CROSSOVERS

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CITIES AND PORTS
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INTERNET CONTRIBUTION

Ing. **Mariëlle H. van Dijk**, Msc. (1967), originally educated as chemical analyst and interior designer, works as projectmanager for several organizations including Rijkswaterstaat and Port of Rotterdam. During this employment she became interested in the societal impact of technological development. Especially the rise of information technologies in civic participation drew her attention. This then became the subject of research for the master degree public administration she obtained in 2015. Her diverse background always accounts for new views on ordinary topics, like the Pod Peanut Podium she founded in 2014. This podium combines ordinary topics in an unusual fashion, like the podium on Big Data and Music in 2015.

Dr. **Rebecca Moody** (1981) is assistant professor at the department of public administration and sociology at the Erasmus University Rotterdam. Her research focuses on the relation between technology and public policy and its core concepts. Her PhD research focused on the impact of geographical information systems on policy formation and agenda setting. Other research projects include: the influence of web 2.0 technologies on micro-mobilization processes and the impact on the policy process; Development a tool for social media monitoring in European urban contexts regarding the topic of integration of ethnic minorities; The influence of visual culture and visual technologies on public policy; The impact of technology on knowledge creation within non-conformist groups and the impact of big data on urban policy contexts.

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Introduction

In port city development cooperation with citizens is a crucial factor for success. Not only because they are part of, and constitute the port city, but also because their support is necessary for further growth. More often than not, citizens initially feel resistant to expansion because of issues of environmental nature or liveability.

At the same time we find that the knowledge position of citizens has improved, as a result of new technologies and more possibilities to new information because of big, open and linked data. Additionally citizen-government cooperation has moved from a government to a governance type of interaction, in which policy is more a mutual debate than before (Edelenbos & Monnikhof, 2001; Pröpper & Steembeek, 1999). This debate is not only open and transparent in terms of information (Bekkers & Moody, 2015), but also in the openness of the participation process itself, in which citizens are invited to participate and become able to influence the process and outcome (Wirtz & Birkmeyer, 2015).

This inherently changes the interaction between citizens and governments in matters of port city expansion. Governments have to face this challenge in efforts to expand but still keep citizen support.
In this paper we will develop a recipe on dialogue in these matters. We will argue that the knowledge position of citizens has changed, as well as the way of interaction and participation, by comparing two cases of port expansion, one in 1990, and one in 2013, and will translate the lessons learned into a comprehensible set of recommendations.

Two decades have passed

The first case we looked at is Heijplaat, which was originally built in 1913. A new vision of port expansion created the rumour that Heijplaat was going to be demolished because of the surrounding port activities and the resulting noise. Citizens of Heijplaat claimed that this was only an excuse and the real reason was the desire for unlimited expansion of the port. This put the local government and citizens in a direct conflict. Citizens created a crisis team and organized several protests against the intended demolition. Despite their intensive and well-organized protests, the citizens did not ensure an active role in the decision-making process and were given hardly any information concerning this process. The actual debate was held within the city council and the political party responsible. Despite the protests and lack of influence of the citizens of Heijplaat, all was decided internal of the city council. Finally a dispensation of the noise in port areas was given and Heijplaat was saved.

Our second case deals with Moerdijk, a small community that suffered from a very large fire at ChemiePack in 2011. This called for a futureproof vision on the development of the port, its surroundings

and the safety of its citizens. In de media this vision was interpreted as the demolition of Moerdijk as a city and community. The government responded to the resulting commotion, by issuing a meeting and explicitly addressing emotions. Citizens were invited to participate in drafting a new port vision. They quickly created an issue group claiming when Moerdijk would be demolished, their property would become unsellable which would lead to a financial disaster for homeowners. The city council as well as citizens gathered information on how to deal with the issue. Not only via internet, also via experts. The information obtained was shared and consequences discussed in different and paced platforms. Communication through only a few key persons proved to be successful. Finally the continuance of Moerdijk was ensured by a mutual agreed guarantee.

Emotion and information

Although the cases in itself are very similar, the process in which this has happened is very different.

Firstly we find that in Heijplaat the local government did not provide citizens with information, where in Moerdijk all information was made available and accessible for citizens. Secondly, citizens of Heijplaat were unable to participate in the process of policy formation on their community. In Moerdijk the citizens were not only explicitly invited to participate, they were also able to influence the outcome and process.

In the comparison of both cases we find that there are two crucial points for successful and positive citizen participation in issues relating to port city expansion.

Firstly it is important for governments to explicitly address the emotions of citizens and acknowledge that they are a community. In port-city related issues, areas are too often seen as just 'port', and too little seen as part of a city. This accounts for a situation in which citizens do not feel taken seriously. Communication and participation between citizens and government become difficult since both frame the issue different. The danger is local debates will be conflicts instead of cooperative dialogues.
Secondly we find that if governments want or need active involvement of citizens in finding solutions, they have to provide citizens with information and data, where the ability of citizens to comprehend this information should not be underestimated. Even though the availability of information put citizens in a position of more power and the playing field between citizens and government becomes more even or levelled, this does account for improved relations and trust.

Love or hate: a new approach for local debate

Although contemporary participation models advocate more interaction between government and citizens, our case study shows that this insufficiently meets the knowledge position of citizens. Addressing prevailing emotions and providing information is crucial in successful participation. Key persons and pacing the debate through different platforms adds to this success.

Citizen involvement and conflict in port-city development

Heijplaat, 1990

Citizens protest but do not interact with government

- 30 January-Letter to citizens on demolition
- 15 February - Petition from citizens to alderman
- 14 March - Possibility for questions to ….?
- 26 April - Citizen opinion survey by citizens
- 1 June - Citizens present alternative plan
- 14 June - Public meeting city council
- 29 August - Plans for demolition abolished
- 13 September - Definite abolsihment of demolition plan

Moerdijk , 2013-2014

Citizens interact with government

- 5 January, 2011 - Fire Chemiepack Moerdijk
- 12 February, 2012 - Creation advisory board
- 4 March, 2012 - Workshop with citizens
- 18 September 2013 - Publication advise advisory board
- 31 October, 2013 - Citizen meeting
- 1 December, 2013 - Citizen opinion survey by city
- 20 February, 2014 - Citizens meeting
- 20 May, 2014 - information meeting on strategy & guarantee
- 1 July, 2014 - Strategy presented & adopted
- 17 november, 2014 - information meeting on guarantee
- 1 January, 2015 - Guarantee completed

Key success factors

Interact with citizens
Do not underestimate knowledge position of citizens
Explicitly address emotion

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In port-city development, citizens initially feel resistant because of issues of nature or livability
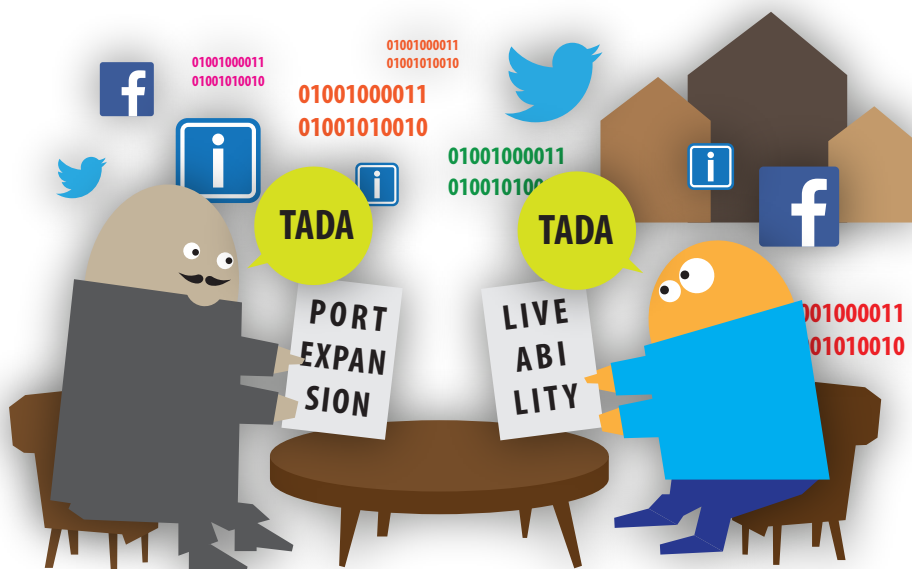
As a result of information and communication technologies, the citizen-government interaction changed. The debate is not only open and transparent, citizens are also able to influence process and outcome.

Successful participation is all about addressing emotion and providing information.