

Does democratic anchorage matter?

An inquiry into the relation between democratic anchorage and effectiveness of Dutch spatial projects

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Abstract

Does democracy matters is an intriguing question. Not only as a normative question, democracy is a value in it self which can be cherished for that reason alone, but also as a question of its impact on the effectiveness of decision-making processes (see Sorenson, 2002; Agranoff and McGuire, 2003). Several authors have suggested that the answer to this question is yes. For instance reasoning along the lines that the involvement of stakeholders in decision-making enhances the legitimacy of decisions it is expected that this involvement also enhances the quality of the outcomes (Mc Laverty, 2002; Skelcher, 2007). Skelcher (2007) for instance poses the hypothesis that a high level of democratic performance will be associated with a high level of (inter)organizational performance. In this paper we look at the question how stakeholders and politicians are involved in governance networks around spatial projects and what the effect of that is on the outcome of those projects.

The research

The research is based on a survey in 2006 that resulted in 337 respondents involved in spatial projects in The Netherlands. They were asked questions about involvement of stakeholders and political actors in decision-making, trust, project characteristics, and outcomes (we distinguish two types of outcomes: process and content). Each of the respondents was asked to answer the questions with a specific project in mind (which they also had to mention explicitly in the survey).

For this paper we analyzed the relation between two forms of democratic anchorages of decision-making, the stakeholder involvement and the political involvement on the one hand, and the perceived outcomes of decision-processes and the growth of trust on the other hand. We used separate items to measure both forms of democratic anchorage.

Research results

Our analysis shows that according to respondents both stakeholders and political parties are well involved in the process (stakeholders slightly more than political actors). We also find that both democratic anchorage forms are related to perceived outcomes but only stakeholder involvement has a strong significant effect on both forms of outcomes. The paper elaborates this findings and also analyzes the impact of both stakeholder involvement and involvement of political parties on the growth of trust in decision-making processes

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1. Introduction

There is a growing attention in public administration for the emergence, development and effectiveness of governance networks (Kooiman, 1993; Kickert et al, 1997; Milward and Provan, 2000; Agranoff and McGuire, 2003; Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004; Sorenson and Torfing, 2007). Within the general trend of governance networks in public administration we see all kind of initiatives to encourage and stimulate the involvement of stakeholders in decision-making that can be seen all over the world. Stakeholder involvement goes around under a lot of labels such as citizens panels, citizens charters, interactive decision-making, governance, and so on (see, e.g., McLaverty, 2002; Lowndes et al., 2001; Edelenbos, 2005).

In The Netherlands a lot of governments have experimented with stakeholder participation under the label of interactive decision-making that is trying to enhance the influence of citizens and other interest groups on public policy making (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000; Edelenbos & Klijn, 2006). Main motives to involve stakeholders in decision-making are diminishing the veto power of various societal actors by involving them in decision making, improving the quality of decision making by using information and solutions of various actors and bridging the perceived growing cleavage between citizens and elected politicians. These arguments can also be found in literature about governance networks (Marsh/Rhodes, Sorenson/Torfing, 2007).

Mainly spatial projects, such as road infrastructure, urban development, and regional development, are used to involve citizens and other kinds of stakeholders (NGOs, businesses, etc.) in The Netherlands. If we look for examples of governance networks with their emphasis on horizontal forms of governance, their involvement of many actors and their complexity of decision-making processes these projects are probably one of the best examples. Most of these projects show a diverse set of interests (economic interests, social interests, ecological interests, etc.) and these interests are often contrary. In other words, spatial issues are wicked problems which according to theories of governance and networks require the involvement of various stakeholders to succeed (Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004).

Earlier research has shows that governance networks in general and processes of interactive decision-making in specific have trouble to get democratically embedded (Edelenbos, 2005; Klijn & Skelcher, 2007; Sorensen & Torfing, 2007). Projects of stakeholder participation have the danger of loosing democratic ground. Stakeholder involvement and involvement of political parties and institutions is mostly called democratic anchorage of networks (Sorensen and Torfing, 2006) In this article we are interested whether democratic anchorage has impact of outcomes and effectiveness of governance networks. Moreover, we are interested in the relationship between the degree of democratic embedding of Dutch spatial projects with stakeholder participation and their effectiveness. We therefore pose the following main question for this article: "Does the involvement of stakeholders and polical actors have effect on the (perceived) outcomes in governance networks around spatial projects in The Netherlands?"

In order to answer this research question our article is structured in the following way. In section 2 we sketch our theoretical focus. We elaborate the research methods used in section 3. We used a survey as our main research method. We present our findings in section 4. We finish our article with drawing conclusions in section 5.

2. Theoretical focus

Introduction: the emergence of complex networks

Several authors have mentioned the shift from government to governance (Kooiman, 1993; Agranoff and McGuire, 2000; Sorensen and Torfing, 2007). Governments accept that they no longer can develop and implement public policy on their own. They depend on many stakeholders with different resources (knowledge, money, etc.). A complex web of (interdependent) relations between governments, businesses, NGOs and civil society emerge (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). In these networks governments increasingly arrange deliberately all kind of alliances and cooperation models in order to face complex issues in the public domain (Rhodes, 1997).

In practice we find a wide variety of appearances of governance networks. One can think of public private partnership projects, community governance initiatives, citizen participation, interactive policy making, and so on. In The Netherlands for instance extensive use of stakeholder involvement initiatives can be observed, particularly at the levels of local and provincial government (Edelenbos & Monnikhof, 2001). At the level of the national government much thought is also being devoted to activities which can develop and extend stakeholder participation in projects, although the intensity of this involvement varies a lot (Edelenbos et al., 2006). In this paper we examine a wide variety of spatial projects which involve various stakeholders and can be characterized as complex decision-making processes. There is much discussion about how these governance networks are related both to the traditional democratic institutions and to real stakeholder involvement. Are these networks relatively closed and an only accessible to vested interest groups or can we witness a wider participation of stakeholders? And are these networks separated from the traditional democratic institutions (political parties, city councils, parliaments etc), or are these political actors and institutions deeply involved in networks? These questions have normative meaning (how should we arrange democratically our decision-making processes in networks) as well as empirical meaning (how is democratic anchorage organized and what are the effects). In this article we focus on the latter – empirical – question.

Democratic anchorage: relationship between representative and participative democracy

It is however clear that with the discussion on governance networks and stakeholder involvement that is an important characteristic of governance networks we also touch the subjects of participation and democracy. With the emergence of governance networks we introduce some characteristics of direct democracy and thus the discussion on stakeholder involvement can also be connected to the rich literature on participation. The literature on democracy and participation focus on the relation between citizens and elected officials on the one hand and the effects and desirability of participation on the other hand. See for instance literature on participation: Arnstein, 1971; Berry, Portney & Thomson, 1993; McLaverty, 2002.

Much of the recent literature has questioned the effectiveness of representational democracy (McLaverty, 2002; Sorenson & Torfing, 2003, 2007). Some argue to strengthen or even replace representational democracy by more direct forms of participation which also fit the complex interactive nature of much complex decision making processes (Hirst, 1997; McLaverty, 2002; Sorenson & Torfing, 2003). But this

raises the question if these more direct forms of participation fit with the more traditional representational form and how we should see to it that the two forms do not clash with each other. The following four relations between interactive decision making and representative democracy have been distinguished (Klijn & Skelcher, 2007):

1. incompatible: interactive decision making undermines the legitimacy and decision making of representative organs;
2. supplementary: interactive policy making enables democratic institutions to supplement connections with society and recognizes the complexity of decision making;
3. transitional: interactive policy making will increase in importance as a method for decision making at a cost to classic representative organs;
4. instrumental: interactive policy making is used by governments in order to give representative democracy more authority and steering capacity.

Some have crowned governance networks and the resulting stakeholder participation as a renewal and revival of democracy: an injection of direct democracy in a decaying system of representation. Others see it as a contribution on the (continuing) decline and hollowing out of formal representative democracy: a further attack upon the primacy of politics, democratic values, and continued fragmentation of political decision making (Mayer et al, 2005). This concern stresses the democratic anchorage of governance networks and in particular interactive processes (Sorensen, 2002).

Democratic anchorage through political involvement in various ways

That the issue of the relation between governance networks and democratic anchorage is regarded as important can also be derived from the attention to this issue from a meta-governance point of view, which stresses various forms of regulation of governance networks and the sometimes self-regulative character they seem to have (Jessop, 1998; Kooiman, 1993; Sorensen, 2002; 2005; Sorenson & Torfing, 2003; 2005). It involves the management of complexity and plurality through the organization of self-organization (Jessop, 1998, p.42). The change from government and sovereign rule to meta-governance affects the role of politicians seen from a democratic point of view. In a perspective of sovereign rule and representative democracy “politicians are expected to control all aspects of the governing process through their monopolized right to pass laws and their firm grip on the state bureaucracy” (Sorensen, 2006, p.99). Metagoverning politicians govern in a totally different way. They leave autonomy for stakeholders to govern themselves, and politicians reduce their pursuit to govern and control all elements in the governing process (Sorenson & Torfing, 2007). Some authors argue that the democratic anchorage can be established through political involvement in the governance processes (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000; Edelenbos, 2004; Sorensen, 2006). Different roles for metagoverning politicians can be distinguished (Edelenbos, 2004; Sorensen, 2002, 2006). Below we distinguish four roles.

A first form of interactive politics is *framework politics* (Teisman, 1997) or *hands-off framing of governance* (Sorenson, 2006). This role is expressed in the identification of frameworks and conditions for the governance process. These conditions or frames may be further developed during the process. Besides substantive conditions, politicians may also identify procedural conditions that are directed towards the quality of

the interaction that takes place during the process. This can include regulating the openness of the interactive process, guaranteeing the representation of certain interests, stimulating the variety and spread of the perspectives describing the problem throughout the process, and so on. In their role to identify the framework for the interactive process politicians can act as pacesetters demonstrating to prospective participants that they are willing to be responsive. They seek to mobilize organizations and individuals to participate in the interactive process. The participation of politicians in the interactive process can contribute to expanding the motivations of participations to actively contribute.

A second form of interactive politics is *monitoring politics* (Edelenbos, 2004). This refers to intervening periods within the process whereby politicians become acquainted with the results of the interactive process to date, such as through public meetings where the active participants (citizens, environment groups, housing cooperatives) report upon the debates and negotiations that have taken place. Politicians are actively involved in this meeting by questioning, commenting, debating, and thinking together with the participants about the matters presented. There may also be formal decision making moments during the interactive process whereby politicians are required to make choices which effect the further direction of the process. At these moments participants are also advised of the political choices. Since politicians experience first hand the substantive debate in this kind of process they are more able to identify with the motivations, interests and perspectives behind certain plans and ideas.

A third form of interactive politics is *debating politics* (Edelenbos, 2004) or *hands-on participation* (Sorenson, 2006). Some see debating politics as the essence of (deliberative) democracy. In the political arena it is desirable to have debates that are attractive to citizens, and that these become the centre of public interest. Politicians participate in a dialogue with citizens and representatives of social groups and businesses. They do not function in isolation but take a more responsive stance towards citizens. The advantage of a debating style of interaction is that the politicians are in close range of the interactive policy process, whereby they are able to follow the exchanges (arguments, value conflicts) and the reasons behind them.

A fourth style of politics in the interactive context is *facilitative politics* (Edelenbos, 2004; Sorenson, 2006) in which social processes are allowed to be pursued without a dominant position for the political sphere. Current social developments have brought about a situation in which there are strong degrees of differentiation within society, this complex character is characterized by a range of value patterns and living styles. In such a society patterns of decision making and negotiation occur in differentiated sectors which have a network character. From a political-administrative perspective, this challenges the possibility for the government to administer society since it is the self regulating capacity of social networks that prevail. A facilitative government hands over initiative to society and the market and allows them to be responsible for processes and outcomes. One of the ways in which this can occur is through interactive policy making. Politicians set a budget for example and social groups and citizens are in turn required to be responsible for the outcomes. In this arrangement the government is less active in identifying the outcomes and form of the interactive arrangements. Political steering of contents is more abstract and there is greater focus upon the processes of interaction.

Thus, different metagoverning roles for politicians can be distinguished. However, we did not take into account these distinctions; we studied in general the level of political involvement in complex governance networks. This is considered important in several studies (Sorenson, 2006; Sorenson and Torfing, 2005).

Democratic anchorage through opening the process for stakeholder involvement

Another way of approaching democratic anchorage is by looking at the way stakeholders are included in the governance process. Openness, accessibility and inclusion are often-mentioned aspects of democratic legitimacy of decision-making processes (Macpherson, 1979; Scharpf, 1999). A motive for stakeholder participation is the creation or restoring of a trustworthy relationship between citizens and government (Sorensen and Torfing, 2006; Edelenbos and Klijn, 2006). By involving more actors (and certainly citizens), decision-making acquires a less closed character, leading to more transparency and mutual understanding.

Scharpf (1999) distinguishes, input legitimacy, next two other forms of legitimacy (throughput and output¹), which refers to the openness of the policy and agenda-setting process. Openness in the governance network enhances the possibility of plurality (Jessop, 1998), that different and heterogeneous stakeholder groups are involved in the governance process. Different with a representative model of democracy in which the elected politicians reflect the people, in a system of network governance the right to represent the people is not predetermined and must be created and shaped over and over again by means of inclusion and exclusion that are based on political or administrative decisions (Sorenson, 2002, p.704).

The inclusiveness of a governance network emphasizes the openness and accessibility to those that might be or are affected by government decisions (Dryzek, 2007). The initiator or facilitator determines the rules to access a governance process. The democratic ideal is more than just expanding participation, it is also about creating diversity in institutions, processes and their outcomes (Young, 1999). Inclusion has not only become normative consideration, but also pragmatic, because governments are easily confronted with all kind of costs (for example deadlock in process, litigation) as a consequence of excluding certain stakeholders. Young (2000; 2001) distinguishes two types of exclusion, external and internal. External exclusion refers to the locking out of people or groups through restricted membership or limited economic or social resources. Actors can also decide themselves to stay outside the network for fear of co-option. Young speaks of internal exclusion when participants have limited capacity, for example communication or negotiation competences (Young, 2000, p.57). Sorenson (2002) argues that stakeholders have to be facilitated in gaining capacity to participate in network governance.

Inclusion relates to strong participation. Inspired by Dahl's 'preconditions for a polyarchy' Berry, et al. (1993, p.55) formulated two dimensions of participation that are important for a system of strong participation. These are *width* and *depth* of participation, which together determine the *strength* of participation in the policy process. The *width* of participation is the degree to which each member of a community is offered the chance to participate in each phase of the interactive process. The *depth* of participation is determined by the degree to which citizens have the opportunity to determine the final outcome of the interactive process.

In this article we depart from the abovementioned two forms of democratic anchorage: (1) openness of the interactive projects, i.e. the actual involvement of stakeholders, and (2) the embedding of the interactive project, i.e. the involvement of political actors, the politicians, in the interactive spatial projects. We elaborate these two forms in section 3.

Democratic anchorage and effectiveness

Democratic anchorage of governance networks around spatial projects is an intriguing question, not only from a normative point of view, but also approached of its impact on the effectiveness of interactive projects (see Sorenson, 2002; Agranoff & McGuire, 2003). Some authors argue that the involvement of stakeholders is a democratic value in itself, because it enhances the democratic legitimacy of decisions (Sorensen, 2002, 2005; Young, 2000; 2001). Others approach it more instrumentally by claiming that stakeholder involvement not only leads to more legitimate decision-making but also to a better quality of the outcomes (McLaverty, 2002; Skelcher, 2007). Skelcher (2007) for instance poses the hypothesis that a high level of democratic performance will be associated with a high level of (inter)organizational effectiveness.

We are especially interested in the practical effect of democratic anchorage on the perceived results of governance processes. We pay no attention to the intrinsic democratic value of democratic anchorage in an earlier qualitative study.

Beforehand it seems that the involvement of political actors seems to matter less. Edelenbos and Klijn (2006) have shown through their research on interactive policy-making on a local government level that it is difficult to find a relation between outcomes and the degree to which the municipal council was involved in the interactive process. Although it seems to matter, it is not a decisive factor. Process management emerges as the most important condition for good and satisfactory outcomes. Other research on the relation between political involvement and effectiveness shows, however, that this latter form of democratic anchorage is a precondition for reaching good outcomes out of interactive projects (Edelenbos et al, 2006). Thus, research results are not conclusive. It is therefore interesting to take a closer look.

In order to say something about the effect of democratic anchorage we distinguish two forms of outcomes: content and process (see also Edelenbos & Klijn, 2006). These two forms will be elaborated in the next section.

3. Research method and measurement

The analysis in this article is based upon an internet survey held in December 2006 among respondents involved in spatial projects in the Netherlands. The problem with surveys like this is that there obviously do not exist lists of all spatial projects in the Netherlands – let alone of all respondents involved in these types of projects.

However, there is in the Netherlands an important organization, called Habiforum. This is a knowledge network in which professionals from the spatial domain participate, and was established in 1998. The professionals are practitioners (from governments, NGOs, water boards, etc.), scientists and consultants. Habiforum tries to

develop new forms of durable spatial use, and therefore implement a practice and scientific program that are developed and implemented in close interaction. Because Habiforum has developed itself as an important network organization in The Netherlands, many people who are interested and active in (sustainable) spatial development have joined this network. Therefore the mailing list of Habiforum is an important source to get in touch with a large number of professionals in the spatial domain. We have approached the people on this mailing list as our population for this research. The next table describes the population we have used for our survey, and the number of respondents that have returned a usable questionnaire.

Table 1. Population and Survey

Number of people on Habiforum List ²	1596
Returned questionnaires	547
Analyzed questionnaires	337

After we deleted the researchers in the mailing list the list contained 1596 addresses. The questionnaire was sent by e-mail in November 2006 to these addresses, although we knew beforehand this included many people with only a broad interest in spatial projects and without ‘real’ involvement in such a spatial project. In total we got 547 filled in questionnaires back. Many of these, however, were incompletely filled in. In fact, 188 people did not give any information about a spatial project they were involved in, and quit the survey after the questions about these projects started. Many of them indicated in an open question that they were in fact not involved in such a project. We also had to delete 22 other respondents from the dataset, because they were missing on most of the variables. This leaves us with 337 respondents who answered most of the questions in the questionnaire and indicated that they were involved in spatial projects. Thus, related to the number of e-mailed questionnaires the response can be estimated at 21%, although related to the people that are actually involved in spatial projects this response can be estimated substantially larger³.

Nevertheless, the above implies we have to be careful in interpreting our data as: a) the actual population of people involved in spatial projects is unknown and b) therefore it is impossible to find out whether our response is representative for this population. Given the fact that it is impossible to solve this point, we nevertheless believe it is worthwhile to analyze this dataset in order to find out more about the democratic anchorage of these types of projects and its effects.

The respondents were asked questions about trust, project characteristics, management strategies, (perceived) outcomes and on involvement of stakeholders and political parties in decision-making. Each of the respondents was asked to answer the questions with a specific spatial project in mind which they also had to mention explicitly in the survey. Our measurement of the main variables used in our analysis here was as follows.

Democratic anchorage

Our main independent variable is democratic anchorage. As we argue in section 2, we can discern two types of democratic anchorage: stakeholder involvement and political involvement. Each of these two types was measured by two five-category Likert items⁴,

which in both cases were highly related. The correlations of the two items measuring stakeholder and political involvement respectively was 0.64 and 0.67. In the following analysis we will therefore use two separate scales of both types of democratic anchorage. The two items measuring respectively stakeholder and political involvement were recoded, added up and divided by two. The mean score on stakeholder involvement was 3.79 with a standard deviation of 0.89, and the mean score on political involvement was 3.57 with a standard deviation of 0.96. This indicates that stakeholder involvement as one aspect of democratic anchorage scores high in our research. Stakeholders are well involved in the interactive spatial projects. The political involvement is also in general present. However, the means of both questions measuring political involvement (see endnote 3) are slightly different; political involvement before the start of the interactive project scores higher (mean = 3.72) than the political involvement during the interactive project (mean = 3.41). This indicates that politicians are more practicing framing and facilitative politics and less monitoring and debating politics (Edelenbos, 2004). This corresponds with other research to the role of politicians in interactive processes (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000; Sorensen, 2004).

The correlation between both dimensions of democratic anchorage is 0.39, indicating that both dimensions are correlated and together measure democratic anchorage. Nevertheless, a factor analysis discerns two different dimensions with an “eigenvalue” over 1.00. The two items measuring stakeholder involvement score high on the first dimension, both other items score high on the second dimension, which indicate that it is justified to handle these two dimensions as distinct dimensions of democratic anchorage.

Perceived outcomes

Our main independent variable deals with the effectiveness of the projects, or in other words ‘the outcome’. Naturally, it would be best to measure these outcomes ‘objectively’ and independently from the respondents, but that is a cross sectional survey design not possible. We can therefore only measure the outcomes as perceived by the respondents.

We can discern between two types of outcomes: process and content outcomes (see also Edelenbos & Klijn, 2006). The perception of process outcomes was measured by six five category Likert items⁵. The Cronbach’s alpha of these six items is 0.80, so that they can be considered as forming one scale of the perception of process outcomes. The scores on the six items were added up, and divided by six, resulting in a scale with a mean score of 3.39 and a standard deviation of 0.60.

Content outcomes were also measured six five category Likert items. The Cronbach’s alpha of these six items was 0.84 and they were considered to form a scale of content outcomes. Again, the six items were added up, and divided by six, resulting in a scale with a mean score of 3.90 and a standard deviation of 0.62. In both cases the scores are above the theoretical mean (3), which indicates that the respondents are positive about the outcomes. Comparing both means, it also appears they are somewhat more positive about the content outcomes.

Project complexity

The outcomes of a project will not only be dependent on the democratic anchorage, so it will be necessary to control for several other relevant variables. The complexity of a

project is certainly such a variable. We defined a spatial project as more complex when it dealt with more activities. Six different activities were discerned: the building of houses, industry development, commercial development, environmental development, road development and water management. Based on the answers of the respondents, we measured for each project of one or more of these activities is performed. This resulted in a complexity scale ranging from 0 to 6. According to the mean score on average the projects involved 2.98 activities, with however a broad diversity given a standard deviation of 1.59.

Parent organization of the respondent

The respondents have a different background. As it is possible that this background influence the perception of democratic anchorage and/or the outcome perception, we will control in the analysis for this background. Four different backgrounds can be discerned: 1) national civil servants (11%); 2) local civil servants (29%)⁶; 3) private sector respondents (48%); 'others' (13%). The last group mostly involved respondent from stakeholder organizations like environmental groups, etcetera. To incorporate this variable in the analysis, three dummies were included. National civil servants serve as the reference category.

Phase of the project

The phase of the project can also influence the perception of democratic anchorage and/or the outcomes. For instance, almost by definition there will be fewer outcomes in the first phases of a spatial project. Based on the answers of the respondent we could discern four different phases: 1) preparation phase (21%); 2) developmental phase (41%); 3) building phase (17%); 4) maintenance phase (21%). In the analysis we will include three dummy variables, with the preparation phase serving as the reference category.

Growth in Trust

There is a growing interest in the role of trust in complex governance networks (for example: Lane and Bachman, 1998; McEvily & Zaher, 2006). In this line of literature we define trust as *a stable positive expectation of actor A (or prediction) of the intentions and motives of actor B, that is that B refrains from opportunistic behavior, even if the opportunity arises*. Authors pay also attention to the growth of trust⁷ (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996).

4. Research results

Perceived outcomes

In this section we show the results of our research. We conducted an OLS regression analysis with both outcome variables as dependent variables, and the variables discussed above as control variables. Our main focus will be on the effects of both aspects of democratic anchorage. Table 2 shows the results with process outcomes as dependent variable.

Table 2. Regression analysis with perceived process outcomes as dependent variable

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2,173	,228		9,538	,000
	stakeholder involvement	,326	,042	,499	7,805	,000
	political involvement	,041	,041	,066	1,018	,310
	complexity	-,027	,025	-,065	-1,082	,281
	parent organization of respondent (national civil servants =reference category)					
	local civil servants	-,099	,146	-,077	-,682	,496
	private sector respondents	-,071	,140	-,060	-,511	,610
	others	-,266	,162	-,151	-1,647	,101
	project phase (preparation phase = reference category)					
	developmental phase	,034	,093	-,028	-,364	,716
	building phase	-,043	,107	-,029	-,400	,690
	maintenance phase	,014	,106	,010	,128	,898
		R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
N=222		,552(a)	,304	,275	,50520	

The results in table 2 show a very clear picture. Only one variable – stakeholder involvement – has a positive significant effect on the perceived process outcomes. This effect is also very strong (beta = 0.499). The effect of political involvement is not significant, neither are the effects of the project characteristics.

Table 3 shows the results with process outcomes as dependent variable:

Table 3. Regression analysis with perceived content outcomes as dependent variable

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2,655	,242		10,954	,000
	stakeholder involvement	,256	,045	,385	5,688	,000
	political involvement	,055	,044	,086	1,256	,211
	complexity	,013	,027	,031	,481	,631
	parent organization of respondent (national civil servants =reference category)					
	local civil servants	,034	,153	,026	,220	,826
	private sector respondents	,062	,147	,052	,423	,672
	others	-,168	,169	-,096	-,994	,321
	project phase (preparation phase = reference category)					
	developmental phase	,046	,099	,037	,460	,646
	building phase	-,133	,117	-,085	-1,135	,258
	maintenance phase	,078	,113	,053	,693	,489

	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
N=226	,458(a)	,210	,177	,54537

Although with respect to the content outcomes, the total explained variance ($R^2 = 0.177$) is slightly less compared to table 2, the overall results are very similar. There is only one, very strong, statistically significant effect on the perceived content outcomes, namely stakeholder involvement (beta = 0.385). Nor political involvement, nor the project characteristics are statistically significantly related to content outcomes.

It is remarkable that political involvement doesn't (significantly) correlate to content and process outcomes. It seems to matter less as a democratic anchor point, contrary to some literature on this issue (Sorensen, 2002; Sorenson & Torfing, 2006; Edelenbos et al, 2006). The inclusion and involvement of stakeholders matters more as a democratic anchor point. We wonder why, and therefore we took a closer look at trust as a possible intervening variable. In section 2, we already mentioned that stakeholder involvement is often used to restore a trustworthy relationship between citizens and government. It might be that trust explains the significant effect of stakeholder involvement on outcomes.

Growth of trust

To assess the effect of trust, we introduced the variable 'growth of trust' in the preceding analysis. In essence this does not change much, but in both cases a) the effect of stakeholder involvement decreases slightly. With respect to process outcomes the beta decreases from 0.499 to 0.411 and with respect to content outcomes from 0.385 to 0.311; and b) growth of trust has in both cases a significant effect (beta respectively 0.289 and 0.247) on both outcome variables.

The latter finding points at a direct relationship between trust and outcomes. A growth of trust is related to a more positive view of the outcomes. The first finding, however, suggests that there is also an indirect effect as trust and stakeholder involvement appear to be related. We conducted an OLS regression analysis with growth of trust as a dependent variable. The results are presented in table 4:

Table 4. Regression analysis with growth in trust as dependent variable

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2,264	,331		6,836	,000
	stakeholder involvement	,306	,063	,306	4,859	,000
	political involvement	,049	,060	,052	,822	,412
	complexity	,019	,037	,031	,528	,598
	parent organization of respondent (national civil servants =reference category)					
	local civil servants	-,103	,199	-,053	-,515	,607
	private sector respondents	-,026	,191	-,015	-,137	,891
	others	-,353	,230	-,129	-1,537	,126
	project phase (preparation phase)					

= reference category)						
	developmental phase	-,213	,140	-,118	-1,527	,128
	building phase	-,454	,168	-,192	-2,703	,007
	maintenance phase	-,106	,159	-,049	-,665	,507
	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
N=275	,379(a)	,144	,115	,838		

The analysis indeed shows an effect of stakeholder involvement on trust. More stakeholder involvement leads to a growth in trust between the partners in a project. This underlines theory on trust that claims that trust grows through continuing interaction. Trust does not appear at the snap of a finger, but it must be built up in the interaction among actors. Most observations show that trust is a characteristic of an interaction relation that has existed for some time (Lane and Bachman, 1998). Parties will develop mutually shared meanings and partnerships gain stability from that.

Involvement of politicians in governance networks seems to have no effect on the growth of trust. Maybe this does not come as a surprise, when we take into account that trust in politicians has declined steadily the last decades in many western countries. In The Netherlands, for instance, we see a clear decline in trust from 1997 till 2004 (SCP, 2005, p.353). There is not only little trust in national government and parliament, but also in local political institutions (Weggeman, 2003, p.93).

This development in trust is not dependent on the background of the respondents, but there is a relation with the project phase: in the building phase the relation with growth in trust is negative, or in other words, in that phase there is a *decline* in trust between the partners. An explanation could be that things are not working out in the implementation phase as planned in the developmental phase (see Edelenbos and Klijn, 2007). This creates disappointment and a declining trust and no believe that one is keeping their word.

5. Conclusions

There is a growing attention for democratic anchorage in the literature of governance networks (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000; Sorenson & Torfing, 2007; Sorensen, 2002). This is a reaction on the instrumental or management approach of governance networks (Kickert et al, 1997). Some speak of a democratic deficiency in network theory (Sorenson & Torfing, 2007). Others observe a separation between interactive governance practices and the existing administrative and political system, leading to alienation and institutional dualism (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2005) and an evaporation of the results from interactive governance systems (Edelenbos, 2005). In this article we were especially interested in the practice of democratic anchorage: how does democratic anchorage take form in practice? Moreover, we are interested in the relationship between forms of democratic anchorage and their effectiveness. Therefore we posed the following main question in this article: “Does the involvement of stakeholders and political actors have effect on the (perceived) outcomes in governance networks around spatial projects in The Netherlands?”

We looked at different complex projects in the spatial domain of The Netherlands. We distinguished two forms of democratic anchorage, stakeholder and political involvement, which are theoretical based. We also discerned two forms of effects, process and content outcomes. We researched the relation between democratic anchorage and outcomes through quantitative research (see section 3).

Although our research shows some interesting results, it has also some important limitations. The first one has to do with the sample. It is probably impossible to find the whole population of people involved in interactive spatial projects, as this simply does not exist. We believe that we have got a relevant subsample of the people involved, but unfortunately we can never be sure, because the population is simply unknown. It would however be worthwhile to follow alternative strategies, for example a sample of spatial projects, in order to find out whether these generate the same results.

Also, our use of a cross sectional design has important limitations as we can never be sure of the exact causality between some variables. Does a growth of trust lead to better outcomes, or – alternatively – does a more positive perception of the outcomes leads to a growth of trust? Only a longitudinal design can answer this question, and we hope our findings will stimulate other to do that. Next to this, our measurement of ‘perceived’ outcomes is also debatable. It would be better to measure the outcomes ‘objectively’, within the projects and independent of the respondents. But again, this is difficult to do, and something we hope to do in the future.

It is now time to turn to our conclusions. Our first conclusion is that stakeholder as well as political involvement is present in the spatial interactive projects in The Netherlands. However, the stakeholder involvement scores (in general) higher than political involvement. We also see that for political involvement, politicians are more involved in the initial stages of governance processes and less in the implementing phase of those processes. Politicians are practicing more framing and facilitative politics and less debating and monitoring politics. They set frames and budgets before the start, but do not active follow or participate in the interactive spatial projects. This corresponds with other findings about the role of politicians in interactive processes (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000; Sorensen, 2004; Edelenbos, 2005).

Our second conclusion is that stakeholder involvement as one form of democratic anchorage has a very strong positive significant effect on the perceived process and content outcomes. We have controlled this effect through a number of other variables (parent organization, complexity of the project, phase of the project and growth of trust). This seems to turn out to be an important democratic anchor point in governance networks. Also other literature on stakeholder inclusion underlines this result (Young, 2000, 2001; Berry, 1993; Dryzek, 2007; Sorensen, 2002).

The third conclusion is that political involvement as the second form of democratic anchorage has no significant effect on (perceived) outcomes, content as well as process. This is a surprising research results, because many authors stress the importance of the metagoverning roles and involvement of politicians to establish democratic quality in governance networks (Sorensen, 2002; Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004). Some other research also relativises the importance of political involvement (Edelenbos & Klijn, 2006). However, we looked in general at the level of involvement of politicians in complex governance processes; we made no distinctions in different roles politicians

can play in these processes. In section 2 we distinguished four roles: framework, monitoring, debating and facilitative politics. It seems interesting for future research to study in more detail the relationship between these four roles and effectiveness of governance processes.

Moreover we see that growth of trust explains for only a small part the significant effect from stakeholder involvement on outcomes. The original effect remains strong. However, we see also that growth of trust has a significant effect on process and content outcomes. Our fourth conclusion sounds that there is a strong significant effect of stakeholder involvement on growth of trust. This is not surprising; in literature on trust it is underlined that trust is a characteristic of an interaction relation that has existed for some time (Lane & Bachman, 1998; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). Again the involvement of politicians in governance networks does not seem to matter, it has no effect on the growth of trust. Again this is not so surprising; there is little trust in political institutions in The Netherlands. From 1997 onwards there is declining trust in political institutions in The Netherlands (SCP, 2005). We also see there is more trust in the judiciary than in governmental systems, not only on the central but also on the local level (Weggeman, 2003).

To conclude, our main conclusion is that stakeholder inclusion as a special form of democratic anchorage seems to matter. We can argue that the better the inclusion of stakeholders is designed and organized, the better outcomes (content and process) are reached in complex networks and interactive and collaborative processes. It is not only a way of securing democratic value, but also a precondition to reach good outcomes of complex governance projects.

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Endnotes

¹ Throughput legitimacy refers to the quality of the process through which decision-making comes about. Lastly, output legitimacy focuses on the responsiveness and accountability in the policy-making process. We focus on the first and last form of legitimacy in our two forms of democratic anchorage.

² This number appeared after the deletion of people working at universities and research organizations. We wanted to reach the people 'really' involved in complex projects.

³ If the number of 188 'incomplete' questionnaires is an indication of the actual population, we can make the following rough estimation of the actual response: Of the 547 returned questionnaires, 188 or 34% is missing. In this same proportion holds for the total sample, the 'real' number of people involved in spatial projects is 1056 (.66*1600). If this assumption is true, the actual size of the response is about 32% (337/1056). Possibly it is even higher, as people not involved in spatial projects will probably not have bothered to take part in the survey.

⁴ We posed the following two statements to measure stakeholder involvement: “Decision-making processes for this project is accessible for all stakeholders” & “During the decision-making process responsibility is handed over from political actors to stakeholders”. Respondents could indicate with a five point scale if they could agree with these statements (totally agree, agree, neither agree/nor disagree, disagree, totally disagree).

We posed the following two statements to measure political involvement: “Politicians had an important role at that start of the project and at the determination of the outcomes” & “During the process there were many contacts with politicians and they were intensively involvement in the project”. We used the five point scale with the categories: totally agree, agree, neither agree/nor disagree, disagree, totally disagree.

⁵ We also used items to measure the two forms of outcomes. For process outcomes we distinguished the following items and questions:

- Management: Do you think that the involved actors have contributed substantively to the management of the project?
- Conflict resolution: Do you think that conflicts and differences of opinion have been solved adequately during the project?
- Prevention deadlocks: Did you witness any disturbing deadlocks during the project?
- Productive use of differences in perspectives: Do you think that the involved actors have made use of the existing different perspectives and insights (among the actors) in an adequate way with regard to solutions and problems in the project?
- Contact frequency: Do you think that the involved actors had frequently contact with each other during the project?
- Support: Do you think that the results from the project can expect the support of the involved actors?

For content outcomes we distinguished the following items and questions:

- Innovative character: Do you think that innovative ideas are developed during the project?
- Integrative aspect of the solution: Do you think that different spatial functions have been connected sufficiently?
- Recognizable contribution: Do you think that in general the involved actors have delivered a recognizable contribution to the development of the results?
- Problem solving capacity: Do you think that the solutions that have been developed really deal with the problems at hand?
- Robustness of the results: Do you think that the developed solutions are durable solutions for the future?
- Relation costs and benefits: Do you think that - in general - the benefits exceed the costs of the cooperation process?

The responds could mark their answer for all the abovementioned questions on a five point scale: very sure, sure, neutral, surely not, very surely not.

⁶ Including members from provinces and water boards.

⁷ This concept was measured by a single variable. On this variable the respondents could indicate what has happened with the trust between the partners since the beginning of the project. They could answer this with a five point scale ranging from strongly declined (1) to strongly increased (5).