The use of data in Policy labs in the agendasetting phase: an empirical case study of the development of neighborhood agendas in the Hague

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1. Introduction

The increased availability of data has changed the world around us. It has also influenced the field of policy making. Over the last decade, the use of data has become more critical in policymaking. Additionally, more data became available for governments to use (Cerquitelli, Querci & Pasquali, 2017; Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017). According to the TNO (n.d.), data-driven policymaking positively affects policymaking because governments have access to a large amount of data they can analyze and use to identify new trends and patterns and track developments. Moreover, it can help research and analyze large amounts of policy documents, case laws, and permits, positively affecting fair decision-making (TNO, n.d.). Despite the many advantages of the increased availability of data, the availability of data also comes with challenges and treats (Cerquitelli, Querci & Pasquali, 2017). There seem to be many institutional, political, and practical barriers to the effective use of data in policymaking, making it challenging for many government institutions to effectively collect and utilize the available data (Cerquitelli, Querci & Pasquali, 2017). Moreover, there is criticism on the way the data is analyzed and the use of algorithms. There is a need for more transparency, accountability, increased respect for privacy, and a need to test and evaluate data in context with stakeholders or citizens. (Abouzahr, Adje & Kanchanachitra, 2007; Cerquitelli, Querci & Pasquali, 2017). However, government institutions still seem to struggle with the conditions mentioned before to ensure the legitimate use of data, such as privacy and the correct interpretation of data (Cerquitelli, Querci & Pasquali, 2017).

An essential aspect of data-driven policymaking is that data-driven policymaking does not only focus on including big and open data like more traditional evidence-based policymaking. It also focuses on the co-creation of policymaking by including citizens and other stakeholders in the policymaking process (Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017). The aim of data-driven policymaking is to create better policies and more legitimacy for policies by including citizens and stakeholders in the policymaking process (Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017).

A more specific approach used in data-driven policy making is the Policy lab approach. Policy labs have become more popular over the last few years and have been emerging worldwide, intending to support policy practitioners with innovative solutions (Olejzniczak et al., 2020). A Policy lab is an experimental environment in which academics, policymakers, practitioners, and citizens collaborate to work on policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation (Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017). It is a process of engagement of various stakeholders. A Policy lab involves building a coalition through the participation of

stakeholders. With this coalition, one will look at translating and presenting data and evidence. Lastly, an essential aspect of Policy labs is to engage policymakers to act when policy windows emerge (Hinrichs-Krapels et al., 2020) to facilitate the change and innovations resulting from the Policy lab. Policy windows are essential for Policy labs to facilitate change, innovations, and the development of new and improved policies which are goals of Policy labs. Nevertheless, there are some risks involved in Policy labs.

One of the confusing elements of Policy labs is that the term policy lab is utilized in many ways, which makes it difficult to compare different types of Policy labs for academic purposes and more complex to research (Olejniczak et al., 2020). Nevertheless, some studies have attempted to find core characteristics of Policy labs (Lewis, 2021; Hinrichs-Krapels et al., 2021) and provide a tool for the conceptualization of Policy labs (Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017).

A risk that Veenstra and Kotterink (2017) mention in their article is that Policy labs become primarily focused on implementing an open innovation approach and stakeholders' engagement rather than achieving actual results. Additionally, they state that more research is needed to develop the Policy lab approach to make it more effective.

More research has been done in the past five years, and more articles about the Policy lab approach have been published, especially about the role of Policy labs in policy making. However, the research that has been done on Policy labs is somewhat limited compared to the broader trends in policymaking, such as coproduction in general or data-driven policymaking. Additionally, there are limited in-depth case studies available on Policy labs. One can also find that most Policy lab research is focused on Policy labs taking place in the policy formulation phase and on research on developing new experimental solutions to tackle complex societal issues. Limited research is available about Policy labs in different phases of the policy cycle. It would be interesting to see more studies about the Policy labs in different phases of the policy cycle to determine whether there are differences between Policy labs that are being set up in different phases of the policy cycle. This type of research could help to develop the Policy lab approach in the future.

Since it will be interesting to learn more about Policy labs in the agenda-setting phase, this research will specifically focus on a Policy lab in the agenda-setting phase of the policy cycle. One of the critical ingredients of a Policy lab involves stakeholders such as citizens, societal

organizations, policymakers, and academics in translating data. Therefore, data is an essential aspect of a Policy lab as well.

As demonstrated earlier, much has been written about data and the challenges governments face when gathering, analyzing, and using big data. However, not much has been written about the use of data in Policy labs, even though this is a vital aspect of a Policy lab. During the research for this paper, only two articles were found that discussed the use of data in Policy labs more in-depth. The article of Siodmok (2020) explains that big and thick data are used in Policy labs. Big data or quantitative data is mainly used to get a general overview. The thick data is additional, complementary data that can be qualitative and is used to understand relationships and causation between different variables and explain complex issues in society. According to Siodmok (2020), combining those two data sources in the ideal combination and should provide the best results. However, this claim has not been studied in other articles on Policy lab that were found for this research. Since not many other studies have been done about the use of data in Policy labs, it is interesting to look at what data is being used in Policy labs and how it is interpreted by the various stakeholders involved in Policy labs.

Therefore, this thesis's central research question will be: "How are qualitative and quantitative data being combined and interpreted in Policy labs in the agenda-setting phase?". The research question will be answered through a case study. According to Flyvbjerg (2006), in-depth case studies are essential to strengthen social science. This case study could therefore contribute to the research on Policy labs and the development of the Policy lab approach in the future.

A focus group was attended to answer the research question, policy documents were reviewed, and interviews were conducted as part of an in-depth case study on an example of a Policy lab, the neighborhood agendas in the Hague. The project 'neighborhood agendas in the Hague' is an excellent example of a Policy lab set up locally and takes places in the policy cycle's agenda-setting phase.

The setup of this thesis is as follows. After this chapter, the theoretical framework is presented. This chapter will discuss the relevant theories about Policy labs and the use of data within Policy labs. It is important to note that there are many definitions for Policy labs, making it a complex topic to research. In order to determine the scope of this research and gain a knowledge about the operationalization of a Policy lab, some relevant concepts such as the Policy lab, the policy cycle, and the policy window will be discussed. Subsequently, we

will zoom in on the use of data in Policy labs. Because of the limited studies that have been done about the use of data in Policy labs, a broader look will be taken at the use of quantitative and qualitative data by governments in general.

In chapter three, the research design of this thesis will be discussed. In this chapter, the chosen methodology for this study will be motivated, such as the criteria for the chosen case study, the background of the respondents, the data collection methods used, and the coding strategy used to analyze the data. The fourth chapter is a presentation of the case study and an analysis of the interviews that were conducted. Finally, a conclusion will be provided, including a section about the limitations of this research, recommendations for future research, and policy recommendations.

2. Theoretical framework

Policy labs are a relatively new phenomenon, and most of the research that is conducted on Policy labs has been done in the past five years. In order to understand Policy labs and their role in policymaking, it is essential to look at a few concepts and theories related to those concepts.

In this chapter, the concept of Policy labs will be explored. Moreover, the definition utilized in this thesis will be provided. Additionally, concepts related to Policy labs that are necessary to understand the concept of Policy labs and essential for the success of a Policy lab, such as the policy cycle and policy window, will be discussed.

Next, we will zoom in on the use of data in those Policy labs. Because there are limited articles about the use of data in Policy labs specifically, the use of data by governments, in general, will be provided in addition to the theories about the use of data in Policy labs. The theoretical framework will conclude with a summary and a hypothesis for this thesis based on the theoretical framework.

The theoretical framework will be utilized as a base for the research design, as well as the results and conclusion. The concepts that are used in this research and the theories that will be tested and applied to the case study are discussed in this chapter as well.

2.1 The definition of Policy labs and related concepts

The first concept that will be discussed is the central concept of this thesis, Policy labs. In order to determine the scope of this research, the concept of the Policy lab needs to be defined. Additionally, an example of a Policy lab will be provided to gain a better

understanding of the concept Policy labs. There are many different definitions for Policy labs used by various researchers. The many definitions and terms used in the literature to describe Policy labs or similar processes make it challenging to define Policy labs precisely.

Moreover, the existence of different definitions for Policy labs is coherent with the remark that Olejniczak et al. (2020) make in their article, namely that Policy labs come in many different forms. The term Policy lab tends to be used for different activities and purposes; therefore, it is vital to establish a clear definition used in this research.

Many articles compare Policy labs to Urban Living Labs or Living Labs. For example, Veenstra & Kotterink (2017) do not provide a specific definition but define them by distinguishing between Living Labs and Policy labs. In their research, Policy labs focus on the involvement of citizens in the policymaking process. In contrast, Living Labs focus on public open innovation processes in general, specifically the inclusion of private sector organizations. Besides the term Policy lab, researchers use the term Policy Innovation Labs (Evans & Chang, 2021) or Urban Living labs (Trei et al., 2021). Nevertheless, Urban Living labs seem to fit more into the so-called Living Labs (Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017) and distinct themselves by including public and private organizations (Trei et al., 2021). The definition of Urban Living Labs, which is widely accepted, is as follows:

"They aim at formalized knowledge production through an experimental design to be formulated and diffused, focused exclusively on a specific territory (e.g. a city). They develop innovation (in processes or implementation) and co-create it with the 'users' by giving them direct influence. They include all affected stakeholders, at least citizens, private and public actors, and scientists who actively shape the innovation process. They are situated in real-life contexts (Steen & Bueren, 2017)."

The definition of Steen & Bueren (2017) is clear. Nevertheless, the process is mainly focused on the implementation phase of policymaking. In contrast, Policy labs can take place in the implementation phase and other phases of the policy cycle (Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017). In this research, the definition for Policy labs that will be adopted is a more recent definition of the concept of Policy labs, namely:

"A process of engagement, the labs involve building a coalition through participation of diverse communities (thereby establishing 'trust'), working on the language and presentation of evidence (thereby enabling effective 'translation') and engaging policymakers early to

respond when policy windows emerge (thereby considering 'timing' for creating policy action) (Hinrichs-Krapels et al., 2020)."

There are numerous examples of Policy labs all around the world. One of the Policy labs mentioned in the research of Hinrichs-Krapels et al., 2020 is a Policy lab on the Mental Health Act. Around 22 policymakers, clinicians, legal practitioners, and researchers in this lab came together to review the Mental Health Act. They came together for one day to assess six key areas of tension. The lab aimed to support the independent review of the Mental Health Act by analyzing the approaches the review could take. The lab resulted in a policy brief and a report which were published and later used for other policy documents about mental healthcare.

An essential aspect for the success of a Policy lab is a policy window. This concept is also part of the definitions Hinrichs-Krapels et al. (2020). According to Kingdon (1984), a policy window is an opportunity to put something on the agenda or to act. A policy window occurs when the problem, policy, and politics unite. So, when there is an opening or chance to push a particular policy or idea for innovation because of an issue that arises. A policy window is necessary to facilitate change. In the example of the Policy lab on the Mental Health Act, there was a need for an assessment. Additionally, the policy document, in the end, was also utilized by politicians and contributed to change. If the outcome of a Policy lab is not being used or applied, the outcomes of a Policy lab can easily be forgotten, and the impact will be very limited.

2.2 Characteristics of Policy labs

According to Lewis (2020), Policy labs come in many variations. Policy labs can be government controlled, funded by the government, or even work independently. Policy labs can be relatively small and can be short-lived. Policy labs are flexible and can help redefine policy problems or develop innovative policy solutions for wicked societal problems. Nevertheless, Policy labs often face operational problems and have limited capacity. The methods that Policy labs use risk clashing with the bureaucratic structures that are in place because Policy labs are about thinking outside the box and creating innovative solutions. In practice, these innovative solutions often create a need to change standardized processes, which seems complicated in big governmental organizations.

Moreover, because of the flexibility of policy labs, there is a risk that policy labs will be defunded. The existence and continuation of Policy labs are mainly based on political will to

keep them in place because of the needed resources and for them to facilitate change. Overall, Policy labs can help improve policy design by creating new methods and policy solutions for complex problems. They can also help to create a better understanding of data and create more legitimacy by including citizens (Lewis, 2020)

2.3 Conceptualization of the Policy lab approach

Based on the research conducted, a conceptualization of the Policy lab approach can be made. Veenstra & Kotterink (2017) conceptualized their Policy lab approach in their research. Their conceptualization is demonstrated in figure 1. Thei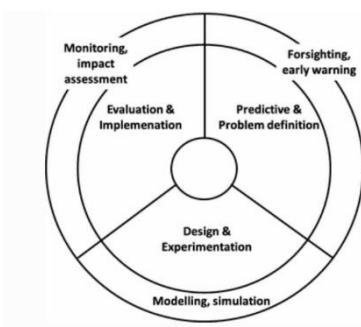r approach consists of two circles. The inner circle demonstrates the policymaking process. This process seems to be based on the policy cycle of Howlett and Giest (2015), which is presented in figure 2. The outer circle consists of the use of data in each of these phases. According to Veenstra & Kotterink (2017), the two circles influence each other. A few conditions need to be met to start a Policy lab. Whicher (2021) made a framework with four components for a Policy lab:

Figure 1: conceptualization of the Policy lab approach (Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017)

Proposition

People

Product

Process

The proposition entails the lab's financing, the lab's vision, and the lab's governance. The product entails the tools that are available to utilize. The people are the people who work in the Policy lab and their knowledge and skills. The last one, the process, is about engaging people in the lab and making the lab known.

2.4 Policy labs and the policy cycle

In their article, Veenstra and Kotterink (2017) write that the Policy lab approach can be utilized in different phases of the policy cycle. However, few studies have been done on Policy labs that take place in another phase than the policy formulation phase. The policy cycle used in this research is the policy cycle of Howlett & Giest (2015) (see figure 2). Howlett & Giest (2015) describe five different phases of the policy circle. The first phase is

the agenda-setting phase. There are two types of agendas. The systemic agenda consists of all issues that receive attention from government institutions. The systemic agenda is essentially the society's agenda for discussing public problems, such as crime or health care.

Figure 2: Policy cycle (Howlet & Giest, 2015)

On the other hand, the formal or institutional agenda consists of only a limited number of issues or problems to which politicians pay attention and discuss in formal meetings (Howlett & Giest, 2015). A Policy lab in the agenda-setting can be formed by creating a community (Hinrichs & Krapels et al., 2021) where citizens and other stakeholders come together to translate or interpret data that results in an official agenda in the form of a policy document. This document becomes part of the institutional agenda. The second phase is the policy formulation phase, in which different policy options are developed and discussed by relevant policy actors who have not only an opinion but also knowledge about the specific policy issue (Howlet & Giest, 2015). In a Policy lab, one could again include more stakeholders in this process and translate data together to formulate a new policy. The third phase is the decision-making phase, in which policymakers and politicians will decide on what to do about specific policy issues based on the information that they have. In a Policy lab, one would not leave the decision-making process up to politicians or civil servants. One would include more stakeholders such a academics, citizens and entrepreneurs to make a decision based on talking and assessing the available data about the different options. The fourth phase is the policy implementation phase. Different policy tools can be used for policy implementation, which can be divided into two categories. The first category consists of substantive instruments directly impacting the policy outcome. Examples of substantive instruments are money, regulation, goods, and services provided by government institutions. The second category consists of procedural instruments. Procedural instruments focus more on the process and have a less direct impact on the outcome of a policy. In the fourth phase, stakeholders could be included to discuss existing and innovative tools to see which tool would be the best based on data. Examples of procedural instruments are public hearings or commission inquiries and informal talks. The

fifth phase is the policy evaluation phase, in which the effect of a particular policy is measured (Howlett & Giest, 2015). Based on the evaluation, the cycle can start again.

2.5 The use of data in Policy labs

As mentioned in the introduction, the increased availability of data also challenges the government. There is criticism on how the data is analyzed and used within governments. One also sees a need for more transparency, accountability, increase respect for privacy, and a need to test and evaluate data in context with stakeholders or citizens (Abouzahr, Adje & Kanchanachitra, 2007; Cerquitelli, Querci & Pasquali, 2017). Policy labs are a solution for this (Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017). One of the key components of a Policy lab is data. Two types of data are generally used in Policy labs: qualitative data and quantitative data. Quantitative data is measurable; qualitative data is not measurable and often consists of text (Neumann, 2014, p. 46).

The increased availability of quantitative or big data poses opportunities and challenges for governments. There are opportunities for governments to capture real-time sensor data and social media data. Moreover, more governments and organizations work together to connect their data and improve their information resources. They can also link the new data to the more traditional statistics. Governments also can use the data to monitor the effectiveness of policies, accountability, and transparency about progress (Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017).

Challenges with using big data are the variety of data, the quality of the available data, reliability, and data security. Challenges with the integration and application of data come with a lack of standardization of data, the electronic infrastructures, legal issues, and the interpretation of data by civil servants (Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017). Siodmok (2020) also illustrates some of these issues. He says that their Policy labs encountered problems with partial data since not all people are digitally active and participate in online activities, which can create a bias in the sample. Moreover, he says that analyzing big data is time-consuming, and he encountered issues with the operability of the data in various systems.

One of the goals of a Policy lab is to develop policies with the citizens and not decide for them without including them. If only quantitative data were used, one would make policies based on a merely empirical base. However, the goal of Policy labs is to create new policies based on a policy design approach that is based on multiple sources and enhance the big data with other types of data. Moreover, additional data is necessary to deal with the challenges that come with the use of big data. Therefore, Policy labs usually consist of a combination of

the two sorts of data (Whicher, 2021; Siodmok, 2020). In their research, they are talking about big data and thick data. The big data are the numbers collected on a large scale, and the thick data consist of smaller samples or case studies to humanize those numbers (Siodmok, 2020). According to Siodmok (2020), big data is used in a Policy lab to get an overview, and the broader picture and the thick data is to learn about the experience of citizens and the meaning behind those numbers. Therefore, he states that the combination of the two is ideal and results in the best outcomes.

To summarize, one can conclude that there are many definitions of Policy labs. Which makes it challenging to research and compare Policy labs. The definition that is used in this research is the definition of Hinrichs-Krapels et al. (2020). Which consists of three key elements:

1) Building a coalition by participation
2) Translating data together with stakeholders and presenting evidence
3) Engaging policymakers

The Policy lab approach can support governments in redefining societal issues and developing innovative solutions. They also provide an opportunity for governments to be more transparent about the data they use and interpret it with stakeholders. One of the strengths of Policy labs is their flexibility. However, this flexibility often clashes with the traditional bureaucratic structures in government organizations. Policy labs risk being underfunded or experiencing a lack of political commitment.

Moreover, Policy labs alone are not sufficient to improve policy designs. The conditions under which a Policy lab take place are important for their success. The challenges arising within Policy labs concerning data use could be problems with the reliability, availability, standardization, and interpretation of data. There is limited research available on the use of data in Policy labs. However, the available research recommends the use of a combination of big data and thick data. Big data can get a broad overview of a specific issue. Subsequently, the thick data can be used to understand certain relationships better and double-check the interpretation of the big data. Overall, the articles about Policy labs that were found are primarily focused on the structure and characteristics of the labs rather than the way data was used and interpreted. Literature about this specific aspect of Policy labs is still missing. This case study will specifically focus on this gap in the literature and will therefore contribute to the research about this specific aspect of Policy labs.

Based on the theories, the hypothesis for this case study is that the challenges that many Policy labs face with the data and with Policy labs, in general, will also be present in this Policy lab. Moreover, a combination of data sources will likely be combined in the Policy lab. Based on the literature, one would expect that the big data would be used first to get a broader picture, and the thick data would be used after to explain certain relationships.

3. Research design

This chapter will elaborate on the research design and methodology utilized to conduct this thesis research.

The study is a qualitative study. The research methods used to perform the case studies were content analysis of policy documents and semi-structured interviews. Moreover, a focus group was attended to prepare for the interviews, and observations were made. The research goals are explanatory and descriptive (Toshkov, 2016). Only limited in-depth research is done on Policy labs in general, and in-depth case studies are essential to strengthen social sciences (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Moreover, case study research is vital to identify core variables in abstract theories, help construct new theories, capture the complexity of problems, and identify causal mechanisms in social processes (Neuman, 2014, p.42). As opposed to some quantitative research methods such as surveys or qualitative methods such as the use of grounded theories, there are almost no specific requirements for case studies. The lack of criteria can be both a strength and a weakness. The strength of a case study approach is that one can tailor the research design and data collection methods to find an answer to the research question. However, a weakness is that the research design can be vague and ungrounded. Because of the limited guidelines for case study research, it is even more critical for the researcher to explain and discuss the methodological choices that have been made (Meyer, 2001). Therefore, this chapter places an even stronger emphasis on explaining methodological choices. The criteria for the case selection, the respondents, the data collection methods, the data analysis, and the validity and reliability of this research are discussed and explained in this chapter.

First, the criteria for the case study will be discussed. The specific case study chosen for the research is the creation of the neighborhood agenda at the Municipality of the Hague. Secondly, the selection of the respondents for this research will be discussed. Next, the data collection methods and how the data was analyzed will be explained. Lastly, the reliability and validity of the research will be discussed.

The research will focus on the use of data in Policy labs, both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data is collected in numbers, and qualitative data is collected through words, pictures, or observations. Questions about the use of both qualitative data and quantitative data are included in the list of topics for the interviews. The topic list can be found in Appendix A. As stated in the introduction, this research was set up to answer the main research question: "How are qualitative and quantitative data being combined and interpreted in policy labs in the agenda-setting phase?".

3.1 Case selection

The selected case is the development of neighborhood agendas by the Municipality of the Hague in the Netherlands. The case is selected based on the definition used in this research and the different concepts of the research question. The key characteristics of the Policy labs are essential for the case selection. The key characteristics that were used for the case selection are:

- Policy lab in agenda setting phase
- engagement of citizens and various stakeholders to create a community
- use of different types of data
- translation of data and input to a policy document
- political support

The key characteristics of engagement of citizens and various stakeholders to create a community, the translation of data and input to a policy document, and political support are based on the definition of a Policy lab that is used for this research. The additional criteria, such as the agenda-setting phase and the use of different data types, are based on the research question. The selected case has all the characteristics even though it is not identified as a so-called Policy lab in its name. The neighborhood agendas are developed to create an agenda for the neighborhood and aim to impact policy development both on an operational and strategical level. During the development of the agenda, participation is a key aspect. Different types of quantitative and qualitative data are used to develop the agenda. This data is then translated into a neighborhood agenda, a policy document that the council must approve.

Chapter four of this research will provide a more detailed description of the case, including some background information that makes clear that the case fits within the criteria set for the case selection.

3.2 Respondents

The interviews were conducted with seven professionals working for the program Neighborhood agenda. They have different positions and backgrounds. The main criteria for the people that were asked to participate in the research was that they specifically work with interpreting and processing the data. All the participants work on the implementation of the neighborhood agenda and have a role in the process of creating the agenda. Most of the active project leaders have been participated in this research. The additional participants have been selected, because in this way various perspectives of people with a different role and background are considered. The seven professionals consist out of three project leaders Haagse Kracht [Power of the Hague], two project leaders Wijkprofiel [Neighborhood profiles], one data analyst and the program secretary. The Haagse Kracht project leaders work on the whole process of creating the agenda from the beginning to end, engaging the stakeholders and to combine all the data that is available and present the end result. The project leaders Wijkprofiel are more specialized in creating the profiles of the neighborhoods based on data and have more experience with the use of quantitative data. The data analyst supports in analyzing the available data and looks at new methods to collect more data and improve the quality of the data that is available. The program secretary supports the program managersand is focused on how the program team can support the rest of the employees to execute their tasks. The following abbreviations will be used to reference the participants:

Participant	Abbreviation
Project leader Wijkprofiel	Participant 1
Project leader Wijkprofiel/Haagse Kracht	Participant 2
Project leader Haagse Kracht	Participant 3
Project leader Haagse Kracht	Participant 4
Project leader Haagse Kracht	Participant 5
Data analyst	Participant 6
Program secretary	Participant 7

The participants have been informed about the research beforehand and have agreed to participate in the research. They will receive a copy of the thesis.

3.3 Data collection

A content analysis of policy documents has been conducted to obtain a clear picture of the case initially and to determine whether the case was appropriate for this study. Moreover, it has been used as part of the case study. The content analysis consisted of council documents published on the website of the Municipality of the Hague, particularly the council information system. In order to find those documents, the council information system has been researched on the keyword 'wijkagenda', which is the Dutch translation of neighborhood agenda. All the documents that were found were read.

Moreover, a focus group organized by one of the project leaders was attended. The interview topic list was based on the information obtained during the focus group in combination with the theoretical framework. The topic list primarily focuses on obtaining information on the availability of quantitative and qualitative data, the collection methods, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data, and the interpretation of the data. The topic list for the interviews can be found in Appendix A.

There are different ways of collecting data and conducting interviews. The most suitable interview technique for this research is semi-structured interviews. With this technique, it is possible to get as much in-depth information from the participants as possible and to ask follow-up questions based on the answers of the participants. The questions that were asked were based on the topics of the topic list that was made beforehand and were mostly open-ended questions. Follow-up questions were asked to obtain more in-depth information about the specific topics and the perspectives of the participants. All the interviews were conducted in the first language of the participants, Dutch.

3.4 Data analysis

At first, a content analysis was done based on the policy documents published on the Municipality of the Hague website. All the documents were analyzed. This analysis has been summarized in chapter four, the chapter about the case selection. Additionally, the interviews that were conducted were recorded and transcribed without annotations for behavior. Three of the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and transcribed manually. Four interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams and recorded and transcribed by Microsoft Teams. Those transcriptions were checked on mistakes and irregularities afterward and refined when necessary. After the transcriptions were made, the transcriptions were coded. Coding means that parts of the interviews were labeled with short descriptions, making it easier to compare

the various answers with each other. The coding approach was a combination of inductive and deductive coding. Based on the theoretical framework, a set of codes had been thought of beforehand. After the interviews were conducted, some codes were added to be able to code the answers of the participants. In chapter four, the findings are presented, and an analysis is provided.

The following coding scheme was used for this research:

Concept	Definition	Label	Meaning of label
Quantitative data	Information in the form of numbers (Neuman, 2014)	Internal sources	Sources from within the municipality such as Den Haag in Cijfers
		External sources	Sources outside of the Municipality such as the ministries and other organizations
		Challenges availability	The extent to which the data can be accessed or used
		Challenges reliability	Difficulties that arise in the trustworthiness of the data
		Challenges standardization	Difficulties that arise in the different levels

			the data is presented.
		Challenges interpretation	Difficulties in the explanation of the data.
		No challenges	No difficulties with analyzing the data
Qualitative data	Information that is expressed as words, images, or objects (Neuman, 2014)	Collected via surveys with open questions	Collection of information through online and offline questionnaires
		Collected via interviews	Collection of information through one-on-one interviews
		Collected via focus groups	Collection of information with groups of people
		Challenges interpretation	Difficulties in the explanation of the data
		No challenges	No difficulties with analyzing the data
Combining data	Using both quantitative and qualitative data.	Preference for quantitative data	Focus is on the quantitative data and thinks the quantitative data is more important for the result

		Preference for qualitative data	Focus is on the qualitative data and thinks the qualitative data is more important for the result
		Equally important	Both data sources are used in the same way and are of the same importance for the result
		Use quantitative data as base for collection of qualitative data	Using the quantitative data to come up with questions for the questionnaires, interviews or focus groups
Interpretation data	The way in which the data is understood or explained (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022c)	With external stakeholders	People that have an interest in the Policy lab outside of the municipality such a citizens and entrepreneurs
		With internal stakeholders	Civil servants of the municipality of the Hague that have an interest in the Policy lab

Advantages Policy lab approach	A quality of the Policy lab that makes it better or more useful (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022a)	Participation	Involvement of citizens in the process
		Collaboration	Working together with other departments or organizations
		Better interpretation of data	Increased or better understanding of the data
		Support for policies	Citizens support for policies
Challenges Policy lab approach	Something that causes difficulties for someone or something (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022b)	Commitment	A pledge to follow up on action that are agreed upon
		Finances	Money that is available
		Skills	The abilities and expertise of the people working in the Policy lab
		Capacity	The amount of time and resources that are available

Since the interviews were conducted in Dutch, the citations of the participants that are used in chapter four are translated from Dutch to English.

3.5 Reliability and validity

As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, it is crucial in case study research for the researcher to discuss the methodological choices that have been made, and to discuss the reliability and validity of the research. The principles of reliability and validity in qualitative research are a bit different than those in quantitative research because qualitative research is not based on statistics and measurable data (Neuman, 2014, p. 218).

The term reliability in qualitative research means dependability or consistency. Qualitative research is reliable when other researchers can reproduce the study and get similar results (Neuman, 2014, p. 218). The term validity in qualitative research means truthfulness. A high validity means that one truly measures what is needed to draw conclusions and answer the research question (Neuman, 2014, p. 218). One can make a distinction between internal validity and external validity. The internal validity is about the research process and whether mistakes were made that led to false conclusions (Neuman, 2014, p. 298-299). External validity is about whether the results can be generalized to other cases (Neuman, 2014, p. 306).

In this research, the semi-structured interviews can threaten the research's reliability because the questions are not set beforehand and are partially based on the participants' answers. However, this threat is minimized by creating a topic list based on theory and earlier observations. Additionally, the interviews were transcribed and coded based on a conceptual framework. The coding scheme and the transcriptions available upon request make it easier for other researchers to repeat the research and come to the same results. Other researchers could request the transcriptions and analyze the data themselves. Another threat to the reliability could be that the researcher had much knowledge about the case before the start of the study. In that case, there is a risk of making suggestions or influencing the answers of the participants. Nevertheless, this could also be an advantage because the researcher was able to ask more concrete questions.

The internal validity of this research is high. An advantage of qualitative research is the construct validity because the interviewer was able to ask additional questions or ask for clarification when answers were unclear. The content validity is also high because the topic list ensures that all aspects of the research question are covered. Another advantage of case study research is the conceptual validity, which means that case study research helps to identify the core variables or concepts in more abstract theories (Neuman, 2014, p. 42).

The external validity of this study is limited since the results of in-depth case studies can often not be generalized to other cases. Moreover, only one case study was used for this research. Nevertheless, the goal of a case study is not necessarily for the results to be generalizable but rather to explore and gain knowledge about certain phenomena.

4. Case study: Neighborhood agendas in the Hague

This chapter provides the results of the case study that has been done. First, a description of the case will be provided based on the policy documents that were analyzed. Secondly, the empirical findings of the interviews will be presented as well as an analysis of the results based on the theoretical framework.

4.1 Case description

The case that is chosen for this study is the development of the neighborhood agendas by the Municipality of the Hague in the Netherlands. In this chapter, some background information on this case will be given, and an answer will be provided as to why this case is an example of a Policy lab and, thus, why it is used for this study.

The development of the neighborhood agendas in the Hague started as a pilot in 2019 because of the coalition agreement that resulted from the new coalition that had been formed. In this agreement, the coalition agreed to make a new version of the neighborhood plans for the 49 neighborhoods or areas that are situated in the Hague. The key ingredient of these new agendas had to be participation, including the participation of the citizens, relevant civil society organizations in the neighborhood, and local entrepreneurs. The idea behind this new approach was that citizens became increasingly involved in policy issues and participation projects in their neighborhoods over the past few years. Nevertheless, time after time, citizens were involved in only one issue at the time. There was no integrated approach to tackle the challenges and priorities of the neighborhood as a whole. The council believes that citizens know what their neighborhood needs better than civil servants. Moreover, the citizens often provide practical solutions that civil servants have not thought of themselves.

Therefore, the neighborhood agenda can be seen as an integral, area-specific, and data-driven approach to improving the policies and obtaining a more realistic local view of the problems in the city. The aim of the agenda is to get an overview of the key challenges of a neighborhood together with the citizens living in the area, local organizations, and entrepreneurs with local businesses in the neighborhood. Additionally, together with the

stakeholders, the opportunities and solutions for these challenges are discussed. As a result, an agenda for the period of four years is developed, which can be utilized to develop, create and adapt policies on different subjects (Municipality of the Hague, 2021).

The process, as written in the policy documents (Municipality of the Hague, 2021), is as follows. At first, a profile of the neighborhood is made based on quantitative and qualitative data. The collected data comes from different sources such as the Municipality, the National Institute of Public Health and Environment (RIVM), and Statistics Netherlands (CBS). Secondly, citizens, civil servants, civil society organizations, and local entrepreneurs are invited to come together to interpret the available data. Based on this, the neighborhood profile is created, forming a base for the conversations that follow about the main challenges, priorities, and opportunities for the neighborhood. Based on the follow-up conversations, the main themes and priorities are chosen. In those conversations, one will also discuss the actions and solutions for the priorities and challenges of the neighborhood. As a result of all this input, the neighborhood agenda is developed. This agenda will then be presented to the neighborhood together with an action plan.

The process of the neighborhood agendas can be seen as a Policy lab according to the definition used for this research. The definition is: *"A process of engagement, the labs involve building a coalition through participation of diverse communities (thereby establishing 'trust'), working on the language and presentation of evidence (thereby enabling effective 'translation') and engaging policymakers early to respond when policy windows emerge (thereby considering 'timing' for creating policy action). (Hinrichs-Krapels et al., 2020) "*.

The Policy lab clearly involves building a coalition through the participation of diverse communities. Since citizens, entrepreneurs, and civil society organizations are included in the process of interpreting the data and setting the priorities. All stakeholders come together multiple times; this enables them to create the so-called community. During the meetings, data and facts are discussed and translated to the priorities of the neighborhood. This results in a clear, visual neighborhood agenda that is presented to the various stakeholders in the specific neighborhood or area and civil servants and politicians. During the process, policymakers and policy advisors are included as well. After the neighborhood agenda is presented, the agenda is used as a tool to influence, change, and to develop new policy when a

policy window occurs. Because of this, one could consider this specific case an excellent example of a Policy lab.

4.2 The results of the interviews

In this chapter, the results of the interviews will be discussed and analyzed based on the theoretical framework that was presented in chapter two. The structure of the chapter is based on the structure of the semi-structured interviews and will discuss seven different subjects related to the case study. In total, seven interviews were conducted, of which five were with project leaders, one with the data analyst, and one with the program secretary.

Process

In the policy documents about the neighborhood agendas, a process for developing the neighborhood agendas is described and formalized. During the interviews, all participants described the process they followed for developing the neighborhood agendas in their neighborhoods. The process described in the policy documents is a rather global description of the process but does entail steps in a specific order. Nevertheless, not all the project leaders follow this process and the specific order in which the steps take place. In practice, the project leaders have much space to adapt the process according to the neighborhood's needs and to their preferences. Based on the participants' answers, one can conclude that the separate steps are not necessarily followed but are occurring at the same time and are intertwined with each other. It is interesting to note that all participants agree that a tailor-made approach is necessary for every neighborhood and that there is no such thing as a one size fits all approach. According to all the participants, this is because every neighborhood is different and needs a different approach. Therefore, the project leaders are quite free to choose a strategy they like. The following statements demonstrate the need for a tailor-made approach in every neighborhood:

"*Every neighborhood is different because not every neighborhood or citizen is capable of discussing data or information [...] But the interesting thing is that every project leader has the freedom to develop the neighborhood profile in their own way including the participation strategy that they chose to use.*" *(Participant 1)*

In practice, this usually means that in the process around the interpretation of data in neighborhoods with a lower SES, the data is not always presented and interpreted directly with citizens. At the same time, this happens in neighborhoods with higher SES citizens. One

can conclude that the first step of the process, the quantitative data collection, is the same for every neighborhood. Nevertheless, the next step, the creation of the neighborhood profiles, differs per neighborhood. Moreover, not all project leaders create the neighborhood profile before creating the neighborhood agenda. Sometimes, this is because of time constraints and issues. However, one of the participants also mentioned that this is done because, in that way, the neighborhood profile and the agenda are more complementary and make more sense. Other project leaders and Participants 6 and 7 disagree with this and state that the profile is an essential first step in creating the final document, the neighborhood agendas. Overall, the process described in the policy documents is, in practice, used as a guideline but not always followed by the project leaders. Even though the process seems formalized on paper, this is not the case in reality. The participants have quite some freedoms in choosing their approach, and the process differs based on the neighborhood. The participants did not see this as a problem, because they feel like this is needed to achieve the best result for the neighborhood.

Quantitative data

The quantitative data that is being used for the neighborhood agendas come from different sources. The Municipality of the Hague gathers a lot of data on the website www.denhaagincijfers.nl. Open data sources that are used to gather data are, for example, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) together with the Public Health Service (GGD) and Statistics Netherlands (CBS). Moreover, data from the police, the municipal enforcement, and departments from within the Municipality is gathered. Some participants said social data is missed in the available open data sources. Moreover, there are some problems with the level at which the open data is collected.

"The data is, the open data that I was talking about first, is on a high level. Sometimes it is even on a district level. But sometimes we have data on a neighborhood level, and these are for example estimations about health from the RIVM. And the neighborhood, the project leaders are all asking for very specific data. When they hear something from citizens or organizations or social welfare organizations, they want to be able to ask specific questions about for example a very specific area. Yes, at that moment we get stuck. The open data is not sufficient because the collection of the data happens on a level that is too high. So that is why we have started to collect our own data too, so we can collect data on the level of a specific postal code." (Participant 6)

Participant 6 states that they encounter issues with the level at which the open data is collected and available. Multiple participants discussed the issue of not having data on the right observation level during the interviews. Part of the problem has to do with the fact that the boundaries of the neighborhoods are different on an operational level than the boundaries that are used by Statistics Netherlands (CBS). Participant 6, a data analyst, additionally explains that they have developed an additional survey to deal with the issue. In this survey, both closed and open questions are asked, so additional quantitative and qualitative data can be collected. This way, additional social data, and more specific local data can be collected. However, a remark was made by one of the participants about this survey. Participant 2 describes that she notices that young people do not always seem to fill in the survey, which could create a bias in the data being collected.

Another concern multiple participants have about the quantitative data is that the data is not always reliable, and this is particularly the case with the number of notifications or complaints that are filed.

"By the way, there are a lot of side notes to add to the quantitative data, so you have to constantly say, these are notifications, but someone can file five complains and those count as five complains. So, you constantly have to give disclaimers with the quantitative data." (Participant 1)

Participant 1 says that the same person can file a complaint multiple times about the same issue, and the complaint will be counted as five different complaints. However, in the presentation of the data, it is not clear whether the complaints about an issue are filed by different citizens or the same person, which can negatively affect the reliability of the data.

Another example of a reliability issue that was mentioned by of one of the participants about the quantitative data was the following:

"A good example to not only work with data is ehm Transvaal. On paper there are 17.434 citizens. […] But maybe in reality double the number of citizens live there. In that case you can develop a policy for waste, or a policy for parking. Yeah, that does not work of course, if the reality is different. This is due to overcrowded housing, because of the many migrant workers. […] They are not registered. So, you must be able to interpret and understand the data. (Participant 5)

In this answer, the participant argues that quantitative data alone is insufficient to make the neighborhood profile and agenda. The participant also stresses the importance of correctly interpreting and understanding the data. This answer also shows that not all the quantitative data is reliable because of a lack of registration.

Some of the mentioned issues are also present in the study of Siodmok (2020) on Policy labs, explained in the theoretical framework. There seem to be issues with the standardization and operationalization of the data. Moreover, one of the participants mentioned the risk of collecting partial data. All of the participants acknowledge that analyzing the quantitative data is time-consuming.

Qualitative data

The first step in developing the neighborhood agenda is creating the neighborhood profile. The creation of the neighborhood profile happens mainly based on quantitative information that is interpreted with external and internal stakeholders through interviews and focus groups consisting of a variation of citizens, professionals, and civil servants. Nevertheless, the creation of the neighborhood agenda is not only based on quantitative data but also on qualitative data. Every project leader is free to choose their collection methods according to the preferences and needs of the neighborhood. Most project leaders use a combination of different techniques to gather qualitative data. The first one is one-on-one interviews with stakeholders.

"The next step was to conduct the interviews in the neighborhood and my focus was to interview different stakeholders in the neighborhood. So, youth work, the school, the entrepreneurs, the association for entrepreneurs. Yeah, what more organization do you have? Yeah, the residents' organization of course. […] Actually, every stakeholder organization that is active in the neighborhood and also some citizens and foundations of owners and I have also asked many of my colleagues from the municipality: 'What do you actually do on your policy domain in the Havenkwatier? And eventually, I got 35 interviews. " (Participant 3)

Participant 3 did 35 interviews with stakeholders, which seems like quite a lot and is time-consuming because the interviews do not only need to be conducted but also analyzed. Other participants did not mention the number of interviews they did, but all the project leaders used interviews to collect additional data or interpret the quantitative data.

Another technique to gather data is the so-called 'wijktafels', which are focus groups of citizens, professionals, and sometimes civil servants from different departments. One of the project leaders described the process and their meetings as follows:

"Ehm, what we do, is ehm, yeah, we have three meetings. Meeting one is to get an overview of the status of the neighborhood. I do not do that based on the data but based on a selection of places in the neighborhood I will ask the participants what is a good and a bad side of this place. The spots can be a school, a park, a playground or the shopping mall. So, I will choose identifiable places and ask for the good and bad sides. Like that, we get a picture of the status of the neighborhood. At the same time, the citizens can dream without considering money issues or policy restrains etcetera. What would you do if anything is possible?" (Participant 4)

This participant clearly states that the' wijktafels' is the primary data collection method. The participant also explains that he/she does not use the big data as a source of information but instead starts the conversation based on the experiences of the participants. This approach is not chosen among all the participants. Some participants base their questions on the neighborhood profile that has been made and the quantitative data that has been collected.

The last source for qualitative data is the surveys mentioned before. In the survey, both quantitative and qualitative input is gathered. The qualitative input is mainly gathered through the open question answers. To analyze these answers, a text mining program is currently being developed which is mentioned by Participant 6. This is an addition because some project leaders still struggle to analyze all the qualitative data being collected.

"But indeed, you gather a lot of data, sometimes with the open question, which is way harder to analyze of course. We also have a text-mining project that is dealing with this issue, and we have hired [name], she is also busy with the neighborhood agendas, but she is also processing all the input we get from the open questions. It is a big job, but we get a lot of good information out of it." (Participant 6)

Project leaders can also request help from the external colleague that was hired to help them analyze the qualitative data.

Overall, one can see that the project leaders chose different methods for collecting qualitative data. Every project leader chooses their strategy based on their preference and the needs of the neighborhood. All the project leaders use a combination of the collection methods. However,

they use and apply it each in their own way. For example, the 'wijktafels' or focus groups are used as a method for the collection of data by all the project leaders. However, the form in which they are set up and the people who are invited differ per project leader.

Interpretation of data

The interpretation of data together with the stakeholders is primarily focused on the interpretation of the quantitative data. The methods that are used for the interpretation of the quantitative data differ per project leader. Some project leaders do this directly with the stakeholders, while others interpret data with internal stakeholders, and others interpret the data themselves with direct colleagues from the program and check their assumptions with the internal and external stakeholders afterward. The previous quotes of Participants 1 and 5 about the quantitative data already demonstrated the need for good interpretation because many circumstances influence the quantitative data that need to be considered. Participant 6, the data analyst, confirms this during her interview, she says:

"Yeah, the thing that is difficult is that the data, we want the data to say something specific and sometimes we are too easy in drawing conclusions. And the problem with a lot of data is that we must look at how that data is collected, where is it from and and how is it built. For example, if you look at the complains, the MOR complains that I was just talking about, so the complains about the public space. […] It is not always correct, but you can almost say like the neighborhood is better when there are more complains. So, in that case the data does not really say something about the waste problem, for example, but more about the involvement of citizens in that neighborhood." (Participant 6)

This example illustrates that the step of interpreting data together with stakeholders is crucial in order not to draw conclusions too quickly. This is also confirmed by Participant 1 in her interview, and she adds another important aspect to the interpretation of data.

"Ehm, and I think, imagine if you live somewhere and you have parking issues. Yeah, ofcourse, you are going to take that with you in your role at the table. […] Like, I think that is more important than green energy for example." (Participant 1)

Basically, the participant says that stakeholders are biased in selecting the data and topics they think are important and will interpret the data based on their background and preferences. This issue also arises in the one-on-one interviews. Stakeholders are more likely to talk about the issues that concern them. Therefore, it is vital to test the assumptions that are made during the interviews and 'wijktafels,' which is done by some of the project leaders.

The process has already demonstrated that a tailor-made approach is necessary for every neighborhood because of the ethnographic differences. Participant 5 also mentioned that the reaction of citizens to the data can be very strong when they feel like the data is incorrect or does not present reality. The strong reactions of citizens also demonstrated the need for the interpretation of the quantitative data together with the stakeholders and the need for additional qualitative data to understand the numbers.

To summarize, there is no specific guideline on interpreting the data and with whom exactly. Nevertheless, the interpretation of the data is an essential aspect of the process, according to all the participants. Every project leader involves stakeholders in the interpretation of the quantitative data. The emphasis is mainly based on involving external stakeholders from the neighborhood. Every project leader interprets the quantitative data either with external stakeholders directly or based on the interactions with external stakeholders. The internal stakeholders are included to provide additional information; however, their input does not play a significant role in the priorities written down on the final neighborhood agenda in contrast to the input of the external stakeholders, which plays an important role.

Combining the qualitative data and the quantitative data

In creating the neighborhood agendas, quantitative and qualitative data are being used and combined to come to the final product, the neighborhood agenda, eventually. All the participants of this research were asked how they used and analyzed the data they gathered and how they utilized the different types of data. They were also asked whether they preferred quantitative or qualitative data and what considerations they kept in mind while combining the data. Most of the participants were optimistic about the combination of different types of data and said they work complementary towards each other. This is demonstrated in the following statements of two of the participants:

"A good thing of the survey is also that you can ask question on a neighborhood level, because in the conversations with stakeholders which you do prior, which are the qualitative interviews, you will ask people questions about what is going on in the neighborhood. They will raise issues which you can then test in the survey, that is presented to a bigger group of people. Through the survey you can ask people if they recognize the issues that were mentioned by people during in the interviews, to get a feeling about how the size of the issue." *(Participant 2)*

"The qualitative data is also an add on to the quantitative data and to check, does these numbers make sense? [...] Like what the numbers say. Is there a gap? Or is there something that gives the wrong picture? What causes that? And sometimes you use the qualitative data for this, so it is a check on the quantitative data. Like, is the data right?" (Participant 7)

Participant 2 argues that they use the survey to check claims or statements that are made during the interviews and whether the claims are shared among other citizens in the neighborhood. Participant 7 argues that the qualitative data is also there to check the big data, investigate the gaps in the quantitative data, and to tell us more about the relationship between variables.

Most project leaders use the quantitative data as a starting point to create the neighborhood profile and look for their focus in their interview questions. The quantitative data can also be used for monitoring or evaluation after the neighborhood agenda is presented (Participant 7). However, all the project leaders share the idea that the creation of the final product is mainly based on the qualitative input of the citizens. They say this because the neighborhood agenda is set up as a participation project, so the citizens' input is valued more than the quantitative data. The project leaders also prefer qualitative data when asked about this. The project leaders prefer this more strongly than the data analyst and the program secretary, who think both data sources are essential. This is mainly because some believe that the quantitative data does not provide a correct and complete overview of the neighborhood without qualitative input.

Moreover, they believe that the priorities that are put on the agenda should be priorities that are chosen by the citizens since they also play an essential part in eventually implementing the agenda. Therefore, the agenda should not be composed by the Municipality itself. Nevertheless, the project leaders do acknowledge the strength of combining the different data sources, even though it is time-consuming. Some of the project leaders also find it more challenging to analyze the data because they feel like they do not have a research background. The project leaders state that they get additional support from the program bureau for analyzing the data and that this additional support is essential for them to do their work well.

Advantages of the Neighborhood agendas
In addition to the specific questions about the use of data in the process, the participants were asked about the advantages of the neighborhood agendas and the process. The main advantages that were mentioned were the creation of support for new policy and increasing

the trust of citizens in the government by including them in the process of the interpretation of data and development of the agenda. Participant 5 talked about this advantage:

"And I think you can eliminate that obstacle; you obtain more support for policy. You do not need long procedures anymore to achieve things because you already have citizens backing you." […] And I think if you look at a national level, you can even diminish trust issues in the government. After COVID, not many people trust the government anymore. We, as a municipality, experience that as well." (Participant 5)

Other advantages mentioned, such as the one below by Participant 6, are about the increased collaboration, participation, and engagement of citizens.

"The advantage is that you work directly with the citizens, you work together with the citizens. […] And you can use this to also collaborate with them for other purposes not only on a district level but also to try to work together with other departments. Yes, that's it, it is a tool, a strategic tool." (Participant 6)

Other participants call the neighborhood agendas a good participation process (Participant 3) and a bottom–up process (Participant 4). Another advantage that is both mentioned by Participant 6 and 7 is that the neighborhood agendas provide an opportunity to monitor and later evaluate based on the data that is collected in the process of the development of the agendas. Overall, it is interesting to see that most advantages that were mentioned by the participants were about creating support and increasing participation. Therefore, the focus of the participants seems to be on participation rather than on improving the policy design process by using data, which is mentioned as a risk in the literature by Veenstra & Kotterink (2017).

Challenges of the Neighborhood agendas

Besides the advantages of the process, there are still many challenges and risks concerning the use of data within the process and the process as a whole. A variety of challenges that the participants mentioned were commitment from stakeholders, capacity and (financial) resources, communication issues, and employees' skills to analyze the data, monitor the agendas based on the data, and make strategic use of the agenda after it is presented.

Another challenge of the neighborhood agenda that the participants mentioned is that the neighborhood agenda creates expectations. Nevertheless, it seems complicated for the Municipality to live up to those expectations after the neighborhood agenda is presented.

Another challenge that is mentioned by one of the participants is the preference of project leaders for qualitative data over quantitative data. The participant sees this as a risk for the process since project leaders are not objective but base their choices on their skills instead of what would be best for the results. Some lack the skills or tools to assess and analyze quantitative data and therefore prefer qualitative data and interviews above more structured data. According to one of the participants, this personal preference could be a risk.

Another challenge that the participants mentioned is limited capacity, especially for the follow-up of the neighborhood agendas, which is essential to make a real impact on policy development. Moreover, the resources that are needed for a follow-up on the agenda are not arranged prior to the presentation of the agenda. There are also concerns about the commitment of other departments within the Municipality.

Most of the issues and concerns of the participants are not related to the process of creating the neighborhood profiles or agendas but seem to be related to the follow-up on the agenda. Such as the issue raised by Participant 4:

"Another risk is, yeah what I also try to accomplish with the neighborhood agenda is to make the departments more demand oriented. I have developed a three-steps action plan. What actions can be done by the citizens or the neighborhood themselves, for what actions do they need a bit of support and what are the not able to do? When they can do it themselves, they can start with it, that's fine. But sometimes the need a bit of support and then I ask them what do they need for support or some subjects they cannot do themselves and its demand oriented towards the department, like you ask the departments can you deliver this? And what the departments are good at is the supply-demand part. So, they have something the can offer. For example, when a street is not clean. What can we offer? A clean-up day. That is very supply-oriented, because they already have this, so they use it. But we do not really ask citizens what they need exactly and can we deliver that. And that is what we should do as a department." (Participant 4)

Most of the challenges and concerns that were mentioned by the participants are similar to the challenges that Policy labs face in general. Those issues all have an influence on the quality and success of a Policy lab. However, for this case study, the most interesting concern was the participants' concern for the preference of qualitative data over quantitative data, which could be based on their background or skills and not only on what is the best for the result of the neighborhood agendas.

Overall, one can see that the process of the development of the neighborhood agenda in practice is a rather loose and flexible process. There are some aspects that all the project leaders have in common. They all use both quantitative and qualitative data too some extent use variations of the same collection methods such as the interviews, wijktafels and surveys. They all interpretate data by either directly or indirectly involving external stakeholders. Overall, the project leaders are optimistic about combining the data sources. Which is coherent with the research of Siodmok (2020) and Whicher (2021). However, they do see some challenges concerning analyzing the big amount of data and value the qualitative input over the quantitative input in the end. The program secretary and data analyst are more positive about the combination of both data sources and see the need for extra support of the project leaders to support them in gathering and analyzing the data. The focus of the project leaders at this moment seems to be primarily on making the process a good participation process for the citizens, rather than making the best use of the data that is available. This could be a risk for the effectiveness of the Policy lab in the end (Veenstra & Kotterink, 2017). A concern that needs additional research is the objectiveness of the research methods that are chosen by the project leaders. It would be best if choices of project leaders are based purely based on achieving the best results and are not dependent on the background, capacity or resources of a project leader.

5. Conclusion, discussion and recommendations

This chapter will provide a summary of the results and an analysis, as well as an answer to the research question: "How are qualitative and quantitative data being combined and interpretated in policy labs in the agenda setting phase?". Moreover, the limitations of this research will be discussed, and recommendations for this policy issue and future research will be discussed.

5.1 Conclusion

To answer the main research question: "How are qualitative and quantitative data being combined and interpreted in Policy labs in the agenda-setting phase?", it is essential to look at what kind of data is used and how the data is being collected and later applied in the final policy document in this case.

In the case of the neighborhood agendas, both quantitative and qualitative data play an essential role. The quantitative data has different sources such as Statistics Netherlands (CBS), national government agencies, the police, and municipal law enforcement.

Additionally, some additional social quantitative data is collected through the survey made by the Municipality itself and adapted per neighborhood. The quantitative data is being interpreted and checked via one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and colleagues from within the Municipality. The interpretation of the data differs per project leader and is dependent on the preferences of the project leaders as well as the ethnography of the neighborhood. The sources for the quantitative data are the same for all the neighborhoods.

Nevertheless, the challenges that arise concerning the use of data can depend on the neighborhood and the operational boundaries of the neighborhood. The qualitative data is being collected through in-depth interviews, focus groups or so-called wijktafels, the open questions from the survey, and in some cases, through a website. Overall, the participants are optimistic about the combination of the quantitative data and qualitative data. Nevertheless, the project leaders place less emphasis on this combination than the other participants.

The case study findings are coherent with the existing theories about Policy labs and the use of data within the Policy labs. So, there does not seem to be a big difference between the problems that arise in the agenda-setting phase and other phases of the policy cycle that have been studied more thoroughly, such as the policy formulation phase. All the participants comment on the importance of the combination of different sources of data, just as Siodmok (2020) and Whicher (2021) stress in their articles. Overall, the project leaders use the quantitative data to get an overview of the neighborhoods and the qualitative input to interpret and use the data for the neighborhood agenda. According to the participants, an advantage of this combination is that they can interpret the quantitative data better, and the in-depth interviews add more background information about the real issues behind the numbers, which is vital for the final product, the neighborhood agenda. However, in the end, all participants say that the qualitative information is most important to creating the neighborhood agenda because it is a participation project, and the citizens' input is the most important to determine the neighborhood's priorities. Nevertheless, one can conclude that the quantitative information is beneficial for starting a conversation and monitoring the neighborhood's progress after the neighborhood agenda has been published.

The main advantages of neighborhood agendas were participation, collaboration, and creating support for policies among citizens. When asked about the advantages, most participants did not mention the data aspect specifically. This would confirm the concern of Veenstra & Kotterink (2017) about Policy labs being set up to facilitate an innovative participation process rather than creating a good and effective policy document. However, it is too early to

say something about the effects of the neighborhood agendas and whether they will be used as a strategic document to influence the rest of the policymaking process because most agendas have not been published that long ago. Some concerns and challenges that come with the neighborhood agendas are similar to the challenges that arise in the theoretical framework. The main challenges are the commitment of internal stakeholders and the bureaucratic structures that make it difficult to achieve the goals of the neighborhood agenda and change the way of policymaking. Participants are concerned about other departments' commitment to making this a success.

Moreover, there are concerns about whether people have the right skills not only to analyze the data which but also later on to implement the agenda. Another concern is about the available resources in the sense of capacity and financial means. Nevertheless, the approach is still developing, and most participants say that the approach for the neighborhood agenda is improving and that they are trying to tackle the issues one by one. However, just like any change in a government organization, it takes time and baby steps before those issues are addressed and solved.

5.2 Limitations

There are a few limitations of this research that are important to address and discuss. Qualitative studies with semi-structured interviews risk a researcher bias because the interview questions are not structured or formalized. Therefore, there is a higher risk for the researcher to influence the participants' answers and misinterpret their answers. To ensure that the answers were understood correctly during the interviews, they were regularly checked by summarizing them in the researchers' own words. Moreover, with interviews, there is always a risk that the participants give socially desired answers. In this case study, it does not seem to be the case because the participants talked much about the strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood agenda and were also critical of the process.

Another limitation of this research is the external validity. The external validity of single-case studies is not strong. Nevertheless, this study aims to find answers to the how and why questions, which cannot be answered with quantitative studies. Overall, qualitative research is time-consuming, and because of time constraints, only one case study has been included.

5.3 Recommendations for future research

As stated in the chapter about the theoretical framework, there are still some gaps in the literature about Policy labs that need research. Based on this research, it would be interesting to see more research about the interpretation of data in other Policy labs, and whether some

Policy labs set specific criteria for the interpretation of data, and if so, what kind of criteria since these criteria are not set in this Policy lab. Moreover, it would be interesting to do more research about the background and skills of employees working in Policy labs and to see whether this influences the use of the data by the employees since this was suggested by one of the participants.

In general, it is recommended to perform more in-depth case studies to compare the different case studies and to learn more about the practical and operational problems that arise in Policy labs. This is needed to improve the Policy lab approach. Moreover, it would be good if a systematic literature review would be made of the research on Policy labs since the theories about Policy labs are limited and not always coherent. There are multiple definitions for the concept Policy lab, and it would be good if there is a clear definition of a Policy lab that is widely accepted. This could be made based on the systematic literature review and would make future research more manageable and more coherent.

5.4 Policy recommendations

Based on this research, some recommendations regarding the development of the neighborhood agendas can be made to improve the process and achieve better results.

One of the interesting results of the case study was that the process is more formalized on paper than in practice. In practice, all the participants said it is crucial that the approach for each neighborhood agenda can be tailored to the neighborhood's needs. It is therefore essential that the process of creating the neighborhood agendas maintains flexibility, and there should be caution in formalizing the process too much.

Even though the process should be relatively flexible, it is good if specific tools and support are provided to the project leaders to make sure that the project leaders choose their approach based on what is best for the neighborhood without encountering limitations because of limited skills, capacity or tools. Ideally, there would be tools and support for every step of the process and guidelines and tips to follow for different ways of interpreting the data. The project leader can then apply the tools or approach that is most suitable for the neighborhood. These tools, guidelines, and tips will support the project leaders in making a more objective decision and base the approach less on personal preferences.

The additional research tools that are currently being developed could be a good addition to the process. The survey provides an opportunity to ask additional questions on topics missed in the general data. Additionally, the survey allows project leaders to test the

representativeness of the qualitative information obtained during the 'wijktafels' and one-on-one interviews. However, one should also keep the potential bias of this data in mind because the survey is not completed equally among all citizens. Particular attention should be given to reaching young people to increase the survey's representativeness.

The text mining tool is a good example of a tool that should be developed to support the project leaders in analyzing the data that is being collected via the open-ended questions of the survey. This would also help to make the whole process less time-consuming.

The last recommendation is to tackle the challenges mentioned by the project leaders that pose a risk to the agenda's success. Two main risks mentioned by the participant and should be tackled as soon as possible are capacity and resource issues.

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Appendix A: List of interview topics[1]

Functie en rol in het proces van de wijkagenda's [Occupation and role in the process of the neighborhood agendas]

Proces wijkagenda [Process of the development of the neighborhood agenda]

Beschikbaarheid kwantitatieve data [Availability quantitative data]

Ophalen kwalitatieve data [Collection of qualitative data]

Combineren van kwalitatief en kwantitatieve data [Combining the quantative and qualitative data]

Interpretatie data door verschillende partners [Interpertation of data by different stakeholders]

Voordelen/kansen van deze werkwijze? [Advantages and opportunities of this method]

Nadelen/risico's van deze werkwijze? [Disadvantages and risks of this method]

Manier van werken zoals de wijkagenda (Policy lab) ook mogelijk voor andere diensten? Waarom wel/niet? [Would this method work for other departments too? Why would it/wouldn't it?]

Werkwijze gebruikt voor het maken van een agenda in dit geval. Zou het ook voor andere fases van de policy cycle werken? Zo ja, welke?[Method is used in this case for the development of an agenda. Would this method work in different phases of the policy cycles according to you? If yes, which phases?]

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[1] Interviews are conducted in Dutch, the language of the participants.