I have noticed progress in efficiency and capability of doing research, also taking into account learning process stemming from my bachelor’s thesis. There are always aspects which I need (any other person as well) to improve in further researches, however I have learned a lot from doing this research, in the context of an internship organisation, comimg work with research and free-time and as a master student. Most of all I have learned a lot from the people I have interviewed, their dedication, enthusiasm but also their realism and vigilance makes clear how complex the interaction between the formal and informal is and how, even the Omgevingswet, will not mean that the interaction will ever be perfect – but that we can at least try and do our best.
References


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Figures

- Picture 4: On page 83. Jos Reinders (Brooker) and his initiative Werkplaats-K. Source: own photograph. 18-05-2018.
- Model 1: Research model. Source: own
- Model 2: Conceptual Framework. Source: own
- Map 2: Global Location of Gebrookerbos. Source: OpenStreetMaps
- Figure 1: Heuristic model of urban shrinkage (Haase et al., 2014)
- Figure 3. The regional system. Source: own
- Figure 4. Formal and informal. Source: own
- Figure 6. Schematic overview of the ‘level network’. Source: own.
- Table 1: Operationalization of institutional changes. Source: Meijer & van der Krabben (2018)
- Table 2: central starting points of Participation in the Omgevingswet. Source: https://aandeslagmetdeomgevingswet.nl/thema/inspiratiegids/participatie-wet/
- Table 4: Overview of selected cases. Source: own
- Table 5: Table of the ‘ideal’ exemplary practitioner and characteristics. Source: own
Appendix I

Interview guide (basic template)

Introductie

Mijn naam is Jordan Jansen ik ben masterstudent sociale geografie aan de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen. Ik loop stage bij kennis en adviesorganisatie RUIMTEVOLK en zij ondersteunen mij dan ook voor mijn onderzoek. Ik doe mijn afstudeeronderzoek naar zogeheten exemplary practitioners in krimpgebieden. Dit zijn mensen die een bepaalde, belangrijke rol spelen (als actieve burgers of voortrekkers) bij de totstandkoming van burgerinitiatieven en het succes daarvan. Daarnaast houd ik ook rekening met de Omgevingswet die in 2021 in gaat en welke eventuele gevolgen dit gaat hebben voor het burgerinitiatief. Ik wil tot aanbevelingen komen die bruikbaar kunnen zijn voor andere regio’s wat betreft de vormgeving van burgerinitiatieven in het kader van de Omgevingswet. Ik kijk naar succesfactoren, knelpunten en leermomenten van de initiatieven en de rol die een exemplary practitioner daarin kan spelen.

Dat was een korte introductie van mijn onderzoek. Ik wil u alvast bedankt voor de medewerking en loop nu een aantal formaliteiten door: allereerst vraag ik uw toestemming om het gesprek op te nemen voor de makkelijker verwerking in mijn resultaten. Daarnaast of u uw volledige naam wilt gebruiken of dat u liever anoniem blijft? Het interview duurt tussen de 45 minuten en maximaal 1 uur (ik zal op de tijd letten). U hoeft niet alle vragen te beantwoorden, geef dit even aan. Tot slot, bent u geïnteresseerd in de resultaten? Dan zal ik na afronding deze per mail naar u toesturen (streeftijd augustus). Let wel: het onderzoek is geheel in het Engels, de samenvatting in het Nederlands. Heeft u verder nog vragen? Zo, niet dan gaan we nu beginnen.

Interviewguide: EPs

Achtergrond

1. Wat is uw leeftijd?
2. Waar komt u vandaan?
   a. Waar bent u nu woonachtend?
3. Wat is uw achtergrond?
   a. Studie
   b. Werk

Uw woonplek

4. Waarom bent u hier komen wonen?
   a. Bent u erg betrokken bij uw wijk/regio?
   b. Waarom bent u zo wel/niet betrokken bij de regio?
5. Wat zijn kwesties die erg spelen in de regio?

Krimp

6. Hoe ervaart u de krimp zelf in de regio?
   a. Waar uit zich dat in?
   i. Fysiek (leegstand .e.d)
ii. Sociaal (mindware, mindset, maar ook achterstanden, criminaliteit etc.)

7. Voelt u zich betrokken bij de krimpproblematiek
   a. Wat vindt u ertegen te moeten doen?
      i. Wat doet u er daadwerkelijk tegen; waarom dat wel/niet?
   b. Ervaart u het als probleem of heeft u het geaccepteerd: het kan ook voordelen bieden

8. Wat zijn de grootste uitdagingen waar jouw plek (gemeente/regio) voor staat?
9. Hoe sluit dit aan op het opzetten van het initiatief of bij het aanzetten van participatie?
10. Waar loop je het meest tegen in je plek?

**Overheid**

11. Wat beschouwt u tot de rol van de overheid?
12. Welke rol neemt de overheid daadwerkelijk in?
   a. Hoe/Is dit veranderd in de laatste jaren, naar uw idee?
13. Waar laat de overheid het na?
   a. Vult de markt die plek altijd op?
   b. Wat is uw rol hierin?

**Participatie**

14. Hoe kijkt u zelf tegen burgerparticipatie aan?
   a. Wat zijn de voor- en nadelen?
15. Vindt u dat burgerparticipatie vanuit de overheid aangejaagd moet worden, of ziet u het als losstaand?
16. Hoe vindt u dat dit nu wordt verwoord in ambtelijke stukken?
17. Hoe zie je dit voor je in de nieuwe Omgevingswet?

**Het initiatief**

18. Wat is uw positie in het initiatief?
19. Kunt u in het kort vertellen wat het initiatief inhoudt?
   a. Hoe is het tot stand gekomen?
20. Vindt u dat het belangrijk is dat burgerinitiatieven het heft in handen (moeten) nemen of zie je hierin meer een rol voor de markt/overheid
21. In hoeverre verschillen burgerinitiatieven van marktpartijen/ondernemers?
22. Wat is het belang van uw netwerk; wie heeft u voor het opzetten van het initiatief nodig gehad?
   a. Heeft u hier voorbeelden van?
23. Kunt u mij in het kort het proces vertellen van start tot waar u nu bent?
   a. Wat zijn struikelblokken waar je tegen aan loopt? (Bijvoorbeeld gemeente, procedures, geld, kennis, wetgeving)
   b. Hoe kan je het beste omgaan met deze struikelblokken
      i. Heeft u hier een voorbeeld van?
24. Hoe ziet u uw positie en rol in de toekomst voor u? (Met het oog op de Omgevingswet)
25. Wat zou u andere initiatieven of initiatiefnemers aanraden? (qua aanpak)
26. Waarom is uw aanpak zo uniek?
27. Zou een dergelijk initiatief ook kunnen ontstaan/werken in een niet-krimpregio?
28. Bij in het tot stand komen van een initiatief in een krimpregio. Wat is hier de rol van
Wetgeving

29. Bent u op de hoogte van de huidige wetgeving en de wetgeving die nog in ontwikkeling is?
30. Welke (juridische) instrumenten zijn volgens u nodig voor een succesvol initiatief?
31. Welke stakeholders moeten erbij betrokken worden en welke knelpunten levert dit op?
   a. Heeft u steun van de gemeente (accountmanager)?
      i. Zo ja, op welke manier?
      ii. Zo nee, zou u het fijn vinden hulp te krijgen van iemand binnen de gemeente?
32. Welke grote (juridisch/planologische) knelpunten zijn er momenteel bij het opzetten van een initiatief of bij het starten van een participatietraject?
33. Hoe kan een wet, initiatieven beter ondersteunen en ruimte bieden?
   a. (Maatwerk, generiek, ruimte voor experimenteren etc.)
34. Bent u bekend met de Omgevingswet, welke in 2021 (streeftijd) ingaat?
   a. Zo ja, hoe ziet u participatie in de Omgevingswet?
   b. Zo nee, waar ligt dit aan?

Aanbevelingen

Het onderzoek focust zich ook op bepaalde voortrekkers in de regio, u bent er wellicht een van. In dit laatste stuk vraag ik u persoonlijk hoe u hierin staat en welke eigenschappen van een dergelijk Exemplary Practitioner van belang is voor het succes van een initiatief.

35. Hoe kijkt u aan tegen bepaalde voortrekkers/voorbeeldige personen in een regio?

Denkoeefening: de volgende vraag zet ik u eventjes aan het denken. Ik zoek naar eigenschappen (hebben van een netwerk, kennis, maar ook empathie, binding met de plek, maatschappelijke betrokkenheid enz.) die belangrijk zijn. Schrijf op dit bladje (minimaal 5 – maximaal 10) eigenschappen die u zelf heeft waarvan u vindt dat dit belangrijk is voor een succesvol initiatief. U heeft 5 minuten. Geef ook een top 3 aan

36. Kunt u de top drie nader uitleggen: waarom zijn deze eigenschappen zo belangrijk?

Tot slot

37. Hoe moet het burgerinitiatief en participatie formeel verwoord/gepositioneerd worden? (Dus in de wet)
   a. Welke kaders moeten/moeten niet gezet worden?
38. Hoe hoopt u dat participatie vormgegeven gaat worden in de toekomst?
39. Wat zou u andere initiatieven/regio’s die met krimp te maken hebben meegeven voor succesvolle burgerparticipatie?

Afsluiting
Dit is het einde van het interview. Nogmaals hartelijk bedankt voor uw medewerking. Mocht u later nog tips of aanbevelingen hebben, schroom niet om mij dit te laten weten. U ontvangt per mail van mij de eindversie met alle resultaten, mocht u dit willen. Hopelijk vond u het ook interessant!

**Eigenschappen en karakteristieken**

Wat zijn mijn belangrijke eigenschappen?

Top drie:

1.

2.

3.

Overige belangrijke eigenschappen
Planning interviews

1. Peter Erkens – Stadsboerderij Heerlen – Datum 16-05-2018
2. YAGEO burgerinitiatief – Roermond initiatieven – Datum 18-05-2018
5. Peter Broekmans (Rendiz) – De Fabriek Maasbree – Datum 19-05-2018
7. Maja Roçak – Onderzoeker NEIMED – Datum 22-05-2018
8. Har Timmermans – Initiatiefnemer Kasteel Kessell – Datum TBA
10. Ralph Tangelder – Vereniging Kleine Kernen – Datum 04-06-2018

11. Samira Louali – Projectmanager Gebrookerbos - Eventueel

Focus group

1. RUIMTEVOLK – experts on regional development, housing and Omgevingswet
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Krimpregio's</th>
<th>Gemeenten</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Eemsdelta</td>
<td>Appingedam, Delfzijl, Loppersum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Oost-Groningen</td>
<td>Oldambt, Pekela, Stadskanaal, Veendam, Westenwalde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hoogeland</td>
<td>De Marne, Eemsmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parkstad Limburg</td>
<td>Brunssum, Heerlen, Kerkrade, Nuth, Landgraaf, Onderbanken, Simpelveld, Voerendaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Maastricht-Mergelland</td>
<td>Eijsden-Margraten, Gulpen-Wittem, Maastricht, Meerssen, Vaals, Valkenburg aan de Geul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Westelijke Mijnstreek</td>
<td>Baek, Schinnen, Sittard-Geleen, Stein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Zeeuws-Vlaanderen</td>
<td>Hulst, Sluis, Terneuzen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Achterhoek</td>
<td>Aalten, Bronckhorst, Berkelland, Doetinchem, Montferland, Oost Gelre, Oude IJsselstreek, Winterswijk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Noordoost Friesland</td>
<td>Achtkarspelen, Dantumadeel, Dongeradeel, Ferwerderadeel, Kollumerland C.A., Tietjersinteradeel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticiperegio's</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Noordwest Friesland</td>
<td>Harlingen, Waadhoeke</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Friese Waddeneilanden</td>
<td>Arnewald, Schiermonnikoog, Terschelling, Vlieland</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Zuidoost Friesland</td>
<td>Heerenveen, Ooststellingwerf</td>
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<td>Opsterland</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Oost Drenthe</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Kop van Noord-Holland</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Schouwen-Duiveland</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Walcheren</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Hoeksche Waard</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>Krimpenerwaard</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Noord-Limburg</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Midden-Limburg</td>
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</table>
## Appendix III  Overview of participation in Omgevingswet (Dutch original version)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Regels</th>
<th>Wie is verantwoordelijk voor het naleven van de participatieregels?</th>
<th>Waar staat het?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omgevingsvisie</td>
<td>Motiveringsplicht *</td>
<td>Bevoegd gezag</td>
<td>Omgevingsbesluit (art. 8.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programma</td>
<td>Motiveringsplicht *</td>
<td>Bevoegd gezag</td>
<td>Omgevingsbesluit (art. 8.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omgevingsplan</td>
<td>Het bevoegd gezag geeft bij de kennisgeving van een omgevingsplan aan hoe de participatie wordt vormgegeven. <em>Motiveringsplicht</em></td>
<td>Bevoegd gezag</td>
<td>Omgevingsbesluit (art. 8.1, eerste lid)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Omgevingsbesluit (art. 8.1, tweede lid)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Projectbesluit   | Het bevoegd gezag doet uiterlijk bij de start van de verkenning voor het projectbesluit een 'kennisgeving participatie'. In deze kennisgeving staat:  
- wie worden betrokken, waarover en wanneer  
- wat de rol is van het bevoegd gezag en de initiatiefnemer  
- waar meer informatie beschikbaar komt  
Bij de verkenning mag iedereen mogelijke oplossingen aandragen voor de beschreven opgave. Degene die dit doet, kan het bevoegd gezag vragen om daarover advies te vragen aan een onafhankelijk deskundige.  
Zowel voor de voorkeursbeslissing als voor het projectbesluit geldt een motiveringsplicht. Het bevoegd gezag geeft hierbij aan hoe derden zijn betrokken, wat de resultaten zijn van de verkenning en gaat in op de aangedragen oplossingen en de uitgebrachte adviezen daarover. | Bevoegd gezag  
Als een ander dan het bevoegd gezag initiatiefnemer is, kan het participatietraject wel een gezamenlijke actie zijn. Het bevoegd gezag en de initiatiefnemer bepalen samen de rolverdeling, waarbij het bevoegd gezag uiteindelijk beslist. Het bevoegd gezag geeft in de kennisgeving participatie aan wat de rollen zijn van het bevoegd gezag en de initiatiefnemer. | Omgevingsbesluit (art. 5.47, 5.48 en 5.51) en Omgevingsbesluit (art. 4.2 en 4.4) |

Source: https://aandeslagmetdeomgevingswet.nl/thema/inspiratiegids/participatie-wet/