

**Do-democracy and its Democratic Effects on  
Deliberative and Participatory Democracy**

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## ***1. Introduction***

The notion of active citizenship has gained importance over the years (Van Dam et al. 2014, 323). Western European governments increasingly encourage their citizens to play an active role in society (Tonkens 2009). Dutch policy-makers too have enthusiastically embraced the promise of active citizenship. A ‘do-democracy’ is what society should aim for according to the current cabinet of the Netherlands. In this sort of democracy, citizens (are invited to) take up opportunities and responsibilities for the well-being of their community. These engaged citizens will bring about trust (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties 2013a), social cohesion and mutual understanding (Van de Wijdeven 2012, 295). In short, it is believed that Dutch democracy will benefit from a transformation into a do-democracy. Whether do-democracy is indeed beneficial to democracy is the main object of this study. From a deliberative and participatory democratic perspective, it will examine the effects of do-democracy on the quality of democracy.

Dutch local governments have made several attempts to improve the quality of local democracy. These attempts range from organizing local referenda to introducing directly elected mayors (Hendriks and Schaap 2010, 114). In addition, local administrators have put considerable energy in enhancing civic involvement in the policy-making process through *inspraak* (consultation) and interactive policy development (Korsten 1979; Van de Peppel 2001). These efforts, aimed at increasing the quality of local democracy and civic involvement, have however not really paid off: Dutch scholars describe the results as (somewhat) disappointing (e.g. Hendriks and Schaap 2010, 116; Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2012, 7). This research will determine whether and, if so, to what extent do-democracy is a key to a more participatory and deliberative democratic future.

The idea that citizens (should) take action themselves to improve the quality of the public domain is not new (Crenson 1983; Cornwall 2004; Lelieveldt 2004). However, despite increased (policy) attention, a lot remains unclear and unknown about these citizens’ initiatives (Van Dam et al. 2014, 323). The question whether active citizens foster democracy is often overlooked by scientists. When studying citizens’ involvement and its effects on the quality of democracy, most scholars tend to focus on citizen participation aimed at influencing policy (e.g. Edelenbos and Monnikhof 2001; Irvin and Stansbury 2004). Even the most recent publications on participatory democratic innovations narrow their focus to citizens’ involvement in the political decision-making process (e.g. Geissel and Newton 2012;

Geissel and Joas 2013; Michels 2011a; Smith 2009). The main aim of these studies is assessing the democratic value of participatory governance and deliberative procedures. The democratic value of do-democracy has however not been studied yet. This research is therefore of an exploratory nature. Rather than focusing on the efforts of citizens limited to influencing the political decision-making process, the emphasis of the research is on concrete forms of citizens' action. Or, in other words, the actions undertaken by citizens aimed at improving the livability of their neighborhood or municipality.

The effect of these concrete actions on the quality of democracy is the main topic of this research. It will be examined from a participatory and deliberative democratic point of view since within these models of democracy, active citizenship is considered as a valuable and necessary element. Taking a citizen's perspective, the following research question will be addressed:

*Does do-democracy strengthen deliberative and/or participatory democracy?*

An answer to this question will shed light on the 'democratic potential' of do-democracy. In this research, do-democracy will be conceived as a supplement to representative democracy that has the potential of strengthening democracy in a deliberative and/or participatory way – next to other democratic instruments such as elections and interactive policy development. Since a lot of research needs to be done on the effects of do-democracy (Van de Wijdeven 2012, 295; Peters et al. 2014, 50), the research will hopefully provide valuable insights for both practitioners and scientists. To evaluate the impact of do-democracy on the quality of democracy, an evaluation framework informed by participatory and deliberative democratic theory will be employed. The research adopts a qualitative case study approach to investigate the do-democracy in the Dutch municipality of Zoetermeer.

The answer to the research question in the conclusion (section 5) will be preceded by a discussion of the results (section 4), research design (section 3) and theoretical framework (section 2). The theoretical framework includes considerations on the democratic value of do-democracy and is followed by a discussion of the evaluation framework itself. The research design section covers a description of the method, case selection and operationalization of the framework's criteria. Lastly, an analysis of the results per criterion is included from which the conclusions are drawn in the last (concluding) section.

## ***2. Do-democracy and Democratic Theory***

This theoretical section will encompass an introduction to the phenomenon of do-democracy and a discussion of its value for democracy perceived from different democratic perspectives. In addition, an evaluation framework is created that contains elements of both participatory and deliberative democratic theory.

### ***2.1. Do-democracy***

The concept of ‘do-democracy’ is coined by Van de Wijdeven (2012) in his dissertation on active citizenship in Dutch neighborhoods. Central to do-democracy are the citizens who want to make a difference in the public domain through concrete action. The involvement of these engaged citizens is reflected in the actions they undertake. According to Van de Wijdeven (2012), the ‘doing’ in do-democracy refers to a fourth mode of collective decision-making, next to voting, bargaining and negotiating (295). Instead of being politically involved in the decision-making process, do-democrats take action to improve the public domain and its livability and safety. Do-democracy is distinct from other democratic instruments such as interactive policy development since its main purpose is *not* influencing policy or the political-decision making process. Rather, the actions that fall under do-democracy are of a more concrete nature and are more directly directed to improving the public domain. Action in do-democracy is, for instance, about citizens who clean dirty streets and rebuild neglected playgrounds. Instead of discussing such issues in a neighborhood forum, citizens take concrete steps to solve these problems themselves – with or without the help of authorities. Through their actions, these do-democrats (help to) shape and determine their living environment and fulfill their citizenship duties (Van Gunsteren 1998). According to Van de Wijdeven (2012), do-democracy can be seen as a form of direct participatory democracy; it is viewed as a tool for citizens to possess direct influence on the public domain (296).

The Dutch government has enthusiastically embraced the promise of do-democracy and is eager to stimulate it (Tonkens 2009). In a policy document on this topic, it is written that the government is determined to actively contribute to the transition to a do-democracy (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken 2013b, 3). The Dutch cabinet’s wish for do-democracy sounds similar to British Prime Minister David Cameron’s plea for a Big Society. In (t)his sort of society, citizens should not always turn to official, local authorities or central government for answers to the problems they face. Instead, citizens should help themselves

and each other. Cameron's wished transformation into such society with enhanced citizen participation is already dismissed by Kisby (2010) as a "pure fantasy", drawing a poor and naive version of the active citizen as a "philanthropist and volunteer" (489-490). It remains to be seen whether these qualifications suit the Dutch case too.

According to The Council for Public Administration (Rob) (2012, 18) and The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) (2012, 11) – two advisory bodies for the Dutch government and parliament – the 'do-democracy transformation' is already in progress. Both bodies observe that Dutch citizens increasingly participate on their own initiative. Scholars too write that citizens try to tackle public problems increasingly on their own (Van de Wijdeven and Hendriks 2009, 123). The Rob and WRR rely for their claims mainly on anecdotal evidence and local success stories. How many of the Dutch actually turned into do-democrats is unknown. This lack of data raises the question whether the issue of do-democracy receives disproportionate attention (Peters et al. 2014, 57). Data from The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) sheds some light on how many citizens are actually actively engaged in improving their neighborhood or municipality. In 2012, 24% of the Dutch population put effort into an issue which mattered to either their municipality, a certain group within their municipality or their neighborhood (Cultural Changes 2012). Over the years, there is however no evidence for a trend towards increased local engagement (Posthumus et al. 2013, 195). In the near future, more citizens could of course become involved in their municipality or neighborhood. In addition, according to Tonkens et al. (2015), the conditions for (more) active citizenship are present and as written earlier, the Dutch government is willing and determined to encourage this development (109). In addition, it seems there is enough potential: 71% of the Dutch non-participants – people who are not active in their neighborhood – are willing to do something for their neighborhood (Peters et al. 2014, 57). It might however be the case that in practice, people abstain from participating because they are too busy performing their day-to-day activities (King et al. 1998, 322). Whether it is wishful thinking or Dutch democracy is actually transforming into a do-democracy, it is clear that the topic of do-democracy has come in for a lot of attention, especially from policy-makers (Van Dam et al. 2014, 323).

## ***2.2. Do-democracy: An Asset to Democracy?***

Whether do-democracy is considered as an asset to democracy depends on one's view on what a democracy should aspire to achieve. Different normative views in political-philosophical thought can be distinguished on this matter; the ideal of democracy is complex and contested (Gutmann 2007, 521). In addition, these normative views adhere to different conceptions of participation. In the elitist version of democratic theory, participation is equated with voting a government out of office. It is a view associated with Schumpeter (1966), who defined democracy as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (269). In this view, politics is seen as something best left to professional politicians. It is up for the leaders and representatives to decide and govern once they are elected; politics is their "business" (Schumpeter 1966, 295; Stoker 2006, 151). It follows that citizens in this sort of democracy play a passive role (Klijn and Koppenjan 2000, 119). Other political activity than voting should be minimized. When citizens do engage, administrative inefficiency (and worse) will be the result (Held 2012, 150). In sum, participation should be limited to electoral action and more or other sorts of participation are seen as undesirable. This "thin conceptualization of participation" leaves little for empirical investigation since few standards are provided to evaluate participation other than voting (Teorell 2006, 788). The latter is the main reason why the focus of this research is on the following two democratic theories.

In democratic theory, the role of citizen participation in democracy is mainly discussed by participatory and deliberative democrats (Michels 2011a, 277). The 'participatory model of democracy' is associated with scholars such as Pateman (1970) and Gould (1988) and the 'deliberative model of democracy' with theorists such as Habermas (1996) and Fishkin (2014). Deliberative and participatory democrats both consider citizens' involvement as the key to a more and better democratic future (Held 2012, 211). Despite the latter, the theories adhere to different conceptions of participation. For participatory democrats, active citizenship is mostly about providing self-government to citizens in all (non-) political domains of society. Citizens' self-management should be introduced with the aim of democratizing economic, social, cultural and political life (Pateman 1970; Gould 1988). This democratization process will boost self-development (Gould 1988, 255) and stimulate feelings of political efficacy (Pateman 1970, 150). In contrast, deliberative

democratic theory is a “talk-centric” theory that focuses on the process of opinion formation (Chambers 2003, 308). Of central importance is the idea that democracy revolves around the transformation of preferences (Elster 1998, 1). To achieve such transformation informed discussions among free and equal citizens need to take place. Within the deliberative context, participation is therefore understood as conducting informed discussions. At first glance, the concept of do-democracy seems to directly contradict deliberative democratic theory. As mentioned before, in a do-democracy it is all about action rather than deliberating, arguing or voting. The involvement of citizens is mainly reflected in the actions they undertake. In other words, it is not so much about ‘telling’ but more about ‘showing’ (Van de Wijdeven 2012, 297). Debates and decision-making are however inherent to (executing) collective action. From a deliberative democratic point of view, the question therefore remains whether these decision-making processes are accompanied by informed debate. In sum, where participatory democrats steer their attention to enhancing citizens’ influence opportunities, deliberative democrats accentuate the importance of having reasonable and well-informed debates and discussions.

### ***2.3. An Evaluation Framework and its Criteria***

To determine whether the initiatives and activities that fall under the broader umbrella of do-democracy foster democracy, an evaluation framework consisting of five theory-based indicators will be used. The framework – mainly inspired on Michels and De Graaf (2010), Michels (2011b) and Geissel (2012, 2013) – is informed by both deliberative and participatory democratic theory. It includes the following criteria: 1) inclusiveness 2) deliberation 3) influence 4) legitimacy and 5) civic skills and duties.

#### ***2.3.1. Inclusiveness***

The first criterion will assess whether an initiative provides inclusive participation. Its inclusiveness will be determined by the initiative’s level of openness and the representativeness of its participants. Participatory democrats’ first and foremost priority is that as much as possible citizens participate and voice their views (Gutmann 2007, 525). In the participatory context, it is therefore mostly a matter of numbers. It follows that citizens’ activities and initiatives should be open and accessible to everyone who wants to become involved: every citizen should be able to join if (s)he wishes to do so. One can however



question whether equality of access is sufficient when equality of usage is lacking (Dalton et al. 2006, 262). Therefore, an additional sub criterion to determine an initiative's inclusiveness is the level of representativeness. This second sub criterion stems from deliberative democratic thinking: deliberative democrats argue that opportunities to participate should not be increased for its own sake. Rather, the nature and form of participation should be enhanced (Held 2012, 232). To ensure deliberation (see next criterion) and 'good' participation, either the whole population or a representative sample of the population should be involved in an initiative (Fishkin 2014, 31). Consequently, representativeness among participants is highly desirable since it increases the likelihood that all the different voices are heard (Fiket and Memoli 2013, 138). It follows that an initiative should not only be 'open' but that the participants should also represent their neighborhood. Only in that case it will promote social inclusion (Silver et al. 2010, 455). As a consequence, exclusion and selective representation are considered as problematic. Similarly to interactive policy development, it could however be the case "that the actual participants [...] are a kind of participation elite made up of well-educated, white individuals" in their fifties (Mayer et al. 2005, 189). Research already revealed that 'do-democrats' do differ from non-participants in terms of background characteristics (Bakker et al. 2012, 412; Denters et al. 2012, 20). Highly-educated citizens participate, for instance, twice as much in their neighborhood or community as their lower-educated counterparts (Cultural Changes 2012).

### *2.3.2. Deliberation*

We have seen that deliberative democrats argue that citizen participation is not just about enhancing the opportunities to participate. The quality of discussion that precede decision-making is of crucial importance too. Only by the means of deliberation - defined by Fishkin (2014) as "the process by which individuals sincerely weigh the merits of competing arguments in discussion together" (33) - citizens can reflect and transform their preferences, what will result in taking reasoned and rational decisions. It follows that, within the initiatives, there should be room for open discussion and that participants should be able and willing to justify their opinions and change their preferences. In this way, minority and individuals voices will be heard (Michels 2011a, 279). A potential threat to achieving sound public reasoning is the presence of self-interested participants who only care about their own

issues and problems and fail to take into account the bigger, societal picture (Peters et al. 2014 55-56).

### *2.3.3. Influence*

Participatory democrats such as Pateman (2012) acknowledge the value of deliberation but do, however, not believe that deliberation is sufficient to enhance democracy. To make citizens' social and political life more democratic, individuals need to have influence over their everyday life (Pateman 2012, 8). It should be about giving citizens a say or, in other words, provide them with influence. Influence comprises of two components: perceived meaningfulness and perceived effectiveness. In this research, it is about *perceived* influence since the citizen's perspective is leading. Therefore, the focus is on whether participants feel they have influence. Perceived meaningfulness refers to the capacity of a participant to make a difference within the initiative itself and perceived effectiveness to the capacity of an initiative (or: the participants together) to implement its plans and achieve the set goals. On the one hand, influence is thus about to which extent participants feel that they are individually able to make a difference within the initiative itself (Geissel 2013, 17). More specifically, the involved individuals should be able to influence discussions, plans and actions in order to avoid empty window-dressing rituals (Arnstein 1969, 216). On the other hand, the level of influence depends on whether the participants think they have the capacity to put their plans in practice (Geissel 2012, 169).

### *2.3.4. Legitimacy*

The concept of legitimacy can be defined in different ways. Following Hendriks et al. (2007) and Michels (2011b), I will refer to legitimacy as the extent to which participants accept and support the procedure of a specific initiative and its outcomes. 'Perceived legitimacy' (i.e. citizens' political support and acceptance of their representatives and the political system) is another way to define legitimacy (Geissel 2012, 168). Because participation in a do-democracy is associated with concrete action rather than influencing political decision-making, the influence on perceived legitimacy is expected to be weak. The focus is therefore on participants' acceptance and support of the procedure and outcome of a specific initiative. It should be noted that the level of legitimacy only will be addressed for participants. Although it could be argued that the perceptions of non-participants matter as well, the

majority of residents could be unaware of an initiative’s existence. A lack of broad public awareness does however not necessarily imply a lack of legitimacy (Hendriks et al. 2007, 373).

Both participatory and deliberative democrats believe that citizen participation has the potential of increasing the legitimacy of the procedure and outcome of an initiative. According to participatory democratic theory, citizens who believe that participation is worthwhile (or: influential) are not only more likely to participate but, in addition, to hold that a decision should be binding (Held 2012, 212). In other words, influential participation increases a decision’s legitimacy. In contrast, deliberative democrats argue that deliberation enhances the legitimacy of procedures and outcomes. Decisions based on public sound reasoning are more likely to be perceived as legitimate. In deliberative democratic theory legitimacy it is therefore not so much a matter of influence but rather of having informed discussion.

**2.3.5. Civic Skills and Virtues**

Citizens’ enlightenment is regarded by both participatory and deliberative democrats as a major advantage of participation. It is believed that participation possess the capacity to enhance civic skills (such as debating skills) and duties (such as a sense of community). In addition, participation is perceived as a remedy for the widespread apathy and lack of interest in public life (Held 2012, 234). Besides, deliberative democrats believe that deliberation can enhance a citizen’s grasp of complex problems and expand the quality of citizens’ democratic life (Held 2012, 238). Lastly, participatory democrats argue that meaningful participation enables citizens to develop their social and political capacities (Pateman 1970, 42).

*TABLE 1. Evaluation Framework with Theory-based Criteria.*

<b>Deliberative Democracy</b>
Inclusion – Representativeness
Deliberation
<b>Participatory Democracy</b>
Inclusion – Openness
Influence
<b>Deliberative and Participatory Democracy</b>
Legitimacy
Civic Skills and Duties

The framework and its criteria are summed up in table 1 (see above). The criteria enable us to evaluate the possible strengths of do-democracy for deliberative and participatory democracy. Research on (other) participatory democratic innovations revealed that there “is a trade-off between different democratic criteria” (Joas 2013, 260). The democratic innovations of participatory governance and deliberative procedures yield, for instance, positive effects regarding civic enlightenment and legitimacy (Michels 2011a; Joas 2013). In addition, studies show that participatory governance projects score generally high on openness but has poor records of representation and deliberation. In contrast, deliberative forums tend to have more positive effects towards representation and deliberation than the innovation of participatory governance (Michels 2011a; Joas 2013). The downside of the deliberative democratic innovation is however the limited influence of its participants (Michels 2011a, 289). What the strengths of do-democracy are will be discussed in the remaining sections of this research.

### **3. Research Design**

To provide an answer to the earlier introduced research question, data was collected by the means of semi-structured interviews with 12 do-democrats. This section will elaborate on the selected research method and cases and on the operationalization of the indicators.

#### **3.1. Research Method and Case Selection**

Within this research, the do-democracy of the municipality of Zoetermeer was studied. A qualitative method was adopted because of the method's ability to provide deep understanding of the subject under study; it enables to open the black box, yielding a wealth of detailed data (George and Bennett 2005, 312). In total, five cases were selected which provided the necessary data. The cases share the same context since they are all set in the municipality of Zoetermeer. The municipality of Zoetermeer has developed as a typically suburban growth center (*groeikern*) in the metropolitan area of The Hague. These growth centers or so-called 'new towns' are cities which are designed from scratch according to planning doctrines of a specific period (International New Town Institute 2015). The special aim of news town was to offer new housing. As a growth center, the original village of Zoetermeer grew in 40 years from a typical Dutch rural community with 9,000 inhabitants into a suburban new town with currently 124,002 inhabitants (Lupi and Musterd 2006, 808; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS) 2014a).

The municipality of Zoetermeer was selected because of its unfavorable setting: in the literature, suburbs are characterized as anonymous, non-interacting local societies with inhabitants who are not socially actively involved since they are very keen on their privacy; giving rise to 'atomized' suburbanites (Lupi and Musterd 2006, 806). A study conducted by Lupi and Musterd (2006) on Zoetermeer revealed that although Zoetermeer's inhabitants participate in associations and organizations, the social ties in the different neighborhoods are weak and identification with the municipality is not very strong (815). As a consequence, developing a sense of community or securing sound public reasoning will be both hard to achieve since community feelings lack and engagement is mostly directed towards personal gain (Stoker 2006, 101). The municipality of Zoetermeer therefore qualifies as a least likely crucial case, following the Sinatra inference 'if it can make it here, it can make it everywhere'. In other words, if do-democracy has the hypothesized democratic effects in

Zoetermeer, it should have the same effects in other non-suburban, Dutch municipalities (Gerring 2007, 237).

Based on Van de Wijdeven's (2012) conceptualization of do-democracy, I decided to select five initiatives. These initiatives can be perceived as expressions of do-democracy since they are all aimed at making a difference in the public domain by concrete doing. The initiatives – *Adoptie Groen*, *Energiecoöperatie Zoetermeer*, *Stichting De Hof van Seghwaert*, *Stichting Zoete Aarde* and *Mozaïekprojecten* – are related to actions aimed at improving Zoetermeer's living environment (see table 2). The concrete aims vary between transforming Zoetermeer in a more green, sustainable or beautiful municipality. The case selection is made after consultation with several civil servants of the municipality of Zoetermeer and BizKwadraat – a *stichting* (non-profit foundation) for citizens' initiatives in Zoetermeer. The danger of this approach might be that only best practices are presented and selected which might result in a too rosy picture of the effects of do-democracy. We need to be aware of that danger.

The selection covers both initiatives in which citizens take up opportunities and responsibilities themselves for the well-being of their community and initiatives in which citizens are invited by the municipality to do so. Because of the exploratory nature of the study, it was decided to cover both types of citizens' initiatives in order to gain as much as possible insight into the phenomenon of do-democracy.

TABLE 2. *Aims, Actions and Spaces of Initiatives.*

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Aim</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Space</b>
<i>Adoptie Groen</i>	Make street more pleasant	Green maintenance	Invited
<i>Energiecoöperatie Zoetermeer</i>	Make Zoetermeer sustainable	Educate inhabitants, build sustainable energy suppliers	Popular
<i>Stichting De Hof van Seghwaert</i>	Create a green space and meeting place	Maintain pear orchard <i>De Hof van Seghwaert</i>	Popular
<i>Stichting Zoete Aarde</i>	Create a green space and meeting place	Maintain community garden <i>Broekweg</i>	Popular
<i>Mozaïekprojecten</i>	Embellish Zoetermeer and create social cohesion	Make mosaics	Invited

The initiatives differ with regard to the role and influence of the municipality of Zoetermeer. Within *Energiecoöperatie Zoetermeer*, *Stichting De Hof van Seghwaert* and *Stichting Zoete*

*Aarde*, the involvement of the municipality is limited. These initiatives only received a short term subsidy from the municipality in their beginning phase. In addition, rather than being invited by policymakers the citizens who participate in these three initiatives come together at their own initiative for collaborative action and problem-solving. The actions of these citizens take place in so-called ‘popular spaces’ (Cornwall 2004, 2). All three popular initiatives are relatively young and are established in 2014. Both *De Hof van Seghwaert* and *Stichting Zoete Aarde* are *stichtingen*; non-profit organizations run by a board of five or six members. *De Hof van Seghwaert* is set in the neighborhood Seghwaert-Noordoost and *Stichting Zoete Aarde* in De Leyens. Both initiatives are supported by volunteers. *Stichting Zoete Aarde* has around 50 volunteers and *De Hof van Seghwaert* approximately 35. These volunteers represent only a small percentage of the total population of Seghwaert-Noordoost and De Leyens which have respectively 7,120 and 7,842 inhabitants who are aged 18 and up (Gemeente Zoetermeer Wijkprofielen 2015a). The *Energiecoöperatie* is a cooperative with 25 co-op members who elect the board, which currently consists of 7 people. In contrast to the other two popular initiatives, *Energiecoöperatie* is not linked to a certain neighborhood of Zoetermeer, but rather to the municipality as a whole which has a population of 95,125 who are above 20 years (Gemeente Zoetermeer Bevolking 2015b).

With regard to *Adoptie Groen* and *Mozaïekprojecten*, citizens are invited to join by the municipality (through, for instance, the municipality’s website). *Adoptiegroen* enables citizens to adopt a green area of their neighborhood which they will take care of. Currently, there are approximately 450 of these ‘adoption spots’ and 1,000 adopters (Gemeente Zoetermeer Adoptiegroen 2015c). Three of them were interviewed. These three adopted a spot in different neighborhoods – Meerzicht, De Leyens and Buytenwegh – together with the neighbors of their street. In *Mozaïekprojecten*, inhabitants of Zoetermeer are provided with the opportunity to make a mosaic together with their fellow neighbors. The three citizens who coordinate these projects and assist the residents (on voluntary basis) were interviewed for this research. The invited spaces are municipality-facilitated and controlled: *Adoptie Groen* and *Mozaïekprojecten* are funded by the municipality and supervised by Zoetermeer’s civil servants. Civil servants determine, for instance, whether inhabitants of Zoetermeer are allowed to participate. In these two initiatives, an explicit selection mechanism is incorporated.

The necessary data is collected through conducting semi-structured interviews.

Individual interviews are the main method of data collection because of the method's capacity to provide detailed observations of the respondent's experiences with do-democracy. It qualifies as a way to directly and deeply assess the roots of individual attitudes and tap into them (Mosley 2013, 2). A potential downside of this method is, amongst other things, that a researcher receives answers that are not accurate or truthful. A researcher therefore always needs to be aware of the context in which an interview is conducted and of how respondents (might) frame their answers (Mosley 2013, 21-22). Since the criteria of the framework are aimed at revealing a respondent's perception, interviews are the preferred way to collect the necessary data. The choice to rely on interviews only is justified because the research question – *does do-democracy strengthens deliberative and/or participatory democracy?* – will be answered from a citizens' perspective. The focus of the research is not so much on these individual interviews and experiences, but rather on the respondents' experiences and perceptions within one of the five initiatives.

TABLE 3. Overview of Respondents and their Background Characteristics.

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education level</b>	<b>Role</b>
Respondent 1	<i>Adoptie Groen</i>	36	Female	HBO	Participant
Respondent 2	<i>Adoptie Groen</i>	34	Female	MBO	Participant
Respondent 3	<i>Adoptie Groen</i>	42	Male	HBO	Participant
Respondent 4	<i>Energiecoöperatie</i>	61	Male	WO	Board member
Respondent 5	<i>Energiecoöperatie</i>	50	Male	WO	Board member
Respondent 6	<i>Mozaïekprojecten</i>	49	Female	MBO	Coordinator
Respondent 7	<i>Mozaïekprojecten</i>	72	Female	Huishoudschool	Coordinator
Respondent 8	<i>Mozaïekprojecten</i>	65	Female	HBO	Coordinator
Respondent 9	<i>De Hof van Seghwaert</i>	45	Female	Middelbare school	Volunteer
Respondent 10	<i>De Hof van Seghwaert</i>	66	Male	WO	Board member
Respondent 11	<i>Stichting Zoete Aarde</i>	54	Female	WO	Board member
Respondent 12	<i>Stichting Zoete Aarde</i>	45	Female	WO	Board member

In total, 12 inhabitants of Zoetermeer were interviewed. The respondents play (on voluntary basis) an active role in one of the five selected initiatives. Whether 12 interviews provide enough data to draw conclusions is hard to determine. I share however the observation that the quality of the analysis and the dignity, care and time taken to analyze the different interviews is more important than the quantity of the interviews per se (Baker and Edwards



2012, 5). Thorough analysis of the interviews will increase the likelihood of generating valuable insights. Nevertheless, it needs to be taken into account that for making definitive conclusions about the strength of do-democracy for deliberative and participatory democracy, more research will be necessary. The latter is however not surprising because of the research's exploratory nature. The selection covers different types of participants who have different roles (see table 3). The majority of the respondents does however fulfill some sort of leader function. This overrepresentation of leader figures could bias the conclusions of this research since such figures might experience their role differently than 'ordinary' participants who have less or other responsibilities and interests. Permission was obtained to record the interviews and to transcribe them anonymously – transcripts are available on request. To ensure anonymity, respondents will be only identified as respondent 1 to 12. All respondents were born and raised in the Netherlands except for one who was born in England.

### ***3.3. Operationalization of Criteria***

Several criteria, informed by participatory and deliberative democratic theory, will be distinguished to examine whether do-democracy actually enhances democracy. This section discusses how these different criteria will be measured (see table 4 for an overview). The interview questions can be found in the appendix.

*TABLE 4. Criteria and their Indicators.*

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Indicator(s)</b>
Inclusion – Openness	'Open access' or selection mechanism
Inclusion – Representativeness	Inclusive or selective participation in terms of social background characteristics such as age, gender and ethnicity
Deliberation	Speaking opportunities, respect, consideration, comprehension
Influence	Perceived meaningfulness and perceived effectiveness
Legitimacy	Support and acceptance of participants for process and outcome
Civic Skills and Duties	Skills: learn to speak in public, manage a meeting, facilitate discussion, set up an agenda, duties: feelings of engagement and responsibility, relations with other inhabitants

### *3.3.1. Inclusiveness: Openness and Representativeness*

To fulfill the first criterion of inclusiveness, an initiative should provide equal access to all inhabitants of the neighborhood and the participants should be representative of the wider community. Openness implies that the initiative is open to all who wish to attend. To find out whether an initiative has an open-to-all character, the respondents need to be questioned about the ways new participants can join. Is everyone welcome to do so or are certain skills required to become active within a specific initiative? It should also be noted if access is limited to citizens who have a certain status or (political) beliefs. In addition, are participants actively seeking new members? If so, through which channels? Answers to these questions will reveal whether openness is considered important and what efforts are made to secure and propagate an initiative's open character.

It also needs to be considered to which extent participants are representative of the wider community in terms of social background characteristics such as gender, age and ethnicity. In other words, is the condition of descriptive representation met? In order to assess an initiative's representativeness level the composition of the participants needs to be compared to the composition of its population. CBS's *Regionale Kerncijfers* and *Kerncijfers Wijken en Buurten* offer data on the composition of Zoetermeer's population. To figure out the background characteristics of the participants the respondents will be asked to estimate the gender and age ratio and whether and to which extent non-Western immigrants are represented among the participants. Their answers enable us to roughly assess the background characteristics of the involved citizens.

Excluding citizens from participating implies a weakening of participatory democracy. From a deliberative democratic perspective, it is more relevant who participates in terms of gender, age and ethnicity. Selective representation will be considered as problematic. Unrepresentative participation endangers democracy since in that case it is less likely that all different voices will be heard. It follows that in order to meet the indicator of inclusiveness, selection mechanisms should be absent and participants should mirror the composition of their population. Because 'perfect' representation is probably too hard to achieve, the indicator of representation is met when no group – in terms of age, gender and ethnicity – is (almost) totally absent.

### *3.3.2. Deliberation*

Following Burkhalter et al. (2002), this research treats deliberative norms as potentially measurable discussion conditions that, if met, could produce certain outcomes. When discussions take place in a deliberative setting, interaction will be steered towards informed arguing (Elster 1998, 105). Rather than focusing on the outcome itself, the emphasis of the interviews lies on assessing to which extent discussions take place in such deliberative setting. The first thing is to determine whether there is – in general – room for discussions within an initiative, and if so, how the respondents characterize the atmosphere in which the discussions take place. Next, the participants will be questioned more thoroughly about their experiences. The questions will be based on four discussion conditions: do participants 1) have equal speaking opportunities 2) demonstrate respect for another 3) consider the views of other participants adequately and 4) demonstrate mutual comprehension of one another's perspectives. In other words, everyone who wants to share his or her opinion needs to have the chance to do so (speaking opportunities), participants should acknowledge one another's unique experience and perspective (respect), participants should listen carefully to others (consideration) and ask for clarification when they are confused (mutual comprehension) (Gastil and Black 2008, 6).

### *3.3.3. Influence*

Participants' perceived level of influence was examined in two ways. First, the involved citizens were asked whether they evaluate their participation as meaningful. Are participants satisfied with the way their input and ideas are translated into action? In addition to perceived meaningfulness, perceived effectiveness was also considered. To determine the latter, I had a closer look at the outcome side and to which extent participants feel that their intentions and plans are realized. For instance, does a respondent believe that the participants together are able to put things in practice? In addition, it was examined whether the respondent believes that the participants collectively possess the capacity to reach the goal(s) of their initiative. Perceived effectiveness matters when assessing influence because lacking capacities to put things in practice indicates a lack of influence. Central to participatory democratic thinking is giving people a say in all domains of society or, in other words, provide them with influence. To strengthen participatory democracy, do-democrats need to possess both the power to make

a difference within an initiative and *as* an initiative. Only when respondents express such feelings of influence, democracy will be strengthened.

#### *3.3.4. Legitimacy*

The fourth indicator of legitimacy is (narrowly) defined as the extent to which participants accept the process and outcome of a specific initiative. In this research, the preferred way to measure a participants' level of perceived legitimacy is by asking the involved citizens how positive or negative they are about the process and outcome and whether they support how things work and to which extent they accept decisions (Michels 2011a, 289). Positive feelings indicate that participants perceive an initiative as legitimate and negative attitudes imply a lack of legitimacy. If possible, the source(s) of (il)legitimacy will also be considered.

#### *3.3.5. Civic Skills and Duties*

Lastly, it needs to be determined if participants have learnt civic skills and whether their civic duties are strengthened. Asking respondents whether and what they have learnt as a participant is one possible way to go (De Graaf and Bodd 2010, 45). To gain more insight on their newly learnt skills, the interviewees were asked to give concrete examples. They could have, for instance, learnt how to speak in public, manage a meeting, facilitate a discussion, set up an agenda or formulate their opinion (Talpin 2012, 194). If participants' duties are strengthened, we need to observe increased feelings of engagement with and responsibility for their neighborhood and improved relations between neighbors (De Graaf and Bodd 2010, 11). A pre- and post-test design would be probably the best way to analyze differences in participants' attitudes. However, since the research relied on interviews, the participants were asked whether they experience such changes in their attitude. If respondents report such changes in their attitude, it indicates that citizens are indeed 'enlightened'.

This section revealed the method and subjects of this research. It also covered how the different criteria of the earlier introduced evaluation framework will be measured. The outcome of these measurements will be the topic of next section.

## **4. Results**

In this section, the results for each criterion will be discussed. Per criterion it will be considered whether and to which extent it is met.

### **4.1. Inclusion**

To evaluate the inclusiveness of the different initiatives, we need to describe who are able to participate in the five selected initiatives. In addition, the focus is on what the characteristics of the actual participants are. Firstly, let us consider the openness of the studied initiatives. Most initiatives can be characterized as open which is best illustrated by the following quote of an *Energiecoöperatie* respondent who stated that “everyone who wants to join, is welcome to do so” (R4). At first glance, it seems that nothing stops citizens from participating in one of five initiatives. In addition, initiators of *Stichting Zoete Aarde* and *De Hof van Seghwaert* were during their startup phase already actively seeking the input and involvement of their fellow neighbors and organized several gatherings for the local community. Despite the openness of the initiatives, the internal structure of the majority of the initiatives seems not to be really inclusive; within the initiatives – with the exception of *Adoptiegroen* – there is a division between ‘ordinary’ participants or volunteers and the people (coordinators or board members) who lead the initiative. And only the *Energiecoöperatie* has clear rules on how the board is formed. In addition, not every inhabitant of Zoetermeer will face the same incentive to become involved in one of the initiatives. The main reason is perhaps because participation is “just a matter of interest” (R5). As a consequence, your participation opportunities will be limited if gardening, mosaic tiling or building sustainable energy suppliers are not your forte. The result is that initiatives consist of collections of like-minded individuals who share the same interests and ideas. For citizens with deviant interests and ideas, the initiatives would thus not feel very inclusive.

The initiatives in the popular space – the so-called popular initiatives which include *Energiecoöperatie*, *De Hof van Seghwaert* and *Stichting Zoete Aarde* – are actively recruiting new participants. New volunteers are mainly attracted through (social) media. Especially Facebook is an often mentioned channel to reach out to the wider public and potential new volunteers. This way of recruiting new participants could however favor certain groups and exclude others; older citizens between 65 and 75 have, for instance, less often access to internet and use social networks such as Facebook less frequently than their younger

counterparts (CBS 2015). With regard to the two initiatives in the invited space – *Adoptiegroen* and *Mozaïekprojecten* – citizen are invited by the municipality of Zoetermeer to join through, for instance, the municipality’s website. And it is the municipality that assesses whether citizens receive permission and funding to start an *Adoptiegroen* or mosaic project. Only in these two initiatives, an explicit selection mechanism is thus present. The level of openness of *Adoptiegroen* and *Mozaïekprojecten* is however also considered as high since all residents of Zoetermeer are eligible to apply for these projects. And as for *Adoptiegroen*, those in charge of a green space also actively invite their fellow neighbors to join through, for instance, Facebook or by their own printed leaflets.

Overall, access is mainly secured for those who have an interest in sustainable development, enjoy gardening or mosaic tiling and are active on the internet and social networks. In addition, there is a difference between the invited initiatives on the one hand and popular initiatives on the other hand. Equality of usage also needs to be considered. Do the initiatives only attract the ‘traditional’ active citizen who is already deeply engaged in local affairs or are the participants a microcosm of their population? The representativeness of the five initiatives needs to be assessed on different levels since the initiatives operate either on street (*Adoptiegroen*, *Mozaïekprojecten*), neighborhood (*De Hof van Seghwaert*, *Stichting Zoete Aarde*) or municipality (*Energiecoöperatie*) level. Table 5 (see below) provides information on the proportion of non-western immigrants and the age composition for Zoetermeer and the neighborhoods De Leyens and Seghwaert-Noordoost where, respectively, *Stichting Zoete Aarde* and *De Hof van Seghwaert* are located.

TABLE 5. Ethnicity and Age in Zoetermeer, De Leyens and Seghwaert-Noordoost.

	NW immigrants	Age composition				
		0-15 years	15-25 years	25-45 years	45-65 years	65+ years
Zoetermeer	19%	17%	12%	25%	30%	15%
Neighborhoods						
De Leyens	8%	14%	10%	20%	35%	22%
Seghwaert-Noordoost	17%	18%	14%	27%	32%	10%

*Kerncijfers wijken en buurten (CBS 2014b)*

The interviews reveal that two groups are excluded from participation: young people in their twenties and inhabitants of non-western origin. Non-western immigrants, for instance, make up 19 percent of Zoetermeer's inhabitants but lack representation in almost all initiatives. In case of *Stichting Zoete Aarde* this finding is less surprising since De Leyens accommodates a smaller percentage of non-western *allochtonen*. The only exception in this respect is *Adoptiegroen*; citizens of non-western origin are also involved in these projects. Since the *Adoptiegroen* projects are in most cases carried out by the inhabitants from a specific street, all inhabitants become more or less 'automatically' involved. The participants of these projects are also well represented in terms of age and gender. With regard to the other initiatives, the gender ratio is mixed. *Stichting Zoete Aarde* and *Mozaïekprojecten* have an overrepresentation of women in their fifties. In contrast, the majority of the participants of the *Energiecoöperatie* are male and aged thirty and up. Lastly, the gender distribution of *De Hof van Seghwaert* is more or less 50/50. Although the participants of the five different initiatives do not represent their population, the majority of the respondents does not fit the category of a 'traditional active citizen'. Only the respondents of *Energiecoöperatie* were already (professionally) involved in local politics or the topic of sustainable development. As for the remaining respondents, they are all quite new to world of citizen participation.

#### **4.2. Deliberation**

To determine the potential for deliberation, it needs to be assessed whether and to which extent decision-making takes place in a deliberative setting. Except for *Adoptiegroen*, all other initiatives have a monthly structured and formalized (board) meetings. With regard to the projects related to *Adoptiegroen*, it is mainly about showing action rather than telling about the tasks which are all related to green maintenance. According to *Adoptiegroen* respondents, decisions are made when they pass each other on the street or through Facebook or Whatsapp. Considering the 'simple' nature of their actions, more extensive discussions or in-depth debates are (seen as) unnecessary. Although the three respondents of *Adoptie Groen* do not conduct deliberative discussions, they are nevertheless positive about the sphere within their project. In contrast to *Adoptie Groen*, the other four initiatives have a set schedules for meetings where ideally, the most important decisions are reached. It does not mean, however, that all decisions are made during these meetings. In some initiatives, such as *Stichting Zoete*

*Aarde*, there is also much ad hoc decision-making between board members. These ad hoc decisions are generally not preceded by in-depth discussion and are reached via e-mail or Whatsapp. In addition, both *Stichting Zoete Aarde* and *De Hof van Seghwaert* have so-called *dominante trekkers* – determined and motivated leaders who stimulate, activate and take the lead (Ham and Van der Meer 2015, 132). These (informal) leaders report that sometimes they just do instead of wait and debate if, for instance, pears need to be picked. Their decisions are frequently even in the form of announcements: “sometimes I just announce things [...] you cannot have hundreds of thousands meetings about what you want to do or not. I won’t discuss that, I just do it” (R10).

With the exception of the respondents of *Mozaïekprojecten*, respondents of *Stichting Zoete Aarde*, *De Hof van Seghwaert* and *Energiecoöperatie* evaluate the sphere of the structured monthly meetings more or less as positive. The respondents of *Mozaïekprojecten* have, however, (outspoken) negative feelings. In addition to or because of these negative feelings, participants do not carefully listen to each other and avoid and ignore each other’s input. In addition, although the participants have in principal equal speaking opportunities, the opportunities are not always used because the respondents much rather avoid confrontation. It follows that on the deliberation dimension, both *Adoptiegroen* and *Mozaïekprojecten* score rather low, however, because of different reasons. As for the other cases, the earlier described ‘discussion conditions of deliberation’ are better met and during these meetings it is, therefore, more likely that deliberation is achieved. Although respondents sometimes feel a bit misunderstood (R7) or insecure (R12 and R4) about their input or role, most respondents of these initiatives stated that, in general, participants have the chance to share their opinions; they treat each other with respect; listen to each other’s input; and ask for clarification if they misunderstood things. There is, however, no evidence that respondents actually adjust or reflect upon their opinion during the meetings.

It is doubtful whether ‘real’ deliberation is achieved during the meetings of *Energiecoöperatie*, *De Hof van Seghwaert* and *Stichting Zoete Aarde*. The impression of the interviews is that these initiatives mainly attract like-minded individuals who tend to share a common goal which is making (a part of) Zoetermeer more green or, in the case of the *Energiecoöperatie*, more sustainable. Obviously, there will be some differences in priorities but overall, the participants strive for the same aim. Since the presence of conflicting viewpoints is often seen as a necessary condition for deliberation, deliberation within these



three initiatives is likely to be limited. In addition, respondents emphasize repeatedly that participation should be ‘fun’ and, therefore, participants give each other much space to develop their own activities and tasks. In this case, there is not much to deliberate on. And with regard to *De Hof van Seghwaert* and *Stichting Zoete Aarde*, the presence of a *dominante trekker* will certainly not contribute to creating deliberation. It follows that similar to the invited initiatives, the three popular initiatives do probably not fulfill the criterion of deliberation. This finding is especially for *Adoptiegroen* not that surprising since within this initiative, action is clearly the *modus operandi*. In the other initiatives, there is however a lot more talking.

### **4.3. Influence**

With regard to the influence criterion, it should be examined whether the involved citizens feel that they have the capacity to improve their living environment. We have seen earlier that the concrete aims of the five different initiatives are all related to accomplishing a better living environment, in some cases accompanied by a wish for creating more social cohesion. To what extent do respondents feel that their goals are met? Almost all respondents believe that their efforts pay off, and that thanks to their hard work Zoetermeer has become more social, green or pleasant. Feelings of disappointment are practically absent. Only one respondent of *Energiecoöperatie* is a bit more careful: “I cannot say we have already accomplished a lot. We are active for a year now and we need to learn much” (R4). In addition, it seems that the respondents of *Mozaiëkprojecten* experience their success more individually than the other respondents: they are the only one who relate their feelings of success to their *own* individual projects instead of to the initiative as a whole.

Respondents were also questioned about their feelings of influence within the initiative itself. The two *dominante trekkers* of *De Hof van Seghwaert* and *Stichting Zoete Aarde* both worry that their influence is possibly too big. Their fellow respondents did however not express such feelings. Overall, respondents replied that they were satisfied about their level of influence within the initiative. Three of them – of *Energiecoöperatie*, *De Hof van Seghwaert* and *Stichting Zoete Aarde* – reported that having influence did not really mattered to them. For these respondents, participation is primarily about deriving personal enjoyment and satisfaction. Lastly, the respondents of *Mozaiëkprojecten* were mainly satisfied

over the level of influence within their own specific projects. Overall, however, respondents of all five initiatives perceive their participation both as effective and as meaningful.

At a first glance, it seems that in a do-democracy influence is limited to those who are involved and, therefore, that the municipality is left out. This is however not necessarily the case, since civil servants of the municipality of Zoetermeer are involved in almost all initiatives. Even the popular initiatives are not entirely detached from local authorities. Since the activities of *Zoete Aarde* and *De Hof van Seghwaert* take place on municipal land, the initiatives agreed to a user agreement with the municipality and have twice a year an evaluation meeting between the board and responsible civil servant. Within the invited initiatives, the role of the municipality is larger since these initiatives are funded and controlled by the local government. The meetings of *Mozaiëkprojecten* are, for instance, always joined by a civil servant who distributes the tasks among the coordinators. Within *Adoptiegroen*, the role of the municipality is mainly a financial one; participants are free to make and execute their own plans. It follows that influence within the initiatives is not limited to the participants; the municipality continues to play a relevant role too.

#### **4.4. Legitimacy**

The interviews make clear that the outcome and procedures of the different initiatives are in most cases fully supported by the participants. The respondents of *Mozaiëkprojecten* do, however, express some negative and mixed feelings. On the one hand, they really enjoy working at the workplace and like their role as coordinator. On the other hand, the respondents do not always fully support the decisions that are taken and criticize how things are and go. These feelings can be possibly explained by the negative atmosphere amongst the coordinators and the fact that they have no influence over which projects they need to coordinate. Despite these negative feelings, the respondents of *Mozaiëkprojecten* do however, in the end, accept the decisions and procedures. The other respondents are in general satisfied how things are turning out. Their satisfaction is closely related to the fact that they perceive their initiative as successful and enjoy their role as participants, being a leader or not. When the respondents are asked whether they support an initiative's procedure and outcome, they either answer with just 'yes' or point to the successes of the initiative. An *Adoptiegroen* respondent, for instance, replies that he supports the way the initiative works and adds that "it

is just a nice initiative. It is good for the neighborhood” (R3). It follows that as long as the participants believe that the goals of the initiative are met and derive pleasure from their participation, the procedures and outcomes will not be questioned.

The three initiatives in the popular space – *Energiecoöperatie*, *De Hof van Seghwaert* and *Stichting Zoete Aarde* – are all relatively young. The respondents of these initiatives are all proud to be involved and are satisfied with the progress that has been made during the last one or two years. A respondent of *De Hof van Seghwaert* says that “one and a half year ago, I couldn’t have dreamed of what we already have accomplished today” (R10). Respondents do, however, observe some issues which could in the long term cause dissatisfaction. The issues include having too much ad hoc decision-making, the presence of different styles of leadership which might conflict and making too little progress. These are potential sources of dissatisfaction which might, in the longer run, erode the legitimacy of an initiative. Currently, however, it seems that those who participate in one of the five initiatives are positive about the process and outcome.

Although the focus of the research is not necessarily on the effects of participation on perceived legitimacy, the interviews provide however some insight on this matter. Respondents of different initiatives appreciate the efforts of the municipality and the involvement of civil servants and local elected officials. Only one respondent (of *Energiecoöperatie*) expresses negative feelings. According to him, the municipality is too passive and should be more supportive of their initiative. Others – of *Adoptiegroen*, *De Hof van Seghwaert* and *Stichting Zoete Aarde* – are however more positive. An *Adoptiegroen* respondent says, for instance: “I really like that the municipality offers us these opportunities [...] they put effort into it and that is just nice” (R1). Three respondents of the popular initiatives note a difference between the civil servants and the politicians of Zoetermeer. These respondents praise the enthusiasm of the local politicians but describe their relation with the bureaucracy as challenging. With regard to the latter, respondents mention terms such as ‘exhausting’ and ‘cumbersome’.

#### ***4.5. Civic Skills and Duties***

When asking the respondents what they have learnt from their participation, almost half of the respondents replied that they have increased their practical and technical knowledge of

specific issues. Their generated knowledge on, for instance, how to prune a tree or do mosaic tiling is however not that relevant since the focus of the research is on whether participants gained *civic* skills and, as a result, became more competent citizens (Michels and De Graaf 2010, 487). Following Verba et al. (1995), a distinction is drawn between communication and organizational skills. These skills allow citizens to use time and money effectively in political life and can be acquired in all different non-political contexts (Verba et al. 1995, 305).

In all initiatives, respondents have practiced their communication skills with civil servants or local elected officials. The participants of *Adoptiegroen* and coordinators of *Mozaiëkprojecten* have on a regular basis contact with the responsible civil servant. With regard to the three popular initiatives, practicing communication skills with the municipality is only for board members; the ‘ordinary volunteer’ is not involved in these contacts. In addition, the initiator(s) of especially *Stichting Zoete Aarde* and *De Hof van Seghwaert* expanded their knowledge on the functioning of Zoetermeer’s bureaucracy since they needed to find their way through it in order to receive permission to use the municipality land. The interviews reveal no evidence that these respondents misuse their newly learnt skills to bypass the authorities. That could however be the case in the future.

With regard to organizational skills, respondents said that have learnt how to lead volunteers, organize events and position themselves more accurately within a debate. Others stated that because of their active role, they have become better listeners and became less insecure. The reported civic skills do not reveal a clear pattern and do not depend on the initiative. It is, however, likely that respondents of popular initiatives practiced their communication and organizational skills more thoroughly than participants of invited initiatives since in the former case, the initiative needed to be invented from scratch. When reflecting upon their experiences, the respondents of *Stichting Zoete Aarde* and *De Hof van Seghwaert* describe, for instance, the tiring process of finding out who to contact in the municipality for their questions and requests. The invited initiatives have, in contrast, already an established ‘communication infrastructure’.

To assess whether the civic duties of the participants have been improved, respondents were questioned about their feelings of engagement and responsibility for their neighborhood and whether these feelings have increased because of their active role. In most cases, a respondent’s choice to become active was an expression of already present feelings of engagement and responsibility. Because of these feelings, the respondents of for instance

*Stichting Zoete Aarde* and *Adoptiegroen* felt responsible to take concrete action in the first place. Others do however claim they feel even more responsible or more engaged. Again, there are no clear differences between the different initiatives and their participants. For the *Mozaïekprojecten* respondents, however, it seems that their participation is not really an expression of engagement and responsibility. Instead, these respondents fulfill their active role primarily because it enables them to pursue their hobby. In addition, the three respondents do not report that they feel more responsible or engaged because of their involvement. One respondent says, for instance, that “I don’t feel more responsible. Everyone has its own responsibilities. I cannot look after the whole world, I already have my own children to look after” (R7). Although it seems that the civic duties of the *Mozaïekprojecten* respondents have not really improved, the respondents do however report that they got to know other inhabitants of Zoetermeer (better). Respondents of the other initiatives also note that they have more contact with other residents. This seems particularly the case for *Adoptiegroen*: these projects stimulate neighbors to seek contact with their fellow neighbors who were before “hidden behind their curtains” (R3).

This result section discussed the findings regarding inclusion, deliberation, influence, legitimacy and civic skills and duties. Which conclusions can be drawn from these results, will be the subject of the next section.

## *5. Conclusions and Discussion*

This research aims to shed light on the democratic potential of do-democracy (initiatives) from a deliberative and participatory democratic point of view. These two democratic theories assert that citizen participation has several positive democratic effects regarding inclusion, deliberation, influence, legitimacy and civic skills and duties. The presence or absence of these effects was considered for five do-democracy initiatives which were all set in the municipality of Zoetermeer. Because the research relied on interviews only and leader figures were overrepresented among the respondents, conclusions need to be drawn with caution.

The findings of this research show that participation in do-democracy – regardless of the specific initiative – strengthens both deliberative and participatory democracy in several ways. Do-democracy enables citizens to become involved in their neighborhood or municipality and is, in that respect, inclusive: there are no explicit requirements to become active. Despite the lack of substantial participation thresholds, two groups are almost totally excluded from participation: young people and non-Western minorities. Those who do participate are given a say in politics with a ‘small p’ and through their participation, do-democrats possess influence over their own living environment or at least, they perceive it as such. Besides, there are effects on legitimacy: involved citizen generally have positive attitudes towards the outcome and procedures of a specific initiative. A last positive effect of participating in do-democracy initiatives is that it develops citizens’ civic skills. The influence of participation on civic duties is negligible since for most participants their involvement is an expression of already present feelings of engagement and responsibility. In this research, the effects of do-democracy on deliberative and participatory democracy are only studied for those who participate in do-democracy. Whether non-participants observe similar effects is unknown. It therefore remains to be seen if democracy as a whole benefits from the transformation into a do-democracy. It might even be the case that the effects are only to be perceived with regard to those take part (Michels 2011b, 290). In addition, different ‘types’ of participants – being a leader or ‘ordinary’ volunteer – might experience their participation in the do-democracy differently. These potential differences and the consequences for deliberative and participatory democracy are however not fully captured in this research.

The positive effects regarding openness, influence, legitimacy and civic skills make clear that do-democracy is mainly beneficial to democracy in the participatory way (see table 6). These findings are however not unique to do-democracy. As described earlier, other

participatory democratic innovations – participatory government and deliberative forums – are accompanied by similar positive effects (Michels 2011a; Joas 2013).

TABLE 6. Empirical Evaluation of Do-democracy – An Overall Assessment.

Democratic Theory	Criterion	Result
Participatory Democracy	Inclusion – Openness	+
	Influence	+
Deliberative democracy	Inclusion – Representativeness	–
	Deliberation	–
Participatory and Deliberative Democracy	Legitimacy	+
	Civic Skills and Duties	+/~

To strengthen deliberative democracy too, do-democracy should include representative participants and deliberation. As we already observed, representative participation is not achieved because of the absence of the two earlier mentioned groups. Other studies on Dutch citizens’ initiatives yield similar results with regard to selective representation (Bakker et al. 2011; Denters et al. 2014). The criterion of deliberation also possesses some problems since the quality of deliberation is doubtful; in none of the studied cases it is likely that real deliberation is achieved either because the focus is on action or because the initiatives are collections of like-minded individuals. These findings are in line with studies on participatory governance. As already observed by Joas (2013), there “is a trade-off between different democratic criteria” (260). No democratic innovation is perfect; they all have their own democratic strengths. From a participatory democratic perspective, it should be supported that citizens tackle public problems increasingly on their own. This research shows that do-democracy is accompanied by range of positive democratic effects. Deliberative democratic theory steers out attention to two downsides of do-democracy: the lack of deliberation and representativeness. In the wider society, the latter will be especially considered as problematic since it implies that the merits of do-democracy are unequally distributed across the different segments of society. This finding makes clear that the municipality’s role continues to be important and that the public domain cannot be entirely left to the active citizens. On the one hand, a municipality needs to take action in case an initiative harms non-participants since the latter group lacks influence. On the other hand, it underlines the relevance of invited initiatives since these type of initiatives – see for example *Adoptiegroen* – enable citizens with less resources to also become part of the do-democracy. Although this study is conducted

within the municipality of Zoetermeer, it is likely that its findings also apply to other Dutch municipalities. Although do-democracy takes perhaps better root in other non-suburban municipalities, it is likely that these initiatives have similar positive and negative effects on democracy. Further research is however necessary to determine whether the claims made in this research also apply to other contexts.



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## **7. Appendix**

### **7.1 Interview questions**

Eerst wat korte vragen of u en uw achtergrond.

1.1. *Wat is uw leeftijd?*

1.2. *Wat is de hoogste opleiding die u heeft afgerond?*

1.3. *Wat is uw arbeidssituatie? Werkend (zzp'er?, parttime of fulltime), studierend, werkeloos*

1.4. *Wat is uw afkomst? In welk land bent u of uw vader/moeder geboren?*

Nu over het initiatief waar u betrokken bij bent [kort antwoorden, ter achtergrond]

2.1. *Kunt u wat vertellen over het initiatief?*

2.2. *Wat is het doel van het initiatief? Waarom is het in het leven geroepen en door wie?*

2.3. *Wat is uw rol binnen het initiatief?*

2.4. *Hoe bent u betrokken geraakt?*

2.5. *Hoeveel inwoners van Zoetermeer zijn betrokken bij dit initiatief?*

*Wanneer is iemand 'betrokken'?*

2.6. *In welke mate is de Gemeente Zoetermeer betrokken bij dit initiatief? Wat voor rol speelt de gemeente?*

U vertelde eerder dat X inwoners van Zoetermeer betrokken zijn bij dit initiatief. Als u die groep mensen even in gedachten neemt....

3.1. *Hoe schat u de verhouding man-vrouw in? Dus: hoeveel mannen, hoeveel vrouwen*

3.2. *Hoe schat u de verhouding jong-oud in? Dus: hoeveel jongeren, hoeveel ouderen*

3.3. *Hoe schat u de verhouding(niet-westerse allochtoon-autochtoon in? Dus: hoeveel niet-westerse allochtonen, hoeveel autochtonen)*

Nog wat vragen over het initiatief zelf...



4.1. *Hoe raken burgers betrokken bij dit initiatief?*

4.2. *Is iedereen die wil, welkom om zich aan te sluiten?*

4.3. *Als er sprake is van selectie, op basis waarvan? Moet je al 'iets' kunnen?*

4.4. *Bent u zelf ook actief opzoek naar nieuwe betrokkenen? Zo ja, welke stappen onderneemt u dan?*

Rond dit initiatief moeten er – kan ik mij zo voorstellen – allerlei zaken worden geregeld en besloten (wie doet wat, wat gaan we doen, waar liggen de prioriteiten). Dus, de vraag is:

5.1. *Als er een bepaald besluit moet worden genomen (kan over van alles zijn), gaat daar dan discussie aan vooraf tussen alle betrokkenen?*

Wanneer er discussie plaats vindt...

5.2. *Hoe zou u de sfeer waarin zo 'n discussie plaats vindt, willen omschrijven?*

5.3. *Voelt u zich op uw gemak? Waarom wel/niet?*

5.4. *Als u een bijdrage wil leveren aan zo 'n discussie, is daar dan gelegenheid voor?*

5.5. *In hoeverre wordt er – in het algemeen – naar elkaar geluisterd?*

5.6. *In hoeverre bejegen de deelnemers van zo 'n discussie elkaar met respect? Dus: waardenen jullie elkaars in breng? [Meer dan luisteren; explicieter]*

5.7. *Als de discussie onduidelijk verloopt en u heeft behoefte aan verduidelijking, vraagt u daar dan om?*

Voorgaande vragen gingen met name over het verloop van discussies, de volgende vragen gaan over uw deelname en of die er – volgens u – toe doet.

6.1. *Hoe tevreden bent u over uw invloed op de gang van zaken binnen het initiatief?*

6.2. *Hoe tevreden bent u over de mate waarin uw inbreng terug te zien is in de resultaten van het initiatief?*

Ook relevant is uw mening over deze zaken:

7.1. *In welke lukt mate het om de (eerder omschreven) doelen van dit initiatief te behalen?*

7.2. *In hoeverre lukt het om bedachte plannen en ideeën in praktijk te brengen? Dus: als iets wordt bedacht of besloten, in welke mate krijgt dat dan navolging in praktijk?*

7.3. *Zou u het initiatief als succesvol omschrijven? Waarom niet / wel?*

Nu twee vraag over uw ‘algemene’ tevredenheid:

8.1. *In hoeverre kunt u zich vinden in hoe het initiatief in zijn algemeenheid verloopt?*

8.2. *In hoeverre staat u achter 1) genomen beslissingen en 2) de gang van zaken?*

En de laatste vragen:

9.1. *Heeft u door uw deelname veel geleerd? Zo ja, kunt u daar voorbeelden van geven?*

9.2. *Heeft u door uw deelname meer contact gekregen met andere inwoners van Zoetermeer? Alleen binnen initiatief of ook daarbuiten?*

9.3. *Voelt u zich door uw deelname meer een onderdeel van de Zoetermeerse gemeenschap? Zo ja, hoe uit zich dat?*

9.4. *Voelt u zich door uw deelname meer verantwoordelijk voor wat er gebeurt in uw buurt of wijk? Op welke manier uit zich dat?*

Dit was het interview, bedankt!