

From Welfare State to Participation Society: Studying Social Service Access and Equity in the Netherlands

By

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Abstract

In September 2013, the Dutch government announced it was time to transition from the traditional welfare state to a so-called participation society, instantly bombarding the term to much-maligned word of the year. While the opposition decried it as austerity under another name, proponents argued it was a necessary reinvigoration of personal responsibility in the face of challenges like globalization and an aging population. Localized and targeted solutions would yield better outcomes and promote social cohesion beyond the cold state bureaucracy. This thesis takes stock of the literature investigating this apparent transition, before contextualizing it within broader welfare state change and participation research. Prominent shortcomings are identified and then addressed by presenting a comprehensive theoretical framework, built around the distinction between neoliberal and communitarian models of participation. This framework connects empirical and normative debates, explicitly identifies often unchallenged assumptions, and provides specific guidance as to how to locate and study potential access and equity issues in the shifting welfare landscape. A case study analysis of the Dutch participation society as national policy offers support for the framework's internal linkages, and highlights how the responsibility and self-sufficiency goals of the neoliberal model mean access and equity matter primarily in terms of outcomes. The subsequent micro-level analysis of citizen initiatives in Gouda identifies a communitarian model, centered on fostering social cohesion, and as such requires attention to the representativeness of participants. This thesis suggests a structured research agenda necessary to ensure participation society studies talk to rather than past each other.

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The late, great Johan Cruyff once said: "If I wanted you to understand, I would have explained it better." Unfortunately, I never possessed his footballing talent, so I have tried to explain things the best I can. I hope I have succeeded.

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1 - Introduction

In a September 2013 speech prepared for him by the Dutch government, King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands declared that the welfare state of old was no longer sustainable in the context of internationalization and an aging population. The time had come to transition into a participation society, where the government empowered individuals to take responsibility for their own lives and communities. He cited the need to reduce government deficits, but also argued that this change would promote societal solidarity, thereby granting opportunity to the strong and protection to the weak, and ultimately proving beneficial for all (Ferdinand, 2013). While welfare state retrenchment is hardly unique, particularly in contexts of austerity (Korpi and Palme, 2003), few countries have articulated such an explicit and comprehensive policy shift in welfare and services provision, and as such the announced transition to a so-called participation society immediately generated considerable public, partisan, and academic interest.

Five years on, the academic interest remains, but with disappointingly little to show for it. Much of the research has produced provisional micro- and meso-level findings (Engbersen, Snel and 't Hart, 2015; Igalla and Van Meerkerk, 2015; Snel, Hoogmoed and Ode, 2015), with few attempts to relate and engage these studies along shared theoretical frameworks or research agendas for a bigger picture view. There have been parallel conceptual and normative debates (Schinkel, 2007; Van Houdt, Suvarierol and Schinkel, 2011), but again these often approach the participation society and its components from a multitude of angles and theories without establishing sufficient common ground for knowledge accumulation, especially relating back to empirical studies. Hesitance to draw broad conclusions or even commit to core theories based on policy initiatives that are still considered to be in their experimental phase is understandable, but

this welfare state transformation has its roots long before 2013 (Lenos, Sturm and Vis, 2006; Lub and Uytendinck, 2012) and the key components of the participation society have parallels in other countries that can inform and avail of Dutch studies as well (Andrews and de Vries, 2007; Smith, 2010; Newman and Tonkens, 2011; Andreotti, Mingione and Polizzi, 2012).

A series of academic contributions to the blog *Sociale Vraagstukken* (Social Challenges) illustrates the problem. The articles were published by prominent experts in the field, at the approximate two-, three-, and four-year anniversaries of King Willem-Alexander's original speech, and give status update on how the participation society is going. Snel and Engbersen (2015) reference Wilson and Putnam and sound the alarm that participation may be creating a Matthew effect, benefiting those with the social and material capital to take advantage of it, while abandoning neighborhoods most in need of support. Fenger (2016) instead draws on Ostrom's research on common pool resources, and decides that citizen's collaborative efforts outperform the cold, bureaucratic state and this should be harnessed wherever possible regardless. Koopman (2017), meanwhile, argues that participation itself is very diverse, and excessive government rules and requirements are what actually drives observed differentiation. All three provide compelling but difficult to compare perspectives and evidence, evaluating the participation society in accordance with their separate conceptions of its drivers, subjects, and desired outcomes. Specifically, they approach the question of access and equity in fundamentally different ways, arguing about conclusions without setting the terms of the debate first.

Ultimately, there are big questions to be answered in terms of what this transformation means for welfare access, equity, quality, efficiency, and other outcomes. These questions, particularly those regarding access and equity, drive much of the public debate. Even if the participation society today is far from replacing traditional welfare state institutions, there needs

to be a clear idea of how to study this transition and its effects as more changes do take place and more data does become available. Localized welfare provision and empowerment beyond rigid formal and bureaucratic channels could be a compelling way to reach marginalized groups and individuals more effectively, while overextended Western welfare states are under increasing pressure to retrench or restructure, and migration and an aging population pose unprecedented challenges. Active citizenship has specifically been hailed as a way to grant agency to previously marginalized groups and widen social inclusion (Newman and Tonkens, 2011, p. 14). On the other hand, there is considerable skepticism that this policy solution is perhaps too convenient, and that governments are using such welfare reform as a cloak for retrenchment and austerity, without providing the resources and support for decentralized welfare and bottom-up initiatives to truly succeed (Miliband, 2011; *De Volkskrant*, 2013b). This could leave vulnerable and marginalized groups at even greater risk.

To study this question beyond the headlines and political punditry, and suggest a common research agenda, I present a theoretical framework that distinguishes between neoliberal and communitarian models of participation, and builds on this to help locate relevant access and equity concerns. While in the neoliberal model, access and equity should be studied primarily in terms of secured outcomes, in the communitarian model it revolves around the active involvement itself. While I find that the Dutch participation society best matches the neoliberal model as a whole, I also show that the communitarian model can still provide valuable guidance in studying access and equity at certain meso- and micro-levels. Importantly, my framework tries to bridge the gap between normative and empirical studies, and leaves room to question common assumptions like the inherent desirability of participation and active citizenship. Moreover, instead of treating the participation society as a unique phenomenon, I consider it within broader national and

international trends, widening the theoretical foundation it can be based on and the scope to which it potentially applies. This theoretical framework requires researchers to be more explicit about their assumptions and think carefully about where relevant access and equity concerns may arise, and as such ensures that future findings can be integrated into a bigger picture.

The investigation will proceed with a brief overview of the participation society in Chapter 2, followed in Chapter 3 by an extensive literature review that highlights both the trends and gaps in the current literature and draws attention to empirical and normative assumptions that often go unchallenged. In Chapter 4, I lay out my theoretical framework, which first distinguishes between neoliberal and communitarian models of citizen participation, and then integrates these into an adapted version of Teorell's (2006) political participation framework to locate access and equity concerns. Chapter 5 covers my methodology, and introduces the two brief studies conducted as an initial test of the framework. The first, a case study analysis of the Dutch participation society, is presented in Chapter 6, while Chapter 7 details the micro-level analysis of citizen initiatives in Gouda. Chapter 8 concludes, acknowledges limitations, and provides suggestions for further research.

2 – The Participation Society

The participation society is not defined by a single law, but rather a broad and growing collection of formal and informal policies. Nevertheless, the 2007 Social Support Act (*WMO*) first signaled a significant turn in Dutch welfare policy. It decentralized key care responsibilities to the municipal level, and emphasized the need to actively mobilize citizens in the development and implementation of local social policy (*Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning*, 2007). An updated and expanded version was enacted in 2015, giving municipalities further duties and highlighting the need for individual self-sufficiency and community participation (*Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning 2015*, 2015). Together, these and other laws and policies that shape the participation society promote local volunteering and initiatives to take over some of the welfare state's roles and bring power and responsibility back to the municipal level. From an access and equity perspective, such decentralization is claimed to result in lower bureaucratic and other barriers for ordinary citizens to express and enforce their concerns and priorities.

The full picture of the participation society is more complex. It is perhaps understandable that the academic literature lacks a clear and concise conceptualization of the Dutch participation society and how it relates to other welfare changes and configurations across space and time, given that even politicians and policy makers have difficulty defining it. While it is generally linked to other concepts including active citizenship, volunteerism, marketization, and decentralization, there are few clear mechanisms or boundaries. A 2014 parliamentary letter emphasized that at its core the participation society is “a society where people are involved themselves and are co-owners of public provision. The care and support of the government adapts to this, instead of the other way around” (Plasterk and van Rijn, 2014, p. 1). This seemingly reduces it to little more than

tackling collective action problems, either ignoring or dismissing the many speeches and projects that declared fundamental shifts in state roles and community relations, and highlighted the value-driven nature of this endeavor (Verhoeven and Tonkens, 2013).

Elements like decentralization and marketization are certainly part of the participation society, but everything ultimately boils down to that key concept of participation, typically studied through the lens of active citizenship. Decentralization and marketization are akin to tools and mechanisms of the transformation, the former bringing the agency and incentives to act closer to the people, while the latter demands citizens' input by leaving them to make welfare provision choices (Newman and Tonkens, 2011). Still, it is in the actual participation that the transformation most clearly affects people's lives and welfare experiences. Indeed, the more comprehensive contributions to the literature center around the active citizenship dimension (Newman and Tonkens, 2011; Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013), and it dominates media coverage and public conversation.

Active citizenship is what gives individuals a duty of choice that facilitates marketization (Newman and Tonkens, 2011, pp. 12–13). Active citizenship is the local engagement that both demands and facilitates increased responsibility at the municipal level (Bakker *et al.*, 2012). Active citizenship provides the most direct solution to the challenges of migration and an aging population. It is through the lens of active citizenship that consequences in terms of access and equity can best be identified. Nevertheless, active citizenship does not cover the entirety of observed and expected welfare state change, and this is important to keep in mind. The theoretical framework I will present focuses primarily on participation in this most explicit and direct dimension, and while the other phenomena that constitute the changing welfare landscape are not entirely ignored, I recognize that they are largely unspoken or peripheral to my model. This does

not mean it is impossible to incorporate them more explicitly as well, but that is beyond the scope of this investigation. As the literature review will highlight, active citizenship is the most cited and studied aspect of the participation society, and the one where access and equity matter most.

When it comes to specific policies, citizen initiatives (*burgerinitiatieven*) are the quintessential expression of the participation society. These initiatives come in all shapes and sizes, but originate primarily at the local level and encourage individuals to set up their own projects to improve public spaces or social provisions in their community, typically with financial and sometimes logistical support from the municipality. This form of local engagement and solidarity is argued to grant flexibility in tackling issues specifically affecting certain groups or neighborhoods, and to promote social cohesion (Fenger, 2016). In practice, there is considerable skepticism regarding these supposed benefits, particularly the claims of inclusion and cohesion, and early studies have found mixed results. Education and ethnicity have been singled out as particularly affecting participation levels (Engbersen, Snel and 't Hart, 2015), some have warned that underprivileged neighborhoods will be further disadvantaged (Kanne, van den Berg and Albeda, 2013), and there is a risk of stratification between those who choose to participate and those who feel forced to (Vrieling, 2017). On the other hand, the profile of the average active citizen has been found to be more diverse than that in traditional forms of political participation like deliberative democracy and public consultations (Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013, pp. 19–20).

Before proceeding to the literature review, I need to make a further note on terminology. Throughout this paper, I refer to the Dutch word *burger* as citizen. While both terms originally described the inhabitants of a town or city, citizen has come to be associated more strongly with formal state recognition and belonging ('Citizen', 2018), whereas *burger* remains a looser term

tied to residence ('Burger', 2018). I considered civilian, civic, and resident as alternatives, but all three would result in an awkward translation of the word *burgerschap* (citizenship), and I wanted to remain consistent throughout. Still, it is useful to keep this simultaneously more local and more inclusive meaning of the word in mind, especially when considering what this means in terms of who are deemed among the recipients or participants of the welfare state.

As Newman and Tonkens (2011, p. 19) highlight, handling terminology and translation is a common challenge in studies of welfare reform and (active) citizenship. Key terms are used differently in different country contexts, and many concepts and ideas change as they travel. This is part of the reason that comparative research is difficult and individual cases, like the Dutch participation society, are often studied in isolation instead. Nevertheless, an awareness of this challenge, particularly when studying policy texts or discourse, should overcome much of the confusion and help understand terms like participation and active citizenship not as set global standards but as dynamic families of meaning (Newman and Tonkens, 2011, p. 20). Sometimes the nuances are important, sometimes less so, but they should always be considered by the researcher.

3 - Literature Review

To provide a compelling theoretical framework and suggest a useful research agenda, it is important to have a thorough understanding of the existing literature, both regarding the Dutch participation society specifically and regarding related concepts and phenomena. My framework is more concerned with structuring research and connecting theories than it is with generating substantial expectations of its own. As such, while insights from the literature review and basic case knowledge inform the framework, this is emphatically not an attempt at actual inductive theory development or grounded theory approaches (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Instead, I have called upon a wide range of mostly secondary sources from different fields and contexts in order to capture and connect relevant dimensions of participation society research, and justify the need and form of my resulting theoretical framework. This chapter gives a brief overview of key works.

3.1 The Participation Society in Global and Historical Context

The term participation society entered Dutch public discourse in 2013, but a glance at the literature reveals an abundance of synonyms and related concepts that stretch back to the previous century and across borders. In the Netherlands alone, there is mention of active citizenship (*actief burgerschap*), personal responsibility (*eigen verantwoordelijkheid*), do-ocracy (*doe-democratie*), and citizen participation (*burgerparticipatie*) (Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013, pp. 7–9). These terms vary in their connotations and associations, but broadly describe the same policy direction and desired outcomes, and are often used interchangeably. Lenos, Sturm, and Vis (2006) identify three generations of citizen participation in the Netherlands: (1) citizens demanding

official channels through which to respond to and critique policy; (2) increased room for citizen input in early policy formation; and (3) bottom-up citizen initiative, where the state plays a largely facilitative role. The authors show that these generations did not replace but rather layered on top of each other, with the third generation, encompassing the participation society and related concepts, emerging in the early 21st century. All three are presented as people demanding more room for participation, rather than the state requesting such input.

Equivalents of the participation society also exist outside of the Netherlands, particularly among other Western European welfare states. A prominent example was the British Conservatives' Big Society, which has lost political priority in recent years but spawned significant literature on topics like decentralization (Buser, 2013), volunteerism (Mycock and Tonge, 2011), and the changing state-society balance (Smith, 2010). Scandinavia sees similar attempts to support active citizenship, though there it is framed more in conjunction with, rather than as (partial) replacement for, a strong public sector (Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013, p. 36). Andrews and de Vries (2007) test the supposed success of decentralization as a strategy to enhance public participation in Brazil, Japan, Russia, and Sweden. They find mixed results and highlight the importance of the motivation for decentralization to its actual outcomes. This emphasis on motivation will inform my own distinction between neoliberal and communitarian models in the next chapter.

The key lesson is that the participation society is not entirely unique, and while context conditions are important to take into account, there is a vast body of literature that deals with largely analogous developments. The problem, as Van de Wijdeven et al. (2013, p. 35) point out, is that studies tend to be nationally focused and concentrated within specific sub-disciplines, so that academic debates tend to run in parallels, with little cumulative knowledge. At least part of

the confusion likely stems from the proliferation of near-synonymous terms. Newman and Tonkens' (2011) do study active citizenship across countries, but explicitly cite the mix of concepts, meanings, and translations as a hurdle to comparative research. While dedicating individual chapters to examples in particular countries, they reject the comparative case study label out of fear that nationally defined meaning and nuance will get lost (Newman and Tonkens, 2011, p. 20). Nevertheless, while comparative country studies are difficult given the substantial number of variables and contextualized meanings to consider, shared theories and frameworks would go far in connecting separated research bubbles and generating more insights even for particular cases like the Dutch participation society.

3.2 Theoretical Underdevelopment

Unfortunately, the existing literature's second problem is its lack of substantial theoretical underpinning. It is difficult to distinguish between the academic and the grey literature, because both emphasize the experimental stage of participation society initiatives to justify a limited scope and hedged conclusions. When the participation society is considered solely as a set of policy directions introduced in the Netherlands from 2013 onward, it makes sense to be cautious. A 2017 study found that 81% of Dutch people have never even participated in a citizens' initiative, and while experts suggest a true and irreversible transition into participation society would require at least 3.4 million citizens to be actively involved (20% of the population), the actual number is currently estimated at just 250,000 (*Movisie*, 2017). Yet, as highlighted, this particular phenomenon is part of a broader historical and cross-country trend, so a strong theoretical foundation is both possible and desirable, and would allow for better comparison to other cases and predictions and extrapolation from pre-2013 studies. While it is unsurprising that the

commissioned grey literature fails in this regard, academic research would do well to focus more energy on contextualizing and connecting studies.

Any existing theoretical frameworks tend to be rooted in foundational civic engagement and civil society literature, particularly neo-Tocquevillian strands including Putnam (2000) and Almond and Verba (1963). Putnam is frequently cited for his social capital theories (Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013, pp. 24, 44), especially linked to neighborhood-level ethnic diversity (Engbersen, Snel and 't Hart, 2015, pp. 2–3), while Almond and Verba help explain individual participation prompts and characteristics (Bakker *et al.*, 2012, pp. 397–398; Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013, p. 21). Primarily drawing on foundational authors is not inherently problematic, but studies centered around these theories often overlook the peculiarities of the participation society setting altogether and simply mix and match theories on a per-study basis. This helps theoretically grounded tests of particular projects or outcomes, but fails to generate valuable knowledge about the participation society and similar welfare models as a whole. Indeed, the extensive political participation research informs my own theoretical framework, but it is crucial to acknowledge mounting evidence that local engagement with the participation society does not necessarily follow the same hypothesized patterns (Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013, pp. 19–20). Not developing more tailored theories risks overlooking particular dynamics and distinctions like the difference between those who lead and initiate projects, and those who take part in or contribute to them, which may be of interest for access and equity and other concerns.

Contrasting to the broad foundational theories, there are also studies which use frameworks and typologies specifically created as public policy tools. These include Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker's (2006) CLEAR framework for citizen participation, which explains that people are more

likely to participate when they can, like to, are enabled to, are asked to, and are responded to. While useful from a public policy perspective, it gives little substantial insight into access and equity issues in the participation society, and largely ignores any link to macro-level institutions or general welfare state transformation.

Thus, the field's theoretical underdevelopment is essentially a substantial gap, with broad classic theories of societal interaction on one hand and micro-level, policy-oriented frameworks on the other, but very little in between. Unfortunately, it is precisely theoretical groundwork at this intermediate level that would be best suited for popular research objectives. Building on a theoretical mainstream for the study of active citizenship and more specifically the participation society should therefore be a priority.

3.3 Measurement Challenges

A further research challenge is the difficulty measuring some of the key variables. There is an extensive literature trying to address the so-called dependent variable problem in measuring welfare state change (Pierson, 2001; Green-Pedersen, 2004; Clasen and Siegel, 2007). The debate concerns how best to conceptualize, operationalize, and measure such change. The most straightforward quantitative approach is to look at social spending trends, but these are highly sensitive to the indicators and statistical techniques used, and obscure a host of distinctly important factors ranging from generosity to structural need (Clasen and Siegel, 2007, pp. 7–10). Several alternatives have been proposed (Clasen and Siegel, 2007), but Pierson (2001) suggests that measurement-wise there is no true substitute for detailed mapping of policy change along a consistent set of criteria. He highlights recommodification, cost containment, and recalibration as the key dimensions of change to keep in mind. Ultimately, there is no catch-all solution, hence the

need for theoretical frameworks and methodologies that are simultaneously flexible but tailored to the problem at hand. It is unclear if the participation society even has much measurable impact on the Dutch welfare state as of yet, but a simple social expenditure approach would certainly never capture this.

Measurement challenges also arise in assessing access and equity. Existing participation society research typically centers on access and equity of input, i.e. who participates (Engbersen, Snel and 't Hart, 2015; Snel, Hoogmoed and Ode, 2015; Vrielink, 2017). Survey responses and demographic data about participants are often the only substantial sources of data available, as there is no systematic evaluation of project outcomes and these are difficult to disentangle from the effects of austerity and the continued working of the more traditional welfare state. Yet just because conceptualizing and measuring access and equity is challenging, does not mean we should uncritically accept the more readily available options. Explicitly acknowledging the prevalence of imperfect proxies and assumptions is important to improving data collection and analysis.

3.4 Recent Studies of the Participation Society

Unsurprisingly, particularly given measurement challenges, existing empirical studies of the participation society closely mirror the current state of the theory. Most focus on the characteristics of those who actively participate, the specific projects they engage in, and the potential influence this has on policy priorities and outcomes (Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013, pp. 41–44). They typically conclude with policy recommendations for how to activate currently marginalized groups, ensure project durability, or foster social cohesion (Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker, 2006; Bakker *et al.*, 2012, pp. 411–412; Bokhorst *et al.*, 2015, p. 11).

Given the variation and flexibility of citizen initiatives and participation, findings are often context-specific and sometimes contradictory, but Van de Wijdeven et al. (2013) identify general trends and shared findings within the active citizenship scholarship that provide a good foundation. These insights come from stacking up micro-level studies rather than repeatedly testing strong theory-guided expectations, and do not cover the participation society per se, as the literature overview was published in 2013. While deliberative democratic channels are dominated by highly-educated, middle-aged white men, action-oriented participation is found to be less clearly stratified according to demographic characteristics (Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013). This could reflect a broader repertoire of ways to be active in the latter. Preexisting social capital and prior experience do remain strong predictors of current and future participation (Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013, p. 20), causing access and equity concerns there. Some government involvement and professionalization tends to be appreciated and foster positive outcomes, as long as it does not overstep to the extent that citizens no longer feel in charge (Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013, p. 29). Exactly where this boundary lies is unclear.

Studies since 2013 focus more explicitly on the participation society. They paint a mixed picture, especially when it comes to access and equity issues. This is unsurprising given their localized, narrow scopes, and limited data. Engbersen et al. (2015) use Rotterdam neighborhood survey data to test individual- and neighborhood-level determinants of active citizen participation. They find that individual characteristics are key rather than neighborhood-level factors like diversity, although neighborhoods with a strong history of activism do see an additional boost in participation (Engbersen, Snel and 't Hart, 2015). Education level is positively correlated with participation, while first- and second-generation migrants tend to be less involved, although this partially depends on their specific origin and the type of participation activity (Engbersen, Snel

and 't Hart, 2015, p. 5). Surprisingly, there is a positive and significant relationship between low income and high levels of volunteering. The authors hypothesize that this could capture low-income individuals living in less nice neighborhoods and thus feeling more compelled to change that, but when they add opinions about the state of the neighborhood to their model the relationship still holds (Engbersen, Snel and 't Hart, 2015, p. 26). They then suggest high-income individuals may have less time for volunteering, but are unable to test this using their data.

Snel et al. (2015) likewise study Rotterdam, comparing active citizenship in two contrasting neighborhoods. Schiemond is a low-income neighborhood with many non-white and unemployed residents, and as such could be expected to lag behind neighboring Lloydkwartier's young, vocal, and well-educated population when it comes to participation. However, the authors' interviews yielded the expected demographic differences, but no significant difference in participation levels (Snel, Hoogmoed and Ode, 2015, p. 79). In fact, people living in Schiemond were more active than those in Lloydkwartier when it came to taking action to keep their neighborhood safe (Snel, Hoogmoed and Ode, 2015, p. 80). Possible explanations include that residents of Schiemond had on average lived in their neighborhood for longer than the Lloydkwartier yuppies, and that Schiemond's higher unemployment rate means people are in the neighborhood during the day and can keep an eye on and intervene in general safety (Snel, Hoogmoed and Ode, 2015, p. 81). However, this cannot actually be tested using their data.

Vrieling (2017) bundles multiple studies on how the participation society and social inequality may relate, focusing specifically on the question of whether do-democracy is in fact a diploma-democracy. She identifies two key cleavages, between white and non-white residents, and between elites and the rest, and uses network perspective and social capital theory to explore how these can be alleviated or exacerbated by promoting active citizen participation. Vrieling (2017)

finds little evidence that active citizenship will foster durable inter-ethnic contact, and accepts the characterization of a white, male, highly-educated, middle-aged participation elite. Unlike others, she tries to explicitly address the question of who the non-participants are, and whether they are likely to simply mobilize in a later stage or will never be active citizens in the participation society at all (Vrieling, 2017, pp. 5–6). When she finds no conclusive answer beyond the fact that preexisting social capital matters, Vrieling (2017, p. 7) identifies three pathways through which such selective participation could genuinely increase social inequality. If everyone benefits equally from the initiatives or the vulnerable and marginalized groups do even more, then who leads them is not as important. The author suggests that it is here that the local government can play an important role, ensuring that underprivileged residents have their voices heard and enjoy professional support to realize their priorities (Vrieling, 2017, pp. 16–17).

Beyond examining who gets involved, why, and how, there is also interest in the types of project that fall under the participation society umbrella. Bokhorst et al. (2015) examined citizen cooperatives, highlighting them as risky but exciting sources of inspiration and innovation in energy, healthcare, telecommunications, and housing. Nevertheless, the authors warn that as cooperatives become more embedded in the institutional landscape, they must be vigilant to retain control or else risk becoming a useful pawn in government budget cuts or energy targets (Bokhorst *et al.*, 2015, p. 11).

Igalla and Van Meerkerk (2015) studied 56 citizens' initiatives and focused on the involved actors and associated project longevity. They found mostly highly educated initiators, but no significant relationship between personal characteristics and the sustainability of citizens' initiatives. What did affect sustainability and longevity was the type of network the project was built on: initiatives tended to last longer or be in a more advanced stage when rooted in a strong

polycentric network than in a star network centered on a single initiator (Igalla and Van Meerkerk, 2015, p. 13). This bolsters the idea that people with pre-established social and professional networks can engage in the participation society more successfully than those who begin from a marginal or isolated position. Again, the authors acknowledge data limitation and their study is largely exploratory, seeking to guide future research rather than actually offering strong evidence on its own (Igalla and Van Meerkerk, 2015, p. 19).

Finally, Grootegoed and Tonkens (2017) move the focus from participants to recipients of voluntary care, interviewing a small sample of disabled and elderly citizens about their experiences being shifted from previously publicly financed daycare to volunteer-driven support. While the nature of their study precluded firm conclusions, the authors found that interviewees' social connections were actually diminished after the transition, and it negatively affected their self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem (Grootegoed and Tonkens, 2017, p. 240). One of the key solutions Grootegoed and Tonkens suggest is "parity of participation," (2017, p. 241) where governments help people with disabilities volunteer themselves where they are able to, ensuring that they feel valued through their own reciprocal contribution to society.

3.5 Challenging Assumptions

The Grootegoed and Tonkens (2017) parity of participation policy recommendation clearly illustrates an assumption that runs throughout much of the literature on active citizenship and the participation society, namely that a well-executed participative model is necessarily desirable. Few studies challenge or even address this assumption, suggesting a general consensus that problems with participation arise primarily from poor execution, like insufficient guidance and non-representative demographics. It seems that once these are addressed, through targeted activation

of marginalized groups or putting in place the right balance of municipal and state support, positive externalities like local effectiveness and efficiency and increased social cohesion will remain. Newman and Tonkens (2011) even highlight how participation grants agency to previously excluded groups, making them ‘subjects’ rather than ‘objects.’ Political and popular media criticism of the participation society, Big Society, and other similar initiatives rarely challenges the underlying idea of this policy model. A common refrain is simply that active citizenship has been misused as a cover up for (austerity-era) budget cuts (Freedland, 2010; Miliband, 2011; *De Volkskrant*, 2013b; Slob, 2014), rather than encouraged and implemented in good faith and with appropriate support.

Some scholarship, however, has begun to challenge the core normative value and supposed positive externalities of participation and active citizenship, even when implemented in accordance with the many recommendations. This critique originates largely in the fact that these are not purely organic bottom-up efforts, like traditional solidarity economies (Miller, 2009). Even if state involvement is minimal, it still shapes and responds to initiatives, and the way in which it does so has significant impact on outcomes as well as the very nature of engagement and the normative expectations tied to it.

Van de Wijdeven et al. (2013) hint repeatedly at a divergence between neoliberal and communitarian notions of the participation society, sometimes clashing in paradoxical ways. General active citizenship policy in the Netherlands, they argue, has been guided by the neoliberal idea: let citizens take personal responsibility for themselves and their communities without much state interference. Yet some policies have been shaped by a more communitarian impetus: activate citizens within their communities so they can strengthen these and collectively solve problems (Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013, p. 28). This distinction between neoliberal and

communitarian notions of participation informs the core of my theoretical framework. It is an important one to make particularly when considering the goals and future development of the participation society and how this affects existing roles and institutions, which the current literature barely covers.

More fundamentally, Schinkel (2007) criticizes the very notion of active citizenship, arguing it has been conflated with brotherhood and imbued with a moral character beyond its formal definition. The author warns this solidifies the dichotomy between active participants and a residual category of passive citizens. The celebration of active citizenship is not politically neutral, becoming a mechanism of in- and exclusion that imposes particular moral and cultural expectations. The active citizen is one who contributes not dissents, and it is no coincidence that newcomers, migrants, rarely receive this label (Schinkel, 2007, p. 85). Van Houdt et al. (2011) link the active citizenship expectation to an ‘earned citizenship’ trend across Western Europe. Studying the citizenship regimes of the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands, they argue that the pressures of globalization and immigration have given rise to a ‘neoliberal communitarian’ notion, where citizenship is both contractually based on personal responsibility, and culturally embedded in a sacralized community. Newman and Tonkens (2011, p. 122) highlight the distinction between active and activist citizens, pointing out how important it is to governments that citizens’ active participation is ultimately in support of rather than challenging their top-down political priorities.

Finally, Lub and Uytendaele (2012) show how acknowledging divergent participation capacities is crucial to avoid paradoxical outcomes, and warn against dogmatic policy and institutionalization. They highlight how policies aiming to integrate and socialize people with mental disorders so they can participate like ‘normal’ people do risk actually deteriorating their

quality of life (Lub and Uytterlinde, 2012, pp. 387–388). This underscores the importance of understanding how state and institutions shape and respond to the participation society, as this is not an organic bottom-up movement and has substantial political, social, and personal consequences. Potential access and equity issues need to be studied with this broader space in mind, not just at the micro-level looking at individual projects or groups of people.

4 - Theoretical Framework

This thesis seeks to establish and justify a stronger theoretical framework for studying the Dutch participation society and similar welfare state policy changes, in order to structure and accumulate insights, highlight normative and empirical assumptions, and investigate the access and equity issues that may arise as a result of such transformation. As was explained in chapter 2, the emphasis is on the active citizenship dimension rather than aspects like decentralization and marketization, because it is the most studied and cited dimension, centrally connects other aspects, and is where access and equity concerns are most prominent. I first propose an important distinction between neoliberal and communitarian models of citizen participation, laying out how these diverge in terms of motivations, characteristics and consequences on the further transformation of the welfare state. Then, I show what this distinction means for locating and studying access and equity problems, adapting Teorell's (2006) mapping of political participation models. Combined, these frameworks facilitate an in-depth and long-term look at the participation society and its (potential) consequences, less swayed by specific policies and political discourse frames that are flexible and unstable. It also ensures that micro- and macro-level, and normative and empirical approaches are structured and contextualized in such a manner that they speak to rather than past each other. Finally, I revisit the very concept of an active citizen, emphasizing the barely challenged normative assumptions that underlie it and considering whether these could foster more fundamental access and equity concerns beyond the specific model of participation or its implementation.

4.1 Neoliberal versus Communitarian Participation Models

One of the insights that emerged from the literature on welfare decentralization and participation is that the motivation behind it matters both in terms of the mechanisms and resulting characteristics (Andrews and de Vries, 2007; Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013). There are two basic arguments for moving toward a participation society approach to welfare. The neoliberal idea focuses on letting citizens take personal responsibility for themselves and their community without excessive state interference. This means that where citizen involvement grows, the state can retreat, hopefully allowing for more targeted, effective, and efficient solutions for welfare and social challenges. In fact, the state may even retreat first precisely to stimulate such involvement. Citizens are empowered actors with ownership over their own lives and surroundings rather than babied by a bureaucratic and paternalistic state. The communitarian model of citizen participation is more concerned with activating citizens within their communities to strengthen bonds and increase social cohesion through collective projects and problem solving. Here the impetus is on strengthening society from below and likewise allowing for more targeted and localized solutions. It recognizes the potential value of local engagement and welfare provision beyond the cold bureaucratic state (Fenger, 2016), but without actually displacing the caring role of the welfare state from above.

Both models constitute potential responses to the key challenges of globalization, migration, and an aging population, and it is important not to caricaturize them. The neoliberal model's response rejects one-size-fits-all solutions and promotes active participation to increase efficiency and reduce costs, thereby preventing existing provision from being stretched beyond its limits as needs grow. Yet it should not be reduced simply to a cover for austerity, as ownership and responsibility are pursued and celebrated beyond their mere cost-effectiveness. Moreover, its

conceptualization of self-sufficiency can be quite broad, and still involves an element of solidarity. In Dutch, this is described as *samenredzaamheid* (shared-sufficiency) – individuals are not dependent on the state, but do look out for one another. The communitarian model approaches the same issues by building social cohesion, seeking to integrate newcomers and previously marginalized groups, and combatting the isolation of marginalized and dependent groups like the elderly. Both thus pursue reforms that keep welfare provision sustainable in this changing context. Of course, many aspects of these models are not mutually exclusive, and indeed the Dutch government has emphasized both neoliberal and communitarian motives in their framing of the participation society (Ferdinand, 2013), but identifying the core features of and distinguishing between the two is necessary to understand broader policy priorities and implications.

Beyond variation in motivation or core value, the literature also points at different conceptions of the role of the state. Van de Wijdeven et al. (2013) distinguish between a British goal of states retreating and making space for their citizens to take over responsibilities, and a Scandinavian approach where state provision persists and plays a supporting role for citizen participation. This distinction may not always be so clear-cut, but serves to further separate neoliberal from communitarian models of participation. The common types of projects will likewise vary in line with these core values and the differing notions of state involvement, with neoliberal ones taking on more substantial welfare responsibilities, while communitarian projects enhance communities in a supplementary manner.

I also draw from the three dimensions of change in welfare reform identified by Pierson (2001): recommodification, cost containment, and recalibration. Together, these three dimensions provide a good overview of the welfare state restructuring. Esping-Anderson's influential concept of decommodification refers to the extent to which services like healthcare are provided as a right,

and individuals can maintain their livelihoods without relying on the market. Pierson (2001) turns this around and considers the extent to which welfare systems introduce new duties and conditionalities, for instance through employment activation programs. While such recommodification is not inevitable in neoliberal participation systems, the focus on personal responsibility does make it considerably more likely than under the communitarian model.

Cost containment is again not a black-and-white contrast between the two, and it is important to disentangle austerity from the participation models themselves. Nevertheless, because the neoliberal model explicitly aims to have individuals or the market take over some of the retrenching state's tasks, reducing public spending is quite central. The communitarian model may seek to reduce spending, but it may also increase it, at least in the short term, as the state pursues targeted investment in local citizen participation to promote social cohesion and other positive externalities.

Finally, recalibration is defined by Pierson as: “reforms which seek to make contemporary welfare states more consistent with contemporary goals and demands for social provision.” (Pierson, 2001, p. 381) This is a difficult one to identify and analyze, but Pierson (2001) argues it is a crucial dimension precisely because it can capture more complex topics like gender equity and social exclusion that the other two do not. Rather than placing it within the core distinguishing framework, recalibration and its components can be studied in greater detail with the distinction between neoliberal and communitarian models of participation as a starting point. I will demonstrate this later using access and equity amid changing demographics as my example.

Table 1 (next page) summarizes the main characteristics identified with each model, as described. While it is important to recognize the limits of this dichotomy and to avoid caricaturizing either type, understanding the impetus and goals of participation is a crucial

framework to study aspects like access and equity, and anticipate future developments amid transition. This list is by no means exhaustive, but shows how the core value or motivation for (encouraging) citizen participation gives rise to a host of distinguishing features. It is not impossible to combine neoliberal and communitarian aspects, especially in discourse, but I anticipate one always dominating in actual policies and results. To the extent that this framework carries theoretical expectations of its own, it is that the highlighted characteristics within the model's configuration tend to go together. My case study analysis of the Dutch participation society will attempt to test this.

Table 1: Comparing Neoliberal and Communitarian Models of Participation

	<i>Neoliberal</i>	<i>Communitarian</i>
<i>Core Value</i>	personal responsibility	social cohesion
<i>State Role</i>	retreating, making space	supporting, persisting
<i>Project Types</i>	local initiatives replacing inefficient state provision, making people self-sufficient	local initiatives tackling local problems, building community
<i>Recommodification</i>	likely	unlikely
<i>Cost Containment</i>	core aspect	possible positive externality, but may actually see specific investment instead

Table 1 distinguishes neoliberal and communitarian models primarily at the national level, but as the different project types hint at, the distinction can be useful at other levels of analysis as well. When discussing a particular form of participation, like citizen initiatives or informal care (*mantelzorg*), identifying whether motivations and characteristics are neoliberal or communitarian helps locate potential access and equity issues and gives a clearer structure for evaluating the project at hand. Even the context conditions and funding mechanisms of participation society implementation can differ enough at municipal level to suggest a shift from neoliberal to

communitarian models or vice versa. This sub-level awareness will inform my empirical analysis of citizen initiatives in the Dutch town of Gouda.

Ultimately, evaluating the Dutch participation society and other similar welfare state transformations with reference to this typology gives better insight into long-term effects and potential welfare state transformation, and allows for contextualizing preliminary results and individual studies within a broader framework of expectations. While individual projects may not prompt clear state retreat at the moment, I expect the neoliberal model to be dominant in the Netherlands in the long-term. The participation society is still in its early stages and as such any findings are skewed toward the early adopters and early initiatives, but systematic study of policy priorities and externalities guided by this framework should facilitate more accurate understanding of what is happening now, as well as calculated predictions about the future.

4.2 Studying Access and Equity Based on the Participation Models

Building on the distinction between neoliberal and communitarian participation, it is possible to hypothesize where access and equity issues would most likely arise. In the neoliberal model, there is a particular danger that vulnerable people will be unable to take on the desired personal responsibility, and that inability to participate combined with a retreating state leaves substantial holes in welfare coverage and increased stigma when using the final safety net support that does remain. This is less of a concern for the communitarian model, where more state provision is expected to persist regardless. However, the communitarian model does risk reinforcing existing social networks and cleavages rather than fostering social cohesion more broadly. Since more vocal and well-connected citizens are likely to lead in participation (Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013), other voices may be drowned out and a gap can emerge between groups that

do and do not feel included. Of course, each model has potential positive access and equity effects too. The neoliberal model may give traditionally overlooked groups greater agency, making them subjects rather than objects of social services and welfare (Newman and Tonkens, 2011). It attempts to place everyone on even footing. The communitarian model meanwhile could in fact be successful in integrating various groups through localized engagement, and shines a spotlight on community labor that may otherwise go unacknowledged.

In order to move beyond these tentative extrapolations and predictions, and link empirical data to hypothesized mechanisms and outcomes, a more systematic approach is necessary. Assessing potential access and equity issues in a structured manner according to the two models of participation is not only efficient, it also allows for broader engagement with the question of welfare transformation, and makes it easier to disentangle the role played by the country's existing welfare regime in shaping outcomes. Therefore, I have modified Teorell's (2006) framework for studying political participation, adapting it to study neoliberal and communitarian participation model. The framework separates the causes, conceptions, and consequences of participation as an active citizen, and identifies the precise nature and location of potential access and equity concerns. Some are shared, others specific to the particular model.

Teorell (2006) studies traditional forms of democratic political participation, and proposes a research agenda that connects normative theory to empirical investigations. In his framework, normative democratic theory both suggests which questions to ask and provides standards to evaluate empirical results. The neoliberal and communitarian models of participation may have been conceptualized with reference to actual findings in the literature, but at their core lie normative judgments as to the roles, rights, and responsibilities of individuals, communities, and the state. As such, they too can inform the questions researchers should be asking, and the

standards they should be using, for instance to evaluate access and equity. Teorell (2006) builds his model around three theories of democracy, that differ primarily in terms of the consequences they prefer, i.e. why participation is desirable. The communitarian and neoliberal model can be distinguished in a similar manner, with the former valuing participation as a force of social connection and cohesion, and the latter as an exercise of personal responsibility and self-or shared-sufficiency.

In evaluating equality concerns within his framework, Teorell (2006) considers Verba et al.'s (1995) focus on 'voice,' highlighting how those who participate must be "representative to the general public in terms of the preferences and needs they transmit to the system" (Teorell, 2006, p. 792). This outcome-oriented evaluation is interesting in that it is not entirely clear whether those representative *to* the general public must necessarily be representative *of* the general public as well. This is an important distinction to make when evaluating the participation society, as representativeness of participants matters for the social cohesion goals of the communitarian model, whereas for the neoliberal model the (shared) outcomes of participation matter in terms of equality, rather than who secures them.

However, Teorell (2006) primarily tests the fairness of political participation models with reference to resources and incentives, arguing that the process should be ambition-sensitive but endowment-insensitive. He defines endowment or resources broadly, including physical, human, social, but also technological and temporal capital. Ambition or incentives include process incentives, expressive incentives, but even internalized duties to the community or norms maintained through fear of social sanctions (Teorell, 2006, pp. 799–800). Teorell acknowledges that the interplay between resources, incentives, and action is not always straightforward, and

neither is separating incentives from resources. I will return to this in reference to my adapted framework, which is presented below (Figure 1).

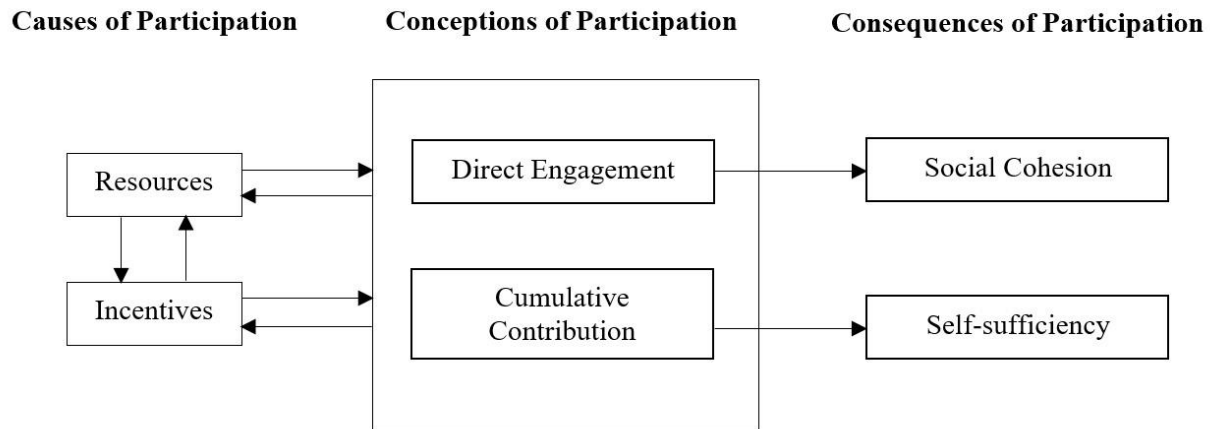


Figure 1: Causes, Conceptions, and Consequences of Participation (adapted from Teorell, 2006)

While this framework for studying active participation draws extensively from Teorell's (2006) political participation research agenda, there are some notable differences. The normative core lies more in the (desired) consequences of participation than in the conceptions, and centers on the same motivations that formed the basis for the earlier distinction between communitarian and neoliberal models of participation. On the one hand there is the social connection and cohesion of the communitarian approach, on the other the responsibility and self-sufficiency of the neoliberal approach. There are specific types or conceptions of participation that feed into these consequences. For the communitarian model, a direct engagement in participation is necessary, as it is only through everyone taking part that the goals of social cohesion and connection are achieved. The less complete or representative this direct engagement is, the less likely the desired consequences will follow. In the neoliberal model, on the other hand, self-sufficiency and responsibility mean a duty to contribute to the welfare of oneself and one's community, but this participation does not need to be universal or representative for the desired consequence to be

achieved. Here, the (cost-)efficient and effective output is facilitated by people dutifully contributing what they can, but it is ultimately that cumulative output that matters most and not the act or nature of participation itself.

In terms of assessing access and equity issues, this means that within the communitarian model, the key concern should be with input – who participates? If certain groups or demographics are systematically excluded or underrepresented, social cohesion can turn into societal splits, with in- and out-groups based on participation. Within the neoliberal model, the aforementioned output is crucial – are individuals and communities able to tackle public projects and welfare adequately and efficiently with reduced state presence? As long as public spaces are still kept up and the elderly continue to receive expected standards of care, the precise demographic characteristics and motivations of volunteers and other active participants are less important. In other words, rather than direct participation, access and equity can also be achieved through meaningful representation of shared interests in others' active contributions.

Teorell's (2006) causes of participation, resources and incentives, also remain important indicators of access and equity, even in the neoliberal model, although the boundaries between them are murkier than he suggests. Resources affect people's ability to participate, as Teorell highlights, but may also affect the need to participate, as securing public goods and welfare is more pressing to some than others (Engbersen, Snel and 't Hart, 2015; Snel, Hoogmoed and Ode, 2015). This is important to consider as aggregate data may result in the two sides cancelling each other out, suggesting resources are irrelevant to participation when in fact they are not. Differentiation according to incentives is deemed acceptable by Teorell (2006), as engagement and ambition drives some to increased political participation while others are content on the sidelines. The author nevertheless acknowledges that resources and incentives can feed into each other, so that this

divide is not always clear. Indeed, this again is particularly problematic among the types of active participation investigated here, especially in neoliberal models where the incentive to participate can be closely tied to the resources one hopes to receive. This is where the aforementioned recommodification emerges, for instance.

A final access and equity concern stems less from the specifics of these models, and more from normative debates about the value of active citizenship in general. Teorell (2006, p. 800) cites selective drivers of ambition like process and expressive incentives, but also acknowledges the role social norms and sanctions may play in citizen participation. To him these are logically necessary to overcome collective action problems in political participation, but they still hint at potential steering and coercion that should raise eyebrows. To the extent that the participation society and similar welfare state transformations are imposed and encouraged from above, this question of incentives becomes even murkier.

The key assumption in both models that activation and participation is automatically desirable ignores the role of the state in shaping and promoting this as official policy, which brings power and informational asymmetries that do not arise from a genuinely organic, localized bottom-up situation (Schinkel, 2007). This is exacerbated by the fact that active citizens are coded as those who engage productively, but not those who oppose or critique government policy and priorities. The very notion of active citizenship can thus become culturally shaped, tied to being ‘normal’ (read: Dutch), and as such create extra barriers for those who do not fit the desired mold (Van Houdt, Suvarierol and Schinkel, 2011) or seek to actively challenge the status quo on how public services should be run (Kisby, 2010).

This cultural framing was visible in the 2017 election campaign, when Prime Minister Rutte published an open letter entitled “act normal” that primarily addressed immigrant residents

with a list of things considered ‘normal’ in the Netherlands, including “working for your money and making the most out of your life,” “helping each other when things are tough,” and “making an effort and not running away from problems,” but also social and cultural expectations (Rutte, 2017). Anyone not willing to act ‘normal’ was advised to leave. Here participation becomes a loaded term, and social norms and sanctions may actively undermine access and equity, bolstering a problematic but widespread assumption that problems can and should be remedied primarily by finding ways to activate those who are currently not as involved.

In short, both resources and incentives provide different but relevant insights regarding access and equity, although Teorell’s (2006) pursuit of endowment-blind but ambition-sensitive participation proves too naïve in this context. Separating out the conceptions and desired consequences of participation allows for differentiation between the neoliberal and communitarian models. Whereas the primary access and equity concern in the communitarian model should be with the input, specifically the extent and representativeness of who participates, the neoliberal model’s access and equity depends primarily on the beneficiaries of its outcomes. In evaluating welfare transformations like the participation society and their effects, situating individual studies within this type of framework provides structure to the specific research and facilitates comparison to others. Moreover, the integration of normative dimensions means it actively suggests new questions and linkages to explore, and empirical findings can even feed back to the normative debate by testing implied relationships (Teorell, 2006, p. 805). The remainder of this thesis is dedicated to briefly testing the framework’s utility in actual research studies.

5 - Methodology

To justify the proposed theoretical framework as a valuable contribution to the participation society research agenda, simply rooting it within an extensive literature review is insufficient. Therefore, I conducted two small studies guided by the framework: an illustrative case study of the Dutch participation society as national policy, and a micro-level analysis of citizen initiatives in the town of Gouda. These two applications have inherent research value and yield interesting results concerning social service access and equity, but they also test the robustness and utility of this framework itself and serve to highlight how it can be used in different ways and at different levels of analysis. The case study focuses on the distinction between neoliberal and communitarian models as a whole, whereas the micro-level analysis seeks to assess access and equity within a communitarian example. Measurement validity, operationalization, and general data limitations are frequent challenges in political economy, particularly in welfare state change research (Clasen and Siegel, 2007). While neither the case study nor the micro-level analysis are able to fully overcome these issues, the theoretical framework makes often unacknowledged tradeoffs and assumptions more explicit, so that the normative and empirical judgments behind them can be properly scrutinized and compared within and across individual studies.

5.1 Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Measurement

As highlighted in the literature review, welfare state change research has long wrestled with a dependent variable problem: how can such change be operationalized and measured? (Green-Pedersen, 2004; Clasen and Siegel, 2007) The answer depends, unsurprisingly, on the researcher's theoretical definition of the concept (Keman and Woldendorp, 2016, p. 194), and so every new

conceptualization of welfare regimes and their characteristics must recalibrate operationalization and measurement as well. This underscores why comprehensive shared theoretical frameworks and well-rooted but broadly applicable conceptualizations are so valuable. Within my proposed framework, variables of interest vary according to the question asked, and the focus is not on measuring welfare state change itself, rather on assessing its potential effects, especially in terms of social service access and equity. Nevertheless, insights and best practices from the dependent variable problem remain applicable.

Establishing a strong theoretical basis and conceptualization of relevant variables was largely addressed in the previous chapter. Concepts help bridge theory and data, so it is important that they are not simply lists of characteristics, but that their dimensions relate to each other and to real-world phenomena in causal terms (Keman and Woldendorp, 2016, p. 56). This is why the neoliberal and communitarian models or conceptualizations of participation were built by starting from their central goal or motivation and then linking them logically through other dimensions, with access and equity issues then located based on the implications of those models.

The operationalization of the broad terms access and equity follows closely from the theoretical framework. There are numerous ways to frame and measure this variable, but I identified representativeness of participants (input) in the communitarian, and secured benefits and services (output) in the neoliberal model as being most relevant given the conceptual and theoretical context. Much of the existing Dutch research has focused on that first, input-driven operationalization, assessing equity in terms of who participates (Van de Wijdeven, De Graaf and Hendriks, 2013; Engbersen, Snel and 't Hart, 2015; Snel, Hoogmoed and Ode, 2015; Vrielink, 2017). The problem is that this decision rarely gets justified in terms of construct validity, and instead seems to stem from the enduring view of these policies and projects as provisional in

nature, and the fact that it is more difficult to disentangle specific outcomes of the participation society from austerity or underlying welfare state structures.

Data limitations understandably complicate finding appropriate variable measurements and making do with what is available characterizes the research process, but it is important to acknowledge tradeoffs explicitly. Existing literature draws primarily from micro-level qualitative observations and interviews, or population survey data linked to demographic characteristics. Most studies therefore end up focusing on who the (early) participants are. There is little insight into non-participants, to what extent they are benefiting or penalized, what the likelihood is they will get involved at a later stage (Vrieling, 2017), or even if they are already trying but failing to do so. The problem is not the methods and measurements used per se, but the way they are often presented as the only possible research approach in these early stages of the participation society transformation. Not only does this make the findings less compelling, it gives the field as a whole an ad hoc image that further discourages aggregating and connecting insights.

The main tradeoff in the proposed framework is between clear falsifiability and broad applicability, impeding assessment of internal validity. It is impossible to falsify or indeed verify an entire causal framework like the one presented, because it cannot be reduced to a single or a small set of specific hypotheses (Keman and Woldendorp, 2016, pp. 131–132). Moreover, it is built around causal mechanisms rather than causal effects, further complicating the search for conclusive results. Nevertheless, I have chosen to make this tradeoff in service of theoretical ambitions, as I believe it makes a valuable contribution to shaping the research agenda. More scoped down or targeted investigations and hypotheses can easily emerge from this framework, although it is important to avoid ecological fallacies when moving between applications at different levels of analysis.

5.2 Case Study: The Dutch Participation Society

I first apply the theoretical framework to an illustrative case study of the Dutch participation society as national policy, in order to evaluate it in terms of the neoliberal versus communitarian distinction and check whether this holds up when applied to a specific case. There are three possible outcomes: (1) it corresponds to the neoliberal model; (2) it corresponds to the communitarian model; or (3) it constitutes a mix of elements that neither model fully captures. The third outcome would suggest the linkage between characteristics is not as strong as the theoretical framework suggests. An intensive case study like this one can shed light on the larger population of cases where decentralization and increased emphasis on citizen participation is shifting the welfare landscape, but its representativeness is always debatable and it cannot prove anything. Moreover, the theoretical framework itself is difficult to falsify, and was largely constructed with literature on the Dutch participation society already in mind, a further source of potential bias. Nevertheless, the case study is a first test to see whether the internal logic and hypothesized connections of the two models can be observed in the real world, and subsequently suggests where researchers and policymakers should look to evaluate effects on social service access and equity of the Dutch participation society.

Gerring (2017, p. 44) identifies within-case evidence as a key criterion for case selection, and the Dutch case study is best suited to provide this. Not only is it explicitly articulated as a moment of welfare state change, and well-documented across popular, policy, and academic sources, it also has an explicit starting point from where to track the configuration of relevant variables. I have highlighted historical trends that predated the official pronouncement of the participation society in 2013, but it is nevertheless helpful to have that date as a marker of when to start really paying attention to discourse and legislation, as well as the trends and interactions

of state role, cost containment, participation project types, and (re)commodification. The Dutch case also has intrinsic importance (Gerring, 2017, p. 43) as a frontrunner in the broader welfare decentralization and active citizenship trend, which means it could serve as an inspiration for developments in other countries. This raises further concerns regarding its representativeness, but I believe the interactions and dynamics among relevant variables are unlikely to change. For this theoretical framework, it does not matter if the Dutch model itself is representative as a whole, rather that the connections that shape it are.

5.3 Micro-level Analysis: Citizen Initiatives in Gouda

The second application of my proposed theoretical framework is a micro-level analysis of access and equity in citizen initiatives in the Dutch town of Gouda. After establishing that Gouda's citizen initiative project falls within the communitarian model of participation, I draw upon a range of available data to identify potential access and equity issues in the hypothesized locations. In line with the communitarian model, the opportunity and representativeness of direct engagement and participation should be the primary concern. If resources do form a significant constraint, participation levels will likely be differentiated according to characteristics like income, education, age, and ethnicity. Micro-level analysis also allows for exploration of the more normative concerns within the framework, specifically deconstructing what it means to be an active participant, or not, and considering the content and desirability of incentives.

Quantitative data analysis is often celebrated within the field of political science for supposedly being more scientific and less prone to observer bias than other commonly used methods (Keman and Woldendorp, 2016, p. 18). While it does hold an advantage in statistically testing causal links between dependent and independent variables, its reliance on quantified

indicators makes measurement validity a particular concern and everything hinges on access to appropriate data. In this case, access and equity is assessed in terms of input – who participates – but privacy concerns mean the data is significantly restricted. For the social cohesion goal, participation should be as widespread and representative as possible, but in line with the framework it is primarily resources that need to be tested as a potential hurdle. Incentives are a more complex dimension that requires further discussion.

Gouda was chosen in part for its transparency and data availability, but quantitatively operationalizing variables of interest still proves difficult. Demographic and survey data is provided at neighborhood level rather than tied to individual respondents, significantly reducing potential forms of statistical analysis and thus testing power. This reveals a largely unacknowledged tradeoff in the current literature, where data availability concerns mean that virtually all studies drawing on neighborhood survey responses and demographic data to map participation levels focus on large cities, primarily Rotterdam (Engbersen, Snel and 't Hart, 2015; Snel, Hoogmoed and Ode, 2015). While this is defensible in terms of Rotterdam's diverse population and varied neighborhoods providing a good research setting, the dynamics of big cities can differ significantly from the rest of the country, and this is rarely commented on. As such, while the micro-level study in Gouda may not provide sufficient data for all the desired testing of access and equity, it remains a useful application of the theoretical framework in highlighting empirical and normative assumptions and underscoring the need for better open data.

6 - Case Study: Dutch Participation Society

Since 2013, there has been continuous debate on how to characterize the participation society and what it means for the future of social services and welfare provision in the Netherlands. The confusion partially stems from seemingly contradictory signals and mixed messaging, with emphasis shifting from local engagement to efficiency to social cohesion to austerity and a range of partisan talking points in between. A similar reaction accompanied Big Society, with Conservatives hailing it as an empowerment of communities and volunteering, while Labour dismissed it as a cynical cover for austerity and the small state (Miliband, 2011). Big Society was quietly abandoned after failing to catch on, but the participation society is now a standard part of the Dutch public policy discourse. However, disagreement and confusion about the current and future state of the participation society persist, and the term carries a political baggage that further colors public debate.

This illustrative case study analysis seeks to gain a clearer picture of what is happening and what the future likely holds. I have drawn from a wide range of sources, carefully analyzed, to test whether the participation society fits either the neoliberal or the communitarian model of participation. Alternatively, it could fit neither, suggesting that the hypothesized linkages between characteristics in the theoretical framework are overstated. While elements of both are present, particularly in discourse, I find the Dutch participation society corresponds closely to the neoliberal model, with the various elements relating to one another as hypothesized. This gives further credence to the utility and validity of the communitarian-neoliberal distinction, and also suggests that those concerned with access and equity should look less at the level and diversity of

participation, and more to the specific outcomes of where state involvement retrenches and what comes in its place.

6.1 Method and Data

The choice of method and case was largely discussed in the methodology chapter, so here I limit myself to the specific data and procedure that informed this case study analysis. While a single case study analysis will always be prone to accusations of observer bias and lack of genuine testing power, a clear and systematic protocol for collecting and analyzing data ensured methodological rigor (Keman and Woldendorp, 2016, pp. 319–320) and even allows for replication. Moreover, single cases can be considered distinct experiments, standing as independent analytic units but also ready to be compared to others under the same framework, where multiple cases “are discrete experiments that serve as replications, contrasts, and extensions to the emerging theory.” (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, p. 25)

To map out the reality of participation society policy at the national level, qualitative data was drawn from explicit discussion of this welfare transition in four types of sources: (1) political speeches; (2) online news coverage by the NOS, the Netherlands’ official public broadcaster; (3) official policy letters in response to parliamentary questions; and (4) key legislation. I performed a directed qualitative content analysis of these source texts, highlighting passages that fit the labels ‘neoliberal,’ ‘communitarian,’ ‘mixed/ambiguous,’ and ‘access and equity concerns,’ and then assigning a label to the text as a whole. Basic coding rules and examples are included in the appendix. The directed approach starts with the theory or earlier research and chooses appropriate labels accordingly, amending them during coding as needed (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1286). It can validate or conceptually extend a theoretical framework, but risks bias as finding supportive

evidence is more likely than not (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1283). I do not expect this to be an issue because I explicitly search for both communitarian and neoliberal markers, and acknowledge that if they mix significantly, this indicates my theoretical framework is flawed.

While the primary analysis helped guide the case study investigation, mitigate bias and ensure I did not miss important elements, I chose not to quantify or report this data on its own because it lacked context and nuance needed for interpreting such a wide array of texts together. The sources were chosen specifically to address the theory, the discourse, *and* the implementation and practice of the participation society, so these different perspectives and their implications had to be weighed carefully. A broader case study interpretation also allowed me to incorporate additional relevant findings, as well as Bacchi's (2012) 'what's the problem represented to be' approach to policy analysis. This was particularly helpful in clarifying the motivation behind the transition to participation society and the problems identified in what came before, through the type of attempted solutions provided.

I selected speeches from the *Rijksoverheid* (government) website, using the search term '*participatiesamenleving*' (participation society) from 2013 to the present. This yielded five results, but two were excluded for lack of relevance. A more comprehensive archive search found another three relevant speeches, bringing the total to six. The database only contains speeches by members of the government, none by opposition parties, which I deemed appropriate as the opposition were not the ones proposing or implementing policy reforms. Selected speeches skew toward 2013/14, when the participation society was first introduced, and four of the six were given by prime minister Rutte. This could be because it was a key policy proposal for the Rutte-II coalition, thus they wanted their loudest voice to promote it, but could also indicate that the leaders of center-left coalition partner PvdA were more reluctant to take full ownership of the reforms than

their center-right colleagues. Days after its official introduction, an opinion poll found that 74% of PvdA voters felt negatively about the participation society (*De Volkskrant*, 2013a).

Newspaper articles were selected by searching ‘*participatiesamenleving*’ on the NOS website. I found forty-seven articles but selected nineteen as being relevant. Rejected articles included summaries of speeches already included among my sources, stories that were either extremely broad or hyperlocal, and several articles related to *participatiesamenleving* being voted 2013 Word of the Year. Policy letters were collected from the online *Tweede Kamer* archives, again searching ‘*participatiesamenleving*.’ Of nineteen letters, eight were relevant enough for selection. Rejected letters typically contained just one peripheral mention of the term. Legislation proved to be trickiest to decide on, because there were several changes to existing legislation that could be interpreted as part of welfare reform but were not explicitly linked to the participation society. In the end I chose simply to include the two flagship and most high-impact pieces of legislation introduced as part of the participation society agenda. Full lists and sources of the selected texts can be found in the appendix.

6.2 Findings and Analysis

The guiding distinction between the neoliberal and communitarian models is the core value or motivation for increasing citizen participation. While both neoliberal and communitarian motives are present in speech and discourse, the neoliberal emphasis on personal responsibility and self-sufficiency is clearly dominant, especially once policy and legislation are considered. King Willem-Alexander’s (2013) speech introducing the participation society contained the much quoted line: “Of each person who can, we ask them to take responsibility for their own life and surroundings.” This clearly evokes personal responsibility, though immediately followed by a

paragraph tying it to a collective good, stressing how “when people shape their own futures, they add value not just to their own lives, but to society as a whole.” (Ferdinand, 2013)

This conceptualization of the link between the individual and their community that begins with the former taking responsibility rather than the latter providing care is a theme the prime minister further emphasizes in his speeches, repeatedly quoting the Adam Smith line that ‘in competition, individual ambition serves the common good.’ He also adds: “Whoever can take good care of themselves, often takes good care of the people around them and *that* strengthens the texture of our society.” (Rutte, 2014c) Social cohesion is therefore never entirely absent, but it constitutes a positive externality to the core value of responsibility. In Bacchi’s (2012) terms, the represented problem is excessive dependence on and insufficient independence from the state. In fact, this even shows in criticisms of the participation society, with numerous articles quoting citizens who continue to be frustrated by “the bureaucracy that municipalities impose.” (NOS, 2018) My findings largely mirror Verhoeven and Tonkens’ (2013) study of active citizenship framing in England and the Netherlands, where England saw more empowerment talk while Dutch politicians employed responsibility talk. Interestingly enough, the authors believed the latter would ultimately be less successful because “the political message to assume greater responsibility is not deemed credible by Dutch citizens due to its accusatory tone” (Verhoeven and Tonkens, 2013). Perhaps discursively linking responsibility to prosocial outcomes has improved that message.

On the actual policy side, social cohesion is particularly absent as a driving motivation. It would likely be inherently more difficult to capture in legislation or policy guidelines, but even in places where references to social cohesion would be appropriate, they are conspicuously absent. A policy letter on informal caregivers commends their “love and/or sense of responsibility,” (van Rijn, 2015) before discussing labor market implications. Legislation like the WMO (2015) and the

Participatiewet (2015) focuses on activating and integrating people into the labor market who were previously sidelined. Discussing the push to incorporate people with mental disorders into jobs or other forms of active contribution, Rutte (2014a) states: “that’s in the interest of the people themselves, but also our society and our economy.” Again, the individual is the starting point, the social implications secondary.

The question, then, is whether the links to other dimensions of the model carry through this neoliberal character, as my theory suggests. Recommodification is certainly very prominent, both in policy and discourse, with a strong sense that everyone needs to contribute their part to economic prosperity. On the legislative side, the WMO (2015) and Participatiewet (2015) reduce benefits and restrict eligibility conditions for individuals previously deemed potentially unfit for work. Decentralizing activation responsibilities to the municipal level, the government claims, allows for more targeted support to these people, boosting self-sufficiency and facilitating a smooth transition into the labor market (van Rijn, 2016a). A policy letter describes the goal as: “less caring, more stimulating” (Plasterk, 2015).

Recommodification also connects easily to cost containment. The Dutch welfare state has had a broader history of retrenchment and spending cuts in the past decades, and it is important not to directly conflate the participation society with austerity. Nevertheless, the need for cost containment is a common thread throughout the policy letters, legislation, newspaper coverage, and political speeches. Despite the claim that decentralization would allow for more personalized support for those (re)entering the labor market, the devolvement of responsibilities is not accompanied by a commensurate devolvement of funds (Plasterk, 2015). What is interesting about the framing of cost containment though is that again the government tries to evoke a secondary

social connection and solidarity, this time by constantly emphasizing that budget cuts are needed in order to ensure good provision for future generations (Rutte, 2014b; van Rijn, 2016a).

More than recommodification or cost containment, however, it is the changing state role in welfare and social service provision that features prominently in news coverage. One article describes how every winter, residents of a town collect money to create a temporary skating rink for the children. A woman donating says: “Actually the municipality should be paying for it. But we’ve been used to it for so long, we don’t know any differently.” (*NOS*, 2018) Dutch citizens have long led worldwide in their time spent on volunteering and other community service activities, so one expects necessary ability to adapt to whatever role the state leaves for them. In reality, articles reveal significant frustration at the apparent ease with which the government depends on volunteers. The growing reliance on informal caretakers has reduced their ability to participate in other forms of volunteering (*NOS*, 2017a), neighborhood organizations warn that municipalities constantly try to give them more tasks (*NOS*, 2017b), and there is particular unease about all the professional caring jobs that are now expected to be performed by unpaid and untrained acquaintances and volunteers (*NOS*, 2015; *NOS*, 2017c). In fact, it seems the state role is combining the worst of two worlds, because initiative leaders do also complain that there is still too much bureaucracy and red tape constraining their abilities (*NOS*, 2018). There’s a sense that government presence is retreating, but people are getting nothing in return.

Speeches and policy documents, interestingly enough, present exactly the inverse image. There are frequent references to decentralization and the efforts to cut red tape and allow more personalized welfare solutions (Plasterk and van Rijn, 2014; Rutte, 2014b; van Rijn, 2016b), and a recurring line that without greater local freedom, “one size fits all becomes one size fits nobody” (Rutte, 2014c). At the same time, the government goes to pains to emphasize that the welfare safety

net remains and no one will fall through the cracks: “[t]he WMO is there precisely for people who are incapable of solving problems on their own, especially for people with no network” (van Rijn, 2016a).

The disconnect between government and public on how they experience the state role is captured well in a policy letter addressing a caretaker’s written complaint that the participation society is too demanding of people like her (van Rijn, 2014). The government’s response is that there are professionals available to facilitate between her informal contribution to her mother and her elderly neighbor’s care, and that of other friends, neighbors, family, and formal providers. She must not have found the right balance yet, but the state will gladly help her with that. After all, “well equipped caretakers avoid, prevent, or delay often expensive forms of municipal support.” (van Rijn, 2014) The caretaker is experiencing discontent about the extent of the duty of care she has been left with, even if she is happy to help, while the government responds to it as a simple efficiency problem.

Of all the elements, state role is the only one that does not appear to fit neatly into the neoliberal model, in part because there is an ongoing struggle over what that role is and should be. It is also the dimension that is probably most resistant to change, and the framework needs to be given some flexibility here to account for the stickiness of underlying welfare regimes and institutions, population expectations regarding certain types of provision, and the relatively slower pace at which this recalibration is able to occur. Project types may similarly take longer to transition, as local citizen initiatives dominate newspaper coverage though policy shifts primarily tackle more central welfare state roles like healthcare and unemployment.

Access and equity concerns in this neoliberal model arise out of outcomes that increase or reduce the burden on particular (groups of) individuals. Even when the state maintains a final

safety net, growing emphasis on personal responsibility and active citizenship will likely restrict and stigmatize its use, so it is especially those who relied on such state provision before, and those who support them, who may lose ground amid this welfare transformation. Studying this will not be easy, but can rely in part on established approaches like tracing conditionalities or longitudinal cohort studies of potentially affected groups. On a smaller scale, survey- and interview-based case studies like Lub and Uytterlinde's (2012) evaluation of the impact of the first Social Support Act on vulnerable groups continue to be suitable, incorporating the resources and incentives of all involved parties but above all paying attention to the typical outcomes.

7 - Micro-Level Analysis: Citizen Initiatives in Gouda

Beyond the national policy space, it is also possible to identify and tackle access and equity problems related to particular projects or contexts. I have applied my theoretical framework to this purpose through a micro-level analysis of citizen initiatives in the Dutch town of Gouda. These citizen initiatives correspond more closely to the communitarian model of participation, as they tend to be enhancement projects rather than efforts to make up for or take over from a retrenching state. Moreover, Gouda is exemplary in that it has set aside approximately 200,000 EUR a year for the purposes of supporting citizen initiatives, suggesting cost containment is not an immediate concern. While other towns have started following this example, Gouda was a pioneer, and there are still many municipalities in the Netherlands where citizen initiatives rely primarily on crowdfunding or corporate contributions. Its communitarian model is underscored by the online application guidelines for residents to request funds for setting up a citizen initiative, where the first application condition states that promoting social cohesion is a top priority (GoudApot, 2017).

Being built to promote social cohesion does not however make these initiatives immune to access and equity problems, and it is important to evaluate input factors, i.e. who participates, to test whether there is a risk of social stratification between passive and active citizens. In the communitarian model, access and equity issues are identified in terms of increased or reduced involvement of particular communities, and attention needs to be paid to the potential formation or solidifying of in- and out-groups. Yet there is also the added puzzle of separating resources from incentives, and the question of what to do with groups and individuals who simply do not desire such community involvement. Initially this may seem a straightforward non-problem, but it becomes troubled once normative expectations and judgments are brought in.

This micro-level study examines key data on the initiatives themselves, to see what this reveals about participants. Then, it moves on to evaluating participation and social cohesion in general through neighborhood-level survey data, acknowledging the chicken-and-egg problem inherent in this measure as well as the difficulties separating resources from incentives. The data limitations prove severe, so only neighborhood level approximations of relations are presented, but this still presents an excellent opportunity to discuss adequate measures and proxies under the communitarian model. Finally, the normative expectation of participation itself is briefly considered, as the theoretical framework offers space for those concerns as well.

7.1 Method and Data

Gouda was chosen in part because socially and demographically it is reasonably representative of the Netherlands as a whole, certainly more so than the big cities where most research takes place. Gouda also has relevant survey data available and a particularly generous and transparent citizen initiative approach. Since 2015, the municipality has set aside a budget of approximately 200,000 EUR a year to supporting citizen initiatives. While other towns have started following this example, Gouda was a pioneer, and in many municipalities citizen initiatives still rely primarily on crowdfunding or corporate contributions. So-called GoudApot applications are reviewed by a committee of ordinary residents, and all projects, requested funds, and application statuses are published online for transparency. Once a funding request is accepted or (partially) denied, this too is indicated online, with a brief explanation of the decision. At the end of the year, an evaluation report is published. Application forms and guidelines are easily accessible online. For this analysis, I first pick out and present key data on the 208 GoudApot initiatives proposed in 2017, checking for access and equity issues. I present an overview of applications according to theme, requested

funds, and received funds, and scrutinize neighborhood initiatives specifically as these provide slightly more concrete information regarding initiators.

The second part of the analysis uses survey and demographic data on participation and social cohesion in Gouda. While this widens the scope beyond strictly citizen initiatives, it can still demonstrate preferred measures and input considerations when studying access and equity under the communitarian model. The data comes from *Gouda in Cijfers* (Gouda in Numbers), a website where anyone can explore and compare measures of interest. Unfortunately, privacy concerns mean that data is aggregated and grouped by neighborhood, making sophisticated statistical analysis almost impossible. This is further complicated by the fact that compiled data originates from multiple sources, though the key variables of interest in this analysis all come from the 2016 *Stadspeiling* (town survey) which covers 1884 random Gouda residents (response rate 37%) (Vermeer, 2017). Again though, all public data is aggregated to the neighborhood level.

Given such significant data limitations, I focus on identifying potential trends and specifying appropriate measures of access and equity, rather than robustly testing these. I take the neighborhoods themselves as data points and place them in a series of scatter plots to highlight potential access and equity concerns. I check if there are significant differences across neighborhoods in the type and/or extent of participation, cross-referencing this with the neighborhood's average income and the percentage of residents that is white and Dutch. Besides income and ethnicity, education is frequently cited as a variable potentially influencing participation and social cohesion, but the dataset lacks adequate neighborhood-level education measures. Of nine Gouda neighborhoods (more like districts), the two smallest had significant data gaps and were excluded from my analysis. This left Binnenstad, Korte Akkeren, Bloemendaal, Plaswijck, Gouda Noord, Kort Haarlem, and Goverwelle.

7.2 Findings and Analysis

Under the communitarian model of participation, the primary access and equity concern is that participants should be demographically representative and unconstrained by resources, to avoid stratification. GoudApot stresses that it tries to be accessible to all and make its application process as straightforward as possible, and indeed Table 2 shows that most projects are readily funded.

Table 2: GoudApot Applications Overview (2017)

<i>Category</i>	<i>Total Applications</i>	<i>(Partially) Accepted Applications</i>	<i>Success Rate (%)</i>	<i>Awarded Totals (€)</i>
Culture	43	27	63	78,204
Target Group*	14	9	64	16,250
Financial Support**	17	2	12	363
Environment/Sustainability	28	15	54	23,871
Youth and Games	25	16	64	60,260
Sports	12	6	50	4,530
Neighborhood Activities	57	50	88	33,790
History/Heritage	12	7	58	18,096
TOTAL	208	132	63	235,362

* Initiatives aimed at a specific target group, like the elderly, migrants, or people from the LGBTQ community.

** Initiatives to financially support the upkeep of a service or purchase of a durable good.

The primary communitarian access and equity concern, however, lies not with theme or even audience of initiatives, but with those who actively initiate or contribute to them. Personal identifying information is removed on the GoudApot website, but the neighborhood activity projects (Table 3) give some insight when coupled with the demographic and survey data of the second part of this micro-level analysis. The contrast between initiatives from Binnenstad and Korte Akkeren is particularly interesting, because Binnenstad has a smaller population but over four times as many (accepted) applications and a substantially higher success rate. According to *Gouda in Cijfers* data, Binnenstad has the highest average income per resident of all neighborhoods (€29,100) and Korte Akkeren the lowest (€19,300). Moreover, 76.6% of Binnenstad is white and

Dutch compared to 71.5% in Korte Akkeren. Aggregated neighborhood data is far from conclusive, but points at a potential problem that is reflected throughout the rest of this micro-level investigation. A final point to make about the GoudApot applications is that the vast majority are submitted by organizations or neighborhood groups rather than individuals. This means that access to and membership of such groups and organizations should itself be scrutinized too.

Table 3: GoudApot Neighborhood Activity Applications Overview (2017)

<i>Neighborhood</i>	<i>Total Applications</i>	<i>(Partially) Accepted Applications</i>	<i>Success Rate (%)</i>	<i>Approximate Population</i>
Binnenstad	21	17	81	6,500
Korte Akkeren	5	3	60	9,600
Bloemendaal	7	7	100	22,100
Plaswijck				
Gouda Noord	20	19	95	20,500
Kort Haarlem				
Goverwelle	2	2	100	11,500
Other/Unspecified	2	2	100	/
TOTAL	57	50	88	/

Using neighborhood survey data, I examine how the independent variables income and ethnicity (recoded dichotomously and then reported in terms of Dutch white population share) interact with various measures of participation and social cohesion. Data limitations made stringent testing impossible, so instead I chose to construct a series of scatterplots to identify potential trends and highlight the value of particular measures in capturing variables of interest. These plots are broad aggregations with no control variables, and should be treated as such. The precise coding and definitions of the variables are listed in the appendix. The scatterplots are presented and followed by brief discussion. Initials refer to the names of the neighborhoods.

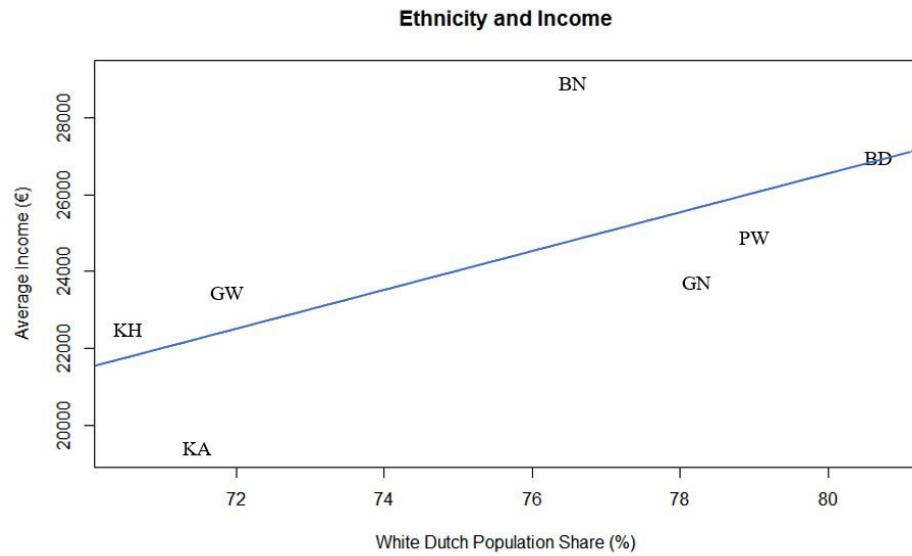


Figure 2: Scatterplot of Ethnicity and Income

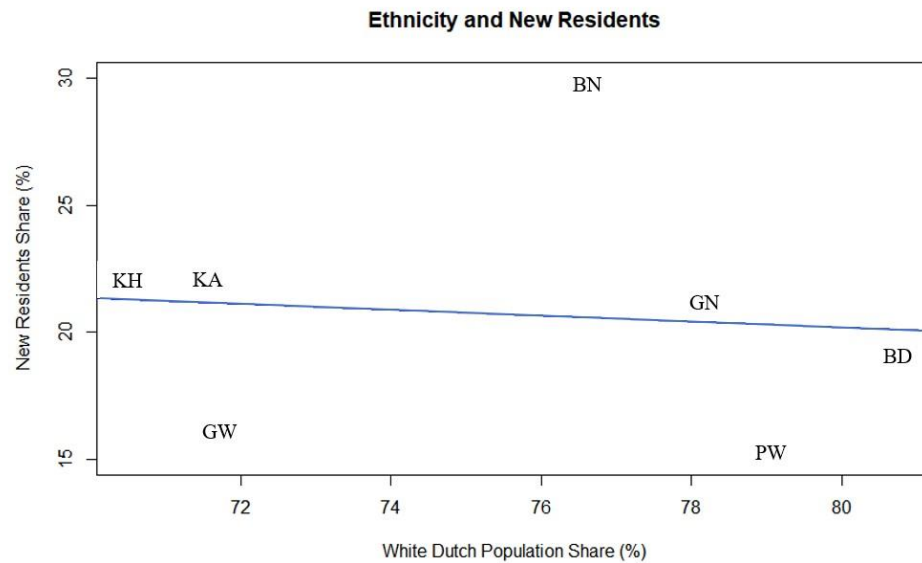


Figure 3: Scatterplot of Ethnicity and New Residents

Figure 2 indicates that, unsurprisingly, the ethnic makeup (whiteness) of a neighborhood and its average income are positively related. Nevertheless, I keep assessing both independent variables separately, as income is a potential resource determinant of participation, whereas ethnicity could be classified as either resource or incentive. Maintaining this distinction may be revealing. Figure 3 suggests that ethnicity is not a strong proxy for being new to Gouda, reducing conflation concern.

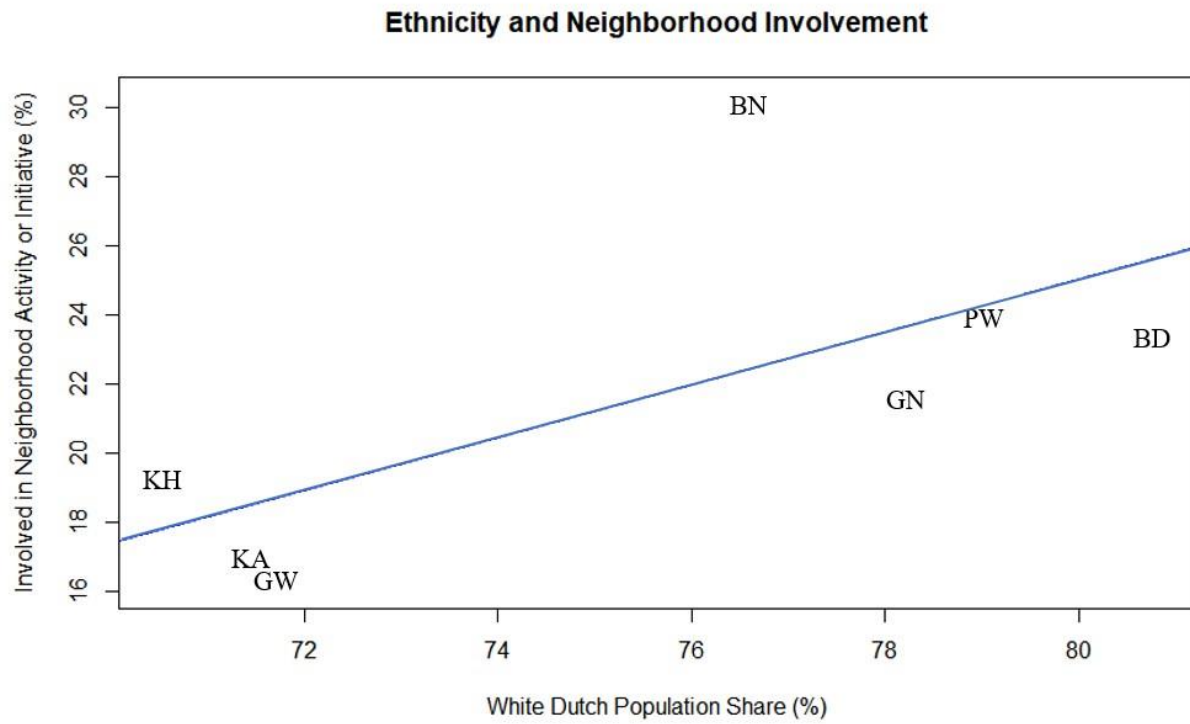


Figure 5: Scatterplot of Ethnicity and Neighborhood Involvement

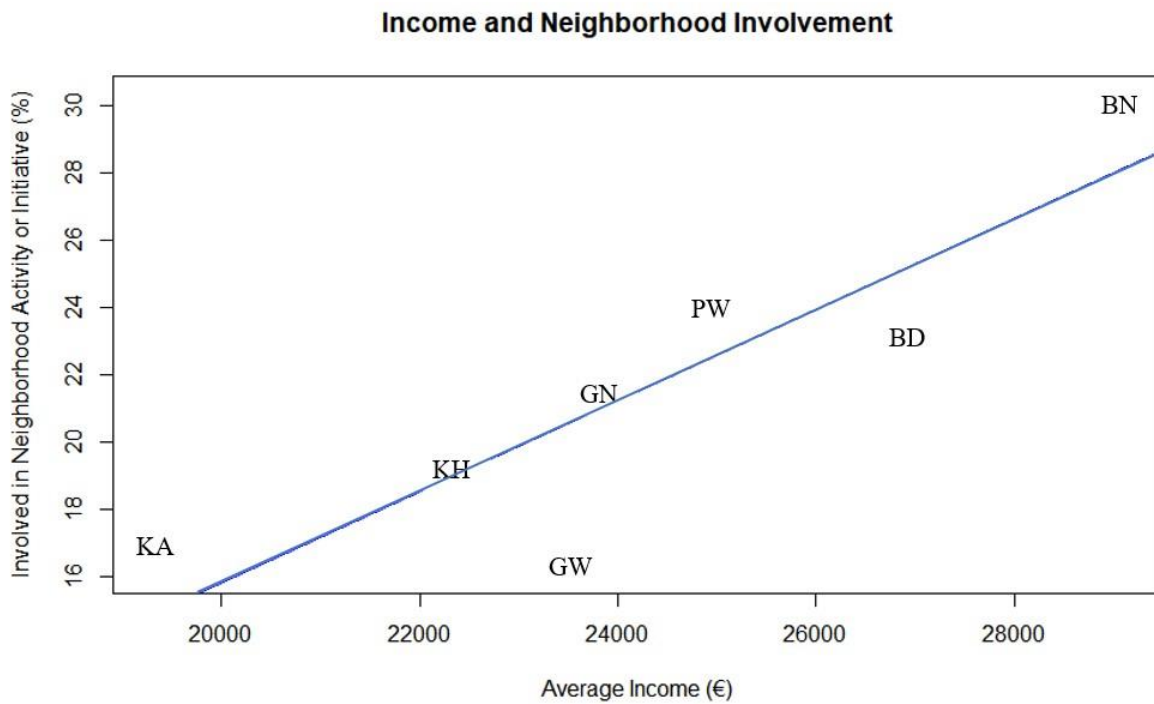


Figure 4: Scatterplot of Income and Neighborhood Involvement

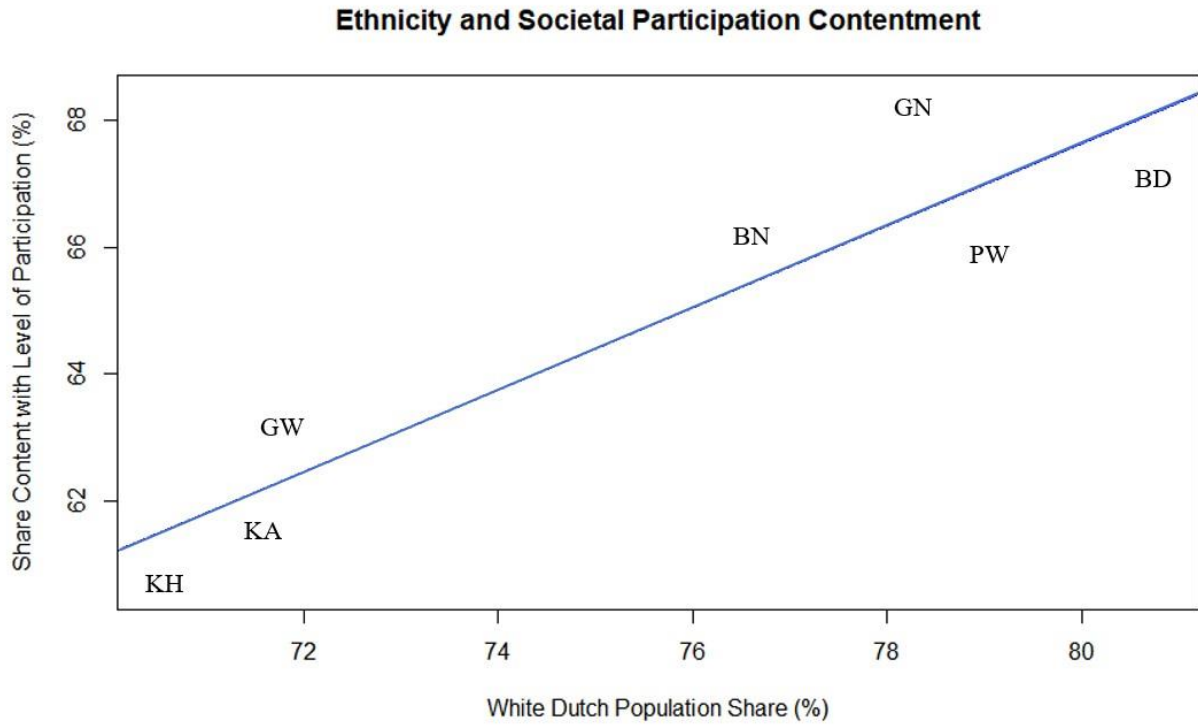


Figure 7: Scatterplot of Ethnicity and Societal Participation Contentment

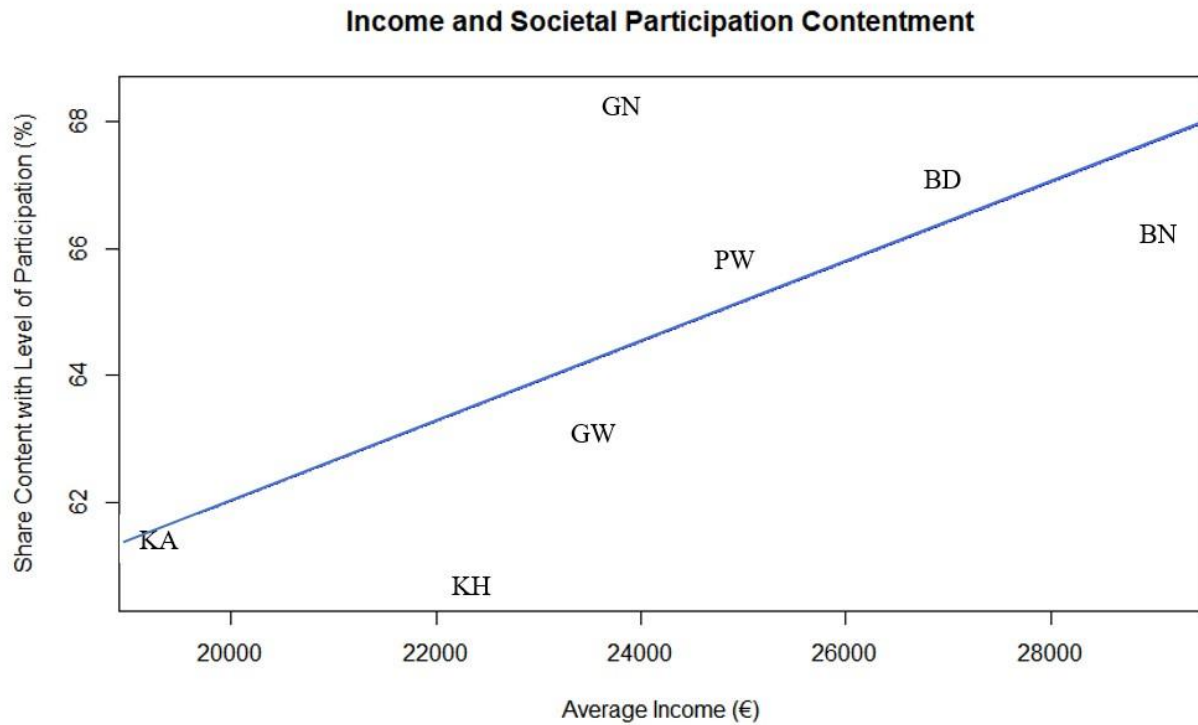


Figure 6: Scatterplot of Income and Societal Participation Contentment

Figures 4 and 5 suggest that the richer and the whiter a neighborhood, the higher the percentage of its residents that are involved in neighborhood activities or initiatives. However, the trendline appears more accurate in the case of income. This becomes even more problematic from an access and equity perspective once the level of contentment with societal participation is taken into account (Figures 6 and 7), where again there is a pretty consistent trend that higher average incomes and a bigger Dutch white population share correspond to greater contentment with one's level of participation. These scatterplots have no testing power and are based on just seven aggregated data points, but nevertheless show consistent trends and suggest reason for concern.

Bringing in level of contentment is a way of trying to separate resources from incentives, as Teorell (2006) proposes. It could be conceivable that certain groups or individuals simply do not desire to participate to the same extent, but this crude measure at least suggests this is not the case. In fact, other measures like club membership (not reported) varied very little according to income or ethnicity, which at least is hopeful given the dominance of clubs and organization in applying for GoudApot funds. Still, even separating resources from incentives becomes tricky in a context where the government advocates a normative position that participation is desirable. Here, access and equity issues via social stratification can quietly arise even as people do not experience their non-participation as problematic themselves.

Finally, one of the central problems in assessing access and equity through the communitarian cohesion lens is that it encounters a chicken-and-egg problem: participation thrives in strongly connected neighborhoods where people look out for one another, yet this is also presented precisely as an outcome of increased local participation. This is why direct measures of social cohesion like neighborhood contacts or reliance are not always desirable. At the same time, it is important not to accidentally veer into neoliberal measures. Engbersen et al. (2015) used

informal care (*mantelzorg*) as a key measure of participation, which is rarely a particularly social task and tends to result from necessity rather than particular interest or desire. Data and space constraints mean this micro-level analysis has been cursory and inconclusive, but I have attempted to highlight again how the theoretical framework structures and guides an individual study, raising relevant questions along the way.

Conclusion

When the Dutch government announced an apparent transition from welfare state to participation society in September 2013, it made headlines not just within the Netherlands but also internationally. This was a prosperous Western welfare state declaring that in order to tackle contemporary challenges like globalization and an aging population, it needed to recalibrate the roles and responsibilities of national and local government, communities, and individuals, promoting greater bottom-up engagement for welfare and social services provision. Unfortunately, the precise nature and extent of this transformation and its implications remain uncertain, in part due to the government's own lack of clear-cut definition, as well as an academic literature that focused on provisional, micro-level studies, but fails to connect and contextualize them more broadly. There is a need for an encompassing framework to structure the participation society research agenda. I have attempted to provide such a framework.

By drawing extensively on the existing literature and insights not just about the Dutch participation society, but about similar phenomena elsewhere as well as welfare state change and citizen participation more broadly, I came up with a central distinction between neoliberal and communitarian models of participation. These models come with their own guiding motivations, conceptualizations of state role, and other linked factors. Adapting Teorell's (2006) framework for studying political participation revealed how the neoliberal and communitarian models hinge on some shared but also some differing potential access and equity concerns, with the former primarily interested in fair outcomes whereas the latter demands representative participants. A case study analysis of the Dutch participation society as a whole and a micro-level analysis of citizen

initiatives in Gouda further clarified the potential applications of this theoretical framework, and suggested that substantial access and equity concerns remain.

Even though my primary concern has been how to study social service access and equity amid the Netherlands' self-proclaimed transition from welfare state to participation society, I highlighted that related welfare state changes have been proposed and indeed implemented in other countries as well. As such, I purposefully formulated my theoretical framework broadly, allowing it to be implemented in a wide range of context and at different levels of analysis. The framework is especially effective in explicitly highlighting empirical and normative assumptions that otherwise remain unacknowledged, challenging the use of indicators that do not engage closely with conceptualization, and ensuring attention is paid to where participation incentives and expectations originate and are enforced.

Of course, clearly acknowledging assumptions and data limitations does not make them disappear, and my micro-level analysis struggled especially to yield substantial results. A theoretical framework is of little use if it cannot be applied satisfactorily. However, existing research has already found clever ways to tackle measurement issues, and data sets are continually being expanded, but this would simply be more effective if it was structured by a more substantial common research agenda. Moreover, there genuinely is an increased emphasis on municipal open data, and if current trends continue, we can expect the data quality in the big cities to be replicated around the country within just a few years (*Open Data Standaarden voor gemeenten*, 2018).

The theoretical framework presented here is intended to be a structure not a straightjacket, and can be applied and expanded with a wide range of theories, methods, and cases. Further research should consider further how best to isolate specific outcomes under the neoliberal model, and what to do about the chicken-and-egg problem of social cohesion. A closer micro-level look

at the initiators and active participants of citizen initiatives may require fieldwork and interviews as long as the aggregate data remains unsatisfactory, and building up the population of studies outside the big cities could yield some interesting contrasts. Finally, the implications of the normative expectations that I have highlighted at various points throughout this investigation remain murky, and it would be interesting to have a better idea of the profiles of those who are currently not active participants and whether or not that is likely to change in years to come. Welfare state changes are often slow, arduous, and highly contentious, and the participation society is no exception. Nevertheless, a targeted but flexible research agenda can bring order to the chaos, and help understand not just what is happening today, but how things are likely to develop in the future. For those who worry about social service access and equity in this shifting configuration, anticipation and early identification of vulnerabilities are only possible if one knows where to look.

Appendix

Appendix A – Content Analysis Coding Rules and Examples

Label	description	potential markers	actual example quotes
neoliberal	any phrase or passage that explicitly references the potential markers, or describes or directly relates to characteristics defined under the neoliberal model and its motivations	responsibility (<i>verantwoordelijk-heid</i>); self-sufficiency (<i>zelfred-zaamheid</i>); independence (<i>zelf-standigheid</i>); freedom (<i>vrijheid</i>); retreat/retrench (<i>terugtrekken</i>); individual (<i>individu</i>)	<p>“municipality tries to offload more and more tasks on us”</p> <p>“the government retreats. But the demand for care remains. The work needs to be organized differently. You see that it has to happen for free, by carers or neighbors.”</p> <p>“inner urge for independence”</p> <p>“danger of unlimited government interference and people who become dependent on the state”</p> <p>“well-equipped carers often prevent, reduce, or postpone more expensive forms of municipal support”</p>
communitarian	any phrase or passage that explicitly references the potential markers, or describes or directly relates to characteristics defined under the communitarian model and its motivations	social cohesion (<i>sociale cohesie</i>); collective (<i>collectief</i>); solidarity (<i>solidariteit</i>); inclusion (<i>inclusie</i>); integration (<i>integratie</i>); connection (<i>band/verbinding</i>)	<p>“where the elderly ensure with each other and with people around them that they grow old pleasantly in their own neighborhood”</p> <p>“unity and connection, between generations and social groups”</p> <p>“state that provides support and care where necessary”</p> <p>“network-society”</p> <p>“the plan evokes the old-fashioned neighborhood shop, where customers could tell their story”</p>
mixed/ambiguous	any phrase or passage that describes characteristics or motivations that span both models or do not correspond to either	decentralization (<i>decentralizatie</i>); targeted (<i>gericht</i>); quality (<i>kwaliteit</i>)	<p>“that is financially unsustainable, but more importantly: it is socially undesirable”</p> <p>“a powerful social structure, where self-organization, social cohesion, and own responsibility play an important role”</p> <p>“opportunities to ensure the quality of services”</p>

access and equity

any phrase or passage that explicitly references the potential markers, or describes other concerns regarding accessibility or equity

access (*toegankelijkheid*); in/equity (on/*gelijkheid*); fairness (*rechtvaardigheid*); vulnerable (*kwetsbaar*); weak (*zwak*); cleavages (*scheidslijnen*)

“elitist character”
“people with fewer skills to keep themselves standing”
“neighborhoods with many poor and few active residents will slide back further”
“the government must continue ensuring that no inequality emerges in the playing field”
“we must be able to guarantee that care and support remain available for them now, but also in the future”

Appendix B – Case Study: Selected Speeches

All speeches listed were collected and can be readily accessed through the online archives of the Rijksoverheid (<https://rijksoverheid.archiefweb.eu/>), using the search term '*participatie-samenleving*' (participation society).

1. Toespraak van staatssecretaris van Rijn bij het symposium 'Sociale Ouderenzorg. Ook in de participatiesamenleving!' (Martin van Rijn, 06/04/2016)
2. Toespraak van minister-president Rutte bij de Kerdijklezing (Mark Rutte, 12/11/2014)
3. Toespraak minister-president Rutte bij congress 'Anders denken over psychische aandoeningen' (Mark Rutte, 10/09/2014)
4. Toespraak Rutte op het Jaarcongres 2014 van het Kwaliteitsinstituut Nederlandse Gemeenten (KING) (Mark Rutte, 16/04/2014)
5. Sterke mensen, sterk land. Over het bezielend verband in de samenleving. (Mark Rutte, 14/10/2013)
6. Troonrede 2013 (King Willem-Alexander, 17/09/2013)

Appendix C – Case Study: Selected Newspaper Articles

All articles listed were collected and can be readily accessed through the NOS website (<https://nos.nl/>), using the search term '*participatiesamenleving*' (participation society).

1. 'Nederland is verzot op onze muziek, maar niet op ons' (26/04/2018)
2. Burgers helpen elkaar: tai chi tegen eenzaamheid en 'gratis' schaatsbaan (08/03/2018)
3. De participatiesamenleving is vooral iets voor hogeropgeleiden (17/09/2017)
4. Do's en don'ts in de participatiesamenleving (17/09/2017)
5. Participatiesamenleving: van preventieteam tot boodschappendienst (11/09/2017)
6. Vrijwilliger of hulpverlener? 'De grens van wat verantwoord is, is bereikt' (21/08/2017)
7. SCP kijkt in glazen bol naar 2050: we gaan nog meer zelf regelen (21/12/2016)
8. Van Rijn: beroep op mantelzorgers geen verplichting (25/04/2016)
9. Caissieres Albert Heijn gaan op ouderen letter (16/12/2015)
10. 'Zorgtaken van kassamedewerkers moeten goed afgebakend worden' (16/12/2015)
11. Nederland klaar voor participatiemaatschappij? (02/07/2014)
12. SCP twijfelt aan zelfredzame burger (17/06/2014)
13. Bewonersbedrijf rendeert nog matig (06/06/2014)
14. Kritiek PvdA-voorzitter op Rutte (12/11/2013)
15. Roemer: gedwongen te stemmen (25/09/2013)
16. Buma: participatie is bezuinigen (25/09/2013)
17. "Participatiesamenleving risico" (20/09/2013)
18. Dijsselbloem ziet geen revolutie (18/09/2013)
19. "Participatie, dan sterke rechtsstaat" (18/09/2013)

Appendix D – Case Study: Selected Policy Letters

All policy letters listed were collected and can readily be accessed through the online archives of the Tweede Kamer (https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven_regering), using the search term ‘*participatiesamenleving*’ (participation society).

1. Toekomst ouderparticipatiecrèches (Lodewijk Asscher, 02/12/2016)
2. Reactie op verzoek van het lid Keijzer, gedaan tijdens de Regeling van Werkzaamheden van 18 mei 2016 over het bericht ‘Kwetsbare zorgvrager kan het echt niet zomaar zelf’ (Martin van Rijn, 27/06/2016)
3. Tweede voortgangsrapportage Agenda Lokale Democratie (Ronald Plasterk, 22/06/2016)
4. Transformatie in het social domein (Ronald Plasterk, 02/04/2015)
5. Reactie op verzoek van het lid Krol, gedaan tijdens de Regeling van Werkzaamheden van 24 maart 2015, over het SCP-onderzoek “Concurrentie tussen mantelzorg en betaald werk” n.a.v. het bericht ‘Participatiesamenleving eist tol op werkvloer’ (Martin van Rijn, 28/03/2015)
6. Reactie op de motie van het lid Slob c.s. inzake de participatiesamenleving (Ronald Plasterk and Martin van Rijn, 12/12/2014)
7. Reactie op een brief m.b.t. werkwijze van de thuiszorg (Martin van Rijn, 18/08/2014)
8. Reactie op het verzoek van het lid Slob over Participatiesamenleving (Mark Rutte, 07/04/2014)

Appendix E – Case Study: Selected Legislation

All legislation was selected and can readily be accessed through the online law collection of the Dutch government (<https://wetten.overheid.nl>)

1. Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning (WMO) (2015)
2. Participatiewet (2015)

Appendix F – Overview of Variables

Name	description	coding	source
Income	average income per resident (€)	single value per neighborhood	CBS
ethnicity	percentage of the population that is (/is not) white Dutch	recoded to be dichotomous, originally distinguished between white Dutch, Western non-Dutch, non-Western non-Dutch, and Moroccan descent	Stadspeiling 2016
new residents	percentage of the population that has (/has not) lived in Gouda for 5 years or fewer	recoded to be dichotomous, originally distinguished between less than 2 years, 2-5 years, 6-11 years, and more than 11 years	BRP
neighborhood involvement	percentage of the population that responded positively when asked whether they are involved with a neighborhood project or initiative	recoded to combine ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree,’ other possible answers were ‘disagree,’ ‘strongly disagree,’ ‘neither agree not disagree,’ or ‘don’t know’	Stadspeiling 2016
societal participation contentment	percentage of the population that responded positively when asked whether they are content about their level of participation in society	recoded to combine ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree,’ other possible answers were ‘disagree,’ ‘strongly disagree,’ ‘neither agree not disagree,’ or ‘don’t know’	Stadspeiling 2016

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