Master thesis in Political Science
with specialization in Public Policy and Governance

Policy Labs' contributions to participatory democracy from an instrumental and normative perspective: do governments get closer to citizens or do citizens get closer to governments?

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research focus

Organizing so-called Policy Labs looks like a new trend in Public Policy. They are defined as "a container for social experimentation, with a team, a process and space to support social innovation on a systemic level". (Kieboom 2014:13). In practice, a lab takes a societal problem, it includes different stakeholders and end-users in the process, and it uses design thinking[1] and other tools to deliberate, co-create, experiment solutions and inform public policy (Keiboom 2014, McGann et al 2018). What differentiates them from other participatory methods is the use of experimentation and participation in a trans-disciplinary space to change traditional decision-making and policy processes (Whicher & Crick 2019:293, Unceta et al 2019:2, McGann et al 2018). At the core of the emergence of Policy Labs lies the assumption presented by participatory democracy that innovation and citizen participation will lead to better outcomes in public policies and governance (Fallon 2016, Acevedo & Dacen 2016). Thus, at first, they seem to be a participatory approach to cope with the promises of participatory democracy as a political regime where citizens get closer to governments and take a direct part in their decision making (Balderacchi 2016, Pellizzoni 2003).

Nonetheless, despite theoretical arguments that establish a positive correlation between participation, public policy, and democracy, there are some issues when it comes to link practice with theory (Hajer 2003, Broerse & De Cock Buning 2012, Moynihan 2003). One issue is the lack of clear evidence or recipe on how citizen participation leads to better public policy and governance (Broerse & Buning 2012). The complexity of the elements involved in participatory settings and the barriers to operationalize these processes challenges their ambitions to reach their desirable outcomes, including changes in government (Purdy 2012, Ansell 2102, Bailey and Lloyd 2016, McGann et al 2018). Another issue relates to the selective approach regarding the arguments in favor of participation, which tends to relate only to some aspects of democracy,

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[1] "Design thinking ideology asserts that a hands-on, user-centric approach to problem solving can lead to innovation, and innovation can lead to differentiation and a competitive advantage. This hands-on, user-centric approach is defined by the design thinking process and comprises 6 distinct phases. The design-thinking framework follows an overall flow of 1) understand, 2) explore, and 3) materialize. Within these larger buckets fall the 6 phases: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test, and implement". (Gibbons, Sarah 2016).

risking undermining the arguments in favor of participation in governments. In the case of Policy Labs, for example, their instrumental contributions to democracy, such as effective, efficacy, scalability, sustainable policies and modernization in the public sector are the most evident arguments used to favor its implementation (Acevedo and Dassen 2016:10, Unceta et al 2019, McGann et al 2018). The normative aspects of democracy are general;y overlooked.

Given these challenges in putting theory into practice, some authors take a skeptical position when it comes to the benefits of participation to democracy and the implementation of participatory democracy. The causal relationship between participation and benefits to democracy is still considered a black box and a matter of speculation given the difficulty in assessing it empirically (Burgess & Chilvers 200). As pointed out by Burgess & Chilvers, "there are concerns that deliberative processes may prove to be protracted and inconclusive, as well as real fears that they subvert broader democratic political processes" (2006: 724). Also, the same authors claim that participatory democratic aspirations are impossible to attain (ibid).

Therefore, in order to situate Policy Labs as an innovative approach to institutionalize participatory democracy, it becomes critical to understand how they positively contribute to the theory and practice of participatory democracy. This task becomes even more relevant as there is a lack of substantial theoretical and empirical studies about Policy Labs (Whicher & Crick 2019:293, Tõnurist et al 2017:1. Mc Gann et al 2018). Furthermore, there are some challenges associated with their practices, such as issues of power relations, culture, depoliticization, generation of quick-fix solutions and lack of legitimacy, which can imply that their positive correlation to participatory democracy cannot be taken for granted (Tõnurist et al 2017, Bailey and Lloyd 2016, McGann et al 2018) .

Considering the discussion above, this research aims to analyze the "participatory democracy" quality of Policy Labs as an innovative participatory setting. The goal is to explore how Policy Labs can lead to better participation of citizens in the government's decision-making processes and generate positive contributions to democracy. Considering the issues linking practice with theory of participation and participatory democracy, the research will investigate how the practice of Policy Labs enhances participatory democracy, not only from its instrumental

perspective but also from its normative aspects. Thus, the research question that will guide this work is:

"In which ways can Policy Labs, as a participatory setting, contribute to enhancing participatory democracy from an instrumental and normative perspective?"

In order to answer the research question, the theory and practices of participatory democracy and policy labs will be introduced in the next chapter to set the references to further analyse the practice. After a more thorough theoretical explanation, the first sub-question that unfolds from the research question is: *"how can the practice of Policy Labs be analyzed in order to assess their contributions to instrumental and normative aspects of participatory democracy?"*(SQ1). To answer this question, an analytical theory-derived framework. was elaborated and is introduced in chapter 3. According to this analytical framework and the elements considered relevant to analyze the practice of Policy Labs, other sub-questions are introduced in the same chapter, which will guide the analysis of the practice of Policy Labs. In order to do so, the research will make use of two case studies: the jongLab and the Digital Identity lab, which will be further introduced in chapter 4. The analysis of the case studies based on the developed analytical framework will be presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7, in order to answer the sub-questions presented in chapter 3. The final chapter presents the research overall findings and the answers to the research question.

With the aim to give a better understanding of the research approach, the next section will elaborate on the research design, including a more detailed explanation on the research objectives and relevance, research methods and limitations and constraints of this work.

1.2. Research design

1.2.1. Research specific objectives, scientific and societal relevance

By highlighting the contributions of Policy Labs to participatory democracy, the research aims also to enhance the practices of governments and public officials in leading them in a better and more effective way. From this, the participatory process and citizen participation can be

developed in a way that can attend the goal of governments to generate more social value through citizen engagement.

From a societal perspective, this research aims to give a critical perspective on what participation entails and the conditions that are necessary for good results in a participatory democracy context. It can bring clarity in which ways citizens and governments should work together, and has the potential to increase citizens' engagement by providing evidence-based information about the impact of their engagement in participatory processes. Also, civil society can have the means to hold government officials more accountable about the way that they propose citizen participation in the public sphere. According to Hoppe (2011:239), some groups see participatory spaces organized by governments as a public relations machine and a space for citizen manipulation.

From a scientific perspective, the research intends to contribute to theoretical and empirical research development in the field of Policy Labs. As stated in the literature review, the field is quite new with quite limited academic work. Considering the heterogeneous nature of these labs and the different contexts where they take place, the research can help to define and shape what they are, how they work and how they can contribute to governmental processes. In relation to their contributions to the effectiveness and efficiency of governments, a positive correlation seems to be taken as a given, bursting the proliferation of initiatives around different governmental levels. Nonetheless, in the light of already pointed criticisms, research in this area will provide evidence and solid arguments to support their implementation and the existence of participatory governmental settings. Currently, their existence and development are mainly supported by the political will of high level public officials (Tõnurist et al 2017).

1.2.2. Research strategy and methods

This research will use a qualitative approach and case study research, to link theory with empirical observation. The theory and literature about participatory democracy and collaborative governance will be used as a starting point to evaluate Policy Labs. The case study will be used to confirm and draw new insights into the theory. Thus, it follows the application of social theory as proposed by Blumer, where "theory, inquiry and empirical fact are interwoven in a texture of

operation with theory guiding inquiry, inquiry seeking and isolating facts, and factors affecting theory" (1954:3).

a. Case study

Case study was selected as a research method given the explanatory nature of this research, the lack of control over behavioral events and the goal to analyze a contemporary event (Yin 2002). The selection method was the study of multiple cases that could represent the variance in the application of Policy Labs at different government levels and that could be typical cases of Policy Labs and participatory policy making process (Gerring 2007).

The selection method unfolded in three main selection criteria, based on the premises that Policy labs are participatory methods to better inform policy making process and governments decisions: policy labs aimed to improve public policies or services, policy labs requested or sponsored by governments, and policy labs that involve civil society and other stakeholders in their processes. The application of the selection method made it possible to compare between the two cases in order to shed light on the practices of Policy Labs in the context of participatory policy making.

In this regard, the case of jongLab and the Digital Identity Lab were selected as they looked like a typical representation of governmental participatory efforts in light of the arguments presented in participatory and deliberative democracy theories. Also, it typically represents the practice of Policy Labs as it contains the main features described in the literature. Lastly, it fits into the participatory process that is linked to a more participatory policy making process.

b. Data collection

To answer the research question, a mix of data sources was used. Case study documents, reports about Policy Labs and data from interviews were used as primary data sources. In the case of the jongLab, this research used the publicly available reports published by Kennisland and under the creative commons license and 44 blog posts reporting the details of their lab process. In the case of the Digital Identity Lab, the research used presentations, general documents from the project and detailed information about their process provided through an interview with the lab manager.

In this specific case, the questions for the interview were crafted based on the analytical framework. The analytical framework was also used as a reference to guide the data collection and coding process by pointing out the important elements that need to be mapped in order to answer the research questions.

c. Data-analysis

The data collected was analyzed using a qualitative approach, having the analytical framework and the literature review as main references. First, the information gathered from documents and reports was coded and combined into different themes to be presented in the form of rich data, according to the elements provided by the analytical framework. Secondly, the interview was recorded, transcribed and the information also coded and allocated under the same themes as applied to the documents. To analyze the data collected, the nuances identified in each case and to support the research analysis, the analytical framework was used as a reference in combination with the literature on participatory processes and participatory democracy.

1.3. Research constraints and limitations

The data source that informed the case analysis and discussion brought some limitations in presenting a more elaborated investigation about the cases presented in this research, especially about the jongLab. The fact that it was not possible to hold interviews with the Kennisland team restricted the research view about contextual information which, in turn, could have given a better understanding of the case. In the case of the Digital Identity Lab, even though it was possible to retrieve contextual information from the interview, the information available on the documents was restricted, including the details of the lab process such as the number of participants and the selections of tools and methods used in each activity. Nonetheless, overall, the information collected could inform the proposed analysis but not without the risk of misinterpretation or partial understanding of the experiences and their main elements.

Regarding the analysis presented, proving a direct causal relationship of the framework elements to democracy aspects in the cases requires a more thorough and in depth research. However, given the time and scope constraints of a master's thesis, a direct causal relationship will not be

proven in this research. To address this gap, the research made use of literature and inferences of previous research about the contribution of participatory dimensions and processes elements to democracy, in order to come to valuable conclusions about the case studies.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Participatory democracy

2.1.1. The emergence of participatory democracy

Participatory democracy is one of the major theories about democracy, along with liberal democracy, classic pluralism and deliberative democracy (Stoica 2012:1). It refers to "a democratic political regime, where citizens take direct participation in public decision-making" (Balderacchi 2016:164). It emerged in the late 60´s and 70´s as a counter-argument against neo-liberal and elitist ideas that considered citizens as peripheral actors of politics. (Vitale 2006:740). It was eclipsed by the conservative movement of the 80's but it gained a new burst in the late 90's and beginning 2000s through the emergency of successful innovative experiments (Floridia 2014).

Participatory democracy entails decentralization and expansion of citizens' decision-making capacity, which has gained great appeal in the context of modern arrangements of political representation and multilevel governance. The different levels of decision-making in multilevel governance is being seen as decreasing the power of citizens. The non-linear decision making process would make it difficult to guarantee the accountability of public officials (Patsias et al 2013). Representation would limit "individuals' political capacities and incentivize apathy and passivity (Floridia 2014:5).

In practical terms, democracy can be participatory through principles of governance such as accountability, transparency and openness, and different institutional reforms, mechanisms and practices (Pellizzoni 2003:211, Balderacchi 2016:165). The implementation of participatory democracy would not require the total decentralization of representative democracy but a reagement of governance structures, redistribution of power, with a more focus on local level governance and the establishment of participatory bodies and bottom-up decision making process (Patsias et al 2013, Floridia 2014). Participatory democracy would lead to active citizenship and direct forms of empowerment (Floridia 2014:5). Overall, in the literature,

participation is seen as a condition to shape the relationship between stakeholders in the public sphere (Patsias et al 2013).

Along with the development of participatory democracy, the term deliberative democracy emerged in political theory in the late 80's. Some authors argue that they are indistinguishable while others consider that these terms are different with similarities (Fischer-Hotzel 2010, Balderacchi 2016, Floridia 2014). From a complementary point of view, Floridia presents participatory democracy as "founded on the direct action of citizens who exercise some power and decide issues affecting their lives", and deliberative democracy as "founded on argumentative exchanges, reciprocal reason-giving, and on public debates which precede decisions" (2014:305, In: Elstub 2018:7). Deliberative democracy would relate to the self-rule of citizens, claiming that it should be expressed about certain issues and that some governance level (Floridia 2013: 12). Participatory deliberative democracy would be the combination of both terms, meaning the citizens should govern through deliberation (Elstub 2018:2). Thus, participatory democracy can be seen as a broader concept that might encompass forms of deliberation, or not .

2.1.2. Normative and Instrumental arguments in participatory democracy

In the context of participatory democracy, two main arguments have been used to support the increasing rise of public participation: the normative argument and the instrumental argument (Moynihan 2003, Broerse & Bunning 2012). The normative argument sees citizens participation as a way to reach healthier democracies, stronger public sector accountability and improve the relationship between citizens and governments. According to Moynihan (2003), the normative argument arose from disillusionment with traditional and hierarchical modes of governance, that were not considered responsive to citizen´s needs, from the democratic ideal of citizens taking direct part in governmental decisions and from the consideration that societal conditions would lead citizens to seek involvement in public decisions. Thus, from a normative point of view, participation and collaboration are promoted based on values of service and empowerment with aims to achieve citizen´s autonomy, more influence in the governing process, transparency, citizens rights, accountability and inclusion in the public sector.

The instrumental argument supports participation on the basis of instrumental value to public administration rather than on democratic norms and values. From this perspective, participation reduces costs, increases efficiency and innovation. Public input, for example, increases resource allocation, improves management choices, provides more informed goals, rises acceptance of projects and increases general public support on public administration (Moynihan 2003, Broerse & Bunning 2012). The idea is that politics, led by experts and government officials, should define policy id no longer valid. Citizens and other societal actors start to have a key role in defining policy that, in turn, would influence politics (Hajer 2003).

2.1.3. Participatory democracy in practice

Over the last 40 years, the growing arguments in favor of public participation have led to the development of new modes of governance. From Administrative Rationalism, New Public Management, New Public Governance to Network Governance, the evolution of governance modes started to acknowledge citizens' integration in governance and participation as key elements in democracy (Osborne and Strokosch 2018, Hoppe 2011). Thus, in the context of growing complex societal problems and changes in governance, new governmental structures, institutional capacity, public servant roles, and policymaking processes were starting to bring together different stakeholders to take decisions and solve problems (Rhodes 2016:639).

As a consequence, participatory and collaborative practices and spaces became key in the implementation of participatory and deliberative democracy. To operationalize public participation and new forms of decision making, diverse methods and initiatives started to emerge in different governmental organizations over the last twenty years and has grown since then. Some examples are consultation techniques, consensus conferences, citizen panels, public hearings and citizens jury (Broerse & Bunning 2012). The level of public participation will vary according to each method, context of implementation, scope, and objectives. According to Vitale (2006:752), the success of such mechanisms will depend on how it is exercised and practiced. Problems of inequality of power, resources, different world-views, different value assumptions and the complexity to integrate different social actors to reach a common ground might arise in

the practices of participatory and deliberative democracy (Pellizzoni 2003:208, Hoppe 2011:253-260). Therefore, the institutionalization of participatory democracy and how participation is operationalized in each context will be key to determine how well practice meets theory in participatory democracy.

2.2. Collaborative governance

2.2.1. Collaborative governance in the context of participatory democracy

Following the changes and reforms in the public sector that embedded the principles of participatory and deliberative democracy, collaborative governance arises as an alternative approach to policy making and public management. It is defined as "the process and structures of public policy decision making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government and/or actors of the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished" (Emerson et al 2012:2).

It is also considered as a strategy to reconstruct democracy by bringing states, citizens and other organizations together, seeking to "restore trust in government and expand democratic consent by deepening participation and deliberation in public affairs" (Ansell 2012:1). It favors participatory democracy practices and aspects and supports innovation in the public sector to reach better social and relational outcomes. Citizens, governments and other societal actors would govern together and jointly make decisions in matters of mutual concern (Fallon 2016:2, Kim 2016:3547). It shares some principles with the concept of "network governance" by criticizing vertical decision making structures and fragmented public management and emphasizing the importance of deliberation, trust and reciprocity in the public sector (Ansell 2012:5) .

What differs collaborative governance from other participatory settings and cooperative arrangement is that collaboration implies a process that involves a "a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative" (Ansell 2012:2). The goal is to facilitate dialogue and cooperation among government and different stakeholders and also

among these different groups (ibid). Collaborative governance spaces would "enhance problem understanding, formulation of new visions, solutions, strategies, and problem-solving capacities, and mobilize societal actors to help generate, adopt, and diffuse innovations" (Fallon 2016:2). Overall, trust building, effective and efficient coordination and legitimate decisions are also listed as the main results from collaborative governance (Ansell 2012:3) Thus, it could be argued that collaborative governance relates more to the instrumental approach of participatory democracy.

2.2.2. Challenges in collaborative governance practices

Under the umbrella of collaborative governance, new deliberation spaces arise as new connectors between citizens and governments to pursue mobilization of actors, resources, and knowledge for better governance (Unceta et al 2019:2). Examples of these spaces are "multi-stakeholder roundtables, dispute resolution processes, collaborative planning, community advisory councils, and regulatory negotiations" (Purdy 2012:409, Ansell 2102:4) Nonetheless, despite the promises of collaborative governance to solve governmental problems in a better way, there is no blueprint how to succeed (Bordin 2017: 357). Following the flaws of participatory democracy, some common problems that might arrive in these collaborative spaces are related to power, individual interests of participants, transparency, and accountability (Bordin 2017: 357, Purdy 2012:409, Ansell 2102). In this regard, institutional and political obstacles also play a critical role in the link between collaboration and better policies, including "conflicting agency goals and missions, inflexible administrative and legal procedures, and constrained financial resources" (Purdy 2012:409). As a result, collaborative governance might not necessarily lead to a better and tangible outcome.

In collaborative governance, the quality of collaborative spaces, according to Patten (2001:222) will depend on "the character and quality of public deliberation and on the relationship between public deliberation and state-decision making" (2001:222). In this equation, the process becomes a critical condition to reach good state decision making. In this regard, some scholarships and empirical studies point to a series of structural and procedural factors that influence the outcomes of participatory and collaborative processes. (Bordin 2017, 357). Overall, processes that enhance

trust, the learning capacity of participants, consider contextual factors and elements and that promote a more appropriate arena for participation, have more chances to meet the collaborative governance goals (Kim, Siddiki and Leach 2017, Fallon 2016, Hoppe 2011).

Taking a closer look into the process stages and a successful participatory setting, some authors highlight the importance of the starting condition of these processes, the decision making process and the results they generate. (Uittenbroek et al 2019, Pellizzoni 2003, Fung 2006:6-7, Ansell 2012). According to the framework presented by Ansell & Gash (2008:550), the starting conditions set important elements to remedy the gaps of the elected representatives or government officials in relation to knowledge, competence, and public purpose. The elements relate to who participates in the process, participant´s power and resources conditions, incentives and constraints to participation, and information of conflict and collaboration among them. Who participates and how they become participants are also considered key aspects of the starting conditions. In this regard, who participates and how they are selected will define the responsiveness, legitimacy, and accountability of the process (Fung 2006: 67).

Regarding the collaborative process itself, how participants make decisions and how they communicate, are critical elements that influence the outcome and the democratic quality of the process (Fung 2006:67). The basic protocols and ground rules for collaboration, face-to-face dialog, and deliberation, level of trust and commitment among participants, shared responsibility and leadership, are crucial elements for every collaborative process (Ansell & Gash 2008). According to Patten (2001:237), a process that facilitates the expression of viewpoints, that ensures that people will have equal opportunity for self-representation, and are rooted in collective decision-making, set the necessary principles for democratic reform. The final outcomes of the participatory process and the what happens after, are important to point out to which extent they produced benefits for citizens and for the public structures and governance, reinforcing the establishment of these types of initiatives (Fung and Wright 2001:33, Ansell and Gash 2008:559).

2.3. Policy Labs

2.3.1. Policy labs, policy design and collaborative governance

The emergence of Policy Labs has its roots in the advancements of one of the public sector reforms, the New Public Management (NPM) and in the emergence of a new governance reform that followed NPM. The series of changes in the public sector during the NPM claimed for a more "entrepreneurial public sector characterised by the adoption of private sector management practices and market competition in the delivery of public services" (Mc Gann et al 2018:253). The idea was that the public sector organizations were a bureaucratic structure and did not have the necessary skills to promote new solutions needed. After NPM, new approaches to policy making and tools were constantly incorporated in the public sector. Nonetheless, the repertoires introduced by the NPM, based on technical models, conventional public sector policies and market innovation started to become insufficient to address some new challenges in public policy and governance, such as "undemocratic decision making, socio-economic inequality and unsustainable use of natural resources" (Kieboom 2014:12).

More recently, design principles and design thinking as a methodology emerged in the field of policy making, taking the entrepreneurial and innovations claims of the NPM into a more participatory direction. Policy Design through a diverse range of inputs, participation in the policy process and co-creation started to resonate more with collaborative and network governance, as the new reforms that took place in public governance (Mc Gann et al 2018:254. In this regard, the use of design in policy making "elicits active participation from the community, enabling more nuanced solutions through the richer understanding that is gained by involving citizens and other end users in reframing problems and in ideating solutions." (Mc Gann et al 2018:253).

2.3.2. Policy labs in theory

'Policy Labs' is a label for a broad and emerging category of concepts that encompass a variety of practices that go under various names. The practice of using labs to solve complex issues is considered "the latest trend in our quest to fix the global challenges of the 21st century" (Keiboom 2014:9). The rise of this new practice is justified by "the transformative promise that they bear, namely that they function as vehicles to combat our social ills by achieving systemic change" (Kieboom 2014:10). In this regard, a large number of related terms emerged to name

this practice like innovation team, innovation lab, public policy lab, government innovation lab, change lab, a design lab, social labs, social innovation lab (Torjman 2012, Mc Gann 2018, Williamson 2015).

Despite the wide range of names and diversity in their practices, there are some principles that bring them together and allow a common definition. From a perspective of policy design, labs are defined as "dedicated teams, structures or entities focused on designing public policy through innovative methods that involve all stakeholders in the design process" (Mc Gann et al 2018:255). The practice involves applying design and scientific lab principles as experimentation, testing process, monitoring and measuring and by participatory methodologies and tools, supported by a transdisciplinary team (Unceta et al 2019:2, EUPAN 2018). Thus, they can be considered a material expression under the collaborative governance umbrella, which appears as "a vehicle for alternative policy making by turning collaborative trans-disciplinary spaces of socio-political experimentation into a revolutionary process that is changing the way in which we address and understand traditional policies and decision-making processes" (Unceta et al 2019:1-2).

2.3.3. Policy Labs' practices

Policy Labs can involve diverse groups of stakeholders, can take place at different governmental levels, from national to local, use heterogeneous methods and participatory tools, and have different structures and focus (Tõnurist et al 2017:8, Acevedo and Dassen 2016:19, Unceta et al 2019). Overall, they tend to address problems and create alternative solutions to standard approaches mostly related to policy and service design (McGann et al 2018:250, Bailey& Lloyd 2016:1). It involves encompassing an "evolving, iterative and a self-correcting decision-making process in which prototyping is central" (Torjman 2012).

Depending on the design process, the Policy Labs can use different tools such as: workshops with policy teams and stakeholders that aim to stimulate innovative ideas; research and data collection; trials to test new methods; and online open policy toolkits (EUPAN 2018). Tools used in policy design and research can range from ethnographic, action research, qualitative, user-centered methods, visualization, analytical techniques, assignment experiments and

behavioural insights. The use of prototypes as tangible artifacts to deliberate about experiences and solutions is also very present in labs (Williamson 2015).

Apart from the diverse set of tools used, Kieboom lists the following set of working principles based on which lab practitioners act to get to solutions and inform public policies: research and learning activities are to do, not to stay in theory; end-users are the leading experts in the process; focus on systemic social problems instead of on difficult ones; act at the system level, by influencing or improving organizations and institutions, developing new changing methodologies, working with a multidisciplinary team and work with the goal of scaling solutions at different levels of the system (Keiboom 2014:14). And, through different interpretations of these principles, some labs will work inside or outside governments, some will focus on social innovation in the public sector while others will work for innovation in general related to specific themes (ibid).

From the different applications of these working methods and tools, Mc Gann presents a classification of labs building on four main working approaches. The first ones are **design-led labs**, which apply a Design Thinking approach and user-centered methods to co-create solutions and inform public policies. The second ones are open government and **data labs**, which use data analytics and participants' expertise to experiment and make governments more open. The third type is the **evidence-based lab**, which relies on evidence-based approach to policy making. The last type, **mixed methods lab**, are the ones that do not take a specific approach. From these categories, in a sample of 35 labs, the authors point outs that design-led labs are the most common type. Regarding how they relate to the policy design process, most labs are related to policy design and development through problem definition, analysis, the generation and testing of solutions. Only a few labs could relate to the implementation of public policy or scaling activities (Mc Gann et al 2018:256-257).

Despite the growing spread of Policy Labs, their innovative approach and the promised advancements in the public sector by their application, there are still some question marks related to their practice that the current literature seems not to address yet and there are others questions that some studies are starting to shed light on (Mc Gann et al 2018). In this second category,

some authors already point out some challenges associated with Policy Labs. In this case, as in the case of collaborative governance, issues of power relations, culture, depoliticization, the dominance of economic narratives, generation of quick-fix solutions and lack of legitimacy are also present in the practices of Policy Labs (Tõnurist et al 2017, Bailey and Lloyd 2016, McGann et al 2018). So, given these challenges in operationalizing Policy Labs and participatory processes in general, there seems to be a long way from innovation and participation in the policy-making process to the results that these settings might bring in practice.

3. Analytical framework

The contribution of participation to democracy, as highlighted in participatory and deliberative democracy theories, will depend on participatory processes settings (Michels 2011, Uittenbroek et al 2019, Glucker 2013). The role of citizens in a participatory process, for example, will be directly linked to the design elements of the process (Michels and Graaf 2017:3). In this regard, some studies point out that different types of participatory arrangements and democratic innovations will have different contributions to democracy, and only a few will include the strict theoretically desired aspects of participatory democracy (Michels 2011:275, Glucker et al 2013:105, Smith 2009:10, Fung 2006). In a quest for a better democracy, given the impossibility of having direct citizen rule in many political regimes, according to Michels, the best that can be done is to try to realize a set of conditions in these participatory settings to maximize the democracy ideal (2011:277).

With the aim to investigate in which ways Policy labs can enhance participatory democracy and to answer the sub-question: "how can the practice of Policy Labs be analyzed in order to assess their contributions to instrumental and normative aspects of participatory democracy?" (SQ1), this research has developed an analytical theory-derived framework. The framework is based on the relation between elements of participatory process design and instrumental and normative aspects of democracy (Michels 2011, Michels and Graaf 2017, Uittenbroek et al 2019, Glucker et al 2013). First, it presents and operationalizes normative and instrumental democracy objectives linked to citizens' participation. Second, it presents and operationalizes the main dimensions of participatory process design. Lastly, based on the theory about participatory processes, it presents the hypothesis that supports the causal relationship between participatory processes design elements and democracy (Fung 2006, Uittenbroek et al 2019, Glucker et al 2013). As expressed by Graaf and Michels (2017), an analysis based on these relations offers a way to gain a better understanding of how participation contributes to a strong democracy.

3.1. Analysis of Instrumental and Normative democracy

In order to operationalize participatory democracy aspects, different articles that investigate the

contributions of participatory processes to democracy were reviewed. The findings indicated different normative and instrumental democracy aspects as possible outcomes of participation, as follows:

Authors	Contributions of participatory processes to democracy
Fung (2006)	Legitimacy, justice (influence and inclusion), and effective administration.
Michels (2011)	Legitimacy, inclusion, civic skills and virtue, and deliberation.
Uittenbroek et al (2019), Glucker et al (2013)	Influence, democratic capacity, social learning, empowerment and inclusion, legitimacy and conflict resolution, harnessing local information and knowledge, incorporating experimental and value-based knowledge, and testing the robustness of information from other sources.
Michels and Graaf (2010)	Civic skills and virtues, inclusion, deliberation, and legitimacy.

Table 1: Contributions of participatory processes to democracy (Cardoso 2020)

From the summary above, it is possible to identify that some democracy aspects proposed by some authors overlap, while there are differences in the way that some authors prioritize and indicate the contributions of participation to democracy. Thus, to integrate the analytical model, this research will mainly use the approach proposed by Michels (2011) as it encompasses most democratic aspects proposed by the other authors. So, this research will focus on the impact of participation in the influence, inclusion, civic skills, and social learning, as normative aspects of democracy, and on legitimacy, as an important instrumental aspect of democracy.

With the goal to avoid different conceptuals interpretations and to make it possible to develop an analysis that leads to concrete insights, the concepts presented above are defined and operationalized into assessment criteria, as follows:

- **Influence**: public participation will enable those who are affected by a decision to influence that decision (Uittenbroek et al 2019: 2532). Thus, to evaluate how participation influences decision, the analysis will look into how the different actors

affected by a decision are engaged in the participatory process. Also, as presented by Michels, influence should be measured by the indication of a "policy change or continuance in relation to the recommendations of participants" (Michels 2011:283). Here, the deliberative aspect, as presented by Michels (2011) can also be incorporated, meaning the degree that the decision-making process is based on public reasoning and different points of view.

● **Inclusion**: public participation will empower formerly marginalized individuals and groups by changing the distribution of power in society (Uittenbroek et al 2019: 2532). Taking a wider approach, Michels (2011) refers to inclusion as the participation of individual citizens in the policy development process, which can be analyzed through two perspectives: access to the decision-making forum and how representative the forum is, including the evaluation whether any relevant group or interests was excluded from the process (2011:285).

● **Civic skills and social learning**: according to Uittenbroek, refers to enabling the development of citizenship skills and opportunities to actively exercise citizenship (2019:2532). Michels indicates that an assessment of this aspect should indicate differences in citizen´s knowledge, skills, and virtue after the participatory process or as a condition to come to a rational decision (2011:286). The author specifically refers to virtue as related to "public engagement and responsibility, political interest, the feeling of being a public citizen, and willingness to be active in public life". (ibid)

● **Legitimacy**: refers to the acceptance of a government's public policy or decision by the public, which can facilitate its implementation and further developments (Uittenbroek et al 2019, Fung 2006). According to Michels, on a small scale, it can be analyzed as to the extent to which participants and other groups of actors support the outcome of the participatory process. In a more broad perspective, it refers to the contributions of participation in the support of political decisions and political institutions (2011:289).

3.2. Participatory Process Dimensions

With the goal to analyze citizens' participation empirically, three important dimensions of

participatory processes were identified through the literature: Who participates? How are decisions made? What is the result? (Uittenbroek et al 2019, Pellizzoni 2003, Fung 2006:6-7). According to Fung, "these three dimensions constitute a space in which any particular mechanism of participation can be located", "they are important to understand potentials and limits of participation forms". (2006:66-67) They are critical to defining the ways in which different participatory processes will address different democratic issues (ibid). So, overall, the analysis of the contributions of participation to democratic aspects will revolve around mapping these three dimensions and their specific aspects, and analyzing how they relate to the democratic aspects previously defined.

3.3. Instrumental and normative democratic aspects in process dimensions

Taking the three dimensions of participatory processes as references, some authors highlight important elements that need to be mapped and analyzed in relation to participatory process design, as presented below, in order to assure their relation to democracy aspects (Fung 2006:66). The nuances and specific issues that each of these elements entails will be further presented and discussed along this research.

3.3.1. Who participates?

Nature of the issue, the context where participation takes place, participants´ representation, the selection of participants, the configuration of power defined, and the stage in which participants are engaged in the policymaking process are important elements related to who participates. They will directly influence the extent to which democratic objectives of participation are met (Glucker et al 2013, Uittenbroek et al 2019, Ansell & Gash 2007).

In this regard, some questions will be used to evaluate the research case, such as: who is eligible to participate? Who participates? Who did not participate? Which citizen groups are represented? How did participants were selected? Which incentives and interests made participants join the process? In which stage of the policymaking process were participants engaged? Do participants possess the information and competence to make good judgments and decisions?

3.3.2. How are decisions made?

According to Uittenbroek, the how question indicates the degree of influence that citizens and other stakeholders have in the process, but can also relate to social learning and legitimacy (Uittenbroek et al 2019: 2531-2534, Michels 2011:279). In this regard, the way in which participants engage in the decision-making process becomes a critical criterion. For some authors, different levels of participation are possible, while others advocate that participation in participatory and deliberative democracy should take place through deliberation (Glucker et al 2013:105, Uittenbroek et al 2019, Chilvers and Burgess 2006:719-720, Fung and Wright 2001).

How participants take decisions during the process, the focus of participation, how knowledge is constructed, and the way participants come to a final agreement, are important criteria to evaluate the level of collaboration in collaborative governance settings (Ansell & Gash 2007: 543-545). Free public reasoning, equality, the inclusion of different interests, accessibility, trust-building, commitment, basic protocols, and ground rules, process facilitation, shared understanding, transparency and mutual respect are some aspects that might impact the quality of deliberative processes (Michaels 2011: 279, Ansell & Gash 2007: 543-545, Chilvers 2006:173).

From the elements above, some important questions to evaluate the case are: How decisions were made? What was the goal of the decision-making process? In which matters did participants take decisions? How did participants communicate and interact? How was knowledge built or leveraged? What was the level of deliberation? Which tools and methodologies were used in the process? How was the process facilitated? Did the contextual, political, and institutional context influence the process?

3.3.3. What is the result?

The result refers to the influence of public participation in public policy or political settings. The result needs to be understood in terms of their link with policy or public actions before and after the process, specifically in relation to what participants and public agents say and do (Fung 2006:66). In this regard, the contributions of the process outcomes can range from different types and intensities, being directly or indirectly (Fung 2006:66). In the case of Policy Labs, a closer analysis of the depth and nature of their process effect seems important as it aims to promote

changes at the system level and greatly contribute to solving complex issues.

Elements of process ownership, engagement of public agents and agencies, political motivation, quality and depth of process outputs, change in attitudes, communication, and knowledge, and implementation of new policies; or actions might shed light on the effects of participation in politics and policies. So, some questions to evaluate this dimension might be: what were the process outcomes and outputs? Were they implemented? What has changed after the process? Did the process generate better and innovative solutions? In which ways the results are linked to the stakeholder's needs and claims? How effectively are the decisions translated into actions? (Fung and Wright 2001:33, Ansell and Gash 2008:559, Kieboom 2014).

3.4. Analytical framework and sub-questions

From this research theoretical review and exploration, and as an answer to the sub-question "how can the practice of Policy Labs be analyzed in order to assess their contributions to instrumental and normative aspects of participatory democracy?" (SQ1), the analytical framework for this research, inspired in the conceptual framework presented by Uittenbroek et al (2019), is presented in the table below.

From the analytical framework and considering the above elaboration on participatory processes dimensions, assessment elements and their contributions to democracy aspects, to answer the questions "*in which ways can Policy Labs, as a participatory setting, contribute to enhancing participatory democracy from an instrumental and normative perspective?",* three sub-question will guide the analysis of the Policy Labs:

- *SQ2: In which ways do Policy Labs contribute to democracy from the perspective of who participates in the labs?*

- *SQ3: In which ways do Policy Labs contribute to democracy from the perspective of how participation took place in the labs?*

- SQ*4: In which ways do Policy Labs contribute to democracy from the perspective of their process outputs and outcomes?*

Participatory processes dimensions and assessment elements	Possible contributions	Democracy aspects
Who? Interest representation ● Issue ● Context ● Selection ● Incentives ● Participants ● Resources ● Representation		*Influence* Public participation will enable those who are affected by a decision to influence that decision.
How? Decision making and participatory process ● Goal ● Communication ● Level of participation ● Knowledge ● Decision making ● Methodologies ● Facilitation ● Context and power		*Inclusion* Participation of individual citizens or relevant groups in the policy making process and changing in the distribution of power in society.
So What? Degree of change ● Government involvement ● Process output ● Power configuration ● Degree of change ● Innovation ● Implementation ● Feedback mechanisms		*Civic skills and social learning* Participation will enable the development of citizenship skills, social learning, and opportunity to actively exercise citizenship.
		Legitimacy Participation leads to acceptance by the public of a government's public policy, decision or action.

Table 2: Analytical framework (Cardoso 2020)

4. The case studies: the jong Lab and the Digital Identity Lab (DI Lab)

In this chapter I will present a brief description of the jongLab and the DI lab, as case studies, based on the information retrieved from documents and from an interview. The aim is to give the reader an overview of the context and motivation that led the organizations to set the policy labs and the lab's main process dimensions based on the questions: who participated in the lab? How was the lab process design? What were the outputs of the policy labs? This will set the basis to introduce more detailed information about the labs and the analysis about their contributions to the democratic aspects presented in the analytical framework in the next chapters.

4.1. The jongLab

The jongLab was an initiative implemented by Kennisland, a Dutch organization and action-oriented think tank, that designs and implements innovative interventions in the field of educational innovation, smart government and creative economies, among other areas (Kieboom 2014). The organization set up the lab in partnership with the municipality of Nijmegen in the context of the decentralization of public services that was occurring in the Netherlands in 2015 (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016).

The lab was a temporary initiative that took place over eight months in 2015, in the city of Nijmegen, and brought together different stakeholders and a multidisciplinary team around the overall goal to bring young people and local organizations together. To do so, the open research question that guided the process was "What is it like to be young in Nijmegen, and how could it be better?" (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016). In order to answer these questions, the jongLab applied a specific methodology developed by Kennisland, called the Field Forward methodology, based on design thinking methodology. The methodology encompasses a participatory process focused on open questions, centered around citizens and supported by some specific tools like storytelling and experiments through prototypes (ibid).

4.1.1. Contextual background - jongLab

In 2015, the Dutch Government started a process of decentralizing social services in areas such as "work and income", "youth care" and "elderly care". These services were transferred from the central governments to local governments motivated by the expectation that municipalities would be able to better tailor those services to the local context and needs (Vermeulen 2015). In the case of the provision of youth services, there was an expectation that the new youth care system would become more "more efficient, coherent and cost-effective", with a focus on prevention (Bosscher 2014).

In this new governance setting, the local implementation of these new services would be the responsibility of each local government, supported by social teams in cities and neighborhoods, which would bring different stakeholders and fields of expertise together (Graaff-Kamphof). Thus, the city of Nijmegen took this transition moment as an opportunity to develop "new services, work practices, and policies together with citizens" (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016). In this context, the jongLab was set up to develop solutions and to provide new insights for the local government to support the provision of public services to youth and to develop further initiatives.

4.1.2. Who participated in the jongLab?

The jongLab included youth, civil servants, youth workers, students, educators and consultants from Kennisland. Twelve representatives of these groups were involved in all stages of the process as team members. Around 50 youth were contacted by the lab team in their process of collecting inputs to develop solutions (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016). The lab created connections with around 150 people among policy officials, policy program managers and consultants on policy making processes through interviews, social media and evaluation rounds (ibid, Kuik 2015). The wide groups of stakeholders were also contacted to give feedback on the prototypes of the solutions developed in the lab (Vrouwe 2015). The decision of who should participate in the Lab was initially defined by the Kennisland team and refined in the initial stages of the Lab along with reflections about the lab goal (Kieboom 2015, Vrowe 2015, Taken 2015).

Even though it was mentioned in the lab reporting that the lab team was formed by 20 members,

it was possible only to identify the name of 12 participants (Kuik 2015, Kieboom 2015, Taken 2015, Vrowe 2015). From this main lab group, 25% of the participants were from Kennisland, who guided the team through the Lab process, 25% were professionals working with youth, 35% were youth, including students, and 15% were public agents from Nijmegen. The importance of having young people in the lab team was highlighted by Kieboom as critical in order not to be bound only by an organizational perspective (2015).

In the lab team, all the participants had the same role of collecting information from youth, discussing the findings, developing ideas, building and testing prototypes. The Kennisland team had an additional role of facilitating the process, guiding the participants through each step of the lab. As stated by Kieboom and reported on the lab blog: "in jongLAB the municipality, young people and youth organizations work as one team. Together they map out what it is like to be young in Nijmegen, but also what can be done differently: so that Nijmegen and its surroundings are a city where you can create and use opportunities!" (2015).

4.1.3. How did participation take place in the jongLab? An Overview of the jongLab design process

The Field Forward methodology, developed by Kennisland, defined the process through which participation happened in the lab. The methodology can be summarized in five main steps: preparation, collecting stories, chasing stories with organizations and citizens, generating collaboration and experimenting and securing new initiatives (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016). According to the jongLab reporting and their insights about their methodology application, stories are narratives through which the storyteller shares experiences, ideas and solutions (ibid).

1. Preparation: this step consisted of learning about the local context, setting the lab team, setting a location for the lab and developing an open research question (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016).

2. Collecting stories: in this step stories were retrieved from youth, professionals and civil servants in Nijmegen. In the jongLab, stories were used as a main learning source about stakeholders perspectives, needs and values (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016). In parallel, the lab team engaged in a collective process of interpreting and deliberating about these stories, checking

them with other stakeholders and publishing them in the lab blog (Tasks & Kieboom 2015).

3. New stories and follow up: after retrieving and assessing the first stories, the third step was to get new stories from companies, schools and municipalities to follow up on their previous stories, to confirm or clarify information (Kieboom 2015). In parallel, there were specific moments of collective evaluation of those stories, which happened within the lab team and with other stakeholders through reflection tables (Kieboom 2015, Wieteke 2020, Taken & Kieboom 2015). From the stories collected, the lab team elaborated frames which can be translated as their common understanding about the stories which, in turn, translated into themes, which were a more concrete definition about their common understanding of reality and the issues in place (Tasks & Kieboom 2015).

4. and 5. Collaboration and experimentation: from the five common threads identified, the lab team developed 16 ideas, and from these ideas, they developed 7 prototypes as a material representation of these ideas (Vrouwe 2015). After being refined and further developed through additional research on the field, the prototypes were tested with a larger audience and refined again. The goal was that these prototypes would be further developed and implemented by public organizations in Nijmegen. (Wieteke 2015, Kieboom 2015, vrouwe 2105, Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016).

The figure below summarizes the main steps of the process and their main sub-tasks.
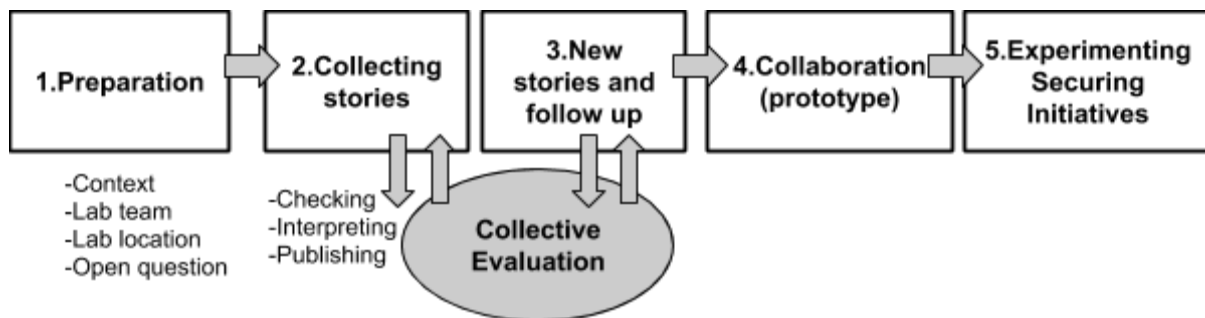

Figure 1: jongLab process design (Cardoso 2020)

4.1.4. So, what? Outputs of the jongLab

As a result, the jongLab developed 5 different prototypes, as follows (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016):

1. The story room: introduce stories as an additional input to policy making in the Nijmegen Research and Statistics Office, that mainly conducts numerical policy research.

2. The digital social network map: the digital network map indicates organizations, fun activities, nice places and networks in the city to attend the youth needs or their request for help.

3. Toolkit Re-connect: a toolkit with cards for youth organizations to make them aware of their exclusive and inclusive behaviour towards young people.

4. Infographic on municipal policy making process: an infographic translating the municipal policy making process to make it understandable for everyone.

5. Lessons in happiness: training to prepare young people who turn 18 to better manage their finance and become financially independent.

6. Education lab HAN (Hogeschool van Arnhem en Nijmegen - Faculty of Social Services) a mini-lab training to use lab principles in education.

7. Learning network: a network to promote meeting of organizations that work on youth issues to cooperate and learn from stories of young people.

4.2. The Digital Identity Lab (DI Lab)

The Digital Identity Lab (hereafter: DI Lab) was set by Waag, a Dutch NGO that works with different projects in the social field, and that "operates at the intersection of science, technology and the arts, focusing on technology as an instrument of social change" (Waag 2020). The Lab was developed to attend a call from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in close partnership with the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG), to explore and define issues about digital identity (Waag 2018, Spierings 2020).

The lab took place over a period of seven months, starting officially in May of 2018 and ending

in December of 2018 (Waag 2018). The organizations involved wanted to set an open and structured process to make the discussion about digital identity, that so far was only held within the government, open to the involvement of different layers of the society and allow the inclusion of other perspectives (Spierings 2020). In the Lab manager's words, "the more fundamental thing was the aim to have the average citizen and their focus and interest back into the policy discussion". Overall, one of the main objectives was to increase trust between citizens and policy makers (Spierings 2020).

The lab had four main goals and four secondary goals. The main goals were: analyse and try new forms of digital identity, experiment with a new policy instrument (Policy Lab), test the usability of different identity concepts and associated tools regarding digital identity and explore the implication of these identity concepts. The secondary goals were: develop interesting concepts and applications with end users in a safe environment, creating support: by involving citizens, scientists and entrepreneurs from the start, support is created with a wide selection from society, investigate the issue of digital identity as one that transcends organisations with an outside-in method, where not the direct interests of the organisation are central, but the social issue and Introduce those interested in the lab to the method and spread the lessons learned more widely (Waag 2018). To reach those goals their working method was based on: working from the perspective of people and organizations involved, co-creating possibilities and prototype and test concepts, assumptions, ideas and tools (Waag 2018, Spierings 2020).

4.2.1. Contextual background - DI Lab

Digital Identity represents the profile that people have in the digital world in a given system, based on the information that they provide, including their preferences (Waag 2018). In the advent of the internet and technology, several issues emerged regarding digital identity. The user currently has no control about this identity and the data available, which increases the risk of privacy violations and fraud. There is also a lack of ownership about how users are profiled in the digital world. Another issue is that companies and governments define people´s digital identity from their own perspective. Moreover, information becomes a valuable asset that interferes with what people see and do on the internet. As a result, citizens claim that they have

lost control, understanding and trust online (Waag 2018). In this regard, one of the main discussions that have emerged in the last years is the self-sovereign identity and the idea that people should have control over their digital identity. Nonetheless, as pointed by the DI Lab manager, a larger system of information and the amount of stakeholders involved makes all the discussion around digital identity a complex issue (Spierings 2018).

In an attempt to move forward the discussions around the Digital Identity, set boundaries and definitions and regulate practices, a number of laws and projects have been set at the European level. In the Dutch context, since 2016, a law has been shaped and discussed about tasks, responsibilities and power in the digital world, including digital identity (Digital Government 2020). There were also several programs within the government to investigate digital identity and to implement solutions to address the complexity of defining requirements for digital identity in government services at different governmental levels. Nonetheless, facing this complex the group of policy makers responsible for planning the future of digital identity were of the opinion that, "whatever was needed in terms of digital identity, they were not the ones that were in a position to have the knowledge or the experience or the tools to make a decision that would actively support their own ambitions within government" (Spierings 2020). So, the lab came as an approach that would integrate different voices to discuss digital identity and to create a shared understanding and common agreement on definitions, issues and solutions.

4.2.2. Who participated in the DI Lab?

A wide range of stakeholders participated in the lab and they were divided in three different rings as per the activities developed in the lab. Overall the lab included active and committed participants with representatives from municipalities, researchers / experts, solutions providers, developers and government agencies that participated in their closed events to a more general public, including private organizations, experts and people interested in digital identity in their open events. Everyone could participate and give their contribution to the lab through the Waag online channels and the ones specifically set for the project (Waag 2018, Spierings 2020). To define who should participate, they looked into the lab objectives and developed a stakeholder map with all the actors they wanted to include. The overall number of people involved in the lab

was not clear in their reporting, but it was possible to identify that this number ranged according to the activities and stages of the lab (Waag 2018). Their initial contact list of potential participants had around 40 names, which grew over the process. They had 300 people participating directly in one or more lab events and had at least 3.000 people through their online channels (Spierings 2020).

The project was governed by a steering group and implemented by the Waag team with the support of a commissioned team. The steering group was formed by two people: one representative of the ministry and one representative from the VNG. The commissioned team had two policy makers from the ministry, one representative of VNG and the lab project manager, fromWaag. The Waag team was composed by four members from the organization, including the lab manager, who was interviewed for this research. (Waag 2018, Spering 2020).

4.2.3. How did participation take place in the DI lab? An overview of the DI Lab design process.

The DI lab design process had three different stages or activities´ levels:

1. Design sprints: 3 closed events, gathering around 8 to 12 people for 3 to 4 days. In the sprints, representatives from different municipalities and some experts came together to experiment with various forms of digital identity by applying different tools and using case experiments to explore solutions and concepts from different angles. In these experiments, they also developed prototypes that were further tested with different users. The lab sprints generated outputs in terms of values, design requirements and usability of tools, which were further incorporated in the lab final output (Waag 2018, Spierings 2020).

2. Meet ups: open events in which different aspects of digital identity, including values, design principles, technical issues and user requirements were researched, translated and discussed by the participants. Each event happened tailored to each instance and occurred in a different city and in houses at different venues, to attract different audiences. Regarding the format, they always started with a plenary introduction about the hosting organization, then they would introduce a case and separate the audience in smaller groups of 3 to 6 people to discuss the case

and present it back to the other participants. In total they had around 5 meet-ups (Waag 2018, Spierings 2020).

3. Open consultations: a more generic approach through social media, Waag website and interviews with people on the streets. The strategy to approach people was aimed to sense what citizens would express when it comes to digital identity and to provide some initial inputs for the discussions in the lab. They did not want to get a representation of the Dutch population in their approach, but just wanted to get a sense of what was going on from a random sample. As a result, they launched a video, which is available on their website, where people talk from different points of view about digital identity (Waag 2020, Spierings 2020).

From the initial events and open approach, they started to shape the discussion around digital identity and identify what was important to address. According to the lab manager, "the collected input provided both insight into what the stakeholders found important and which aspects required further research because they were a blind spot " (Spierings 2020).

Along the process and after the closing of all lab activities, the lab team led by the lab manager, put all the information together and developed the final lab output, which was tested with other actors, to get feedback on its content and applicability (Spierings 2020).

4.2.4. So, what? Outputs of the DI Lab

The final output of the DI Lab was the Digital Identity Framework, which "aims to inform and support a joint and orderly conversation about ethics, values and standards for Digital Identity" (Spierings & Demeyer 2019). The framework orders the input from the participatory DI Lab activities and combines it with other frameworks about values and technology. It also provides a method through which technical requirements can be traceable from a set of values and norms (Spierings & Demeyer 2019). The goal of the framework is to "contribute to the debate and vision on this subject, and strive for an ethical application of new technology in society by providing insight into ethical dilemmas and possible strategies for dealing with them" (Spierings & Demeyer 2019:4). According to the lab manager, the framework can be seen more as a platform to spark conversation and inform decisions about digital identity, without requiring a

detailed understanding of technical issues, architecture, or technological protocols (Spierings 2020).

4.3. Insights about the cases

Even though the cases worked at different governmental levels, process wise, it is already possible to identify that both cases have some communalities and characteristics of a Design-led lab, as one of the Policy labs types presented in the theory of Policy Labs (Mc Gann et al 2018). They involved a variety of stakeholders in their process, they set different participatory settings and different approaches, such as interpretive analysis and stories to develop knowledge and spark deliberation and consensus building. Both cases used an experimental approach by using prototypes to test their assumptions about the problems and get feedback on their solutions and ideas.

Thus, as design-led labs, they applied a design approach to policy making, prioritized "user-centered" methods to clarify problem definitions and cro-create solutions and worked towards specific solutions and services that are derived from public policy (Mc Gann et al 2018:260). Regarding policy making, they focused on informing the local and national respectivel policy agenda and proposing and testing solutions (Mc Gann et al 2018:263). A more in-depth analysis of their process dimensions and elements will be explored in the next chapters in order to answer the research questions about their contributions to democracy aspects, as proposed in the analytical framework.

5. The practice of Policy Labs: participants selection and starting conditions

The starting conditions of any participatory process are critical as they influence the other steps of the process (Ansell & Gash 2008:550, Fung 2006:67). So, in order to answer the sub-question *"In which ways do Policy Labs contribute to democracy from the perspective of who participated in the labs?"* (SQ2), this chapter will elaborate and report on the initial conditions of the two case studies by exploring the elements proposed in the analytical framework such as: lab participants, representation, context, goals, participant´s resources, interests and knowledge. In order to develop the analysis and come to a final conclusion about Policy Labs, these elements are presented, nuanced and discussed in the light of the particularities of each case, supported by the literature of participatory democracy, participatory processes and policy labs.

5.1. Contributions of jongLab and DI Lab to democracy from the perspective of who participated in the labs

5.1.1. Inclusion

The jongLab and the DI Lab were inclusive, taking representation as one of the primary criteria to evaluate inclusiveness in participatory settings (Michels & De Graaf 2010:486). When it comes to the decision of who should participate, some criteria can support this decision in a more democratic way. In this regard, the eligibility to participate or which groups should be represented is defined by criteria such as rights, spatial location, knowledge, interest, context and the characteristics of the problem to be solved (Pellizzoni 2003:198, 216, Chilvers & Burgers 2006:717-718). For more complex problems, a wider range of participants and groups needs to be considered (ibid). In both cases, it was possible to see, from the description presented in the previous chapter, that the definition of who should be included in the process was decided upon the research questions posed by the labs, the lab goals and the nature of the issues in place. In the case of the jongLab, their research question related to three main target groups: the youth, the public servants and youth workers, which were represented in the lab. In the case of the DI Lab, given the complexity of the issue in place and the different governmental levels engaged, the fact that they involved a wide range of actors, from governments, private organizations and civil

authorities confirmed their inclusiveness. So, in both cases, the lab could be considered inclusive by the diverse stakeholders involved, which was aligned with the context and the issue that they tried to address.

The jongLab and the DI Lab were also an inclusive participatory setting due to the fact that they included a wide variety of interests in their process, either through the amount of people involved and or through the methods applied in their process. When it comes to group representation in a participatory process, a discussion about quantitative and qualitative representation becomes relevant considering the existing diversity within groups. However, many authors consider it very difficult to get a representative sample that numerically reflects the variety of a certain group (Pellizzoni 2003:200, Fung 2003:347-348, Broerse & De Cock Buning 2012:244).

Inclusion of a wide range of interests and the quality of the process are considered by some authors more important than the quantity of participants (Pellizzoni 2003:200, Broerse & De Cock Buning 2012:244). In the case of the DI Lab, the fact that their process set a broad participatory setting, with many activities and in different locations, opened up the opportunity for more diverse and direct participation of a large number of people, which can increase representativeness (Waag 2018, Waag 2020, Spierings 2020). In the case of the jongLab, the fact that they had a small setting could be considered a limitation to directly involve more groups of stakeholders or a large number of people in the process. Nonetheless, the fact that interests, needs and perspectives were included through interviews and stories, guaranteed that different interests from the main target groups could be included in the process. So, the size of the settings and a design approach focused on interests instead of quantitative representation guaranteed an inclusive process.

Inclusiveness in both labs also happened due to the fact that they integrated marginalized groups in their process. According to Fung, the inclusion of interests from marginalized groups is a critical element in changing the configuration of societal power structure (2006:67). The main goal of the jongLab was to close the gap between youth and governments and they used the stories and perspective of youth as a starting point to their work (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016). Their main target group, youth, is one of the main marginalized groups together with cultural

minorities, to be included in public participatory spaces (Michels 2011:287). In the case of the DI Lab, one of their goals was to work from the perspective of citizens and stakeholders, and to increase the trust between civil society and governments (Spierings 2020). In the case of the Dl Lab, civil society can be considered a socially marginalized group from the perspective of the formal public policy making settings. According to the lab manager, this group had been excluded from the Digital Identity policy making process (Spierings 2020). So, both labs included groups that do not commonly take part in the formal spaces to discuss social issues and public policy.

Regarding the process design elements that supported the inclusiveness in both labs, their recruitment process and the lab setting allowed the inclusion of stakeholder groups, interests and motivations aligned with the lab goals. When it comes to recruitment, an open process is considered a more democratic approach as it does not exclude anyone from participating (Fung 2006:67-68). Nonetheless, it can attract privileged groups in society that normally already take part in public settings or do not contribute to the inclusion of marginalized groups (ibid). On the other hand, a random and open selection from a certain group might guarantee a good descriptive representation (Uittenbroek et al 2019, Fung 2006:67-68). In the case of the recruitment of municipalities in the DI Lab, for example, they reported that the open call applied to this target group did not work well. They attracted people that were not engaged and had divergent interests in relation to the lab goals. For this reason, in the first lab sprint, as one of the activities developed in the lab, they could not get the desired outcome. To solve this problem, they set a more active recruitment process by setting some specific criterias to select municipalities for the following lab sprints, such as availability, interests and tools (Spierings 2020). As a small participatory setting, the jongLab had an open call targeting the specific groups of the lab (Kieboom 2015). It seems that they manage to get the right representation in the lab team and a good diverse of stories, despite some barriers to participation. They identified that money allowance could be a barrier of youth participation that was not addressed by the lab recruitment process (ibid). On the other hand, they decided to meet youth on the street or in public spaces, which seemed an effective approach considering the usual barrier that they have in participating and engaging in the public sphere (Vrouwe 2015, Kieboom 2015). Overall, in both cases, an

open and active recruitment process within specific groups could guarantee the right inclusion and representation in the labs.

Regarding their process, another interesting aspect also noted in both cases was that the design and the experimental nature of the labs also influenced inclusion and how participants were recruited or approached. In the case of the DI lab, for example, in order to come up with the final framework, they felt the need to consult and get feedback from other participants that were not engaged in the process since the beginning (Spierings 2020). In the case of the jongLab, additional people were contacted according to the needs that emerged to confirm information as follow up on the initial stories collected (Kieboom 2015, Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016). Both labs were a flexible setting that allowed people to participate and engage in different moments according to what had emerged. So, the lab design had an influence on the recruitment and inclusion of participants according to the needs that emerged in the process.

The context in which the labs were set can also be considered an element that relates to the inclusive aspect of the labs. In the case of the jongLab, the fact that the lab was set outside a formal governmental structure and physical space, for example, could be considered a barrier for the participation of public servants, but, at the same time, an incentive for the participation of youth. From a conversation that the lab team had with one of the civil counselors, they got the insight that the public spaces where decisions are taken by governments, the complexity of the policy making process and the language and bureaucracy involved may set youth away from participating and engaging in policy making (Kieboom 2015, Vrouwe 2015). For this public, the fact that the lab was set in an informal space and led by people that tried to reach them and to establish a communication with them, can be considered an approach that facilitates inclusion. On the other hand, in the case of public servants, lack of time to invest in experimentation and lack of prioritization in the workplace of learning and innovation processes were mentioned to the lab team as constraints of public servants' participation in the lab (Kieboom 2015). The context in which the Policy Labs are developed will have an influence in the participation of some stakeholders, either facilitating or posing barriers.

5.1.2. Influence and Legitimacy

If influence relates to the extent to which those affected by a decision can influence the decision, and if legitimacy refers to the acceptance of government decisions or a process outcome (Uittenbroek et al 2019, Michels & De Graaf 2010), we could argue that inclusion can be considered an enabling factor of influence and legitimacy. In this regard, as both labs were an inclusive setting, the starting conditions to influence and legitimacy, were also in place. However, there are some nuances identified in the DI Lab related to the configuration of power, resources and participant´s interests that are worth exploring given the effect that they can have in the initial lab conditions.

Different interests in place and different levels of knowledge can influence the initial conditions of participatory settings and impact how they relate to democratic aspects (Ansell & Gash 2008). In the DI Lab, according to the lab manager, different groups of stakeholders had different interests, which was challenging to balance (Spierings 2020). Municipalities had an interest in solving their own problems of implementing specific tools and providing some services. Also, they had confidential information and specific interests that could not be shared with everyone. Policy officials and the client were risk averse, concerned with the openness and influence that this process would bring and their responsibilities in this. There were some private organizations with commercial interests, given the huge opportunities to get long term contracts with the government. Civil society and other partners had diverse and overall interests in the discussion. Also, the level of knowledge, domain of expertise and overview among those actors were different. According to the lab manager, there were not a lot of people involved that knew everything (Spierings 2020).

The challenges related to the initial lab configuration were addressed by the process design and the facilitation approach to guarantee a more equal and balanced participatory setting. First, they set different layers of participation and different locations and venues to attract and gather different groups on different occasions. The lab sprints, for example, were a closed participatory setting to guarantee a safe space where municipalities could deliberate and prototype their solutions. To address the conflicting interests and differences in knowledge among the municipalities, they applied a more restricted recruitment process and took the lead in defining

the tools that were tested. Overall, according to the lab manager, to decide on the process design of each meeting, for example, they looked at the landscape of participants in order to set a process that could lead to the expected results. To manage the interests of the client and to reduce the lobbying of some private companies during the process, they set up constant communication and held weekly conversations with the clients and some participants (Spierings 2020). So, we can conclude that the initial configuration of the lab regarding power, knowledge and interests will influence the design of the process but can be balanced by the process design and facilitation approach.

5.2. Conclusion

Answering the sub-question *"In which ways do Policy Labs contribute to democracy from the perspective of who participated in the labs?"*, the analysis from the perspective of who participated in the jongLab and DI Lab, shows that Policy Labs contribute directly to the inclusion aspect of democracy and in three main ways, supported by specific elements of its process design. Given the interconnectedness identified among democracy aspects, the contributions to inclusion will indirectly contribute to influence and legitimacy.

The first contribution of Policy Labs to inclusion is by engaging a diverse group of stakeholders in the labs, who are directly connected with the theme explored by the lab, by the context, and by the lab goals. The second one is by assuring the quality of descriptive representation in the process through the inclusion of a wide range of interests and opinions from the stakeholder groups involved. The third one is by ensuring the process includes groups that are socially marginalized from the public sphere or that are not normally engaged in the policy making process. In this regard, the inclusion of such groups can contribute to balance the power relations in society, which is aligned with the participatory democratic goals as presented in the literature review.

Regarding Policy Lab´s process design, another conclusion is that there are some elements that support the lab's contributions to inclusion and influence, such as the recruitment approach and the lab process design. An open recruitment process targeting specific groups, in both cases, could ensure the inclusion of a diverse range of interests, and a more direct recruitment approach

could overcome some barriers to participation and differences in motivation and interests. An adaptive and flexible lab design can contribute to a more inclusive and equal instance by setting and changing their design approach based on participants' profile and initial differences in interests. Flexibility in their process also allowed different people to engage in different stages and in different ways according to their expertise and interests.

The way labs are set, the context in which they happen and the facilitation approach can also affect inclusion in labs. The connection with formal governmental structures might facilitate the engagement and participation of public servants, but can also hinder participation of other groups, as noted in the case of jongLab. The lab size and different layers of engagement can offer the possibility to include a large number of participants, which can increase descriptive representation, but are not decisive in guaranteeing the quality of the process. The lab facilitation approach affects how participants relate to each other and balances differences in the initial lab settings.

Overall, when it comes to democracy aspects, another main conclusion is that inclusion is the main democracy aspect associated with who participates in the lab and is a critical enabling factor to influence and legitimacy. By engaging people that are affected by or connected to the issues addressed in the labs, the labs opens up the opportunity for those people to influence the decision making process in order to reach solutions and results that will attend their needs and interests. This also reinforces the theory that the starting conditions of any participatory setting are crucial to the process and fruitful outcomes.

6. The practice of policy labs: process design and participation

The success of participatory settings will depend on how they are exercised and practiced, including how participants deliberate, communicate and make decisions together (Vitale 2006:752, Fung 2006:67). To answer the sub-question *"In which ways do Policy Labs contribute to democracy from the perspective of how participation took place in the labs?"* (SQ3), this chapter will present the analysis and discussion about how participation happened in the jongLab and in the DI Lab. It will explore their process design and the main steps that took them from the lab inputs to their final outputs. Thus, the process design elements from analytical framework such as, participation, decision making process, knowledge, methods, facilitation and communication will be presented along with other elements identified in the cases in order to answer the research questions. Taking the same approach as the previous chapter, the lab characteristics will be nuanced and discussed in more depth through the lens of the references presented in the analytical framework and the literature of participatory process, participatory and collaborative democracy and policy labs.

6.1. Contributions of the jongLab and DI Lab processes to democracy from the perspective of how participation took place in the labs

6.1.1. Inclusion

The inclusiveness of both labs according to their process design perspective relates to the fact that they put citizens back in the center of the policy making process. Following a post-empiricist approach (Fischer 2003:217-219), the labs brought citizens' knowledge back to the core of the system, in opposition to policy developed only from evidence, scientific and expert knowledge . In the jongLab, stories from youth were the main input to their process of developing solutions (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016). In their own reflection, they considered their methodology "a more democratic, inclusive way of knowledge producing and analyzing that can help to break through existing power structures" (Exel et al 2014). In the DI Lab case, the lab report stated that a crucial aspect of the lab's working method was to work from the perspective of the stakeholders involved, including citizens (Waag 2018). According to the lab manager, "the aim was to have

the average citizen and their focus and interest back into the policy discussion" (Spierings 2020). Citizens also participated in an equal manner to give inputs in the DI Lab process (Waag 2018, Spierings 2020). So, the examples show that both labs took the citizen-centered perspective in their process, along with the perspective of other stakeholders.

Furthermore, in both cases, the prioritization of normative instead of cognitive knowledge as input for deliberation and decision making also indicates a contribution to a more democratic and inclusive process, based on interests of people and their perspectives rather than their formal knowledge (Pellizzoni 2003:198). In the jongLab, even though some participants held specific and technical knowledge such as the public servants, in the description of their process and even from their recruitment approach, there was no indication of prioritization of technical expertise (Kieboom 2015, Vrouwe 2015). In the case of the DI Lab, the open meet ups put different stakeholders together to deliberate in small groups, each of them from their own point of view and social position, but with no hierarchy of knowledge. Even though they had separate deliberative settings, some including a specific public, with a specific profile, from the interview and process description, it seems that their goal was the same: to grasp diverse understandings about digital identity, values and design principles (Waag, 2018, Sprierings 2020). Expert knowledge was used to answer specific questions later, such as legal requirements, but not prioritized along the process. The final lab output is a tool that can be used by anyone and aims to democratize the knowledge and decision making about digital identity (Spierings & Demeyer 2019, Spierings 2020). In both cases, the normative knowledge of citizens and the other stakeholders was valued in the deliberative stage over their technical expertise.

6.1.2. Influence

Process design and the opportunities it offers for an active participation of citizens in deliberative settings is a critical element when it comes to influence, and each case showed a different contribution to this aspect. Participation through deliberation, negotiation and consensus building is seen as the ideal of deliberative democracy and a critical aspect for collaborative governance. (Uittenbroek et al 2019:2532, Fung 2003:344, Patten 2001:222). Deliberation is a form of participation that instigates dialogue among participantes, in which they share arguments, reflect

on their preferences and try to reach agreement (Pellizzoni 2003, Glucker et al 2013). It enables citizens to actively influence decision making (Uittenbroek et al 2019:2532, Fung 2003:344). From this perspective, we can affirm that in the jongLab, only a few participants had the opportunity to exert direct influence in the decision-making process. In this case, only the team lab members could deliberate about the stories retrieved, the common threads and reach consensus about the ideas and prototypes (Kieboom 2015, Wieteke 2015, Taken & Kieboom 2015). In the DI Lab, a wider range of participants had the opportunity to influence decision making in different steps of the process. In their process design, deliberation took place in the meetups and during the lab sprints, which generated the list of values and design principles to inform the final output of the lab (Waag 2018, Spierings & Demeyer 2019, Spierings 2020). Nonetheless, the team lab members were the ones to create the weighing framework, the final output of the lab. So, each case offered different opportunities for participants to take part in the decision making process and influence the final lab output, and engagement in deliberation was higher in the DI Lab.

Despite the importance of deliberation, the participation of stakeholders in deliberative instances by itself does not guarantee that they can influence decisions. The way that they engage in deliberation is a critical factor to inform influence. The equal stance that participants take in the deliberation process is critical to guarantee their influence. Also, a learning process that maximizes equality between participants is critical to collectively learn and to understand complex problems (Pellizzoni 2003:207, Hoppe 2011: 228-229). In this regard, differences in power, resources and social position, for example, can hinder participants from learning from each other and from having an equal say in the deliberation process, reinforcing dominant views. (Hoppe 2011:236, Patten 2001:237). In the jongLab, the way that deliberation took place stimulated more equitable thinking through constant collective interpretation and knowledge sharing about the stories (Tasks & Kieboom 2015). In their view, their approach reduced the possibility of people taking their own dominant perspective on specific issues or groups of actors. As reported by them: "the LAB puts the democratization of this knowledge creation first: no one perspective is more important than another" (Tasks & Kieboom 2015). In the DI Lab, no evidence was found that could support that participants did not have an equal stance in the

deliberative setting where they participated (Waag 2018, Waag 2019, Spierings 2020). On the contrary, the fact that during the meetups and design sprints participants could discuss and deliberate in small group settings, can indicate that there was a chance for them to express their ideas and take stances on the deliberation (Spierings 2020). A collective attempt to make sense of the implications of digital identity also took place through their interpretative analysis of the cases presented in the meetups (Waag 2018). So, we can observe that in both cases, the way they took part in deliberation could contribute to the influential aspect of the lab's process.

Regarding the elements and methods of their design process that supported influence, in both cases, the use of stories can be understood as an artifact that enhances common learning and decision making in deliberative settings. Stories, as a cognitive artifact, are considered a powerful tool to make sense of reality, to identify values, interpret meanings and create a common understanding, which are all elements and conditions for effective collective actions (Yannow 2007:110, Polletta 2006:6,13). Stories were used in the jongLab as a source of information about context and the reality from which the lab team could frame their understanding and identify critical issues to be addressed (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016). Case studies were used in the DI Lab as a way to set a common ground for discussion of participants and to contextualize how tools also carry ethical decisions, which is not explicitly clear for many people (Waag 2018, Spierings 2020). Thus, the fact that stories set a common ground of understanding about the context, the issue and the implication, can support influence by facilitating a more equal deliberative setting among participants.

It is also interesting to notice that, in the jongLab process, stories could enhance the influence of participants that were not directly involved in deliberation. According to Howlett & Mukerjee, "principles, beliefs and causal stories, on the other hand, can exercise a much more direct influence on the recognition of policy problems and on policy content" (2017:13). Stories also help people to make a better sense of reality and the associated problems and motivations related to policy (Howlett & Mukerjee 2017:10). In the jongLab, the use of stories contributed to the influence of youth perspectives in the deliberation process and lab outputs, even though they were not directly involved in deliberation. In this case, the stories were used as the main source

of information to create solutions (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016*)*. Also, in their process of analysing stories, according to their reporting, they tried to set an approach that could keep the essence of the perspectives and interests of the youth by identifying common threads (Taken & Kieboom 2015). We can argue that stories support the influence of a wider group of youth in the decision making process, even when there is a restriction on the scope of participation in deliberation.

6.1.3. Civic skills and social learning

When it comes to the civic skills and social learning opportunities, we could argue that the processes design and the facilitation approach contributed to enhance the labs´ learning aspect. Citizen learning in deliberative democracy is related to self-empowerment and is defined by Fischer (2003:225) as the ability of citizens "to pose the problems and questions that interest and concern them and to help connect them to the kinds of information and resources needed to help them". The author also points to the importance of process facilitation and institutional conditions to support citizens in this process (ibid). In both cases, conversation and deliberation were facilitated by the lab team. The lab team also provided tools and templates that facilitated participants to reach a common ground and to develop solutions (Kieboom 2015, Taken 2015, Vrouwe 2015). In the case of the DI Lab, participants used a tool called "value ladder" to map the values identified in the cases during the meetups (Spierings & Demeyer 2019). A team of facilitators also guided groups in small group discussions. In the jongLab, facilitators guided participants in how to retrieve stories, and templates were used by participants to structure their thoughts and the developments of prototypes (Kieboom 2015, Taken 2015). So, in both cases, their facilitation did not follow a command and control approach, but instigated participants to learn by themselves and with each other, with the support of tools and specific methods.

6.1.4. Legitimacy

If we take the diversity of stakeholders and inputs in both labs as already explored, we can affirm that they had a positive contribution to legitimacy. According to McGann (et al 2018:255), the level of legitimacy will be directly related to the inclusion of non-traditional policy actors and in the process and the "depth and breadth" of their involvement. In the case of the jongLab, a wide range of inputs were obtained from the stories, and solutions were developed through a

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co-creation process and in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders (Vrouwe 2015). In the DI Lab, participants had the chance to influence the final list of values and design principles listed on the Digital Identity Framework. Nonetheless, the fact that the whole framework and the final information was put together by the lab team and only submitted for feedback to a few people, it can generate some issues in their implementation (Spierings 2020, Spierings & Demeyer 2019). But, overall, we can consider that solutions from both labs had a great chance to meet the needs of their target groups and the lab goals and had a successful implementation to the extent to which they involved the stakeholder groups and their interests in the process.

The use of stories as people´s frames, values and principles as a way to make sense of the issue and the context, contributes to legitimacy of the lab´s outputs to the extent that they explore what guides people's behaviour, needs and actions. According to Rein & Schon, "framing is a way of selecting, organizing, interpreting, and making sense of a complex reality", (1993:146). Also, "frames exert a powerful influence on what we see and neglect, and how we interpret what we see" (Rein & Schon 1993:151). The jongLab approach used stories as frames that informed people´s hidden values, themes, wishes and motives regarding their social positions, which, according to them, were crucial to inform new solutions (Tasks & Kieboom 2015). The DI Lab did something similar by taking stories as a starting point to harvest values and principles regarding digital identity in an attempt to translate what really mattered for people in this regard (Waag 2018, Spierings 2020). So, if a policy making process is based on frames that can inform what matters for people and what is underneath people's judgment and needs, it enables and increases the chance of the development of solutions that relate to their frames, and to what matters to them.

The experimental approach through the use of prototypes was also one characteristic of both lab processes that enhances legitimacy. Prototypes in the context of policy making design is defined as a "working model, albeit crude and incomplete, speedily constructed" (Kimbel & Bailey 2017:217). Prototype contributes to the policy design process as it "enables organisational learning by anticipating responses to public policy issues through making models and materialising aspects of provisional solutions, enabling assessment of their delivery, acceptability

and legitimacy". (Kimbel & Bailey 2017:222). In the jongLab, the ideas generated in the lab were materialized and tested with a diverse group of stakeholders by using prototypes. In the DI Lab, prototypes were used to test tools and new design principles discussed by municipalities in the design sprints (Waag 2018, Waag 2019). The two labs shows that through experimentation, the use of prototypes can make it clearer how people interpret and evaluate ideas, facilitating in turn the chances of meeting stakeholder expectations and getting their approval. So, prototypes can contribute to enhance the team's learning and the legitimacy of the final participatory process outputs.

Besides the use of stories and prototypes, the deliberative approach of their process design also contributes to legitimacy. Decision making through deliberation leads to more legitimate and fair results because decisions are not based on arbitrary advantages, but on a broad range of perspectives and from discussions to help individuals learn from and reflect on their own views (Fung 2003:344). Deliberation also seems to be an important approach in the case of Policy Labs as they aim to solve complex problems. The pluralism and the diversity of participants can contribute to seeing the problems from a different perspective (Pellizzoni 2003). In the case of the DI Lab, deliberation was key to get to the outcome of the process as in their case, the main issue was to find a common ground about digital identity and about values and design principles. In this case, the fact that they gathered different stakeholders to discuss and find a common ground contributed to the legitimacy of the lab outputs.

6.2. Conclusion

Regarding the sub-question *"In which ways can Policy Labs contribute to democracy from the perspective of how participation took place in the labs?",* the analysis shows that way participation happens in Policy Labs and their process design contributes to all the democracy aspects, which makes it a relevant and critical element in the Policy Lab contributions to participatory democracy. The analysis also showed the interconnectedness of the democracy aspects. How the labs contribute to influence, including the way participants are included in the process, and the extent to which participants can influence the decision making, impacts legitimacy. The influence aspect is also directly linked to learning, showing that participants that

took part in deliberation had a greater chance to learn through their participation.

Following the results already presented in the previous chapter, inclusion in Policy labs is reinforced by putting citizens at the center of the policy making process and taking a citizen-centered approach, which makes their practice aligned with the deliberative and collaborative democracy principles and goals. By putting normal citizens and other stakeholder groups back in the policy making process, Policy Labs also give emphasis to the normative knowledge instead of the cognitive knowledge in policy making. This will ultimately contribute to the legitimacy of their outputs, as they will be more aligned with underlying expectations and contextual factors.

Influence in Policy Lab will be a result of the process design approach and the extent to which it takes deliberation as the main approach to decision making and stakeholders communication. The way stakeholders are involved in deliberation will define their chances to influence decision making and the lab results. In this regard, the quality of the deliberation plays an important role as it is not enough that stakeholders engage in deliberation, but it is also equally important that they have an equal position in it, to avoid that power differences prevail and ensure the voices of minorities are heard. In the Policy Lab cases, the integration of conversation dynamics and facilitation processes were elements that could enhance a more equal deliberative setting. The facilitation approach and deliberation also empowered individuals to build solutions together and learn with each other, which contributes to civic and social learning. Ultimately, the Policy Lab design process and working methods contribute to influence and learning through the articulation of opinions which are held but not generally expressed by non-dominant groups.

The use of stories as cognitive artefacts was identified as an important element in the contribution of Policy Labs to influence and legitimacy. The use of stories in Policy Lab can increase the influence of participants that were not directly involved in the process, which can be a good strategy to overcome barriers and constraints of small participatory settings. Stories can also set a common ground for learning and be used as a starting point to deliberation, which contributes to reach consensus and find common solutions. Stories, as a representation of values, needs, perspectives and how people relate to their context are a powerful tool to inform

decisions, which increases the chance to meet stakeholder needs and interests, enhancing legitimacy.

The experimental characteristics of Policy Labs, which differentiates them from other participatory settings, according to the literature review, is also key when it comes to legitimacy. The use of prototypes can increase legitimacy by materializing the ideas and solutions provided, which creates a common and better understanding of reality, by anticipating stakeholders evaluation and feedback on the solutions, how ideas will fit in the context. Also, it contributes to influence as it gives an opportunity for stakeholders to engage in the process and to influence decisions at a later stage. Overall, prototypes can guarantee a better integration and translation of citizens´ needs, values and perspective into practical solutions with a greater chance of success.

7. The practice of Policy Labs: outputs and outcomes

The impact of participatory processes in policy making is largely discussed mainly around the influence that citizens can have in changing public policy (Fung 2006:66, Michels 2011:283-284). From this affirmation, we can say that the contributions of participatory settings will be higher if they can guarantee their contributions to democracy by their process design and by the impacts of its outputs and outcomes. Thus, the previous chapter related to the Policy Labs process design and its contributions to democracy is in line with the literature which highlights the importance of the way participation takes place in generating results. This chapter will analyse and discuss the contributions of outputs and outcomes of labs to democracy aspects by exploring their correlation and how they informed further steps in the policy making process, including policy development, approval of and changes in policy.

Nonetheless, when it comes to investigating the relationship between participatory processes and changes in policy, many authors highlight that this direct correlation is difficult to investigate as changes in policy can relate to various processes and actors. So, the aim of this analysis is not to point out direct correlations between the labs and changes in policy, but to shed light on some elements that might increase the contributions of Policy Labs in the policy making process, as already pointed by the literature.

To answer the sub-question *"In which ways can Policy Labs contribute to democracy from the perspective of their process outputs and outcomes?"* (SQ4)*,* the analysis will be carried out based on some process design elements identified in the cases, as suggested in the analytical framework, such as: degree of change, feedback mechanisms and characteristics of the lab outputs and implementation. The source of information are the lab documents and the interview. However, it is worth mentioning that little information was found in the cases, which was a barrier to presenting a more extensive analysis.

7.1. Contribution of the jongLab and DI Lab outputs and outcomes to democracy aspects

7.1.1. Influence and Legitimacy

The first insight about the lab's outputs and their contributions to democratic aspects, is the straight relationship between influence and legitimacy. Broerse and De Cock Buning (2012:242) had already pointed that "influence of civil society has consequences for the legitimacy and the effectiveness of processes of policy formulation". In this regard, influence will be related to the extent citizens and other groups could influence the government's decision through the output of the labs. This, in turn, will also be related to legitimacy, in the sense that if governments do not implement or consider the outputs of labs or any participatory settings, their decision will not be legitimate as it will not be based on citizens needs and interests. So, regarding the outputs of the labs, in this analysis, influence and legitimacy are presented as intertwined democracy aspects.

Considering changes in policy making as one of the impacts that participatory settings have in policy making, the DI Lab had a great impact in the digital identity new policy. When it comes to the assessment of participatory setting outputs, one of the primary criteria is to which extent they were incorporated in the public policy, which in turn can be linked to the influence that participation had in public policy. This direct correlation is classified as a first generation assessment of participatory settings, which looks into effects on political decision making (Loeber et al 2011:599). In the case of the DI Lab, according to the lab manager, the impacts of the lab were clearly visible in the law recently approved by the government, the Digital Government Act. In his opinion, on one hand, the law is much more open and reflects the demands and implications about technology and digital identity discussed in the lab (Spierings 2010). On the other hand, he also stated that "the law does not go far enough in the discussion about digital identity, according to a number of people involved in the DI Lab and including a number of representatives from municipalities" (ibid). Nonetheless, the direct effect does not clarify the process that took the outputs from the lab to the text of the policy document. So, even though the lab seemed to have influenced that new policy, the way in which it happened was not clear.

In the case of the jongLab, regardless of the identification of some process elements that apparently would contribute to the incorporation of the policy results into public policy, in their feedback mechanisms about the implementation, other elements appeared as barriers to the

influence of lab outputs to policy changes. The lab had set meetings in the beginning of the process with the public officials with the aim to guarantee that the lab outputs would be implemented (Kieboom 2015. Taken 2015). They also involved the public officials in the process through direct participations and through meetups to analyse the lab's intermediary results (Kieboom 2015). They supplied feedback on the implementation status of each solution provided by the lab, which was presented in their final report. However, from the status reported, some of the issues that needed to be addressed in the implementation of the outputs of the lab are commitment, visibility and urgency about the policy issues, commitment and concrete agreements higher up at the municipality, more experimentation and advice on the proposed solutions . (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016). So, the example shows that the implementation of lab solutions depends on various other elements connected to the government structure and processes, going beyond the domain of the lab.

Regarding the use of a lab's outputs and the extent to which it can influence public policy, according to Hoppe (2011), in many cases politicians support participatory settings more to feed them with fresh ideas than to guarantee a more democratic decision making. According to their interests and participatory ambitions, public officials can influence time, money and personnel on participatory processes. In relation to time, for example, even though policy making cycles take around four years, participatory processes take average six months to a year. In many cases, due to time constraints, policy officials bring debates to an early closure (Hoppe 2011:235). This was exactly what happened with the DI Lab. After the contract between Waag and the Ministry had ended, the policy lab had to come to an end and the final report was elaborated. The lab manager reported that the communication, which was frequent during the time of the lab, stopped directly after and there was sparse interaction between the lab team and the public officials (Spierings 2020). This fact can lead to the interpretation that the approach of public officials to the DI Lab was taken more from an instrumental perspective, limiting its influence and addressing it in an ad-hoc manner. This brings up the conclusion that temporary participatory settings, which are not embedded in the public governance and structure, might end up having less influence on the policy making process. It also shows that the strategy and involvement of public officials in the participatory process do not necessarily guarantee that the

results will be implemented. Public officials exert the power to direct the influence of the lab process and how they are used.

Despite the political and power issues, a closer look into the solutions provided by the labs can shed some light on elements that can contribute to overcoming institutional and governmental barriers. In the cases explored, both labs were financed by public officials and bodies to come up with solutions to a problem and to engage in a discussion to advance public policy (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016, Kieboom 2015, Waag 2018, Spierings 2020). In this regard, it sounds natural that the solutions that they provided could relate to the public sphere. In the case of the jongLab, for example, all the final solutions provided by the lab target the process and the implementation by public agencies, which is in line with improving public services (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016). However, if we look into the lab goal of closing the gap between youth and the governments and we include some of the treads identified such as, "untapped opportunities for cooperation between young people", "youth work and education", and lack of social status in the city", we can affirm that other types of actions could be taken (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016:8-13). In the jongLab case, some actions could be proposed focusing on actors other than governmental youth organizations or on the empowerment of youth. In the case of the DI Lab, the fact that they develop a platform to spark conversation around digital identity that considers ethical issues, values and design requirements, made their solutions more open and ready to be appropriated by other actors. Thus, more open solutions, that do not rely solely on the government's will and structure to be implemented, can be a factor to favor implementation. If the lab wants to change the system, it might consider not relying solely on the system and its status quo to implement those changes.

Regarding other process aspects that can contribute to overcoming barriers to policy changes, the DI Lab shows that dissemination strategies can be a critical element in Policy labs process design. In this regard, according to Hoppe (2011:231,237-238), the dissemination approach of the participatory process output can avoid the problem of "macro-political-up-take", which is the influence that institutional arrangements, power relations and prior policy discussion make in policy changes. In the DI Lab, to overcome the institutional barrier posed by the public officials,

they set an interesting dissemination strategy about the lab outcomes regarding the discussion and consensus of important issues about digital identity. After the recent launch of the law, a group of stakeholders, including organizations and municipalities, came together during January and February of 2020, led by Waag, and started a lobby to evoke amendments to the law and the inclusion of some key aspects advocated by the DI Lab group (Spierings 2020). One of these aspects, for example, was that digital identity should not be a business model, that it is not something to make money with, and that the law should include a number of technical requirements to the future procurement deals of digital identity (ibid). It is still not possible to talk about the impact of this strategy in the new law, but it generated a flow of information and caught the attention of public officials and other stakeholders about it. So, a broad dissemination strategy that not only relies on the public officials and government structure, can be a way to mobilize actors and put pressure for policy change that might impact further discussion and developments in the law.

Another process element that seems to be important to overcoming institutional and other system barriers to change, is the characteristics of the lab´s outputs. In this regard, from the discussion about the lab's approach to changing the system, critical elements appear to be the trap of solutionism instead of acting to change processes and the system, and the way solutions are created (Keiboom 2014:34). In this context, changes in the system would require less pressure to deliver tangible outcomes and more opportunities to scale values, principles and knowledge, which are the basis of people's behaviour. This resonates with the theory that actors are engaged to act at the system level through their values and worldviews (Broerse & De Cock Buning 2012:245). In the case of the jongLab, the solutions of the lab were mainly focused on improving services and the approach of governments towards youth. Also, they were elaborated considering specificities of the local context at that moment. In the DI Lab, on the other hand, the lab initially did not provide any specific solutions (Spierings 2010). Their final deliverable was a framework that presented values and principles related to digital identity, which could serve as a basis for conversations and to make ethical decisions about digital identity in line with different stakeholder groups' input (Spierings & Demeyer 2019). In this regard, we can indicate that the solutions provided by the DI Lab can serve as a stepping stone to develop further solutions

regardless of the governmental level and engage more actors in the discussion about digital identity. So, they have a higher chance to change the system in comparison to the jongLab outputs.

7.1.2. Civic skills and social learning

When it comes to civic skills and social learning, from the dissemination strategy presented in the DI lab, it is possible to affirm that brokerage was one of the lab impacts. Brokerage is defined as an unexpected and temporary coalition formed by stakeholders in participatory processes and classified as a second order impact, the effects that result from the lab process (Loeber et al 2011:603). The lab seemed to have set a possibility for different stakeholders to meet and create a bond to defend their rights and their opinion in the public sphere. In the lab, some people involved developed civic learning in the sense that they started to address their rights in other ways in the public domain and continue to put the lab outputs forward (Spierings 2020). This result was highlighted by the lab manager, who stated that the lab offered the possibility for stakeholders to meet and deliberate, which otherwise would not have happened because of their social or institutional position (ibid).

The social learning in both labs also happened through their deliberative approach. When it comes to social learning, "deliberative arenas function as schools of democracy where individuals acquire skills of citizenship and come to consider public interests more highly in their preferences" (Fung 2003:350). Through deliberation participants can also learn about the issues at stake, reflect on their own views and learn from others (Uittenbroek et al 2019:2534) In jongLab case, the lab team, as the group involved in deliberation, had the opportunity to learn from the stories of citizens, politicians, policy officials and professionals" (Kieboom & Vrouwe 2016). One of the labs participants also reported on how the process challenged her own assumptions about youth in Nijmegen (Taken in Kieboom 2015). In terms of citizenship and social skills, the jongLab team became more knowledgeable about the policy making process in Nijmegen as they investigated this process to inform the development of solutions (Kieboom 2015). In the DI Lab, one of the lab goals, as reported in their presentation, was to "increase the scope of societal knowledge and debate" (Waag 2018). The lab manager also stated that one

important impact of the lab was the creation of a space where stakeholders that do not commonly engage with each other, could interact and gain mutual learning (Spierings 2020). The lab cases confirm the direct correlation between deliberation and the learning aspect of participatory processes.

Some authors highlight that citizenship skills and social learning are normative aspects and one of the main goals of participatory democracy (Michels 2011, Michels and Graaf 2010). Nonetheless, it could be argued that learning about the issues at stake and practical skills can also contribute to social learning. In this regard, according to Cock and De Bunning, society at large or certain groups sometimes lack rhetorical sources about issues that are important to policy making (2012). Also, a new approach to policy making brings innovation and enhances the skills of public servants, as it "draws on methods and skills usually not available in the public sector" (McGann et al 2018). In the jongLab case, Marjo, a representative of the municipality, expressed that the use of stories could be of great value to their work (Kieboom 2015). In both cases, we can argue that the increasing knowledge about youth or digital identity can equip participants with a rhetorical repertoire and knowledge that can be valid in further deliberation on the topics. Thus, we can affirm that the labs offered the chance to participants to develop skills that can enhance their influence and improve the ways public policy is designed and implemented.

7.2. Conclusion

As an answer to the questions *"In which ways can Policy Labs contribute to democracy from the perspective of their process outputs and outcomes?",* the findings from this chapter show that Policy Labs contribute to legitimacy, influence and learning as democracy aspects mainly through the following elements of their process design: their deliberative setting, the nature of their outputs, and their dissemination strategy. These elements increase the chance of the appropriation and incorporation of the lab outputs in the public sphere, which however does not necessarily relate directly to formal government policy making processes. In addition, the deliberation aspect increases the learning and association capacity of the participants.

The complexity of power and institutional relations in policy making are factors beyond the domain of the Policy Labs and influences to a great extent how and if their outputs will be incorporated in the policy making process. Political will, power relations, institutional arrangements, actors involved, processes and bureaucracy are elements that appeared as barriers to the incorporation of the Policy Labs´ output in law or in higher levels of decision making within formal governmental instances. Also, the fact that labs were set outside governments structures could be seen as a barrier to hold public officials accountable for their commitments with the lab. So, there is a long way to go from the lab outputs to actual changes in public policy. However, this does not mean that the Policy Labs do not influence changes in policy making.

In this regard, if we consider the public sphere as a broader system that goes beyond the governmental structure and bureaucracy, second order assessment criteria that take into account other manifestations of impact beyond the unit of political decision-making, can show some direct contributions of the Policy Labs to changes in public policy. The DI Lab showed that the connection established between stakeholders from the lab experience could enhance the "intelligence of democracy" (Lindblom, 1965; cf. Loeber et al., 2011), by exchanging interests and thoughts about an issue. Also, they come together to further influence the public sphere in different ways. Furthermore, civic and social learning was enhanced through the deliberative aspect of Policy Labs and the enhanced knowledge about the issue that can contribute to improve stakeholders' future discussions.

From the cases, it is also possible to conclude that Policy Labs results can contribute to the policy making process beyond formal governmental instances, by the characteristics of their outputs and by the dissemination strategy that they take. The development of more open solutions that can be used and implemented by different stakeholders can contribute to influence. Solutions based on values, principles and overall elements that shape stakeholder´s worldviews can provide better chances to change systems at the structural level. A wide dissemination strategy can help to take lab outputs beyond the formal policy making process and influence changes by different means, as through communication, media attention or lobby.

8. Conclusion

By investigating the case studies in the light of the proposed analytical framework and literature, the aim of this research was to answer the research question ""*In which ways can Policy Labs, as a participatory setting, contribute to enhancing participatory democracy from an instrumental and normative perspective?"*. Thus, the research findings are presented in this chapter from three perspectives. The first perspective concerns the direct contributions of Policy Labs practices to democracy. The second perspective relates to the research findings contributions to the theory of participatory democracy, participatory processes and Policy Labs, in line with the research motivations and goals. The third perspective presents some reflection about the usefulness of the analytical framework. Although the analytical framework was itself an answer to the first sub-question, its applicability to analyse the case studies brought some important insights about democracy aspects and process design elements. Lastly, following the research motivation of enhancing participatory practices, recommendations are presented in the end in order to contribute to citizens engagement in Policy Labs and to their implementation and development as participatory settings..

8.1. Research findings

8.1.1. Overall findings from the lab practices

As an answer to the main research question, this research found that Policy Labs contributes to democracy and its normative and instrumental aspects through their very participatory and experimental approach, by the nature of their results and process design. This section summarizes the main results regarding Policy Lab´s contributions to inclusion, influence, civic skills and social learning and legitimacy.

Policy Labs primarily contribute to inclusion through their goal of putting citizens and marginalized groups at the center of the policy making process, which ultimately contributes to changing the dominant power structure in society. Inclusion is materialized in Policy Labs through the engagement of a diverse group of stakeholders, the valorization of their knowledge and their contributions, and by assuring the diversity and quality of their representation through

the integration of a great range of interests and opinions. At the process level, inclusiveness is supported by specific elements of Policy Lab´s process design: the way participants are recruited, process design flexibility to accommodate different participants´ needs, different layers of engagement and facilitation. These elements are critical to set an open process, remove barriers to participation and balance differences in power and resources. The lab setting is also an important element influencing inclusion. Labs that are part of government structures will facilitate inclusion of some groups while posing challenges to the participation of others, especially marginalized groups. The size of the labs can be a restrictive element when it comes to the inclusion of a wide range of participants in decision making.

The primary contribution of Policy Labs to influence is through the inclusion of deliberative settings in their process design, and the extent to which deliberation allows an equal stance of participation in their decision-making process. In practice, influence will be directly linked to the Policy Lab´s process design and what is done with the lab outputs after the process is closed. The application of methods and tools that facilitate the expression and articulation of opinions, interests and world views, for example, enhances the quality of deliberation and decision making. In this regard, the use of cognitive artifacts such as stories, can increase the influence and legitimacy from deliberation, as it sets a common ground of understanding and communicates how people see and interpret their realities. When it comes to the direct influence of the lab outputs on the next stages of the policy making process, open solutions and a dissemination strategy focused not solely in government actors and formal policy making processes, contribute to the appropriation of these results by a wider range of stakeholders. This fact is critical to inform second order impacts of Policy Labs as participatory settings, and to overcome the barriers of formal governmental policy making processes in addressing complex issues.

Deliberation in Policy Labs will contribute directly to civic and social learning, supported by a process design that encompass appropriate tools and a facilitation approach that encourages participants to learn by themselves and with each other. Civic skills and social learning happen through the fact that participants have the opportunity to learn with each other, to learn about the

policy making process and about the issue at stake. Through deliberation and a very inclusive process, participants also have the opportunity to increase their social knowledge about policy making and understanding about the issue at stake. Furthermore, by bringing different stakeholders together, Policy Labs increase the chance of integration of different groups that otherwise would not be possible due to institutional and social barriers. The Lab contributions to civic skills and social learning ultimately empower stakeholders to engage in formal and informal policy making instances and contribute to change in society.

Lastly, Policy Labs contribute to legitimacy primarily by their approach to inclusion and influence. A more legitimate process, in this regard, is highly impacted by who participates in the process and the quality of their participation. Regarding process design elements, the fact that Policy Labs includes and involves stakeholders along all stages in their process assures the approval and the improvement of its output in each phase, increasing the chance that they will successfully meet the needs and expectations of the stakeholders involved. Furthermore, the experimental approach through material artifacts, as prototypes, facilitates the understanding and feedback about the solutions proposed or on the practical aspects of the issues at stake, by making ideas or solutions more concrete and promoting a shared understanding. The influence of the Policy Labs on the legitimacy of governmental decisions is directly linked to the extent to which labs manage to influence the other stages of the policy making process or influence a wider public spectrum, by the nature of their solutions and dissemination strategy.

8.1.2. Research findings contributions to the theory of participatory democracy and Policy Labs

Beyond the contributions to the democracy aspects, the research findings also support and clarify some discussion and arguments presented in the theory of participatory democracy, participatory process and Policy Labs. So, from this, we can affirm that the research met its initial goals and motivations to contribute to the theory of Policy Labs in the context of a collaborative governance approach within participatory democracy.

The research confirms expectations and indications presented on the theory that process design and the way participation takes place in a participatory and collaborative setting is very important to assure results that will ultimately improve democracy. It points out specific

elements of Policy Labs process design that should be observed in order to guarantee the contributions already specified. Also, the elements presented in the framework and derived from the theory pointed to a direct correlation between participatory settings and democracy. Furthermore, it also showed that, among participatory settings characteristics, diversity and deliberation in participatory and collaborative governance settings are key to guarantee that citizens will exercise power and take part in decisions that will affect them. In this regard, deliberative settings seems a better approach to participation when it comes to democracy in relation to other participatory approaches, as already pointed out by other authors.

Regarding the normative and instrumental dichotomy presented in the participatory democracy literature, another finding was that these aspects are highly intertwined and they reinforce each other. Inclusion seems to be a very important enabling factor in a participatory setting. An inclusive setting will be a condition to have a quality of deliberation that, in turn, will impact influence. Legitimacy, as an instrumental result of participation, will be highly influenced by inclusion and influence. The more influence citizens have on a decision, the higher are the chances of approval and easiness in the implementation, which ultimately enhances legitimacy. Civic skills and social learning can be considered a transversal aspect that contributes to influence and legitimacy, as better informed citizens can better express their needs and interests, make demands and make better decisions. Overall, there is no linear correlation among the elements from participatory settings and their contribution to democracy aspects, and among the democracy aspects themselves.

When it comes to the implementation of participatory democracy approach, the gap between the outputs of Policy Labs and the decisions that governments take or implement, reveals that participatory settings do not necessarily change the government's power structure, and that decisions about public policy are still in the hands of a few decision makers. This fact can relate to the discussion about forms of participatory and deliberative democracy implementation and the ways that they can be integrated in the current representative democracy political regime.

The findings also show that there are some impacts from participatory settings that go beyond formal policy making processes and that can influence the political voice and interest of citizens

and their decisions about specific issues. In this regard, further research about the ways in which participatory setting can cause wider impacts beyond formal public settings, may shed some light in the ways that participatory democracy can change representative democracy.

This research also provides arguments that can support the development and implementation of Policy Labs in the policy making process, not only from its instrumental use but also in terms of their normative contributions to democracy. In this regard, it is fair to say that Policy Labs bring innovation to governments but also that they can contribute to innovation in governance and policy making processes, changing the way that decisions are made and solutions are created. In this endeavour, as already discussed in the literature of Policy labs (Kieboom 2014), if Policy Labs intend to tackle complex problems, it seems important that they embrace the public system beyond their formal process, that they avoid solutionism to guarantee a higher impact of their solutions and that labs cannot ignore the political power and settings where they are embedded, because it will influence the lab process and their outputs.

8.1.3. Research findings on the applicability of the analytical framework in assessing Policy Labs' contributions to democracy

My analysis of the cases shows that the analytical framework was a good analytical tool as it could inform the contributions to and correlation between Policy Lab process design elements and democracy aspects. Overall, the process dimensions were useful to clearly set different phases of the Policy Labs process which, in turn, made the evaluation more structured. The process design elements could be clearly identified in each case and could critically inform the correlation to the democracy aspects outlined in the framework. Nonetheless, the application of the framework also brought up some important considerations regarding the definition provided by some actors in relation to some democracy aspects and the correlation between them. The case analysis also pointed to the need to add some process design assessment elements in the framework when it comes to evaluate Policy Labs.

The case analysis pointed to the need to integrate in the framework a wider definition of civic skills and social learning and inclusion as democracy aspects. The learning outcomes of the labs also refer to the increasing knowledge from the participants about the topic discussed and from

the experience and exchange with other participants. This type of learning, that emerges from a network and deliberation is also considered a type of social learning (Sol et al 2103), and can enhance participants' capacity to deliberate and engage the public in further discussions. When it comes to learning, talking only about civic skills and social learning related to citizenship might restrict the view on the contributions of Policy Labs to democracy. Regarding inclusion, the theoretical reference is mainly linked to change in power relations, through the integration of social marginalized groups. However, the cases showed that governments can exclude many stakeholders from the policy making process, who, in turn, can be considered marginalized from government decisions. So, a reference to marginalized groups when it comes to inclusion, should consider not only the socially marginalized ones, but also all those that are rarely included in policy making and government decisions.

The interconnectedness of the democracy aspects pointed out that, on the one hand, it is not possible to determine a very strict and direct correlation between the process design elements and democracy aspects, as they influence and reinforce each other. On the other hand, it also showed that some process dimensions are more linked to some democracy aspects than others. Inclusion is the main aspect related to who participates and is also intertwined with influence and legitimacy. How participation takes place in Policy labs is directly linked to all democracy aspects. Influence and legitimacy are inter-linked elements when it comes to the outputs and outcomes of the Policy Lab process.

Regarding the process design assessment elements proposed by the framework, the case analysis showed that some additional elements to the framework are also useful to better inform the analysis of each process dimension. Lab process design, lab format and facilitation, for example, seemed also relevant to indicate the contributions of the labs to democratic aspects in the initial stages of the process. Deliberation, knowledge building, decision-making and methods were highlighted in the case studies as the main elements to inform the contributions of the process design regarding the way participation takes place. Outputs characteristics and dissemination strategy were important elements to inform the contributions of the process outputs and outcomes to democracy. From these considerations, an improved version of the analytical

framework was developed and further presented in table 3, in section 8.2.2.

8.1.4. Limits of this research

It is worth reinforcing that the research findings are based on the characteristics of the labs analyzed, which are related to Policy Labs categorized as design-led labs, linked to policy making and engaging citizens in a participatory way. In order to analyze Policy Labs' overall contributions to democracy, other types of labs and other empirical cases should be considered in further research.

The above observation is also true for design-led labs given the information constraint already introduced in relation two the case studies. The fact that the case analysis was based on documents and only one interview, limited the analysis, as it did not consider other stakeholders´ perspectives and nuances, which could have brought more information and understanding about the lab practices. Furthermore, analysis of more cases might provide more arguments to reinforce current finds, increasing the scientific credibility of Policy Labs contributions to democracy.

Despite the good results from the applicability of the analytical framework, to use it as an assessment approach to Policy Labs and to evaluate its consistency in assessing different cases, it needs to be further tested in other empirical cases and improved.

8.2. Recommendations

8.2.1.Recommendations for government officials and lab practitioners

The first recommendation, drawn from the research findings, is a checklist with the main process design elements that need to be in place and observed in order to guarantee Policy Lab contributions to democracy aspects. The checklist serves as a reference to government officials and practitioners to implement and improve Policy Lab practices.

Check-list - Contributions of Policy Labs to democracy	
Democracy aspects	Policy Lab process design elements contributions to democracy

Inclusion	<u>Primary contribution:</u> diversity in the inclusion of stakeholders groups, needs and interests, and integration of marginalized groups in the process. <u>Process design elements that support these contributions:</u> ● Equal value to normative and cognitive knowledge ● Recruitment process in target groups ● Awareness about barriers and incentives to participate ● Flexible process design, that can be adjusted to the needs and profile of participants ● A wide participatory setting with different activities and / or layers of participation ● Lab settings, if inside or outside government and the labs size. ● Facilitation approach to adjust the process design and balance differences in power and resources
Influence	<u>Primary contribution:</u> inclusive and equal deliberative setting <u>Process design elements that support these contributions:</u> ● Deliberative settings ● Equal participation in decision making ● Use of cognitive artifacts ● Lab settings ● Openness and nature of the lab outputs ● Dissemination strategies
Civic skills and social learning	<u>Primary contribution:</u> inclusive and equal deliberative setting <u>Process design elements that support these contributions:</u> ● Methods and tools that enhances self-empowerment and learning ● Facilitation process
Legitimacy	<u>Primary contribution:</u> inclusive and deliberative setting, and experimental approach <u>Process design elements that support these contributions:</u> ● Flexible process, that allows the inclusion and deliberation with diverse groups of stakeholders along the process ● Use of prototypes or other material artifacts ● Nature and openness of the lab outputs ● Dissemination strategies

8.2.2. Recommendations for researchers

The second recommendation, targeting researchers in participatory processes and Policy Labs, is the use of the improved version of the analytical framework in order to inform further Policy Labs' assessments and contributions to democracy. It is important to highlight that the framework was already a result of a refinement and adaptation of a conceptual framework presented by Uittenbroek et al (2019) and that it should be further developed and refined by its application to different empirical cases and studies.

Participatory processes dimensions and assessment elements	**Contributions to democratic**
Who? Interest representation ● Issue and context ● Recruitment process ● Incentives and barriers to participation ● Participants and representation ● Resources and power relations ● Lab process design ● Lab setting ● Facilitation	*Direct contribution:* ● Inclusion ● Influence *Indirect contribution:* ● Legitimacy ● Civic skills and social learning
How? Participation and deliberation ● Goal ● Level and quality of deliberation ● Layers of participation ● Resources and power relations ● Methods ● Experimental approach ● Knowledge building ● Facilitation	*Direct contribution:* ● Inclusion ● Influence ● Legitimacy ● Civic skills and social learning

So What? Degree of change	*Direct contribution:*
● Government commitment ● Output characteristics ● Feedback mechanisms ● Dissemination strategy ● Policy change ● Stakeholders output appropriation ● Relationship building	● Influence ● Legitimacy ● Civic skills and social learning

Table 4: Analytical framework for researchers (Cardoso 2020)

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