SPR⬤CKLER
To tell you the truth…

EXAMPLE CASE STUDY
PARTICIPATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

CASE BACKGROUND

A medium-sized municipality in the north of the Netherlands has started a programme to increase the participation of the local community into what happens in the municipality. The municipality is at the start of some big political reorganisations that are leading to many changes for the local inhabitants and they wish to find out whether the inhabitants of their municipality feel sufficiently included in the decisions.

They decide to use Sprockler to monitor the programme, to be able to get an idea of the perception of the public and to learn from what they are doing. They will repeat the inquiry three times over the length of the programme: once in the beginning, once half way through and once at the end. In this way, the municipality can learn from the information gathered and adjust their programme accordingly. Also, the stories provide great concrete examples about participation in the municipality at the moment. Asking the questions is already a form of participation because it engages the local inhabitants on the topic.

For the pilot of the first round of the data collection (the baseline), 75 people have been interviewed. They have been interviewed by 15 interviewers from civil society in the municipality who have each interviewed 5 inhabitants. The inquiry they used can be found here: https://secure.sprockler.com/collector/b3c30.

INQUIRY

As usual, an inquiry starts with a story question. After the story question, a number of questions are asked to learn more about the story and to get more detailed (and qualitative) insights. The are divided into questions that relate to the story and questions about the broader context of the inquiry. The inquiry ends with questions about the storyteller.

1. **Could you share a story about a time you tried to influence the decisions made in your municipality? What did you do and what happened?**

2. **This story relates to (please select a maximum of two) …**
   - ○ Education
   - ○ Traffic
   - ○ Safety
   - ○ Buildings

- ○ Construction permits
- ○ Parking
- ○ Elderly care

- ○ Social cohesion
- ○ Community initiative
- ○ Other, namely …
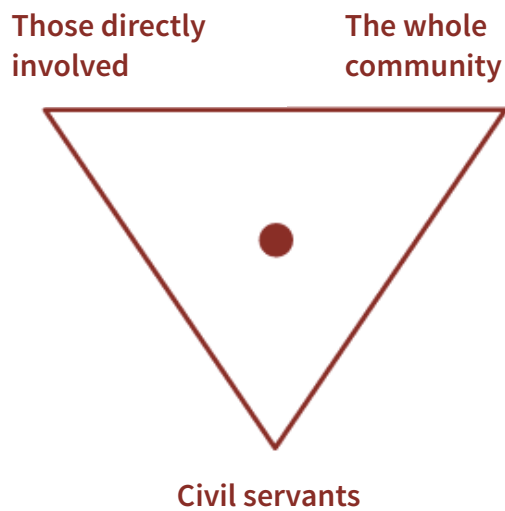
3. The tone of my story is …

Very negative ———————●——————— Very positive

4. When did this story take place?
- ○ Last month
- ○ More than a month ago
- ○ More than six months ago

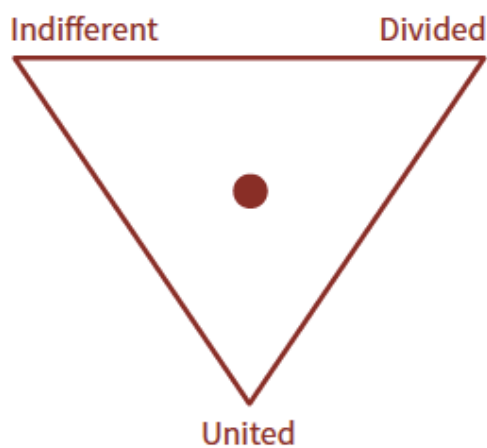- ○ More than a year ago
- ○ More than two years ago

5. The effect of what I shared in my story was largest for …

Those directly involved   The whole community

●

Civil servants

6. An attempt to influence the municipality like the one I described …

Happens frequently ———————●——————— Is an exception

8. How did people feel about your input in the community?

Indifferent   Divided

●

United

Apart from questions about the story, a few more questions were asked to gain insight in the context of the storyteller.

9. How do you think your input in municipality decision-making could be expanded?
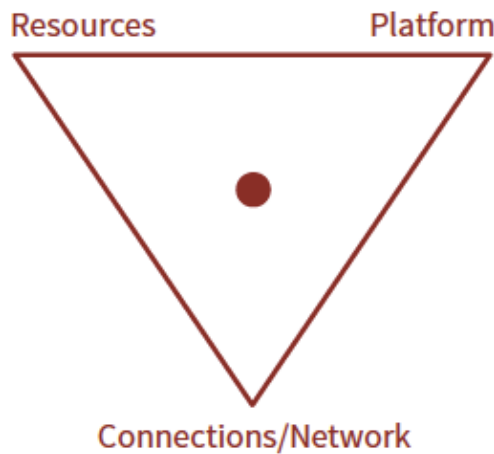
10. Who can influence decisions in my municipality are …
Please select no more than 3 answers.

☐ Owners of restaurants, hotels, shops and businesses
☐ Youth
☐ Elderly people
☐ International actors (such as the EU or the UN)

☐ National politicians
☐ Local politicians
☐ Local celebrities
☐ Religious leaders
☐ Interest and advocacy groups
☐ Students

Lastly, some questions were asked about the storytellers to be able to classify the differences in the results.

11. In which region of the municipality do you live?

○ North
○ South
○ East
○ West
○ Centre

○ Northeast
○ Northwest
○ Southeast
○ Southwest
○ Other, namely …

12. What is your age?

○ <12 years
○ 12 – 18 years
○ 18 – 29 years

○ 30 – 44 years
○ 45 – 59 years
○ >60 years

12. With what gender do you identify?

○ Male
○ Female

○ Other, namely …
○ Prefer not to say

13. Do you consent with your story being shared on an open website?

○ Yes
○ No

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INTERPRETATION

To interpret the results gathered in this first pilot for the baseline, the team in charge of the Sprockler research gets together for an interpretation session. They also invite all the interviewers to join this first interpretation session. This session serves to look at the results of the first interviews and to evaluate the process so far so that the second round of interviews can start. Some of the results discussed by the municipality team and the interviews are included here.

The results to the second question 'This story relates to …" show that many of the stories relate to safety, community initiative or social cohesion.

This story relates to …

This story relates to …
- Education
- Safety
- Traffic
- Buildings
- Construction permits
- Parking
- Elderly care
- Social cohesion
- Community initiative

31%
20%
18%
9%
8%
4% 4%
4%
4% 4%
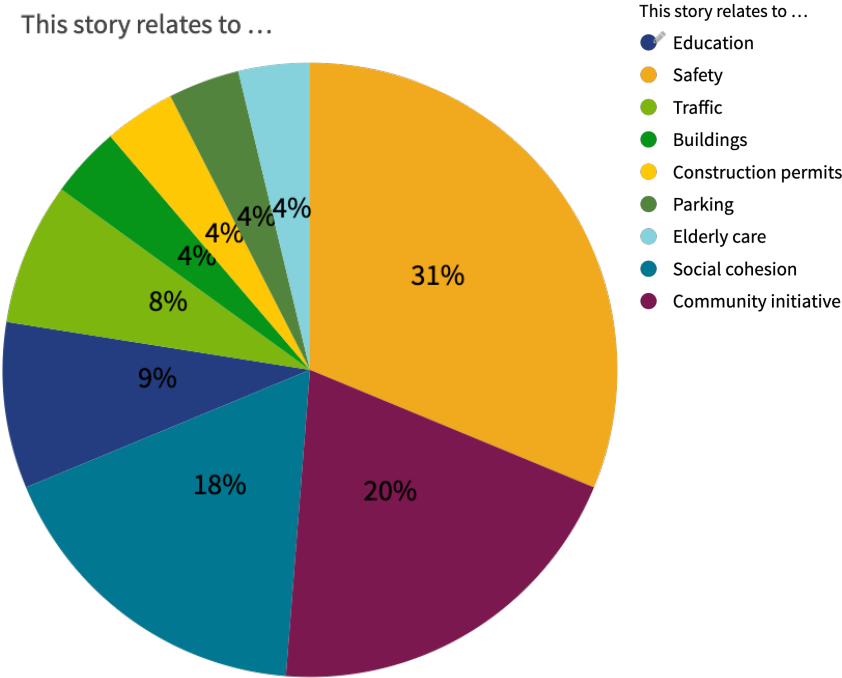
Combining the results of the question about tone of voice with the question on municipality regions yields the following image. The people living in the area classified as 'North' shared very positive stories. Contrary to that, the people living in the areas 'Centre', 'Southeast' and 'Northeast' indicated less positive stories and attached negative values. To learn from where the input in municipality decision-making was successful, it would be worth looking at the individual stories of those living in the 'North' area. On the other hand, the individual stories of those living in 'Centre', 'Southeast' and 'Northeast' could provide information on where and how this input could be improved. This could be combined with existing knowledge about the certain parts of the city. This image also shows that the number of respondents varies per region, when going forward with the baseline research the municipality should take this into consideration to make sure that comparisons are possible.

3. The tone of my story is …

In which region of the municipality do you live?
- North
- South
- East
- West
- Centre
- Northeast
- Northwest
- Southeast
- Southwest

Very negative   Very positive

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3. The tone of my story is …

What is your age?
- <12 years
- 12 – 18 years
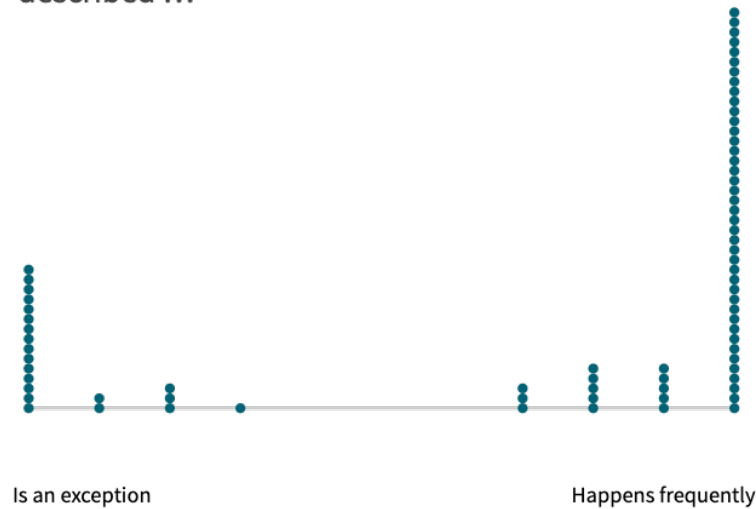- 18 – 29 years
- 30 – 44 years
- 45 – 59 years
- >60 years

Very negative   Very positive

Combining the same question of tone of voice with age yields the above result. We can see here that the groups aged between 30-44 years, below 12 years and a large part of those between 45-59 years of age attached positive values to their stories. On the other hand, those aged between 12-18 and 18- 29 years old and to a limited extent those over 60 years old attached negative values to their stories. This indicates that this last group has many stories where input into municipality decision-making was not valued or used. This shows that the young population between 12 and 29 years old and some of the older population over 60 years old are the ones with negative experiences of trying to influence what happened in the municipality and would be worth investigating or specifically targeting. Their stories can tell us something about why young people shared negative stories about their influence on municipality decision-making.

Looking at the results of the question concerning the effect of what happened in the stories, it appears that quite a lot of people considered the whole community to be affected most. On the topics of safety, social cohesion and community initiative, this is perhaps not surprising as these topics tend to affect many people, and reading the stories behind the dots will show us whether that is true in this case. It is interesting to combine this question in the Visualizer with the results of the question discussed above and read the stories behind the dots.

The effect of what I shared in my story was largest for …

Those directly involved   The whole community

Municipality officials

In the image about the frequency of the stories told, we can see that most consider their story to happen frequently, showing that most of the stories shared here are not rare events.

An attempt to influence the municipality like the one I described …

Is an exception   Happens frequently

The ninth question concerning expansion of input shows that the respondents considered that input in decision-making could be expanded through access to a platform of influence or through connections/network. This image gives the information that, according to the respondents, resources are not the lacking factor, apart from in one case. This is interesting as in current times many Dutch municipalities have (had to) cut back on expenditure. Platforms and connections/network are indicated as more essential, which are things a municipality can supply very well. A desire for platforms and connections might indicate that the respondents are looking for a way in, suggesting that participation is not optimised yet.

If the municipality is looking for ways to increase this, it would be a good idea to look at the stories behind these dots in more depth. What could help is combining this question with the question on what field the story was about to find out more about which topics this is about specifically. Combining it with the questions on age, gender and region could tell us more about the people providing these answers. The one dot in the resources area could provide valuable information as well, showing something that is emerging or a specific area where funding is needed.

How do you think your input in municipality decision-making could be expanded?

Resources   Platform

Connections / network

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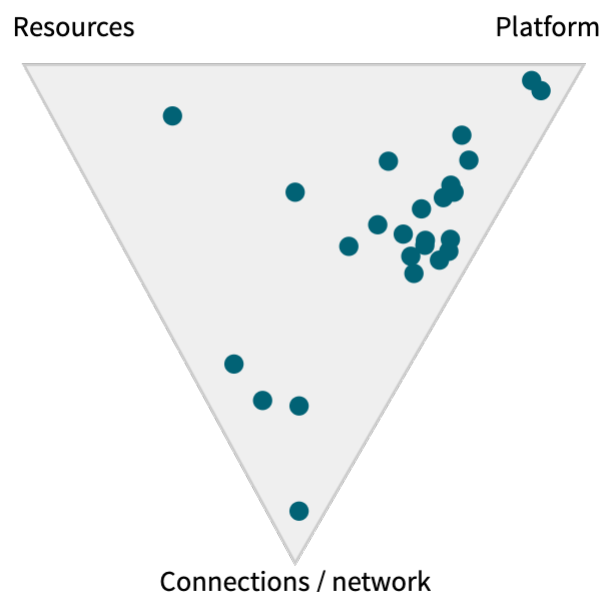
The results showed that there are many initiatives regarding safety, social cohesion and community initiative and that such initiatives happen frequently. These topics might indicate areas that are easier to get involved in. Positive stories can be found in the North, negative in the Northeast, Southeast and Centre. Those of working age and under 12 years old report more positive examples, whereas adolescents, young adults and some over 60 years old report negative examples. The municipality can strengthen the positive examples and use the indicated negative areas and age group information as a starting point to focus on increasing participation. Platforms and connections are indicated to be needed to expand input in the community, which is another potential starting point for the municipality.

These are only a few examples of the results obtained in this inquiry, but they already provide some good points for the municipality to look at if they want to increase participation in their municipality. It will be interesting for the municipality to keep track of these results and see how they change over time.

The conversation with the interviewers also provided tips on how to approach the interviewing process and slight alterations to the wording of the inquiry to improve clarify. After this first pilot, the municipality will now ask 30 more interviewers to interview 5 people each, leading to a total of 225 people interviewed for the baseline.