



Group dynamics in the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

Manon de Jongh

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Group dynamics in the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

Groepsdynamiek in het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Utrecht op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof.dr. G.J. van der Zwaan, ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties in het openbaar te verdedigen op vrijdag 17 mei 2013 des middags te 12.45 uur

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geboren op 18 augustus 1978
te Deventer

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Foreword

Today is the 25th of March, it is exactly seven years since I formally started this PhD project! And now, seven years later, my project has been approved and I am finishing the very last part of the thesis, the foreword. Coincidence? Maybe there is no such thing as coincidence...

While reflecting on the past seven years, the first thing that comes to mind is the round of interviews that I held during the autumn of 2005. I was considering embarking on a PhD and felt that I needed to collect data about what it was like to write such 'a thing'. I spoke to twenty people; some had finished their projects, some had stopped along the way, some had never started, and some were still working on them. One of the respondents warned me: "I feel the most important thing to say to you is that you should take care of your life; don't lose it, while you're busy finishing your PhD". I have thought about this sentence again and again. It has probably been one of the most important things that was said to me in my professional life. And maybe this is the reason why, during the process, I actually could live my life.

What have I gotten out of these seven years? Apart from the knowledge that I gained, I feel that writing this PhD has mostly been a personal development process. For how lucky can one be, spending seven years of one's life reflecting, wondering, thinking, feeling, making mistakes, producing, not producing, being in chaos, not knowing, hoping, choosing, and fighting. During this development process, my professional and private lives changed – not coincidentally – and in no small measure. So, when I try to answer the question above, I wish to share that these seven years have brought me in contact with my true self. Many have supported me in this process, and I would like to thank them here.

First, I would like to thank my sponsors for facilitating this project: Maatschap voor Communicatie, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Udviklingskonsulenterne, and Lone. Especially, I would like to thank the project secretary and the chair of the Citizens' Assembly (deliberately referred to anonymously, see Section 5.4.3) and all the Assembly and staff members and external parties that helped me to fulfill this research. Without you, all this learning would literally have not been possible. A special note is addressed to the chair: thank you for your courage, collaboration, and trust. You supplied science in your professional and personal reflections and actions, which made it possible to explore the role of a facilitator in a more detailed way than one usually can. I am grateful for these contributions and the moments you wanted to share with me.

Then, my supervisor Sandra Schrijver. Thank you for sharing all your knowledge, wisdom, and experience. Working with you has been very inspiring, meaningful, and instructive. Not always easy, but especially therefore challenging. Thank you for pushing me to think individually and critically, for giving me freedom, and last but not least for your good heart.

Furthermore, I wish to thank my clients and colleagues who supported me with knowledge and learning during the last seven years. Especially, Anders Trillingsgaard, Anne Tortzen, Dorthe Degnegaard, Eric Spaans, Frits Lintmeijer, Gemma van der Ploeg, Marcel Brosens, Michael Bo Nielsen, and Morten Fogsgaard. Jette Lindhard and Kenneth Albæk, thank you for managing me the way you did.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends. They probably suffered more than most from this project. Merel, thanks for listening so much to me, even though the B-word (Burgerforum) became taboo in the end. And Lone, you deserve a PhD in patience, acceptance, and trust: I could never have fulfilled your role.

Manon de Jongh

Århus, Denmark, March 2013.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (Het Burgerforum Kiesselsel)

In 2006, the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations set up a national citizen assembly on electoral reform. One hundred and forty¹ Dutch citizens were asked to work together for nine months to investigate various electoral systems for choosing members of the Parliament, and eventually to decide which system would be most appropriate for the Netherlands. To fulfill this task, the members of the Assembly deliberated during ten weekend meetings that were organized in the period between March and November 2006. Members were also given the opportunity to communicate through an intranet site while they were at home. Finally, on the 14th December 2006, the Assembly presented its proposal to the Minister for Governance Renewal. The Assembly proposed a system of proportional representation, in which voters would cast one vote; either for the party of their choice, or for the candidate of their choice. By making this proposal, the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform had completed its task.

The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform has been a unique project. Never before had such a large group of Dutch citizens worked together in consultation with the national government on a subject that is of great importance to democracy, namely the electoral system. The Dutch government was the first government in the world to organize such a large-scale national citizen assembly and, through that, involve 140 citizens in such a public issue. This made the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform a very interesting research opportunity for political scientists, for public administrators, and for any others debating the role of citizens in a modern democracy. The project offered them an exceptional opportunity to study a large-scale citizen assembly, through which they could address the role of citizens in national policy- and decision-making. However, the involvement of citizens in public issues has not been the only subject reflected upon by authors. Constitutional experts, for example, also showed an interest in the recommendations that the Assembly would present. These experts wondered whether a deliberation process involving citizens would result in a different proposal to that which electoral system experts and politicians had previously come up with.

The themes mentioned above are clearly very relevant to reflect upon as the commitment and participation of citizens to public and political matters is one of the conditions for a well-functioning democratic system (Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Krouwel, 2004). Nevertheless, this dissertation will not study the case of the Citizens' Assembly from a political, public administration, or constitutional perspective; rather this thesis investigates the project from a social and psychological perspective. The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform offered a unique

¹ For various reasons the Assembly started out with 142 members (see Chapter 3). This difference of two members is not seen as significant in terms of this study. Therefore, I use the number 140 throughout this PhD, as this was the official number of Assembly members.

opportunity to study group dynamics in a large group consisting of various subgroups, both ad hoc and semi-permanent. As such, investigating the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform using a social and psychological perspective offered potentially valuable insight into how 140 diverse citizens work together, and what that means in terms of facilitating such a process.

In this chapter, the problem definition for this study is presented and the study objective and research question are described. Moreover, the context and some important focus areas of the study are briefly outlined. Later, in Section 1.4, the relevance of the research subject is discussed.

1.2 Problem definition

When individuals work together in a group, various types of social and psychological processes emerge. For example, individual group members relate to one another, small and more serious conflicts can arise, and anxiety can affect behavior within the group. The social and psychological processes that occur in groups are complex and can influence the outcomes and productivity of the group (Steiner, 1972). Groups can, as a consequence of the processes occurring, become totally rigid or, in the other extreme, generate a lot of creative power. In these extreme cases, the results of the group are likely to be very different.

The German psychologist Kurt Lewin, known for his extensive research on how groups work, coined the term group dynamics to stress the powerful impact of complex social and psychological processes on individuals in group situations (Lewin, 1951). Most research on group dynamics has involved small groups. Nevertheless, dynamics are also likely to affect larger groups, such as the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (see, for example, Bunker & Alban, 1992b, 1997; Gilmore & Barnett, 1992; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000). This has led to the following objective for this study:

To gain a deeper understanding of the group dynamics in the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform in order to discover how these dynamics have influenced the effectiveness of this citizen assembly and what that means in terms of facilitating similar large groups.

The dynamics within groups are influenced by the number of individuals within the group. As group size increases, psychological processes become more complex. Members of large groups have, for example, greater difficulties with maintaining interpersonal relationships (Hopper & Weyman, 1975; Hare, 1976; Turquet, 1975) and preserving their own identity (Greene, Morrison & Tischler, 1979; Hinshelwood, 2007; McMillan, 1981; Shaw, 1976; Turquet, 1975) and, consequently, anxiety rises (Hopper & Weyman, 1975; McMillan, 1981; Turquet, 1975). In addition, large groups can easily contain all sorts of subgroups, both formal and informal, and of varying sizes. The diversity of multiple subgroups within a large group context creates enormous complexity. The group, and each individual group member, are confronted with the reality of multiple 'truths' within the whole (Storck, 2002). As a result of the chaos and confusion that might occur, it can become impossible for individuals to think in

a large group (Hogan & Kwaitkowski, 1998; Kreeger, 1975; Storck, 2002). Moreover, there can be an implied threat of becoming overwhelmed by the mass of numbers if members expose themselves as individual thinkers (Foulkes, 1975; Kreeger, 1975; Turquet, 1975). When several stakeholders in a collaborative process are exposed to the ‘whole system’ surrounding a certain problem domain they are confronted with a large complexity, which can create uncertainty and obstacles to successful collaboration (Bunker & Alban, 1997; Gray, 1989; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000). Conversely, the dynamics of large groups can also have positive consequences. Participants can be fascinated by the potential and scale of the group, and individuals can experience a certain relief by being one of an anonymous powerful mass (Foulkes, 1975). Psychological processes, such as described above, underlie the so-called concept of large group dynamics. These dynamics are seen as emerging in groups that exceed perhaps fifteen or twenty in number (Forsyth, 1990; Gilmore & Barnett, 1992; Remmerswaal, 2006). As such, large group dynamics could be expected to occur in the Citizens’ Assembly.

Group dynamics are influenced by the group’s task and thus differ for each group setting. To get a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform, its specific group situation is explored in this study. The Assembly’s weekend meetings were naturally designed and facilitated (see Section 3.4) in a certain way by the staff involved. Both the facilitation as well as the design could have influenced the dynamics that came, or failed to come, about. The dynamics that did arise in the Citizens’ Assembly were worked with by the staff in some way (sometimes maybe unconsciously) during the period that the group met. The way of working might have increased, decreased, or suppressed certain dynamics that were present in the group; and it may also have created other group dynamics.

One could argue that identifying group dynamics is not that interesting in itself. Yet, identification can become valuable when the effects of group dynamics are being explored. In this study, I am particularly interested in how the critical dynamics in the Assembly helped or hindered the task at hand. From this, insight into the meanings of particular behaviors can be obtained along with establishing conditions for successful process development.

To meet the objective of this study, the following research question has been formulated:

How was the outcome (output² and process) of the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform affected by critical group dynamics³, and how were these dynamics dealt with by the staff?

It is beyond the scope of this research to analyze all the critical dynamics that emerged in the Citizens’ Assembly. Therefore, three meta-themes have been identified as significant for the performance of the

² From now on referred to as ‘proposal’.

³ The term ‘critical group dynamics’ is understood as ‘significant group dynamics’ or ‘important group dynamics’, rather than ‘unfavorable group dynamics’.

Assembly: context, diversity, and size. The theoretical relevance of each meta-theme is presented in Chapter 4 and, in Chapter 5, it is explained how these meta-themes were expressed during the process of data analysis. In essence, the meta-theme ‘context’ has been selected to investigate how the Assembly’s political environment might have affected behavior in the Assembly. This is believed relevant because groups are said to be continuously influenced by their environments (Lewin, 1951; Rice, 1969; Trist & Murray, 1990). The meta-theme ‘diversity’ was selected as the differing perspectives found in large groups are said to influence group behavior (e.g. Schruijer & Vansina, 1997). The third meta-theme ‘size’ is felt significant because processes within groups change as the group size increases (e.g. Shaw, 1976; Steiner, 1972). The theoretical perspectives that are considered the most appropriate for analyzing critical dynamics resulting from context, diversity, and size are the social psychological perspective, psychodynamic approach, and a leadership perspective (or, more specifically, theory about leading large groups). These perspectives are seen as having dominated in the development of the field of group dynamics (see Section 4.2).

To aid exploring the research question and to meet the study’s objective, some sub-questions have been formulated based on the relevant theoretical perspectives above:

- a. *How were the Assembly’s dynamics affected by context?*
- b. *How were the Assembly’s dynamics affected by diversity?*
- c. *How were the Assembly’s dynamics affected by size?*
- d. *How was the Assembly’s outcome (proposal and process) affected by its critical dynamics?*

I wish to emphasize that I do not claim to investigate causal relationships with these research questions. Rather, I aim to demonstrate that the concepts mentioned above are plausibly related.

As explained in Chapter 5, this study is seen as an interpretive study that uses a flexible design (Robson, 2002). The reason for choosing a research strategy with a flexible character was that the study started at the same time as the Citizens’ Assembly began its task. A flexible design offered a way to start collecting data straight away, while retaining flexibility to develop the research question as the situation developed. For the same reason, the theoretical framework was created after the data were collected. However, it should be noted that, based on my professional background, I did have certain implicit theoretical notions when I started the period of observation (see Section 5.4.1.1). In essence, the research order amounted to: first data collection, then design of theoretical framework, and afterwards data analysis. Although this shows similarities to the grounded theory approach, the study is not considered as a grounded theory study. Whereas the aim of grounded theory is to generate theory to explain what is central in the data (Robson, 2002), the main focus of this study is on describing and interpreting in order to gain a deeper understanding of the group dynamics in the Citizens’ Assembly, rather than on developing theory. This is not to say that the study’s results cannot

be linked to the development of theory but that, in this project, the value of theory lies in its potential usefulness in relation to practice (see Section 1.4).

The data needed to answer the research questions above were gathered during and after the Assembly's period of operation. In the nine months that the Assembly was active, I gathered data by working as a field and action researcher. I observed the weekend meetings of the Assembly, spoke with Assembly members, and shared and discussed my observations with the chair and other staff members. Besides my role as a researcher, I was appointed as a confidant for the Assembly members. Members who had personal problems that hindered their work with the Assembly could consult me. The data collected from these consultations are used anonymously in this study. After the Assembly had finished its task, various interviews and focus groups were organized to collect further data. Interviews were held with the chair, staff members of the project secretariat, Assembly members, ex-Assembly members, and external parties that were involved in the process of the Citizens' Assembly. Moreover, quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire that was sent out immediately after the final weekend meeting of the Assembly.

The data collected in this study were analyzed by interpretive reasoning. In this way, a picture of what possibly happened in each weekend meeting was created. These interpretations were subsequently linked with the theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter 4 and, if necessary, with other theory. I kept these theoretical concepts in the back of my head as possible interpretations for sensemaking, but I also tried to allow the data to speak for themselves; that is, I tried to be open to other dynamics that did not fit the general theoretical perspectives used.

1.3 Context of the study

As noted above, the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform is, in this study, looked upon from a social and psychological perspective. However, the context in which the Citizens' Assembly actually operated is also discussed in this dissertation, for this context is relevant when positioning and understanding social and psychological group processes. The Assembly's context is briefly outlined below and some of the assumptions made in this study are explicitly stated.

The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform is an example of the instrument called a 'citizen assembly'. A citizen assembly can be described as a group of citizens (the size of the group can vary) in which the participants are either selected, or self-selected, with the purpose of deliberating and making policy or delivering a set of recommendations (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Hendriks, C., 2006a⁴). In this PhD thesis, citizen assemblies are seen as instruments that are used in the context of deliberative democracy. Advocates of deliberative democracy favor citizen participation: in their

⁴ In this PhD, two authors with the same surname, Carolyn Hendriks and Frank Hendriks, are referenced. As they have published in the same year, for clarity I use their first initials when referring to them.

opinion, citizens should be involved in making or executing policy. However, deliberative democrats do not just argue for citizens being involved in decision- and policy-making. They also believe this should be done in a certain way, namely in a process of deliberation and consensus seeking (Akkerman, 2004; Hendriks, F., 2006; Leyenaar, 2007). Advocates of deliberative democracy reason that deliberative processes can, among other things, be used to increase both the quality of policymaking as well as political trust (Akkerman, 2004; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Fishkin, 1995; Hendriks, C., 2006a; Hendriks, F., 2006; Leyenaar, 2007; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Tonkens, 2006; Van Stokkom, 2007; Verhoeven, 2004). Here, I should emphasize that my position in this study on the debate on citizen participation (and democratic forms) is neutral. The purpose in exploring arguments for and against the involvement of citizens in decision- and policy-making is to understand the context of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

As the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform took place in the Netherlands, the Dutch democratic context is described in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Several Dutch authors (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Engelen, 2004; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hazeu, 2004; Korsten & De Goede, 2006; Krouwel, 2004; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Scheltema, 2004; Tromp, 2004; Verhoeven, 2004) discuss the 'gap' between the Dutch electorate and their representatives (or between citizens and politicians), reflecting a perception of falling trust between the two parties. Various authors claim that Dutch democracy could be supplemented with elements of deliberative democracy. According to Hendriks, F. (2006) and to the Nationale Conventie (2006), the Dutch democratic system could be adjusted and developed by using additional direct democratic instruments, and that this might eventually increase political trust in the Netherlands.

Clearly, the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform also operated within a larger political context. Chapter 3 therefore deals with the political background to the Assembly's task.

1.4 Relevance and ambitions

This study aims to contribute to the debate on citizen participation and the practice of deliberative democracy. Political and public administrative scientists have, over the years, provided knowledge on how to design processes (e.g. De Bruijn, Ten Heuvelhof & In 't Veld, 2008; Edelenbos, 2000) but the fact that it is also necessary to deal with social and psychological issues that go beyond content and design is, at best, only briefly mentioned. The effects of critical group dynamics cannot be seen as separate from the content of deliberative processes but, nevertheless, have been underexposed to date, both in theoretical debates as well as in practice (Van Stokkom, 2006; Sunstein, 2002). If deliberative instruments such as citizen assemblies are to be used to increase the quality of policymaking and political trust, a deeper understanding of the effects of group dynamics that emerge is needed. Only then can the real value of citizen assemblies be estimated and the instrument be judged on its merits. This thesis aims to provide greater insight into the effects of group dynamics in a

large citizen assembly, and consequently hopes to offer new angles in the discussions on the utility of citizen assemblies. By integrating knowledge on group dynamics into the fields of political science and public administration, it should be possible to improve participative and deliberative processes and thus also the quality of these processes. Through this, this research might give a little push in the direction of a more effective use of direct democratic instruments, leading to better outcomes and, last but not least, greater citizen satisfaction.

Furthermore, this research hopes to provide greater insight into the effects of diversity in groups. Various authors (e.g. Nkomo & Stewart, 2006; Schrijver & Vansina, 1997) have argued that diversity studies offer useful perspectives, but that the theoretical knowledge has been insufficient to really understand the meaning and consequences of diversity. Specifically, I hope to provide greater insight into the effects of the dynamics that emerge when 140 diverse citizens (and staff), varying in age, education, origin, religion, background, social position, political affiliation, and experience of working with groups, collaborate in a large citizen assembly group. In general, diversity is a characteristic of large groups, and one may say that the diversity (and thus the complexity) of the Citizens' Assembly was exceptionally high. This case thus offers the opportunity to explore the dynamics of diversity over a lengthy period.

Moreover, this study aims to contribute to the field of group dynamics by creating a deeper theoretical knowledge of dynamics in large groups. As noted earlier, most research on group dynamics has focused on small groups. Consequently, theoretical knowledge about the dynamics in large groups is not so extensive. One of the reasons for this could be that opportunities for exploring the dynamics of long-lasting large groups are rare (Weinberg, 2003). Studies that concern large groups (presented in Chapter 4) focus mostly on large groups that exist for a relatively short period. For example, the crowds, audiences, mobs, queues, and social movements that are studied in Crowd Psychology (see Chapter 4). Most of the research that has investigated social influence, group relations, and multiparty collaboration in large group settings (see Chapter 4) deals with groups that work together for one or at most just a few days. Similarly, most large group conferences rarely last longer than a couple of days⁵. The Citizens' Assembly is in this respect fairly unique. The members of this large group worked together on their task over a period of nine months. As such, the case offers a rare opportunity to explore large group dynamics over a lengthy period.

Finally, this study hopes to create a deeper theoretical understanding of working with large groups. It wishes to supplement the theoretical knowledge used in the conference methodologies referred to as Large Group Interventions (see Chapter 4). These methods are seen as a vehicle to understand and work with processes in large groups (Bunker & Alban, 1992a, 1992b; Remmerswaal, 2006). Large Group Interventions usually last for one or a few days, either with or without follow-up conferences. By studying the Citizens' Assembly, I wish to develop greater theoretical insight into how to work with a

⁵ Large therapy and training groups sometimes run over a longer period.

large group over a period longer than just a few days. My hope is that these theoretical insights can improve the practice of working with large groups.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

In this first chapter, the subject of study has been introduced. In the next two chapters, the context of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform is described. First, democracy and the participation of citizens is focused upon in Chapter 2. Then, in Chapter 3, the background and the process of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform are described in detail. Following this, relevant theoretical perspectives are presented in Chapter 4. There, the concept of group dynamics is introduced and this is followed by a description of the dynamics found in large groups. Further, the relevant theory on working with large groups is discussed. Chapter 5 focusses on the research methods used in this PhD. Then, in Chapter 6, the research findings are described and discussed. Drawing the work to a conclusion, the results of this study are reflected upon in Chapter 7.

Chapter 2: Democracy and the participation of citizens

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.

Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has".

Margaret Mead, American cultural anthropologist (1901 - 1978)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the concept of democracy. What are basic concepts of democracy, and what is the role of a citizen in a democratic system? The intention of this exploration is not to provide a detailed overview of the many perspectives that have contributed to the understanding of democracy and citizenship. More specifically, it will not review the contributions of political and administrative scientists to the democratic debate. Rather, a framework is deduced to help understand the context of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Systems, which is the subject of this study. This context is relevant when attempting to position and understand the social and psychological processes in the Assembly.

The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform is an example of the instrument known as the 'citizen assembly'. In this study, citizen assemblies are seen as instruments that are used in the context of deliberative democracy. To position this type of democracy, the model by Hendriks, F. (2006) on the basic types of democracy is used. This model has been found to provide an adequate framework to interpret the context of the Citizens' Assembly. A more extensive elaboration on democracy types is beyond the scope of this study.

2.2 Democracy and its basic concepts

The word democracy is derived from the Greek word demokratia and refers to two dimensions; demos meaning 'people' and kratos or kratia meaning 'to rule'. So literally the word democracy means people's dominion, or government by the people (Dahl, 1998; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hendriks, F., 2006). The 2007 edition of the Van Dale Dutch dictionary defines the term democracy as "a system of governance in which elected representatives govern the country" and "a state in which people govern". In other words, in a democracy, the power is owned by people: they decide, either directly or indirectly, how and by whom the country is or will be run. As, logically, these people follow laws and rules that have been chosen by themselves in the past, one could say that the political power of the demos implies political freedom in itself. Each individual has an equal right to political freedom in a democracy. In practicing this freedom, one should respect the political freedom of the others. Political equality and political freedom are thus major concepts of democracy (Burkens, Kummeling, Vermeulen & Widdershoven, 2001; Dahl, 1998; Hendriks, F., 2006; Scheltema, 2004). Engelen and

Sie Dhian Ho (2004, p.19) include these elements in their definition of democracy: “a political decision making procedure in which political equality and political freedom are guaranteed”.

One of the conditions needed for a well-functioning democratic system is the commitment and participation of its citizens to public and political matters (Dahl, 1998; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Michels, 2006; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Krouwel, 2004). The concepts of public commitment and political participation lead to the idea of citizenship. Citizenship can be described as the commitment and capability of citizens to make an effort in the public interest (Van den Brink, 2002). One could say that citizens in a democratic state have both rights and duties. On the one hand, citizens' rights are political equality and political freedom. Their duty, on the other hand, is to participate politically and to show their commitment to the public matter, so that political society can stay alive. Citizenship has implications for both the government and for the citizens themselves. If the role of citizens should be to make an effort for society, then the government should trust in their capabilities when they represent the public interest (Nationale Conventie, 2006).

Alongside public commitment and political participation, one can also distinguish political trust as a crucial condition for a vital democratic system (Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Korsten & De Goede, 2006; Nationale Conventie, 2006). Political trust can be described as the trust in politicians, authorities, and political institutions, and is important for a country's prosperity. If organizations and citizens trust the quality of their political institutions, they will invest and consume, and that can make the country's prosperity grow. When trust is low, the society becomes economically vulnerable (Korsten & De Goede, 2006). Political trust is also important for the quality of democracy. In countries with an indirect, representative, democratic tradition, citizens choose politicians to represent them (see Section 2.3). The system can be characterized by the principle of “dividing the work” (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007): the voter votes and the politician speaks, deliberates, and decides. This division of roles results in a certain distance between the voters and their representatives, and requires a certain trust between the two parties. If the voters lose faith in the politicians representing them, we speak of a legitimacy crisis. Since a representative democratic system is based on legitimacy, a loss of political trust would be detrimental (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Krouwel, 2004; National Conventie, 2006).

As societies change and become more complex, the question arises whether the practice of democracy can be maintained (Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Scheltema, 2004). The existing democratic order in the Netherlands dates from a period in which circumstances were very different from today. Engelen and Sie Dhian Ho (2004) and Hazeu (2004) refer, as an example, to the influence of internationalization. Dutch institutions were developed and created to function in a Dutch democratic context. However, this context is becoming ever more international and, as a consequence, political decisions are increasingly being made elsewhere, for example in the European Union (Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hazeu, 2004) and by the World Trade Organization (Tromp, 2004). Similarly, other developments, such as increasing knowledge, growing media power, and shifting relationships

between public and private institutions, have influenced and changed the context of democracy (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Dahl, 1998; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hazeu, 2004; Scheltema, 2004).

Besides Engelen and Sie Dhian Ho (2004) and Scheltema (2004), many other authors (e.g. Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Dahl, 1998; Hazeu, 2004; Hendriks, C., 2006a; Hendriks, F., 2006; Korsten & De Goede, 2006; and Tonkens, 2006) also discuss the way democracy functions today. Although the concept of democracy is still strongly supported (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Hazeu, 2006; Korsten & De Goede, 2006; Krouwel, 2004; Scheltema, 2004; Verhoeven, 2004), many authors seem to share worries about the way democracy functions in western society. Low election turnouts, growing numbers of floating voters, fewer memberships of political parties, and the increasing 'gap' between citizens and politicians are all mentioned as symptoms of a less functioning democracy in the Netherlands (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Hendriks, F., 2006; Korsten & De Goede, 2006; Scheltema, 2004). Nevertheless, discussing the quality of democracy can be seen as an element of keeping that democracy vital (Dahl, 1998; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hendriks, F., 2006; Scheltema, 2004). However, given that a significant number of authors are worried, it is relevant to look deeper into how democracy functions (in the Netherlands). This is considered in Sections 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5.

2.3 Types of democracy

Although worries about the quality of the current democracy are shared by various authors, the diagnoses of the problem - and therefore the proposed solutions - vary. To elaborate more on these diagnoses and proposed solutions, one needs to have a sound understanding of the different approaches and types of democracy. Even though the concept of democracy might seem very obvious, democracy has been expressed in many different ways, (Hendriks, F., 2006). One could say that the 2500 years of discussion about democracy has failed to result in a consensus about what democracy is in detail, or how it should be executed (Hendriks, F., 2006; Krouwel, 2004).

Even though there seems to be a lack of an agreement on the details or expressions of democracy, the basic principles are quite clear. All advocates of democracy support, for example, frequent and free elections and political freedom, and reject unequal voting rights or the lack of possibilities for free speech. So, one could say that there is a general agreement on the main ideas and basic principles of democracy, as discussed in Section 2.2. However, the disagreement starts when these basic principles need to be converted into functioning democratic systems. As a consequence, many different types of democracy can nowadays be defined (Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hendriks, F., 2006; Scheltema, 2004).

Hendriks, F. (2006) argues that all forms of democracy can be derived from four basic democracy types. The basic democracy types that he distinguishes are purely theoretical. In practice, none of the

four forms appear in the way described. Democracy is always practiced in mixed forms and shows stronger or weaker similarities to the basic theoretical types (Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hendriks, F., 2006). Hendriks' model helps one to get a better understanding of how certain democratic forms (that he and other authors write about) appear and can be placed in context. How, for example, is citizenship practiced in each democracy type? What can be said about political trust in the different democracy types? How do current developments (discussed in Section 2.2) affect the quality of democracy? His structure also offers an overview of the claimed strengths and weaknesses of each democracy type and a framework in which to understand the contextual problems. More specifically, Hendriks, F. (2006) explains the democratic form found in the Netherlands. This is a good basis on which to understand the diagnoses and solutions that various authors offer for the perceived problems in the Dutch version of democracy. In Section 2.5, the problems perceived in Dutch democracy are elaborated upon.

Hendriks' model presents the four democracy types along two different dimensions. The first dimension deals with the question 'how are democratic decisions being taken?' A democratic decision can be made by voting, or by deliberating. When a decision is voted upon, people vote either for or against the proposal. If more than fifty percent of the voters vote for the proposal, it is accepted, and the decision is made. In this system of decision-making, the majority (50% + 1) rules. Hendriks, F. uses the term 'aggregative' in his model to refer to situations where decisions are made by voting. Alternatively, a decision-making process is seen as deliberative when people discuss and deliberate with each other in order to reach an agreement. Hendriks, F. uses the term 'integrative' when decisions are made in this deliberative way. The second dimension of the model deals with the question of 'who eventually takes the decisions?' In a direct democracy, decisions are made by the *demos* itself. In an indirect democracy, the *demos* selects representatives to take decisions on its behalf. Apart from the common term 'indirect democracy', these systems are also known as 'representative' democracies. By combining these two dimensions (aggregative versus integrative democracy, and direct versus indirect democracy), four distinct types of democracy can be distinguished (see Figure 1): pendulum democracy, voters democracy, consensus democracy, and participation democracy (Hendriks, F., 2006).

Figure 1: Basic types of democracy (Hendriks, F., 2006)

	Aggregative	Integrative
Indirect (representative)	Pendulum democracy	Consensus democracy
Direct	Voters democracy	Participation democracy

Hendriks, F. (2006) describes pendulum democracy as an indirect form of democracy in which people vote on a regular basis and the power is then in hands of the elected politicians (representatives). Here, policymaking is carried out in an aggregative way, which means that decisions are made by voting. The USA and United Kingdom practice this form of democracy (the 'Westminster' model) by having what is essentially a two-party-system (the winner takes it all). In this type of democracy, the pendulum regularly swings; the party that wins an election holds the governmental, administrative, and political power, and thus governs the country for the specified period. By the time the next elections are held, the pendulum might have swung to the other side. In this system, the voice of the people is strongly heard during the election process. However, after an election, the people expect the government to pick up the reins again. Since it can be said that, during the period of government, the government is in charge and the people are somewhat passive, this form of democracy is also known as spectator democracy. Hendriks, F. (2006) sees clarity, decisiveness, and drive as strengths of pendulum democracies. However, these strengths may result in over commitment and fixation: the party in power needs to demonstrate performance to keep or win voters. Extensive reflection on the effects of policymaking is not a strong feature (Hendriks, F., 2006).

The second type of democracy distinguished by Hendriks, F. (2006) he labels a voters democracy. This form of democracy combines aggregative decision-making with direct representation. In other words, people participate directly by voting, either on a large scale (in, for example, a national referendum), or on a smaller scale (in, for example, a town-hall meeting). The individual voter thus plays a central role in this system, meaning that impulses and signals come from below. The central role of voters in a voters democracy can be compared with the central role of customers in a free market economy; the demands of the voter are paramount. Today's democratic societies contain no examples of a pure voters democracy. At best, the model is used to correct or supplement other democratic systems. Increasingly, new interactive media and communication tools offer more and new possibilities for including voters democracy (Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004). California is a good example of a State that employs the voters democracy model in the context of a pendulum democracy. The state organizes referenda on a regular basis, and carries out online opinion polls and consumer surveys to investigate the political 'market' (Hendriks, F., 2006). Hendriks, F. (2006) sees the activation of individual responsibility and taking initiatives as the main qualities of a voters democracy. However, public 'thoughtlessness' can occur in this system, due to ad-hoc thinking and the lack of a strategic thread. Hendriks, F. (2006) refers to the 'tragedy of the commons'; a phenomenon that can appear if many individuals act independently and in their own interests. The outcome can be that these individuals destroy the shared resource over the longer term – even though that is in nobody's interest - because they want to maximize their own individual value (Schneider & Northcraft, 1999). This could mean that a voters democracy is a good concept on the individual level, but fails to work for the totality of individuals. Besides this criticism, the exclusion of minority perspectives by the majority is also mentioned as a consequence of the model (Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hendriks, F., 2006).

The third type of democracy Hendriks, F. (2006) describes is that of the consensus democracy. In this indirect (representative) democracy model, representatives do most of the decision-making work. Representatives work in coalitions and in co-productions and defend the interests of their parties when making decisions. Consensus democracy can be found in countries that have been or are divided or compartmentalized along socio-political lines, for example Belgium and the Netherlands. These societies are built upon various parties, all with their own goals and interests. Consensus is therefore not a natural occurrence; it has to be actively sought. This requires a process of searching for common ground, rather than of polarizing the differences. As a consequence, decision-making in consensus democracies is carried out in an atmosphere of discussing, deliberating, compromising, and negotiating. As such, substantial minority perspectives tend not to be overruled by majorities in a consensus democracy. Citizens in a consensus democracy can be seen as spectators, as in a pendulum democracy. However, sometimes citizens are heard such that they can add something to the policies that representatives, politicians, or representatives of pressure groups have made. This is a difference to the way that citizens in a pendulum democracy participate. Research has shown that consensus democracies manage national economies better than pendulum democracies (Hendriks, F., 2006). Consensus democracies also seem to be better in maintaining peace (Hendriks, F., 2006). Further, consensus democracies are seen as more open to developing cooperation, environmental issues and the protection of weaker citizens (Hendriks, F., 2006). The ability to integrate minority perspectives (different norms and values) into policy- and decision- making processes is often mentioned as a strength of the system. The downside of this strength is that processes become less transparent and more complex, and thus slower (Hendriks, F., 2006).

The fourth and final basic type of democracy introduced by Hendriks, F. (2006) is participation democracy. Participation democracy is explained as a system that combines direct representation with integrative, deliberative decision-making. In this type of democracy, the best and most legitimate way to guarantee collective decision-making is for a large number of the concerned people to participate. Decisions are not made by voting, but in a process of deliberation and consensus seeking. This means that, in this form of democracy, minorities are not simply outvoted by the majority. All participants have an equal right to contribute in a participation democracy. The relationships are, at least in theory, horizontal, open, and free from power struggles. The participation democracy model has been criticized for being naïve and unrealistic in two ways. Firstly, one can question whether relationships can really be open and free of power struggles. Secondly, critics (see Section 2.6) claim that citizens are not as active as the model of participation democracy suggests. Contrary to this criticism, the model's collectivity is also praised. However, as with the voters democracy model, participation democracy cannot exist as a stand-alone democratic system. Rather, it can be used as a correction or supplement to other types of democracies (Hendriks, F., 2006). Many countries, including Australia, Canada, USA, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, and the United Kingdom, have experience with participative democratic instruments. A citizen assembly, the focus of this study, is an

example of the democratic instruments that can be placed in the context of participation democracy. This instrument is discussed in detail in Section 2.7.

Deliberative democracy is one of the main forms of participation democracy (Hendriks, F., 2006). In a deliberative democracy it is important that a broad number of citizens participate, as in participation democracy in general. However, the main focus in a deliberative democracy is on the interaction between the participants. In other words, the center of attention in a deliberative democracy is the democratic process of deliberating and seeking consensus (Akkerman, 2004; Hendriks, F., 2006; Leyenaar, 2007; Michels, 2006). I will generally use the term deliberative democracy from now on primarily because the term deliberative democracy is more specific than participation democracy: deliberative democracy focuses particularly on the process of deliberating and seeking consensus. A second reason is that Dutch authors write more about deliberative democracy than about participation democracy (Akkerman, 2004). I will continue to use the term participation democracy only where I specifically refer to Hendriks' model of democracy types.

In this section, I have presented the four basic types of democracy distinguished by Hendriks, F. (2006). I have already observed that these four democracy types cannot be found in their purist form. The mixed forms that are seen in practice have the potential to function better than the theoretical forms could ever do. That is, the multiform options can exploit the advantages and minimize the disadvantages of the various basic models. Hendriks, F. (2006) pleads for democratic forms that are both sensitive to the situational and cultural democratic setting and creative in optimizing the opportunities. Models that combine these elements are, according to Hendriks, F. (2006), vital democracies that show effectiveness and legitimacy.

2.4 The role of citizens in a democracy

A basic assumption of democracy is that those people who are confronted with the outcomes of political decisions in their daily lives should also be involved in taking those decisions (Hendriks, C., 2006a; Young, 2000). The question is, however, should those people be involved directly or indirectly? What is the role of the citizen? (Almond & Verba, 1996; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Tonkens, 2006; Van Gunsteren, 1998; Verhoeven, 2004).

When citizens play a direct role in a democracy, the term citizen participation is commonly used. While citizenship is a somewhat abstract way of describing the role of citizens in a society, citizen participation deals with the concrete interpretation of that role⁶. The term citizen participation is

⁶ Van Gunsteren (1998) distinguishes three varieties of citizenship theory: liberalism, (neo)-republicanism, and communitarianism. In this chapter, citizenship is interpreted from a republican perspective. Authors of a republican bent claim that citizen participation is the essence of democracy. The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, the subject of this study, is an example of a deliberative instrument and thus the republican tradition is seen as the most relevant when discussing a citizen's role in a democracy.

generally used when citizens are involved in making or executing policy (Van den Brink, 2002). Examples that have taken place in the Netherlands include the City of Amsterdam inviting a group of citizens to talk about the planning of the city center, and when 140 citizens were selected to consult with the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations about possible changes to the Dutch electoral system.

Not all democrats are in favor of citizen participation. Advocates of pendulum democracy, for example, argue that citizen participation should be limited or reduced. Once in a period of typically four years, unless the government resigns early, citizens choose their representatives. In so doing, it is argued, citizens have expressed their opinions (Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hendriks, F., 2006; Tromp, 2004; Verhoeven, 2004). Having done this, advocates of pendulum democracy argue that citizens should then focus on their own responsibilities in daily life and be good citizens, rather than investing their time in democratic issues. Further, they reason that citizens might not be capable of thinking for the whole community when deciding on an issue. In other words, citizens might decide in their own interests rather than reflecting on the wider interest (Lowndes, 1995). Advocates of pendulum democracy argue, moreover, that representatives should be seen as professionals. That is, representatives have been educated and are experienced in governing and decision-making (Engelen, 2004), and so they should take on that role. Further, as political societies have become larger and more complex, specialization and thus representation might be increasingly needed (Engelen, 2004; Tromp, 2004).

Advocates of the participation and deliberation forms of democracy do not focus on the question of whether citizens should participate, but more on how that could be organized. They argue that citizens have a more practical and realistic approach to community problems than politicians, and that they can therefore make better decisions and create more effective solutions (Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hendriks, C., 2006a; Levine & Nierras, 2007; Leyenaar 2007; Lowndes, 1995; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Tonkens, 2006). Organizers of citizen participation processes assume that many (maybe even all) citizens have useful things to say about public issues, despite gross inequalities in education, technical knowledge, access to mass media, social status, and political power (Levine & Nierras, 2007). Hearing a wide range of perspectives is therefore valuable. Another argument for supporting citizen participation concerns the apparently growing distrust between citizens and politicians. Since the start of the new millennium, Dutch citizens have increasingly trusted politics and their politicians less and less (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Hendriks, F., 2009; Korsten & De Goede, 2006), and consequently show less involvement in and commitment towards politics. By letting them participate, it is argued, they might begin to trust democracy more (Leyenaar, 2007) and eventually become more committed and more satisfied citizens (Akkerman, 2004; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Fishkin, 1995; Hendriks, C., 2006a; Hendriks, F., 2006; Leyenaar, 2007; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Tonkens, 2007; Van Stokkom, 2006).

Not only political and social theorists, but also public administration theorists reflect on the role of citizens in a democracy (Edelenbos, 1998, 2000, and 2001; Klijn & Koppejan, 1998; Pröpper, Litjens & Weststeijn, 2006; Pröpper & Steenbeek, 1998; Van der Arend, 2007). This group uses the term interactive policymaking when reflecting on questions such as: what is the division of roles between citizens, social institutions, companies, governments, and politicians in policymaking; how should a process of participation be designed, organized, and facilitated; and how can the quality and support for policies be created? (Edelenbos, 1998, 2000, and 2001; Michels, 2006; Pröpper & Steenbeek, 1998; Van der Arend, 2007). Pröpper & Steenbeek (1998, p.293) define interactive policymaking as "a way of executing policy in which a government involves citizens, social institutions, companies and (other) governments as early as possible, to work and cooperate in an open way on preparing, making, executing and (or) evaluating policy". Interactive policymaking should create support for policy plans, and result in greater satisfaction for all the parties concerned. The ideal outcome of interactive policymaking processes is that the government becomes more open and the citizens more active. Active citizenship will, it is argued, eventually result in a recovered or even improved democratic order (Van der Arend, 2007).

Tonkens (2006) warns of having too high expectations of active citizenship (see also Verhoeven, 2004). Active citizenship only comes into its own right with the appropriate support of active governments, social institutions, and professionals (Tonkens, 2006). Governments should also be careful that it is not only highly educated citizens that participate (because they tend to be more interested in political issues) (Tonkens, 2006; Verhoeven, 2004). If citizens are to participate, the government is responsible for ensuring they are a representative group (Tonkens, 2006).

To summarize, the role of citizens in a democracy can be seen in different ways. Some authors see the citizens' role as primarily voting for representatives. Others believe that citizens should have a continuous and active role in policy- and decision-making processes.

2.5 Dutch democracy: an emerging atmosphere of political distrust

The Netherlands has a long democratic tradition. Dutch representative democracy has, for a long time, been viewed as stable. Moreover, the fundamentals of democracy are still strongly supported in the Netherlands (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Henriks, F., 2009; Korsten & De Goede, 2006; Krouwel, 2004; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Scheltema, 2004). However, since 2001, five governments have fallen before the end of their nominal period, several governmental crises have resulted in the resignation of ministers, and Parliament has had to deal with several new political parties resulting from individuals splitting from their mother parties (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Hazeu, 2004). The elections that were held in 2002, 2003, and 2006 showed a growing shift to the extreme wings (to Marijnissen on the left, and Fortuyn and Wilders on the right) (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Tromp, 2004), and growing numbers of floating voters willing to shift allegiance

(Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Hazeu, 2004; Scheltema, 2004). Further, political parties have been losing registered members and the EU constitutional treaty was rejected by a large majority in a referendum (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Nationale Conventie, 2006). Perhaps most notable of all were the murders of the politician Fortuyn and the film director Van Gogh, and the shock with which these were received, both in the Netherlands as well as abroad (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hazeu, 2004; Korsten & De Goede, 2006; Nationale Conventie, 2006). The question on everybody's lips is what is happening to Dutch democracy?

Ongoing discussions about the so-called 'gap' (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Docters van Leeuwen, 2009; Engelen, 2004; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hazeu, 2004; Korsten & De Goede, 2006; Krouwel, 2004; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Scheltema, 2004; Tromp, 2004; Verhoeven, 2004) between voters and representatives (or citizens and politicians) suggest that there is currently a legitimacy crisis in the Netherlands (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Hazeu, 2004; Krouwel, 2004; Nationale Conventie, 2006). Significantly, it is not just a few politicized citizens and authors that speak about a decrease in trust between voters and representatives; members of the Dutch Parliament are also sensing a gap between themselves and the citizens (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007).

A possible explanation for this gap, according to Andeweg and Thomassen (2007), is the different perspectives that citizens and politicians have on the role of politicians. Most citizens in the Netherlands prefer politicians that 'represent those below' (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007). That is, politicians should continuously check whether the voters agree with the political party's points of view. However, most politicians emphasize 'representation from above' in which they 'translate' the citizens' political viewpoint into policies without a need to constantly check back with the electorate (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007).

Many members of the Dutch Parliament think that at least a part of the gap is caused by the citizens (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007): that citizens are not capable of thinking in the general or community interest and do not have sufficient political interest or knowledge. However, half of the Parliament members do acknowledge some blame. They believe that the cause of the gap mostly lies on the politics' and politicians' side. Another factor according to Parliament members for the declining trust of the citizens is the way journalists nowadays report politics (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007).

However, the perceived gap between citizens and politics is not a very new phenomenon. The relational problem between voters and their representatives has, in one way or another, been a subject of discussion since the 1960s, not only in the Netherlands but also in other western countries. When reflecting more deeply on the international historical context, it becomes clear that crises within Dutch democracy never appear separately, they are always part of wider developments (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Nationale Conventie, 2006). Political trust in countries fluctuates and it is normal for political trust to decrease in periods of economic recession (Henriks, F., 2009; Korsten & De Goede, 2006; Verhoeven, 2004). When the phenomenon of political trust is seen in a context of cyclical

movements, a period of political distrust can be seen as relative or only temporary. As such, one should be cautious before concluding that a country is in a democratic crisis. One should also realize that moderate satisfaction is the normal situation in societies, such that complaints about the government will always be there (Hazeu, 2004).

Nevertheless, in the Netherlands, trust in and support for politicians, political parties, and political institutions has declined sharply since the start of the new millennium (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Hendriks, F., 2009; Korsten & De Goede, 2006). Although this is a relatively short period, the Netherlands seems to have joined an international trend that has been manifest over a longer period (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007). Citizens are better informed and more capable than ever of making their presence felt in political decision-making processes. The raised level of education and the enormously increased access to information partly explain this development. Further, life quality and self-development are more important values nowadays (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2004; Bovens & Wille, 2009; Krouwel, 2004; Scheltema, 2004; Tromp, 2004; Verhoeven, 2004). These changes have resulted in the emergence of 'new' citizens who no longer want to operate in the traditional role of voter, but in a more direct way (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Leyenaar, 2007; Verhoeven, 2004). This development has had some important effects on the political process. Firstly, citizens have become more politically competent and therefore more confident and independent. They demand greater political involvement and consequently want to participate more (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Leyenaar, 2007; Verhoeven, 2004). Moreover, the political behavior of citizens tends to be subject-related rather than party-related. Citizens choose for themselves when they want to be passive, and when active, rather than just following the party line (Verhoeven, 2004). Secondly, the development of new citizens has resulted in less support for political parties in general. Today's citizens are not as committed and connected to a specific political party as citizens of old. Political parties, and maybe even more so the individual politicians, are less trusted. They have to put more and more effort into gaining the trust and support of citizens (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Hazeu, 2004; Krouwel, 2004; Verhoeven, 2004).

Public debates on the gap between citizens and politics are usually accompanied by suggestions for political renewal or reform. The underlying assumption is that citizens would show more trust in political systems if those systems fitted with current social developments (Nationale Conventie, 2006). A significant stream in the international literature argues that people get politically dissatisfied because they are not content with the political institutions and the democratic process in the representative democracy. The remedy for this, according to such authors, is therefore to renew and improve the democratic caliber of political institutions, and to give citizens greater influence in political decision-making processes (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Korsten & De Goede, 2006).

In fact, political renewal has been on the Dutch agenda for several decades. The Netherlands faces a fair amount of 'renewal pressure', resulting in grand plans for reform. However, in reality, this has not resulted in substantial political change (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Hendriks, F., 2006). One of the

explanations for why significant renewal has not been forthcoming is that it is difficult to change political institutions: they have a natural tendency to try and retain power (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Hendriks, F., 2006). Another explanation is that, from a political-institutional perspective, the Netherlands is a very conservative country. The most important political institutions in the Netherlands have existed since the time of the French occupation or since the modernizing of the Dutch democratic system in 1917-19. It may be hard to believe but Thorbecke's democratic design, developed in 1848, still manages to function in a society that has changed so much (Hendriks, F., 2006; Krouwel, 2004; Scheltema, 2004; Verhoeven, 2004).

Implementing political renewal is complex. Therefore, it may be preferable to adjust and improve the present democratic system, rather than focusing on large-scale structural changes (Krouwel, 2004). The Dutch consensus form of democracy could, for example, be supplemented with elements of deliberative democracy (see Section 2.6). It is reasoned that, by using more direct democratic instruments, the Dutch democratic system could be adjusted and developed; and by correcting some of the weaknesses, the political trust in the Netherlands might improve (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Hendriks, F., 2006; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Scheltema, 2004). This calls for a focus on how deliberative principles can be inserted into the Dutch political arenas (Hendriks, C., 2006a).

Dutch national and local governments increasingly involve citizens in their decision- and policy-making processes (Edelenbos, 1998, 2000, and 2001; Pröpper & Steenbeek, 1998; Van der Arend, 2007; Van Stokkom, 2006). In 2006, the Dutch Minister for Governance Renewal, Alexander Pechtold, implemented two national deliberative instruments; a National Convention (Nationale Conventie) and a Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (Burgerforum Kiesstelsel). The National Convention consisted of fourteen independent members and more than thirty advisors, and was tasked with deliberating and coming up with various proposals for a new Dutch political system. The new system should contribute to a better relationship between citizens and politics and, secondly, form a basis for a constitution for the coming century. The second instrument introduced was the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, which is the research subject of this PhD. In this assembly, 140 Dutch citizens were given the task to investigate various electoral systems, and eventually to decide which system would be most appropriate for the Netherlands. The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform is elaborated upon in Chapter 3. To introduce that chapter the concept of deliberative democracy is explored below. Following this, in Section 2.7, I discuss the citizen assembly in terms of its role as a deliberative instrument.

2.6 Deliberative democracy

A democracy where citizens, by deliberating, are involved in decision- and policy-making is conventionally known as a deliberative democracy. This type of democracy has been intensively explored by Elster (e.g. 1998), Fishkin (e.g. 1995) and Habermas (e.g. 1996) over the last twenty

years. Dutch authors that debate deliberative democracy are for example Akkerman, (e.g. 2004), Henriks, C. (e.g. 2005; 2006), Hendriks, F.(e.g. 2006), Leyenaar (e.g. 2007), Tonkens (e.g. 2006), and Van Stokkom (e.g. 2006).

To summarize the main characteristics of deliberative democracy, I refer to Van Stokkom's practical interpretation (2006, p.13) of Elster's contributions (1998): deliberative democracy is "a collective conversation in a group of equal participants in which a shared vision is tried to be made on issues that are of public interest. The outcomes of deliberation are being specified by good reasons, not by votes. Deliberative democracy is therefore not about aggregation of preferences, but about transformation of opinions."

Deliberative democracy has become an item of discussion over the last two decades. Some authors see deliberative democracy as a tool to enrich and deepen democracy, and argue that democracy is not only about input and outcomes (Akkerman, 2004; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Fishkin, 1995; Hendriks, C., 2006b; Leyenaar, 2007; Tonkens, 2006; Van Stokkom, 2006). They reason that the creation of legitimate decisions in a democracy requires certain elements: firstly the participation of citizens (to use their knowledge and create democratic support); secondly the use of deliberation in decision-making (to include processes of collective learning and creating consensus); and thirdly the protection of minority views (to create equality) (Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004).

Even though different schools of deliberative democracy can be defined (Akkerman, 2004; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hendriks, F., 2006), there does seem to be a shared view on creating, or not creating, consensus in modern deliberative models. That is, deliberating processes do not necessarily have to result in a single, group consensus: a complete consensus could be impossible, because of a lack of time in the process for example. Secondly, a full agreement that fits all the different interests and perspectives in the group might not exist given that the world is so complex these days. It is therefore accepted that deliberative processes can result in a 'reasonable' agreement or even in no agreement at all (Akkerman, 2004).

Advocates of deliberative democracy refer to the various strengths of the model. It is, for example, reasoned that deliberation leads to more engaged and more politically confident citizens. Citizens in deliberative processes are content that they have been involved in policy- and decision- making processes (Fishkin, 1995; Leyenaar, 2007). It is also argued that citizens can learn from all the different perspectives that their fellow participants bring to the process (Fishkin, 1995; Leyenaar, 2007; Van Stokkom, 2007; Verhoeven, 2004). By working with these different perspectives, greater understanding and respect for each other's views is expected (Akkerman, 2004; Fishkin, 1995; Van Stokkom, 2006). The diversity can moreover lead to greater community thinking within the group (Leyenaar, 2007; Van Stokkom, 2006; Verhoeven, 2004), such that the participants take more responsibility for the greater objective (Leyenaar, 2007). Another advantage of deliberation that is advanced is the model's ability to bridge conflicts between different parties. Citizens can, for example,

better sympathize with policymakers once they have a better understanding of the complexity of their daily work (Akkerman, 2006; Leyenaar, 2007; Van Stokkom, 2006).

Apart from these arguments that support the deliberative model, there are also criticisms. One of the perceived major disadvantages of the model is the problem of inequality (Akkerman, 2004; Levine & Nierras, 2007; Leyenaar, 2007; Medelberg, 2002; Van Stokkom, 2006). Citizens vary in their verbal skills; and people that are good in putting their arguments across (usually the most highly educated, most urban, and wealthiest citizens (Levine & Nierras, 2007)), are more likely to have influence in the discussions (Levine & Nierras, 2007; Leyenaar, 2007; Van Stokkom, 2006). Further, not everyone will have the same opportunities to share their arguments because of procedures or the lack of time (Leyenaar, 2007). Group dynamics and emotions cannot be isolated from the content of the deliberation. Perhaps surprisingly, there is little focus on these elements in the debate on deliberative democracy (Mendelberg, 2002; Sunstein, 2002; Van Stokkom, 2006).

One could also reflect on the principle of deliberating itself. Deliberative democrats advocate argumentation, rather than voting procedures. However, it can be argued that the principle of voting is in fact the only method that can deal with everybody's opinion in an equal way (Akkerman, 2004). Therefore one could say that voting procedures come closest to the democratic principle of equality. Akkerman (2004) advocates a combination of the two methods: with voting as a supplement to deliberation. As such, deliberative processes can then be concluded with a voting procedure. In this way, the strengths of deliberation can be retained and used, and, at the end of the process, the participants can vote on an individual basis for what they want. This idea has an additional advantage: when voting procedures are used at the end of a deliberation process, this to an extent overcomes the practical disadvantage of the deliberative model - the lack of time (Akkerman, 2004).

Another point of discussion with the deliberative model is the issue of representation: accepting that it is practically impossible to hear every citizen, how does one achieve a sufficiently 'good' representation. It is very possible that a group deliberating over a certain policy is not representative of the specific target group that the policy is being designed for. Furthermore, there could be other complicating factors within a group that influence the representativeness of its outcome. Different power positions, or a large difference in capabilities of the group members could result in an unequal contribution (Tonkens, 2006; Tromp, 2004; Van Stokkom, 2006; Verhoeven, 2004).

It is argued that authorities should take the efforts of citizens in deliberative processes seriously in order to ensure that the gap between citizens and government does not increase further (Nationale Conventie, 2006). There are numerous examples where citizen participation is used to legitimize decisions that have already been taken by public administrators (Hendriks, C., 2006a). When deliberative processes are organized for that purpose, citizens understandably become cynical and their trust in the government decreases further (Nationale Conventie, 2006). Sometimes, citizens fail to understand why their recommendations are not followed by the government, and it is argued that

these citizens could be prevented from becoming dissatisfied if the political decision-making process was explained to them. Citizens might then better understand the role their advice can play in the overall process of political decision-making (Hendriks, C., 2006a; Levine & Nierras, 2007; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Van Stokkom, 2006).

It is possible to distinguish various deliberative instruments including deliberative polls, citizen juries, citizen assemblies (or panels), and consensus conferences (Akkerman, 2004; Fishkin, 1995; Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Hendriks, C., 2006a; Leyenaar, 2007; Van Stokkum, 2007). Deliberative polls are instruments to measure citizens' opinions. The measuring takes place after citizens have been informed about an issue and have deliberated on it with others (Fishkin, 1995). A citizen jury usually consists of a maximum fifty citizens. The group should be representative of the population and deliberate on the basis of information handed out (usually before the meeting). They have the opportunity to hear and question stakeholders before they come to a conclusion (Leyenaar, 2007). A citizen assembly (or panel) is a group of citizens that can vary in size. The participants are either selected or self-selected, and deliberate to make policy or deliver a set of recommendations. The process is supported and usually also facilitated by public servants (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Hendriks, C., 2006a; Van Stokkom, 2006). The fourth deliberative instrument identified here is the consensus conference. In this conference method, of Danish origin, a group of citizens (with a maximum of thirty people) formulates several questions around an issue that need to be addressed. Following this, they identify some experts that will become their discussion partners in the process. At the end of the consensus conference, the citizens come up with their expectations, concerns, and recommendations around the issue. The goal in the Danish model is to come to a consensus, but in other countries a consensus is not always expected (Andersen & Jæger, 1999; Vandenabeele & Goorden, 2004).

Of the abovementioned deliberative models, the Dutch government has most experience with citizen assemblies (Leyenaar, 2007).

2.7 Citizen assemblies as instruments for deliberation

Citizen assemblies are designed to gain input for policymaking from 'normal' citizens. There are no strict design guidelines for the instrument, but most citizen assemblies have three common characteristics. Firstly, participants are randomly chosen (in order to be representative of the population). Secondly, citizens are given information, and listen to and question relevant experts and stakeholders about the task's problem domain. Thirdly, the citizens then deliberate intensively and come to a set of recommendations that will then be presented to the decision-makers (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Hendriks, C., 2006a).

The specific characteristics of citizen assemblies have come to the attention of many policymakers around the world. Notably, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, and also the

Netherlands, have gained some relevant experiences with citizen assemblies (Hendriks, C., 2006a; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Vandenabeele & Goorden, 2004).

Citizen assemblies are organized for a range of reasons. They can, nevertheless, be divided into three groups: citizen assemblies that collect policy information, citizen assemblies that measure public opinions, and citizen assemblies that stimulate general debate. This classification is not rigid, and it is very possible that a citizen assembly will contain elements of two or even all three groups (Hendriks, C., 2006a). The output of the first type of assembly is usually a set of recommendations. The group of citizens is selected in such a way that they, in one way or another, reflect the overall population. The general design of these assemblies is that the group gets information about the issue, they hear and question relevant experts and stakeholders, and they then deliberate intensively (Hendriks, C., 2006a). The primary focus of the second type of citizen assembly is to collect data (generally quantitative) on public opinions. Also in this design, the participants receive information, hear and question relevant experts and stakeholders, and then deliberate (Hendriks, C., 2006a). The third type of citizen assembly is designed to stimulate the general debate, and they will usually involve large deliberative events. Although these assemblies are also designed to generate input for policymaking, they usually have a strong public character and stimulate the general debate. The scope of these events is sufficiently large that most inhabitants hear or talk about the subject of deliberation (Hendriks, C., 2006a).

Citizen assemblies are developed not only to hear the views of organized and motivated citizens but also to gain an overview of the opinions of all of society. The objective of these assemblies is to improve the relationship between citizens and decision-makers in the form of representatives, public administrators, and opinion makers. The main argument is normative: citizens should have the possibility to contribute to policymaking that concerns them. Further, the quality and legitimacy of decisions are also meant to be improved when the opinions of citizens are taken into account. Citizen assemblies have never been seen as replacing the existing institutions of representative democracy. Rather, the instrument is meant to supplement the existing political structures by strengthening the relationship with the public (Hendriks, C., 2006a).

There is however also an issue concerning the outcomes of citizen assemblies. Politicians and decision-makers struggle to deal with the mandates from such assemblies: they do not always know what they should do with the outcomes or recommendations of assemblies. Did the voters not decide that they should govern the country as their elected representatives? If that is the case, what is the legitimacy of a group of citizens in a citizen assembly? In other words, instruments like citizen assemblies lack a formal place in the political decision-making process. This is a structural problem in representative democracies: if representatives have the power, they should decide about things. As such, they retain the last word in accepting or rejecting the outcomes of assemblies. This is, however, somewhat in contrast to the objective of the assemblies. How democratic is it that citizens are asked to

deliberate about an issue, and then their inputs are effectively ignored? Does that, as is claimed, really strengthen the relationship between citizens and decision-makers (Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007)?

The fact that citizen assemblies take place beyond the normal political structures is also viewed as an advantage. Members of a citizen assembly can deliberate without having to consider the complex strategic interests that politicians have to balance such as party interests, the wishes of voters and activists, and the media. This creates opportunities to work toward a creative solution. International research has shown that citizens often produce refreshing perspectives that politicians can then use (Nationale Conventie, 2006). Moreover, citizens seem to be very capable of asking the right questions and giving relevant advice (Nationale Conventie, 2006).

The facilitation of citizen assemblies is usually organized and run by public administrators and public servants. Although they appear on paper to have only the role of facilitator, in practice their role is much broader. Participants usually lack sufficient knowledge of legal and other specialized issues, meaning that the facilitators have to assist with the content (Van Stokkom, 2006).

Citizen assemblies are organized in various forms and sizes. It is however rare that citizen assemblies with over fifty participants are organized. To the best of my knowledge, the State of British Columbia in Canada, in 2004, organized the largest citizen assembly ever, consisting of 160 members. These citizens deliberated about electoral reform (see Appendix 1). Soon after the British Columbian example, in 2006, the Dutch government organized a similar large citizen assembly on the same topic: electoral reform. In so doing, the Netherlands was the first country to organize a national citizen assembly involving 140 citizens to debate a public issue.

Chapter 3: The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2 I explored concepts such as political trust, citizenship, and deliberative democracy to introduce the democratic context surrounding the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. In this chapter, I look more deeply into this project. The Assembly's task, the reason for this, the political background to the task, and the organization of the project are all described. Moreover, the Assembly's outcome is explored: what was proposed by the Assembly and what eventually happened with this proposal? The themes that are included in this chapter's case description are seen as relevant to understanding the social and psychological processes in the Assembly.

3.2 The task

In July 2005, the Dutch Minister for Governance Renewal, Alexander Pechtold, came up with a proposal to organize a citizen assembly on electoral reform. The State of British Columbia (Canada) had just finished an experiment on a new way of policy- and decision-making that dealt with exactly the same theme⁷, and this was used as an example (Ten Heuvelhof, Van Twist, Kort & Van der Pennen, 2006). The consequent Dutch Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (Het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel)⁸ started in March 2006. The participants in the Assembly were given the task of reviewing various electoral systems for choosing Members of Parliament, and eventually of deciding which system would be most appropriate for the Netherlands (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

One hundred and forty Dutch citizens that were entitled to vote became members of the Assembly (see Section 3.4.2 for details of the selection process). In order to guarantee representativeness, the group had to reflect Dutch society 'as well as possible'. The reasoning behind this idea was that the better the Assembly reflected Dutch society, the greater the likelihood that 'the political system' would take its efforts seriously. To represent as well as possible, there were as many men as women selected to be members of the group. Moreover, the members reflected the different age groups and they were selected to proportionally reflect the number of inhabitants per province (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

⁷ An outline of the British Columbian Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform can be found in Appendix 1.

⁸ British Columbia used the term 'Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform' for their citizen assembly. To emphasize that the Dutch Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform was inspired by the British Columbian case, I also use the term 'Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform' to refer to the Dutch assembly. Other authors have used the same logic, for example Lang, (2007a). In documents that have been written by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations the Dutch term is translated as 'Electoral System Civic Forum'.

In the period between March and November 2006, the members of the Assembly met each other during ten weekends. After these weekend meetings, the Assembly presented its proposal on December 14th 2006 to the new Minister for Governance Renewal, Atzo Nicolaï. On so doing, the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform had completed its task (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

3.3 Reasons and political background of the task

The task given to the first large-scale national Citizens' Assembly in the Netherlands was to advise the government regarding the best electoral system for the Netherlands. Even though there is little experience with what kinds of topics are suitable for citizen assemblies, the choice of the electoral system seems remarkable as it is both abstract and complex, and does not play a large role in citizens' daily concerns (Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). So, why was this topic found relevant to be dealt with in a citizen assembly⁹?

The reasoning was that every citizen is affected every day by the essence of the topic. The electoral system is the instrument through which representatives are selected, and it is these representatives that take political decisions for citizens. The consequences of these political decisions affect citizens in their daily lives (Hendriks, F., 2006; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). Another reason for selecting the subject is that the 'electoral system' was a topical issue. That is, many Dutch citizens were having difficulties with recognizing themselves in the politicians representing them in Parliament (see also Chapter 2). There was also a practical reason: Canada had just successfully concluded a citizen assembly on the same topic, which could be seen as inspiration for this process (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

Besides the three reasons mentioned above, Ten Heuvelhof and Van Twist (2007) suggest another argument that might have played a role in addressing the topic: the electoral system has been a tricky subject in Dutch political history. Dutch politicians have not seemed able to agree on a reform to the electoral system. A reason for the complexity of the debate could be the fact that the theme affects the politicians themselves (Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). Changes in the electoral system could affect the position of certain parties or individual politicians. Some might, for example, have to give up their power in a new electoral system. The subject is thus quite risky for politicians to talk about. As such, it could be useful to take the discussion out of the political arena and ask 'normal' citizens, without any particular self-interest, to deliberate on the theme (Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007).

⁹ A staff member of the project secretariat reviewed this chapter on April 24th 2011. He observed that this paragraph could be seen as indicating that the citizen assembly instrument was designed first and consequently a task needed to be found for it. In practice, it had gone the other way around, according to this staff member; the electoral system was a topical theme on the political agenda (see below) and some public servants therefore suggested organizing a citizen assembly. This suggestion, he argued, was inspired by the case of British Columbia.

So far, I have been elaborating on the reasons for selecting electoral systems as a topic for the Citizens' Assembly. However, we should consider the role that the theme has played in Dutch political history. Since 1917, the Dutch electoral system has been one of proportional representation (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). In a system of proportional representation, the percentage of votes won is approximately the same as the percentage of seats in Parliament. In other words, a political party that has gained twenty-five percent of the Dutch votes will also get approximately one-quarter of the seats in Parliament. In the 1960s, the existing system of proportional representation was discussed (Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). The political party D66 proposed introducing a constituency-based voting system in the Netherlands (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). The idea behind such a system is that a country is divided into electoral districts (constituencies). Each district sends one or more people to the Parliament to represent the district. D66 believed that the gap between citizens and representatives would decrease if citizens were represented locally (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). The implementation of a constituency voting system has not been accepted, but remains an element of D66's governmental renewal agenda. Elements of this agenda have been continuously proposed since the 1960s but little has changed (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007).

Discussions regarding electoral systems were topical throughout the second half of the last century. Senior committees were installed to investigate possible designs for a new electoral system, but without any visible result. The issue has continued to be on the political agenda, but not given a high priority by all the political parties (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007).

In 2003, following an election, three political parties, CDA (Christian Democrats), VVD (Liberals) and D66 agreed to form a government coalition known as 'Balkenende 2'. Together with other aspects of governmental renewal, they announced a debate on reforming the electoral system. The coalition established a position as Minister for Governance Renewal, and the D66 politician Thom de Graaf first occupied the post. In March 2005, this Minister resigned because one of his renewal proposals had been rejected in the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament. The government coalition decided to continue in power, and reaffirmed its commitment to governmental renewal. In July 2005, De Graaf's successor, Alexander Pechtold, presented his democratic renewal agenda for the coming period. One of his plans was to establish a citizen assembly on electoral reform. On January 17th 2006, the Citizens' Assembly was officially introduced and it was initiated on the 24th March 2006 (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007).

3.4 Organization of the project

Once Alexander Pechtold had presented his plans for a Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, the preparations for the project were delegated to the Directorate of Constitutional Affairs and Legislation,

part of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Hence, the Minister no longer had any substantial responsibilities in the project.

3.4.1 Staffing

When Parliament agreed to install a Citizens' Assembly in the summer of 2005, a project secretariat was set up by the Head of the Directorate of Constitutional Affairs and Legislation. This project secretariat was responsible for the organization of the entire project; ranging from the design and organization of the weekend meetings to the selection and later support of the Assembly members. The Directorate's Head remained formally responsible for appointing the chair of the Citizens' Assembly and making resources and support available to the 140 Assembly members. The secretariat was managed by a project secretary. In addition to the project secretariat, the staff of the Citizens' Assembly consisted of a chair and a number of external parties (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006). Table 1 provides an overview of the Citizens' Assembly's staff.

Table 1: Overview of the Citizens' Assembly's staff

Staff of the Citizens' Assembly	Comments
Project secretariat	Headed by the project secretary
Chair	(part time)
External parties	(part time) experts, lecturers, consultants, a Committee of Experts, researchers (see Appendices 3, 4, and 5)

The project secretariat started its preparations by organizing an expert meeting in July 2005. A range of experts¹⁰ were invited to provide advice regarding the instrument, the process, the risks, and the 'do's and don'ts' concerning the organization of a citizen assembly. This meeting gave cause to organize a large-scale conference, in which a hundred experts discussed the forthcoming Citizens' Assembly. In November 2005, some members of the secretariat visited British Columbia (Canada) to learn from their experiences with their Citizens' Assembly. The process design used in British Columbia was adopted as a starting point for the Dutch Assembly. Two Dutch experts adapted the Canadian version and presented a proposal for a process design for the Dutch Assembly in December 2005. This process design was discussed and finalized on the 9th March 2006 in another expert meeting¹¹ (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

¹⁰ Names of these experts can be found in Appendix 2.

¹¹ Names of participants of this meeting can be found in Appendix 2.

The secretariat supported both the chair as well as the Assembly members. By the time the Assembly members were selected (in February 2006, see below), the secretariat had a staff of ten people. The division of responsibilities between the staff members during the Assembly process is presented in Table 2 (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006). During the Assembly's period of operation, twenty staff functions were involved.

Table 2: Division of staff members in the secretariat (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006)

Sections in secretariat	Staff in sections
Secretary	1
Communication staff	1 Coordinator, 1 Consultant, 1 News editor
Project Coordinators	1 Coordinator, 1 Deputy coordinator
Policy staff	1 Senior, 1 Mid-level, 1 Junior ¹² , 1 Trainee
Administrative assistants	1 Project secretary, 1 Secretariat assistant
Student assistants	7 (part time)
Confidant	1 (part time)

The student assistants included in Table 2 were political science and constitutional law students from various universities in the Netherlands. The seven students worked part time for the secretariat. They assisted the working groups during the weekend meetings, drew up minutes and reports, and helped organize the weekend meetings (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006). I was contracted as the confidant to support the Assembly members in carrying out their tasks. Members who had personal issues that hindered their work could consult me during the process. More information about this role can be found in Chapter 5.

A Dutch theologian and TV personality was selected to chair the Assembly from January 2006 onwards. She was chosen because she had no history regarding electoral systems and no strong political profile (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). Moreover, she was experienced in dealing with the media (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). The chair's part-time tasks were: supervising the selection process for the members of the Assembly, facilitating the weekend meetings, overall management of the secretariat, supporting the Assembly in its task, and maintaining contact with the Minister, the media, politicians and other stakeholders (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

¹² One of the student assistants also fulfilled the role of part time junior.

In addition to the secretariat and the chair, a number of external parties were involved in the process of the Assembly. As described above, a range of experts were consulted in the preparatory phase to draw up and discuss the process design of the Assembly. Further a committee of academic experts¹³ was set up when the Assembly started its task. This committee could be consulted to discuss the process of the Assembly if that should prove necessary. Two of its members (referred to as lecturer 1 and lecturer 2) were closely involved in the learning phase of the Assembly (see Section 3.4.5.1) and they regularly attended the weekend meetings. Further, six research teams¹⁴ were carrying out research activities during and after the Assembly's process. In addition, a number of external parties¹⁵ were called in to support the secretariat in its activities, for example in facilitation, graphic design, and IT activities (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

3.4.2 Assembly members

Once the chair was appointed, the selection of Assembly members was scheduled. One hundred and forty citizens were to be selected to participate. For the selection of these 140 people, a random sample of 50,400 people was drawn from all registered citizens entitled to vote in the Netherlands (Van der Kolk & Brinkman, 2008). The Dutch Agency for Personal Records and Travel Documents (Agentschap Basisadministratie Persoonsgegevens en Reisdocumenten, BPR) based the sample on the Municipal Personal Records Database (Gemeentelijke Basis Administratie). The 50,400 people selected received a letter in which they were invited to participate in the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. No groups were excluded from the sample. However, it was explained in the letter of invitation that civil servants of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Members of Parliament, Members of the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament, or the European Parliament, and members of the Electoral Council were not allowed to participate in the Citizens' Assembly. In this way, the autonomy of the Assembly would be guaranteed (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006; Van der Kolk & Brinkman, 2008).

Those citizens that had received the invitation letter could apply for membership of the Assembly by nominating themselves during one of the nine information meetings that were organized by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Eventually, 1732 people nominated themselves. Out of these 1732 nominated people, 140 were selected by drawing lots. To guarantee representativeness, a few characteristics were taken into account when drawing: the members had to proportionally reflect the inhabitants per province, there had to be as many men as women in the group, and the group had to be representative of Dutch society in terms of age. To satisfy these requirements, the nominated people were first categorized by province, and after that drawn proportionally with regards to inhabitants per province. It was also ensured in this procedure that there were roughly as many men

¹³ Names of the committee members can be found in Appendix 3.

¹⁴ A short description of the research projects can be found in Appendix 4.

¹⁵ An overview of these external parties can be found in Appendix 5.

as women selected per province. Stratification by age was not included at this stage because it was reasoned that all ages were already represented in the group of 1732 nominated people (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006; Van der Kolk & Brinkman, 2008). Table 3 presents a breakdown of the male and female Assembly members by province.

Table 3: Breakdown by gender and by province of the Assembly members (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006)

Province	Number of female members	Number of male members
Friesland	2	3
Groningen	3	2
Gelderland	9	8
Noord-Brabant	10	11
Zeeland	2	1
Flevoland	1	2
Drenthe	2	2
Overijssel	5	5
Limburg	5	5
Noord-Holland	11	11
Zuid-Holland	15	15
Utrecht	5	5

On March 24th 2006, 142 people were installed as Assembly members. The reason for ending up with 142 people (rather than 140) was because the secretariat could not reach four of the 140 people in time to invite them for the installation event. To be sure of having enough members, the secretariat invited four¹⁶ extra people to become members. Three of these four people accepted the invitation to become 'additional' Assembly members. Then, on the day of the installation, three of the four people that could not initially be reached showed up. As a consequence, the Assembly started with 142 members (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006; Van der Kolk & Brinkman, 2008¹⁷).

¹⁶ These four people were drawn from the list of reserve candidates from the provinces of Zeeland, Drenthe, Flevoland, and Groningen, because these provinces had the fewest number of Assembly members.

¹⁷ These sources fail to note that only three out of four people accepted the invitation to become 'additional' Assembly members and, therefore, talk of 143 people being installed as Assembly members.

3.4.3. Finance

The total budget for the Citizens' Assembly between 2005 and 2007 was €5,100,000 excluding the personnel costs of the secretariat. An outline of the cost items is given in Table 4. Every member that attended an entire weekend meeting received an allowance of €400. This amount was not exempt from tax (seen as income) and is classified in the table under 'weekend meetings' (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

Table 4: Outline of budget items for the Citizens' Assembly (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006)

Cost item	Amount in €
Weekend meetings	1,210,000
Selection phase	340,000
Training	490,000
Communications	2,685,000
Research	100,000
Process support	275,000
Total	5,100,000

3.4.4 Work method and philosophy

In the period between March and November 2006, the members of the Citizens' Assembly met each other during ten weekend meetings, starting on a Friday afternoon and finishing on Saturday evening. The weekend meetings were divided into three phases; a learning phase (weekend meetings 1 - 3), a consultation phase (weekend meetings 3 - 6), and a decision-making phase (weekend meetings 7 - 10). During these meetings, the members worked together in a plenary group and in subgroups (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

The plenary sessions were facilitated by the chair. During most of the weekend meetings she was assisted by the lecturers. The time allocated to the plenary sessions was used in various ways. Some sessions were used as lecture time (mostly in the first three weekend meetings). Other plenary moments were used by the chair to, for example, explain the program of the weekend meetings, to provide opportunities for questions and discussion, or to bridge between the plenary and subgroup sessions.

The subgroups were facilitated by the members themselves. The Assembly members elected these spokespersons and chairs from within their own group (see below). In the subgroups, the members discussed and reviewed the work together. Sometimes they were for example asked to review the lecture material once again, in other sessions the members discussed, deliberated, and shared ideas

about electoral systems. The subgroups consisted of ten to twenty people and their composition changed each weekend meeting.

The members were given the opportunity to communicate through an intranet site when they were at home. The site was only accessible to Assembly members and staff. Members of the general public could share their opinions through a forum on the Assembly's website. The Assembly members used their intranet system both to elaborate on ideas concerning electoral systems, as well as to share feelings, experiences, and concerns about, for example, the weekend meetings. Further, an online discussion was organized at two moments in the process, on June 14th and October 11th 2006. The online discussion was organized to offer members the opportunity to anonymously discuss electoral systems, as well as to provide the group with a rapid insight into opinions that might be shared by many Assembly members. The results from the online sessions held were respectively presented during weekend meetings number 6 and 9 (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

Some Assembly members played additional roles in the Assembly process. For example, by moderating the subgroups as a chair or vice-chair, providing feedback to the plenary sessions as a spokesperson, or serving as a primary spokesperson toward the national press as a media group member. The British Columbian Citizens' Assembly had had good experiences with this way of working and therefore the idea was adopted by the Dutch Assembly. During the fourth weekend assembly, the Assembly members assigned these additional roles to each other using the Sociocratic Circle Organization Method¹⁸. In addition to chairs, vice-chairs, spokespersons and media group members, Assembly members could also apply to be part of the internet and strategy groups. The internet group concentrated on the forum discussions on the website. Members of the internet group replied to reactions from citizens and collected all the contributions made. They summarized and analyzed these reactions and presented them to the rest of the Assembly during the sixth weekend. The strategy group reflected with the secretariat on how to approach politicians and decision-makers. This group started its function after weekend 6 (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

To support their work, all members of the Assembly were offered opportunities to improve various skills. In the period between the beginning of April and the end of June 2006, members could attend several workshops that were facilitated by an external training agency. People could receive training in: computer skills, dealing with the media, presentation skills, planning and project-based activities, debating skills, and organizing information (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

¹⁸ "The Sociocratic Circle Organization Method is a way of producing and leading organizations on the basis of equivalence in decision-making through the principle of consent. The principle of consent means that a decision is only taken once none of the circle members present have any argued and paramount objection to that decision." (www.sociocratie.nl; visited on December 22nd 2008).

3.4.5 Weekend meetings

The aim of this section is to provide a general overview of how the Assembly worked on its task from a process design perspective. The objectives of the learning, consultation, and decision-making phases are described and the program of each weekend meeting is outlined in brief¹⁹. The dynamics that emerged while the Assembly was working on its task are not addressed in this chapter but are a focus in Chapter 6.

Table 5 shows when each weekend meeting was scheduled, where they were held, and how the weekends were divided into the three phases. Below Table 5, the objectives of the three phases are described and the program of the weekend meetings summarized.

Table 5: Citizens' Assembly's weekend meetings (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006)

Phase	Weekend	Date	Location
Learning phase	Weekend 1	24/25 March 2006	The Hague
	Weekend 2	7/8 April	The Hague
	Weekend 3	21/22 April	Zeist
Consultation phase	Weekend 4	12/13 May	Zeist
	Weekend 5	9/10 June	Zeist
	Weekend 6	23/24 June	The Hague
(Summer break)		July and August	
Decision-making phase	Weekend 7	1/2 September	The Hague
	Weekend 8	29/30 September	The Hague
	Weekend 9	20/21 October	The Hague
	Weekend 10	10/11 November	The Hague

3.4.5.1 Start-up and Learning phase (weekend meetings 1, 2, and 3)

After the initiation took place on the 24th of March 2006, the members of the Assembly signed a contract with the chair in which they mutually agreed to work together for nine months. Following this, the Assembly used its first evening to establish its code of conduct, in which they stated the underlying

¹⁹ An example of a complete program for a weekend meeting (randomly selected) can be found in Appendix 6.

principles for the Assembly's working methods²⁰ (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

The objective of the learning phase was that all members would know the basic principles of electoral systems by the end, so that the members could deliberate with one another having equal knowledge. Lecturers 1 and 2 had the task of informing the members during the first three weekend meetings. The education program was based on the training plan that the Citizens' Assembly in British Columbia had used. The Canadian training plan had been first presented to the Dutch 'committee of academic experts' and later developed in more detail by the secretariat. This was carried out in close cooperation with both lecturers (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

In the first weekend meeting, lectures and subgroup meetings concentrated on the question of what is an electoral system. Elements of electoral systems, such as the electoral formula, the ballot structure, and the district size, were first explained to and later discussed by the members. In the second weekend meeting, the members continued with discussing the elements, and particularly how they are combined in electoral systems. Next, five electoral system families were reviewed²¹. During the final weekend meeting of the learning phase, the members were informed about the Dutch electoral system and the consequences of electoral systems. What would, for example, happen if a specific electoral system was to be introduced in the Netherlands? In addition to the discussions about electoral systems, the Assembly in this phase was also given lectures on the context of electoral systems, for example political systems and forms of government, the role of Parliament, and the historical context of the Dutch electoral system (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

3.4.5.2 Consultation phase (weekend meetings 4, 5, and 6)

The intention of the consultation phase was to ensure that all Dutch citizens were offered an opportunity to share their opinions on the Dutch electoral system. At the same time, this would offer the members of the Citizens' Assembly an opportunity to hear - and learn from - their fellow citizens. Between May 23rd and June 20th 2006, the secretariat organized twelve regional debates for the general public. All Dutch inhabitants that were interested could attend these debates and share their views about possible improvements to the Dutch electoral system. The Assembly members had to attend at least one of these regional meetings. They could decide for themselves what role they would take during these meetings: just listen to the debate or actively participate (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

²⁰ The code of conduct can be found in Appendix 7.

²¹ A combination of elements results in an electoral system. A frequently encountered combination of elements is referred to as a 'family'. The five families that are frequently referred to in the literature were reviewed over the weekend; pluralitarian systems, majoritarian systems, the single transferable vote, list systems for proportional representation, and mixed systems (Process Report of the Electoral Civic Forum, 2006).

In the fourth weekend meeting, the Assembly members were assigned their additional roles (see Section 3.4.4) and prepared for the regional meetings which were about to take place. What did the members want to hear and learn from the general public? When the fifth weekend meeting was held, almost a half of the regional debates had taken place. Therefore, the members could discuss arguments that they had heard during the regional debates. Further, the Assembly members deliberated on what they thought were the most important elements of an electoral system, and what system came nearest to meeting these needs (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

During the last weekend before the summer break, the Assembly reflected on the input they had received in the consultation phase. Both the comments from the regional meetings and the reactions posted on the internet were discussed. Moreover, members of the Parliament visited the Assembly to share their views about electoral systems. Before the Assembly adjourned for a two-month break, the members split themselves up into nine working groups. During the summer period these working groups worked together to design their 'favored' electoral system. Those electoral systems would then be discussed as a plenary group straight after the holiday. Further, three members organized additional local debates in their home towns during the summer break (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

3.4.5.3 Decision-making phase (weekend meetings 7, 8, 9, and 10)

During its final four weekend meetings, the Assembly needed to decide which electoral system it would recommend as the best system for the Netherlands.

The first weekend meeting after the summer started with a moment for reflection. What did the Assembly actually want to achieve? The members expressed their expectations for the coming period and discussed the core functions of electoral systems. Moreover, the members formulated conditions that needed to be met by the new electoral system. This was followed by an analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the current system, so members could review which elements needed to be abolished, retained, or added in the new system (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

The inventories drawn up during this weekend and the electoral systems that were designed in the summer break were used by the secretariat to prepare for weekend meeting 8. The secretariat processed the information into rough outlines for four basic 'variants' of electoral systems²². In addition, the Assembly members added two variants²³ that could not be categorized under any of the

²² These variants were: to vote for a party or a candidate (1 vote per citizen), to vote for a party and a candidate (2 votes), a mixed member proportional system (2 votes, on a district basis), and the current system but with a lower preference threshold (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006). Only the first of these variants is explained in Section 3.5 as this is closest to the final recommendations.

²³ These variants were: voting in two rounds, and an alternating system (with elections for part of the parliament to be held every two years) (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

four basic variants. Weekend meeting 8 was used to add detail to these six electoral system variants. Individual working groups fleshed out the variants and eventually presented them to the other Assembly members. The Assembly also decided which decision-making procedure it would use to arrive at its final proposal. This was important because the members had decided that they wanted to come up with one preferred option, instead of several proposals. They believed that this would make their proposal more powerful and convincing. Secondly, the Assembly decided that the selected electoral system variant had to achieve an absolute majority of member votes. Moreover, the final electoral system so chosen would be compared with the current electoral system in the Netherlands. Only if two-thirds of the members preferred the new system over the current one would the Assembly recommend the new electoral system as the best electoral system for the Netherlands (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

Weekend 9 started with a plenary discussion about the six electoral system variants that had been defined in weekend 8. Four experts on electoral systems were invited to comment on each variant. Moreover, the experts elaborated on the possible consequences of each variant. When the experts left, the Assembly started to discuss the electoral system variants among themselves. Eventually, voting rounds were used to shortlist two variants out of the six. The ‘vote for a party or a candidate’ (see description below) and the ‘current system with a lowered preference threshold’ were chosen. These two variants would be put to a vote in the final weekend meeting. The variant that would get the most votes would then be compared with the current electoral system. In addition to the voting rounds, the Assembly deliberated on issues outside the scope of its original task. These were issues (see below) that were not of direct relevance to the electoral system, but were considered to be important to Dutch democracy, and they would be attached to the Assembly’s recommendations as ‘unasked supplementary recommendations’ (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

The tenth weekend meeting of the Assembly was the last meeting, and therefore the Assembly needed to come up with its final proposal. The first step was to select one of the two electoral system variants that were left. The Assembly opted for the electoral system variant ‘vote for a party or a candidate’ (with 102 votes) against the ‘current system with a lowered preference threshold’ (21 votes). To accept this variant as the Assembly’s final proposal, two-thirds of the members needed to prefer it to the current electoral system. When the two electoral systems were put to vote, a large majority of votes were for the ‘vote for a party or a candidate’ variant. One hundred and fourteen members voted for this electoral system, compared with only sixteen votes for the current Dutch electoral system. The final decision was thus made, and in so doing the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform had completed its task. The rest of the weekend meeting was used to discuss the draft text for the final proposal. The final wording of the text was adapted and, to conclude, the Assembly decided to attach five unsought supplementary recommendations to its final advice. The Assembly finished its process with a celebration party (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

3.5 The proposal

The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform presented its proposal on December 14th 2006. The title of its report is 'One vote offering more choice'. According to the Assembly, the best electoral system for the Netherlands was "a system of proportional representation" in which voters cast one vote; either for the party of their choice, or for the candidate of their choice" (The Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006, p.5).

Voters that voted for a party would be agreeing with the preferred order of candidates on the party list. In other words, the party would order its candidates 1, 2, 3 etc. on the list, and the voter would be indicating their agreement with this order. The number of votes that has been given to the party would determine how many seats the party held in the Parliament. However, a voter that casts a 'candidate vote' expresses his or her preference for a specific politician. The total number of votes that a specific candidate has achieved would determine whether that person could represent the party in Parliament in place of someone higher up the list (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007; The Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006).

The electoral system that the Citizens' Assembly recommended is not very different from the then (and still) current electoral system in the Netherlands (Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). The only two differences are the possibility to vote for a party (and thus accept the sequence of candidates on the party list) and the lack of a preference threshold (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). That is, candidates in the present Dutch electoral system can only achieve a preference seat in Parliament if they achieve a certain number of votes (in 2006 this was 16,397 votes²⁴). If this occurs, the party's candidate just above the cut-off line (e.g. in tenth place on the candidate list of a party that wins ten seats based on proportional representation) is replaced by the candidate lower down the list with the required number of preference votes. In the electoral system that the Citizens' Assembly proposed there would be no preference threshold. Removing the preference threshold means that preference votes have an immediate effect such that the voters get more influence on which candidates enter Parliament²⁵ (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; The Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006). The Assembly anticipated that voters would therefore more likely cast a 'candidate vote' rather than a 'party vote'. Consequently, potential Members of the Parliament will be more focused on voters rather than their own political party (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; The

²⁴ 25% of the quota

²⁵ The candidates on the list are to be assigned to the party's seats by the following procedure: for example, a party has obtained twenty seats. Forty percent of the voters cast a vote for the party, and sixty percent cast a vote for individual candidates on the list. Consequently eight of the twenty seats have been obtained by party votes (i.e. forty percent of twenty seats), and twelve seats have been obtained by virtue of preference votes. First, the eight seats obtained via party votes are assigned on the basis of the sequence of the candidates on the list. The remaining candidates on the list are ranked in the sequence of the number of preference votes they received (The Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006).

Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006; Van Stokkom, 2007). Thus, the voters would decide who sits in Parliament, not the political parties. To win votes in the new system, politicians would have to create a distinctive profile, campaign for themselves, and have 'eyes on the outside world'. When politicians are more oriented towards the voters, according to the Assembly, the relationship between voters and politicians will improve, and this will eventually improve political trust (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; The Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006; Van Stokkom, 2007).

The Assembly however believed that the implementation of its proposed electoral system would not be sufficient to increase political trust between voters and politicians. It therefore added five supplementary, unsought, recommendations in its report. These supplementary recommendations were divided into two parts; recommendations concerning responsible members of parliament (Part 1) and recommendations concerning involved citizens (Part 2). By having both responsible Members of Parliament and involved citizens, a flourishing democracy could, according to the Citizens' Assembly, be achieved (The Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006).

In Part 1 of the supplementary recommendations, the Citizens' Assembly recommended: "taking the electorate away from those members who separate from their political party, but remain a Member of Parliament" (The Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006, p.23). This was in response to some Members of Parliament having separated from the political party for whom they were elected and then sitting in Parliament as a 'one-man party'. The Citizens' Assembly believed that these separations should be prevented as Members of Parliament were elected on the basis of their party's election program, and not on their individual views. Additionally, the Assembly recommended that political parties should "limit their lists to those candidates who were willing and able to take up membership of Parliament if elected" (The Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006, p.23). The Assembly's aim was to avoid phenomena such as 'list-pushers'; personalities added to the bottom of the list merely to attract voters (The Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006).

In Part 2 of its supplementary recommendations, the Citizens' Assembly recommended that "primary education onwards should devote more attention to politics and political science" (The Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006, p.23). In this way, citizens could learn how democracy works in theory and in practice, and how they could make a contribution to society. Further, the Citizens' Assembly recommended making greater use of citizen assemblies as an instrument to involve citizens in political decision-making. According to the Citizens' Assembly, a citizen assembly is "an innovative and contemporary tool that can contribute to the restoration of confidence between the public and politicians" (The Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006, p.24). The final recommendation made was that "voters should be able to vote at the location of their choice" (The Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006, p.24). This would avoid situations in which

voters are unable to vote for practical reasons (The Electoral System Civic Forum's recommendations, 2006).

3.6 What happened to the Assembly's proposal?

On April 18th 2008, Ank Bijleveld, the then Minister for Governance Renewal (a State Secretary within the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations), sent a letter to Parliament. In this letter she informed the Members of Parliament that the government did not see sufficient reasons to implement the electoral system that the Assembly recommended (Kabinetstandpunt advies Burgerforum Kiesstelsel, 2008). Why did the government reject the proposal of the Citizens' Assembly, and what has since happened to it? In this section, I elaborate on some political developments and the political commitment toward the Citizens' Assembly, both during as well as after the process, to explore if this might explain the decision that the government took.

The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform had not been popular with the 'political Hague' from the start (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). However, being the third party in the coalition and necessary to ensure a majority, D66 played a key role in the Balkenende 2 government. As such, the party saw the possibility to push its governmental renewal plans forward (see Section 3.3) (Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). The two larger parties in the Balkenende 2 government (CDA and VVD) did not fully believe in D66's renewal plans. Agreeing to the plans was more the result of a negotiation process rather than an agreement on the content (Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). Furthermore, D66's somewhat unconventional behavior made D66 somewhat of an outsider with the other two government parties (Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). It was in this political climate that Alexander Pechtold initiated the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). The unfavorable position of D66 and its Minister Alexander Pechtold resulted in a low commitment from VVD and CDA towards the initiated Assembly (Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). This situation could not be reversed by the chair of the Citizens' Assembly, who it has been argued lacked the political experience or network in The Hague to successfully intervene (Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). Nevertheless, the chair and staff of the Citizens' Assembly did try to strengthen political relationships during the process, for example by visiting certain Parliamentary Committees (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007).

On June 29th 2006, the government fell²⁶ when D66 withdrew, leaving the CDA and the VVD to govern as a minority government until an early election on November 22nd. VVD politician Atzo Nicolaï became responsible for the Citizens' Assembly in this interim period until the next government would be formed (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). In autumn 2006, the 'political' Hague

²⁶ Over to the so called Ayaan Hirsi Ali crisis.

was focused on election programs and campaigns for the forthcoming elections. While the Assembly was working on completing its task, the chair was writing letters to political parties to try to ensure their political commitment after the elections. However, only D66 mentioned the Citizens' Assembly in its new election manifesto. In the elections on November 22nd both D66 and the VVD lost heavily. This meant that neither Alexander Pechtold, nor the Minister currently responsible, Atzo Nicolaï, could play a significant role in putting the Citizens' Assembly on the agenda for the next governmental period. Both their parties were now too small to be given this role (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007).

When the new government was formed, the Assembly sent its proposal to all new members of the Parliament. Following this, some Assembly members were invited to present its proposal to members of the Parliamentary Committee for the Interior on January 25th 2007. Even though the committee members claimed to appreciate the Assembly's work and had studied its proposal seriously, they almost all seemed to have some criticisms. Some committee members did not support the removal of the preference threshold since they believed that this would result in internal competition among politicians from the same political party. That is, politicians would prioritize gaining votes for themselves, rather than thinking about the party's interest (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). The likelihood that the proposal would be introduced with wholehearted support seemed to be diminishing rapidly (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007).

Then, a period of silence started (Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). The coalition agreement between the new governmental parties (CDA, PvdA, and CU) did not refer to electoral systems or to the Citizens' Assembly. Further, the theme was also not debated in Parliament (Schulz, 2010). It was not until autumn 2007 that the new CDA State Secretary of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, Ank Bijleveld, invited a small group of Citizens' Assembly members to talk about their proposal. She told them that there was insufficient political support to implement the Assembly's electoral system, but that she was interested in hearing more about citizen assemblies as an instrument to involve citizens in political decision-making.

On October 11th 2007, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations organized a conference on the theme of citizen participation. The conference was financed with the budget left from the Citizens' Assembly that had been reserved to officially finish the Assembly's process. The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform was intensively discussed at the conference, as an example of citizen participation. Ank Bijleveld closed the day with a debate involving experts and politicians. She concluded that the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform had been a very interesting and successful experiment in citizen participation. However, she had decided to do nothing with the proposal of the Assembly. As Schulz (2010, p.212) observed in his PhD dissertation: "The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform has been started as an instrument to boost the discussion about the electoral system and has resulted in being a research case of a citizen participation process."

In October 2007 it became formal that the State Secretary, in whose portfolio the Citizens' Assembly was placed, was not committed to the Assembly's proposal. She asked the Council of Ministers to agree to her letter 'Kabinetstandpunt advies Burgerforum Kiesstelsel', in which she would inform Parliament of her decision. When this letter was sent to the Parliament on the 18th of April 2008, it was clear: the government coalition, and through that the majority of the Parliament, agreed to reject the proposal of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

The State Secretary explained in her letter why the government had decided to reject the Assembly's proposal. The Citizens' Assembly recommended an electoral system in which the voter would get more influence on the sequence of candidates on the party list and that this would decrease the parties' influence concerning the compilation of their candidate lists. As such, it disagreed with a reduced influence of political parties. Moreover, the government expected that the implementation of the new electoral system would result in greater competition within the political parties. This could harm the parties' stability (Kabinetstandpunt advies Burgerforum Kiesstelsel, 2008). The government did, nevertheless, claim that it wanted to improve the relationship between political parties and society in order to strengthen the representative democracy.

The government was, however, more positive about the Assembly's supplementary recommendations. It announced several actions to improve citizens' understanding of democracy and politics. Furthermore, the government would allow citizens to vote in a polling station of their own choice (within their own municipality), so that citizens could be more flexible during elections. Moreover, it saw value in using citizen assemblies if themes of social relevance needed to be deliberated upon and the frames and preconditions of the task were clear (Kabinetstandpunt advies Burgerforum Kiesstelsel, 2008).

Chapter 4: Dynamics in large groups: relevant theoretical perspectives

"Before a man or woman is an individual or citizen,

he or she is a group member,

at war with his or her 'groupishness'²⁷,

C. Fred. Alford (1994, p.ix)

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 introduced the concept of deliberative democracy. There, van Stokkom's (2006) definition of deliberative democracy was used both to introduce deliberative democracy as a topic as well as to summarize its main characteristics. It was furthermore stated, in Section 2.6, that group dynamics cannot be seen apart from the content of deliberative processes, as various types of social and psychological processes emerge when individuals work together in a group. For example, individual group members relate to one another, small and large conflicts can arise, and anxiety can affect behavior in the group. Social and psychological processes that occur in groups are complex and influence the results and productivity of a group (Steiner, 1972; Schruijer & Vansina, 1997). Group dynamics can thus affect results or outcomes in a deliberative group, such as the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. To gain a deeper understanding of how the Citizens' Assembly could have been affected by social and psychological processes, group dynamics in large groups are the focus of this chapter.

Before dynamics in large groups can be discussed, a general introduction to group dynamics is required. What actually are group dynamics, why is it important to study them, and how can that field of study be used to understand processes in the Citizens' Assembly? In the next section, group dynamics are therefore the focus. As the dynamics in groups are influenced by group size (Hopper & Weyman, 1975; Shaw, 1976) (see also Section 4.3.3) large group dynamics and their effects are described in Sections 4.4 and 4.5. The final part of this chapter concentrates on leading large groups. In Section 4.6, it is elaborated how large groups can be facilitated and worked with once the role of large group dynamics is acknowledged. To conclude, the research questions that underlie the theoretical perspectives of this chapter are presented in Section 4.7.

²⁷ By using 'groupishness' Alford refers to Bion's (1961, p.95) statement: "The individual is a group animal at war, not simply with the group, but with himself for being a group animal and with those aspects of his personality that constitute his 'groupishness'."

4.2 Group dynamics

When a collection of individuals form a group, they will experience that being with others has implications. All kinds of tensions can be sensed when people are in a social context. Some people in the group may, for example, make an individual group member feel threatened, or unclear expectations of the group can make some members uncertain. The field of group dynamics studies these social and psychological processes, in particular as to how they can affect the group's results and productivity.

Even though human behavior in groups had already been studied, Kurt Lewin is commonly recognized as the founding father of group dynamics (Forsyth, 1990; Marrow, 1969; Remmerswaal, 2006). It was Lewin that coined the term 'group dynamics' to stress the powerful impact of complex social and psychological processes on individuals when in group situations (Lewin, 1951). The term group dynamics is not only used to refer to those powerful processes that influence individuals in a group. It also refers to the field of study that investigates these group processes (Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Forsyth, 1990; Remmerswaal, 2006).

The discipline of group dynamics is relatively young and it was only in the twentieth century that the first scientific studies on groups took place (Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Forsyth, 1990; Remmerswaal, 2006; Shaw, 1976). Knowledge on group dynamic theories became more widely known in the 1960s and 1970s when Cartwright and Zander (1968), Hare (1976), and Shaw (1976) published handbooks about group dynamics (Remmerswaal, 2006).

Remmerswaal (2006) places the field of group dynamics within the social sciences, between the fields of psychology and sociology. However, there are other perspectives, Forsyth (1990) observes that some authors claim group dynamics to be a psychological science, as it focuses on individuals' thoughts, actions, and emotions, even though these individuals function in groups. Other authors claim that group dynamics belongs to sociology because of its focus on groups of people, and how these groups affect and are affected by social forces (Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Forsyth, 1990). Notwithstanding these differences in emphasis, the relevance of groups to topics that are studied in many areas of the social sciences has stimulated a wide range of researchers to study them (Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Forsyth, 1990; Forsyth & Burnette, 2005; Worchel & Wood & Simpson, 1992).

4.2.1 Theoretical contributions

In its development, group dynamics has been inspired by various theoretical schools (Forsyth & Burnette, 2005; Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Remmerswaal, 2006). These schools have not worked completely independently and have influenced each other over time. In this section, some major theoretical orientations and classical contributions that have influenced work in group dynamics are discussed in order to provide some insight into how groups can be looked upon and worked with.

The intention of this section is not to provide a complete overview of disciplines that have contributed to group dynamics²⁸. Rather, those orientations and contributions that are considered crucial in the development of knowledge on large group dynamics are highlighted. Thus, this section provides a framework for the later sections of this chapter.

4.2.1.1 Lewinian thinking

One of the underpinnings of group dynamics is Gestalt psychology. The Gestalt School developed in Germany early in the twentieth century. Gestalt psychologists have a holistic approach: they emphasize the relationship between elements and the whole (the Gestalt) and argue that the whole comes earlier than the parts, and is more than the sum of the parts (Gross, 1992; Köhler, 1972; Perls, 2004). Consequently, Gestalt psychologists argue that a group is more than the sum of its individuals. Namely, a group has some characteristics that cannot be derived only from its individuals. Kurt Lewin, who studied psychology with the Gestalt founding fathers (Jones, 1985; Marrow, 1969), moved to the United States at the end of the 1930s in response to the Nazi horrors. Being deeply concerned with the relevance of psychology to social problems, he started to work with small groups in order to find out how groups can change people's behavior (Marrow, 1969). Lewin's research contributed immensely to the development of group dynamics (Forsyth, 1990; Marrow, 1969; Remmerswaal, 2006) and influences of his thinking can be found in various theoretical schools within the field of group dynamics and psychology (Marrow, 1969). One of the theories that Lewin developed is the Field Theory. The theory's name is derived from its proposition that group behavior is the product of a field of interdependent elements (Lewin, 1951). In other words, groups form a field of tension, and the social and psychological tensions present in the group influence both the behavior of individuals in the group, as well as the behavior of the group itself. According to Lewin, one can explain and predict group behavior if one understands the social and psychological forces present. A characteristic of the field of tension is that it is not static but dynamic: there are forces in the group that stimulate change, and there are forces that can break it. As the group seeks balance, the stimulating and breaking forces balance each other out (Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Lewin, 1951; Shaw, 1976). Lewin argued that the interplay of personal and environmental factors determines the actions and reactions of individuals in groups. Thus, to predict the productivity of a group, one should consider not only the personalities, interactions, and aspirations of the individuals in the group, but also the type of task and the environment in which the group is working (Lewin, 1951).

Lewin established the Centre for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1945 and carried out his group studies there. He believed that a group should be studied as a whole in relation to its context (Lewin, 1951) and developed the first laboratory training (or sensitivity training), an experimental approach to group research. In the laboratory, training group members were themselves involved in analyzing processes within the group. Participants were thus both an object as

²⁸ Fields including sociology, anthropology, communication science, history, political science, and management studies have also contributed useful insights to group dynamics but are not discussed here.

well as the subject of the research (Marrow, 1969). Apart from his research in the Centre for Group Dynamics, Lewin founded the National Training Laboratories in Group Development (NTL Institute) together with adult educator Benne, psychologist Bradford, and Lewin's student Ron Lippitt. The institute was established to help people learn about groups, and themselves, while being members and leaders of groups (Marrow, 1969). After Lewin's death in 1947, Benne, Bradford, and Lippitt continued to develop Lewin's thinking in the NTL Institute. Since the 1950s, this institute has contributed considerably to the development of theories and methods for changing individuals, groups, and organizations (Bradford, Gibb & Benne, 1964). Most of the work in the NTL Institute has involved small groups, although large group sessions were also organized to learn about working in large groups.

Today, many of Lewin's concepts have been so widely adopted by psychologists, social scientists, and others that their origins are almost forgotten (Marrow, 1969). Terms originating in Lewin's thinking, such as 'group dynamics', 'action research' (see Chapter 5), 'field theory', and 'sensitivity training' have become entirely familiar in the field. It can be said that the ideas of Gestalt psychology contributed to the development of group dynamics in the person of Lewin (Hinshelwood, 2007; Jones, 1985). It was not only Lewin that was influenced by the Gestalt School, its ideas can also be found in the work of other influential social psychologists including Asch, Heider, and Festinger (Remmerswaal, 2006).

4.2.1.2 Social psychology

Naturally, it is to be expected that knowledge developed in the field of social psychology about human behavior in groups will also be found in group dynamic work. According to Allport (1985), most social psychologists regard their discipline as "an attempt to understand and explain how the thought, feeling, and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others" (p.3). Social psychological research often takes place in laboratory settings. Through experiments in laboratories, researchers try to find causal relationship between certain variables. Concepts that have dominated social psychologists' interest over the years have included social influence and conformity, power, leadership, decision-making in groups, group performance, social categorization, and intergroup conflict (Gross, 1992; Forsyth, 1990; Sabini, 1995). Some key contributions to these concepts are described below since they serve to improve understanding of some of the social psychological mechanisms that take place in groups, and eventually contribute to the understanding of large group dynamics.

In the 1950s, Asch, a social psychologist, conducted what are now viewed as classic conformity experiments (1952; 1955) in which he was one of the first researchers to demonstrate the power of social influence and conformity in groups. Asch asked people to estimate the length of lines on test cards and compare them with a standard line on the basic card. He found that, when people were alone, they made no mistakes. People reliably chose the test line that had the same length as the standard line, so giving the correct answer (Asch, 1955). However, when in a group setting, 76 percent

of the participants at least once during the experiment conformed to the majority view and gave an incorrect answer. In about one-third of the trials, participants agreed with the majority view even though the majority judgment was clearly wrong (Asch, 1955). These results were surprising given that the tasks in the experiments were designed to be extremely easy (Forsyth, 1990). Since Asch's groundbreaking conformity experiments, researchers have carried out hundreds of social influence and conformity studies and found that individuals frequently conform to the incorrect opinions of majorities. Further, researchers have also found conditions that encourage nonconformity (Forsyth, 1990; Sabini, 1995).

Another famous series of social psychological experiments was conducted in the 1960s by Milgram (1974). Milgram was interested in the responses of adults to authority. He studied the willingness of participants to follow orders from an authority figure, who instructed them to inflict painful and potentially fatal electric shocks on a fellow team member. The participants were not aware that the 'victim' was part of Milgram's organization, and that the victim would in reality not receive any electric shock. The shock generator used in the experiment consisted of thirty electrical switches, increasing in steps of 15 volts. The first switch was 15 volts, then 30 volts, etc. up until the maximum of 450 volts. Contrary to the expectations of various experts, Milgram found that none of the participants disobeyed before the 300 volt level, and 65 percent of the respondents fully acquiesced to authority by administering the maximum level of volts. After the experiment, the participants claimed that their acts conflicted with their personal conscience, but they felt unable to resist the authority figure's demands for obedience (Milgram, 1974). Milgram's experiments have been criticized, for example by researchers arguing that obedience to demands in a laboratory setting shows little similarity to obedience in real groups. However, Milgram argued back by relating his results to actions carried out in, for example, the Second World War and the Vietnam War (Forsyth, 1990).

In the 1970s and 1980s, Janis studied faulty decision-making processes in groups. He coined the term 'groupthink' (1972) as "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group (see Section 4.4.4.3), when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of actions" (p.9). Janis claims that groupthink leads to unproductive and inefficient groups that make mistakes which could easily be avoided. In his book "Victims of Groupthink: A psychological study of foreign policy decisions and fiascoes" (1972), Janis defined some antecedents of groupthink, including cohesiveness (see Section 4.4.4.1), the isolation of the group, the style of leadership, and the stress on the group to reach a good decision (Forsyth, 1990). Moreover, he elaborated on ways to prevent groupthink. Janis' findings continue to be elaborated upon by other researchers on a regular basis (see Forsyth, 1990, 2010).

Social psychologists have also tried to gain insights into group performance, as groups often fail to achieve their potential productivity (Steiner, 1972; Stroebe & Diehl, 1994). Among others, Steiner (1972) tried to understand how well groups execute their tasks. He argued that group performance often depends on the demands of the task. Here, he distinguished different types of group task and

elaborated on how groups perform them. Steiner found that different types of tasks require different kinds of resources (e.g. relevant knowledge, abilities, skills, or material). If group members possess the needed resources, the group might be successful; if they lack the required resources, failure is naturally likely (Steiner, 1972). To determine the difference between potential and actual productivities in groups, Steiner introduced a variable ‘group process’. Essentially, a group process consists of the individual or collective actions of the people who have been assigned a task (Steiner, 1972). Steiner proposes the following formula regarding actual productivity in groups: actual productivity = potential productivity – losses due to a faulty group process. Despite problems due to faulty processes, as identified by Steiner, a group process can also result in gains (see e.g. Forsyth, 1990; Shaw, 1976). Group members can, for example, identify challenging performance objectives or synergy within the group. Moreover, the impact of interpersonal processes might have a positive effect on the members’ performances (Forsyth, 1990; Shaw, 1976).

Further, social psychologists have developed insights into concepts such as social categorization (e.g. Tajfel, 1978; 1981; 1982) and intergroup conflict (e.g. Sherif, 1966) which have provided a better understanding of behavior between and among groups (Alderfer, 1987; Sabini, 1995). As intergroup behavior can also be found in large group settings, these two topics are explored more extensively in Section 4.4.4.

4.2.1.3 Psychoanalysis and psychodynamics

Another school that has contributed significantly to the field of group dynamics is Psychoanalysis. The psychoanalytic approach, developed by Sigmund Freud and his followers, includes a focus on the unconscious defensive mechanisms and motivational processes within individuals. Even though psychoanalysis originally focused only on individuals, concepts within the psychoanalytic approach were also found useful in gaining a better understanding of social and psychological processes in groups (Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Miller, 1998; Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Freud applied some of his ideas to groups (e.g. Freud, 1929/1959), even though he never worked with them (Stacey, 2003; Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Further insights into group processes were later derived by pioneering analysts, mostly in their group therapeutic work.

Important contributions to the field of group dynamics were made by the Tavistock Group in London, a group of pioneering psychiatrists, psychologists, and social scientists that worked with group processes and group therapy in the 1930s. In 1946, the group established the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations to make their knowledge available to others (Trist & Murray, 1990). One of the Institute’s prominent associates was psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion, a member of the Kleinian school²⁹ (Segal, 2004; Vansina-Cobbaert & Vansina, 1996). Apart from developing Klein’s thinking (Heinskou & Visholm, 2004; Segal, 2004), Bion worked with returning veterans from the

²⁹ Melanie Klein (1882-1960) was a leading innovator whose ideas influenced child psychology and contemporary psychoanalysis. Some of her ideas were in conflict with the Freudian tradition and consequently the field of psychoanalysis fractured into several schools.

Second World War. Finding himself unable to deal with the large numbers of veterans that needed treatment, Bion decided to experiment with group therapy rather than individual psychotherapy. As a consequence, he realized that individual intention was not sufficient to explain individual behavior within a group setting and reflected on what assumptions he could make about group dynamics that would better explain the observed behavior. This led him to build a theory, which he later described in his book "Experiences in Groups" (1961). Bion argued in the book that groups operate on two levels. Clearly, there is the workgroup that meets to address some specific task. Groups in workgroup mode operate effectively on the basis of rationality, with their members recognizing their interdependence while working on the task. However, when a group experiences danger or anxiety, it can make an unconscious, defensive move to another mode of functioning - a basic assumption mode (Bion, 1961). In this mode, the group is held together by shared assumptions about the group and the members' contribution to the group. Bion described three basic assumption types: dependence, fight or flight, and pairing (Bion, 1961; see also, Hinshelwood, 2007; Miller, 1998; Vansina-Cobbaert & Vansina, 1996). The key characteristic of basic assumption behavior is that members contribute to this behavior without being aware of so doing. They behave as if they have been collected together with a different goal in mind. Members falling into the first basic assumption group, the dependency group, behave as if the group leader, or another person in the group, knows everything and will take care of them, and they therefore act dependently. In a fight or flight group, members believe that the group's existence lies in either fighting an enormous danger, or fleeing from it. The members feel a need for action. In the last group type, the pairing group, members behave as if the group has been brought together to await a miracle that will change everything for the better. This hope is completely disconnected from the real achievements of the group. According to Bion, basic assumption behavior can both support and inhibit the task of a workgroup. Bion's work is widely recognized as having provided a new and significant perspective on individual and group behavior. Since 1957, his contributions have been used by the Tavistock Institute as a framework for their training on group processes (Heinskou & Visholm, 2004; Miller, 1990). Bion's contributions were taken to the United States by Rice (see below), who started to train professionals in the A.K. Rice Institute (Vansina-Cobbaert & Vansina, 1996). Additionally, Bion's insights are used and have been theoretically developed by other researchers (see Miller, 1998; Sutherland, 1990). Researchers including Foulkes (1975)³⁰, Lawrence, Bain, and Gould (1996), Main (1975), and Turquet (1974; 1975) have further used Bion's thinking in their work with large groups (see Section 4.5.2).

Bion was not the only prominent figure in the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. Among others, Eric Trist, who also had a Kleinian analytical background, played an important role (Madsen, 2006). Trist, like Bion, was a founder of the Tavistock Institute. Being an admirer of Lewin's work, Trist

³⁰ Foulkes was the founder of Group Analysis, a psychoanalytical form of group therapy (Foulkes, 1975; Heinskou & Visholm, 2004).

connected Lewin's work in the United States with insights gained at the Tavistock Institute by launching the journal "Human Relations" in 1947 (Madsen, 2006; Trist & Murray, 1990).

In short, pioneering psychoanalysts, as well as their colleagues and followers, have contributed to the understanding of groups. However, the psychoanalytic approach has been found capable of providing only a limited contribution to the understanding of group life (Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Groups are also influenced by factors other than psychoanalytical ones, for example political, social, and economic factors (Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008). Organizations such as the Tavistock Institute therefore combine a psychoanalytic approach with other perspectives, such as open system theory (see below), in their group work (Heinskou & Visholm, 2004; Miller, 1990; Visholm, 2004).

The system psychodynamic approach is closely related to the field of psychoanalysis. While the psychoanalytical approach primarily focuses on individual psychological processes within groups, system psychodynamics also works with groups within their context, such as an organization in its environment, or a department in its organizational context (Fraher, 2004; Vansina, 2008a). Knowledge on psychodynamics has largely been developed by psychoanalytical consultants who have worked with groups in organizations (Agazarian & Carter, 1993; Vansina, 2008a). Psychodynamics is not seen as a fully-developed independent discipline since it originated within psychoanalysis and borrows concepts from other fields of study such as systems thinking. Unlike Vansina and Vansina-Cobbaert, various authors (Agazarian & Cartner, 1993; Heinskou & Visholm, 2004) use psychodynamic thinking in their theory building without referring directly to psychodynamics or psychodynamic theory. Rather, some authors refer to system psychodynamics (Fraher, 2004) or psychodynamic system theory³¹. Vansina (2008a) defines psychodynamics as "an approach by which one endeavors to gain a good enough understanding of what is happening or not happening in a system in order to take effective action (or in-action) to improve in a more lasting way the functioning of that system in its environment, while offering opportunities for psychic development for the people concerned" (pp. 113-114). Consultants who adopt a psychodynamic approach are interested in finding out why a system behaves as it does in order to gain insight into the meaning of particular behavior and how conditions for development can be created, both for the system as well as for the people in that system. In the practice of psychodynamic work, action research (see Section 5.2.2.2) is often used as a method.

4.2.1.4 Systems Thinking and Organizational Development

Another theoretical approach within group dynamics is 'systems thinking'. Interested in what happened when interacting parts formed a whole, biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1950) was one of the pioneers of a general theory on systems (Agazarian & Gantt, 2005; Kramer & De Smit, 1977). Von Bertalanffy made a distinction between two kinds of systems: closed and open systems. In closed systems, no material enters or leaves the system. In other words, a closed system has no interaction

³¹ Given its roots in psychoanalysis, I have chosen to discuss the psychodynamic approach within this subsection (psychoanalysis and psychodynamics). From now on, I refer only to psychodynamics.

with its environment. Open systems, on the other hand, can only exist by exchanging material with their environment. These systems therefore interact through their boundaries with their environment (Von Bertalanffy, 1950, 1968). The objective of an open system is to survive, and it therefore needs to maintain both an internal balance and a suitable relationship with its environment. Von Bertalanffy argued that open systems are characterized by flexibility; they can meet their objectives in several ways. Von Bertalanffy considered living organisms as open systems. A human organism, for example, needs to import food to survive. This food (input) is then transformed by the body (the system) into energy and waste material (output).

Weisbord (1987) viewed Fred Emery as the first person to apply Von Bertalanffy's open system thinking to groups and organizations. Emery subsequently brought these thoughts into the Tavistock Institute, where they were further developed by himself and colleagues including Miller and Rice (see Miller and Rice, 1967; Rice, 1969) and Trist. Before Von Bertalanffy published his theory about open systems in 1950, parallel developments in systems thinking were to be found in various sciences, including biology and cybernetics, and in Gestalt psychology (Kramer & De Smit, 1977). Therefore, when open systems thinking was brought to the Tavistock Institute around the 1960s, systems thinking was not entirely new. Through Lewin's background in Gestalt psychology, Emery, Miller, Rice, and Trist were already acquainted with the idea that 'the whole is more than the sum of its parts' (Heinskou & Visholm, 2004; Weisbord, 1987). Further, Bion's basic assumption theory laid a foundation for open systems theory (Miller & Rice, 1967). Bennis and Shepard (1956) developed Bion's theory into their theory of group development, which in turn was used by Agazarian in her system-centered approach to group practice (Agazarian, 1997). Agazarian's approach represents the most comprehensive systems theory so far applied to groups (Agazarian & Gantt, 2005). Agazarian defines the core system of a group as: a 'group as a whole' system, a system of subgroups within the 'group as a whole', and a member system that make up the subgroups within the 'group as a whole'. She argues that 'the group as a whole' is the containing system for subgroups, and that subgroups, in turn, are the containing system for their members (Agazarian & Gantt, 2005). Efficient working with groups therefore implies the differentiation and integration of subgroups ('functional subgrouping') within the group as a whole (Agazarian 1997; Agazarian & Gantt, 2005; Weisbord & Janoff, 2007).

The introduction of open systems theory changed the way of thinking about groups and organizations radically (Weisbord, 1987). One of the major implications of systems theory was that groups were now seen as systems that were more than just a collection of parts (or a collection of individual group members). Consequently, it was understood that changes in one part of the system could affect the whole (Rice, 1969). Another major change was the inclusion of the environment in understanding group and organizational performance. In other words, groups and organizations were seen as open systems that are continuously influenced by their environment (Rice, 1969; Trist & Murray, 1990).

From the 1960s onwards, systems thinking was applied in organizational development (OD). Organizational development, closely related to the fields of organizational psychology and

organizational behavior, is viewed as an important approach to organizational change (Amado & Amato, 2001³²; French & Bell, 1999). OD studies brought greater insight into the performance of groups and organizations within complex social settings (i.e. their environments). Marvin Weisbord, for example, rethought the contributions of Taylor, McGregor, Trist, Emery, and Lewin in his book "Productive Workplaces" (1987) when reflecting on how organizations can create effective change. One of Weisbord's ideas was that stakeholders from outside the organization should be involved in change processes. By "getting the whole system into the room" (Weisbord, 1987, p.287), better solutions could be created and the system as a whole could decide on its purposes, which would result in enhanced support from the whole system. Based on this thinking, Weisbord, in collaboration with Janoff, later created a conference method for large groups called Future Search (2000). This conference method is further discussed in Section 4.6.2.1.

4.3 The chosen framework for studying the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

In the section above it was illustrated how many different themes can be studied within the general field of group dynamics. Consequently, a choice needed to be made in this research project – what aspects of group dynamics would be the focus? It is logical to present the choice here, because then the theory discussed in the remainder of this chapter can be related to the study's focus.

To explore how critical dynamics have influenced the outcome of the Citizens' Assembly, I focus on three meta-themes: context, diversity, and size. The theoretical relevance of each of these meta-themes is presented below. In exploring the theoretical relevance of the three meta-themes, the characteristics of the Assembly are taken into consideration. Having already placed the Assembly in the discourse on deliberative democracy, the political context of the Assembly is a relevant study area. Further, the Citizens' Assembly was a large heterogeneous group. Assembly and staff members varied in terms of, for example, age, education, origin, religion, background, social position, political affiliation, and experience of working with groups. Therefore, the meta-themes of diversity and size are further relevant study areas.

In the next chapter, Chapter 5, it is explained how the meta-themes were expressed in the process of data analysis. Following this, each meta-theme is linked to the findings in Chapter 6.

4.3.1 Context

Groups are continuously influenced by their environments (Lewin, 1951; Rice, 1969; Trist & Murray, 1990). That is, groups operate within a certain society and can be influenced by macro-level phenomena that even go beyond national boundaries (Wheelan, 2005). World events, international economic and social conditions, and alternative ideologies are just a few examples of things that can

³² Amado comes from a psychoanalytical background, but discusses OD and organizational change theories as "parent approaches" (Amado & Amato, 2001, p.29) for changing organizations.

affect groups. Further, the organizational environment in which the group is working, for example factors such as the group's autonomy and tasks, also influences the group (Lewin, 1951; Wheelan, 2005).

Groups do have some control over their environment, albeit less than some members might wish. Groups that manage their internal processes and development well, and so function on a higher level of development, will be in a better position to respond appropriately to the external environment. Groups that are in conflict, or develop an isolated position, will have difficulty managing their relationships with the outside. Moreover, if internal trust is low, groups may not be able to delegate authority or responsibility to individual members to act on the group's behalf. Nevertheless, groups that continuously try to manage their external relationships will probably achieve more goals and higher performance (Wheelan, 2005).

In citizen participation projects, such as the Citizens' Assembly, the political context is crucial (see Chapter 2). Do politicians support the project? Are the efforts of the citizens taken seriously? And what is the legitimacy of the project; for example, are the results implemented? The role of the media is relevant in such cases, as it can play an intermediate role between the project's boundaries and its political environment. In essence, I have chosen to focus on the political environment the Assembly was working in, because the Assembly started its work in insecure political circumstances and during the Assembly's period of operation the political context became turbulent³³.

4.3.2 Diversity

Group and organizational diversity has been studied in the fields of sociology, social psychology, organizational studies and elsewhere, for example due to the changing demography of society and thus of the workforce (see, for example, Chemers & Murphy, 1995). Nkomo and Stewart (2006, p.520) define diversity as "a mixture of people with different group identities within the same social system". Diversity can be categorized by the criteria considered, for example demographic diversity (race, ethnic background, gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation), educational and technical diversity (training, experience, skills, and functional knowledge), socioeconomic background, personality characteristics, values (Milliken & Martins, 1996), and interests. Large groups tend to be heterogeneous and diverse and, in some circumstances, this can be inspiring and promising to the participants (Luggin, 2004). The differing perspectives within the large group can increase the quality

³³ The Dutch government fell on the 29th June 2006 and consequently the Minister of Governance Renewal (Alexander Pechtold) had to resign. The new minister (Atzo Nicolai) ensured that the Assembly could finish its task, but stated that he would not invest in this project and that he was not in favor of major changes in the electoral system (Schulz, 2010). The fall of the government had some consequences for the Assembly. Firstly, the Assembly had to continue its work without the political support of its founder, Alexander Pechtold. The budget that had been promised to carry out a large-scale campaign to inform the public about the Assembly's proposal was canceled. Moreover, the political process to deal with the Assembly's proposal could not be maintained since new elections were planned for November 2006, before the Assembly had finished its work. This meant that the government could not hold a political debate on the Assembly's proposal before the elections.

of problem solving carried out within the group (Comer, 1995; Schneider & Northcraft, 1999; Shaw, 1976; Steiner, 1972) since diversity can stimulate learning and creativity (Schrijver & Vansina, 1997; Storck, 2002; Van Dick, Van Knippenbergh, Hägele, Guillaume & Brodbeck, 2008; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000, 2007). However, diversity can also increase the complexity and anxiety within the group. Large groups can therefore be overwhelming and frightening, and engender feelings of difference and alienation (Schneider & Northcraft, 1999; Steiner, 1972; Storck, 2002; Weisbord & Janoff, 2007).

The Citizens' Assembly worked as both a plenary group as well as splitting up for subgroup sessions. The composition of these subgroups changed for each weekend meeting. In addition to these group settings, various other subgroups can be distinguished within the context of the Citizens' Assembly; for example the subgroups of those members that had additional roles, the staff, the members that were active on the intranet, and other more 'informal' subgroups. Examples of informal subgroups within the Assembly are social categories that might group together, such as 'the smokers', members that represented the same province, members of similar age, members that had similar education backgrounds, members that had similar political preferences, members of similar social status, and members that had similar interests concerning electoral systems.

4.3.3 Size

Most research on group dynamics has involved small groups. However, various authors have also shown an interest in larger groups (e.g. Agazarian & Carter, 1993; De Maré, 1975, 1985, 1989; Hopper & Weyman, 1975; Main, 1975; Turquet, 1975; Weinberg & Schneider, 2003). Size is significant because the number of individuals in a group has implications for the group. As the number of members rises, processes within groups change (Shaw, 1976). Firstly, when group size increases, organizational effects can be distinguished. The range of skills and knowledge that is available to the group increases with group size, as does the number of 'hands' that are available for obtaining and processing information (Shaw, 1976). So, in other words, the larger the group, the more resources that are available. However, it becomes more difficult in a large group to organize these resources. Hence, organizational problems also increase in larger groups (Shaw, 1976; Steiner, 1972). Another consequence of an increasing group size is the rise in the number of interpersonal relationships within the group. The potential number of interpersonal relationships between group members increases rapidly with size, and consequently subgroups are more likely to form in larger groups (Hare, 1976; Shaw, 1976). Large groups readily end up with all sorts of subgroups, both formal and informal, of varying size (Hopper & Weyman, 1975; Storck, 2002). Group size also has an influence on a psychological level. The larger the group, the more complex psychological processes in the group become. In small groups, group members can, for example, maintain interpersonal relationships with all the other group members (Hopper & Weyman, 1975; Hare, 1976) and preserve their own identity (Greene, Morrison & Tischler, 1979; Hinshelwood, 2007; McMillan, 1981; Shaw, 1976; Turquet, 1975). In larger groups, this becomes more difficult and consequently anxiety rises (see also Section 4.5.2) (Hopper & Weyman, 1975; McMillan, 1981; Turquet, 1975). Stavig and Barnett's (1977) study not only

confirmed the relationship between large group size and increases in conflict and disputes, it also showed decreases in morale, cohesiveness, and consensus.

There is no exact formula for how large a group should be before it becomes a large group (Foulkes, 1975; Hare, 1976). Some authors (e.g. Forsyth, 1990; Gilmore & Barnett, 1992; Hopper & Weyman, 1975; Remmerswaal, 2006) suggest a small group becomes large when it grows to fifteen to twenty members, others speak about thirty (Foulkes, 1975) or even fifty members (Asch, 1952). Turquet (1974, 1975) defines a group as large when it becomes impossible for each member to maintain eye-to-eye contact³⁴. Although different viewpoints can be distinguished, the Citizens' Assembly - with its 140 members - is clearly a large group according to all the criteria mentioned.

4.3.4 Theoretical approaches

The theoretical perspectives that are seen as most appropriate for analyzing critical dynamics caused by context, diversity, and size, are the social psychological perspective, the psychodynamic approach, and the leadership perspective³⁵ (or, more specifically, the theory on leading large groups). Social psychology, psychodynamics, and systems thinking and OD, are said to have been dominant in the development of the field of group dynamics. Lewinian thinking is the only perspective that is discussed in Section 4.2.1, and has not been selected as a separate perspective for use in the analysis. The reason for this is that Lewin's contributions are widely acknowledged and have been integrated into all the perspectives mentioned. The relevant theory from all three perspectives will now be presented in the following sections.

4.4 Social influence and behavior in median and large groups

Social psychological theory concerning social influence and behavior in median and large groups is presented below³⁶. Social influence is explained by Napier and Gershenfeld (1993) as the process by which a group brings pressure on its members to conform to its norms (common shared standards) or by which a member manipulates the behavior of others.

4.4.1 Norms and collective behavior

Social norms theory states that much of a person's behavior is influenced by their perception of how other members of their social group behave. Unspoken rules and standards guide the group and

³⁴ As Storck (2002), Weinberg and Schneider (2003), and many others, I refer to groups with thirty to thirty-five group members or more as large groups. I also distinguish a "medium" size group, between small and large groups, using the term median group, a term that was coined by De Maré (1985; 1989). Median groups consist of twenty to thirty members, and are also referred to elsewhere as 'small large' groups or 'larger' groups.

³⁵ Theoretical insights into 'leading large groups' are derived from social psychology, psychodynamics, and systems thinking and OD.

³⁶ Some of the theoretical contributions discussed in this section are based on findings in small groups. They are, nevertheless, included as they are considered relevant to discussing social influence and behavior in median and large groups.

define acceptable and unacceptable behavior for the group members (Napier & Gershensonfeld, 1993). Group norms are said to regulate the performance of the group as an organized unit, keeping it on course toward its objectives. The formation of a common norm is therefore seen as an essential element of group life (Sherif, 1936). Group agreement is said to be shaped as the group functions over time, and members come to behave in ways that prove acceptable or unacceptable to the individual group members. This process of reaching an agreement over group behavior can be seen as a mechanism for socially controlling individuals' behavior in the group (Napier & Gershensonfeld, 1993). Even though some norms are codified or written as statements, group norms are often established through a process that is largely beyond conscious awareness. As a consequence, people often conform to group norms without even knowing that they felt pressure.

Behavioral theorists argue that people behave in ways that gain rewards, and avoid or suppress behavior that is punished (Napier & Gershensonfeld, 1993). Given that individuals differ in the extent they find consequences reinforcing, non-conforming behavior can also be found in groups. If individuals are to retain membership without conforming, then they must either find a way to change the norms so that 'deviant' behavior becomes redefined as socially appropriate (and so reinforcing) or they must be permitted to create a role that permits deviance and reinforces other members' tolerance of that deviance. However, groups often put effort into reducing deviancy. If deviants continue their behavior, the group may define its boundaries to exclude them (Napier & Gershensonfeld, 1993).

Many large groups, such as crowds, audiences, mobs, queues, and social movements are only temporary and relatively unorganized. Moreover, they lack a specific set of procedures for selecting members and identifying goals (Forsyth, 1990). The behavior of individuals that are part of these large, spontaneous groups is studied in Crowd Psychology, which is usually seen as a branch of social psychology. Contributions in this field have been made by Le Bon, Freud, and Turner and Killian, among others. Where both Le Bon and Freud consider crowds to be mostly homogeneous (see below), Turner and Killian (1972) introduced another perspective to collective behavior known as the emergent norm approach. Turner and Killian argue that the unanimity of the crowd is an illusion that arises because the behavior of part of the crowd is perceived as being the sentiment of the whole crowd, both by observers as well as by crowd members. According to these authors, the crowd is characterized "not by unanimity but by differential expression, with different individuals in the crowd feeling differently, participating because of diverse motives, and even acting differently" (1972, p.22). Turner and Killian nevertheless claim that a crowd develops a common understanding of what sort of behavior is expected in the situation it is in. In other words, crowd behavior is guided by norms that emerge as the situation unfolds. Norms in crowds can have a powerful influence on behavior, and may differ from the more general norms that are prevalent in society.

4.4.2 Majority and minority influences

During the 1950s and 1960s, the study of influence processes was primarily focused on the phenomenon of conformity. Researchers wanted to explain the reasons why individuals would change

their judgment, their opinion, or their beliefs in the direction of the position held by the majority. However, since the late sixties, studies have increasingly started to focus on the reciprocal process: the influence exerted by the individual, or a minority of individuals, on the majority's views (Nemeth, 1986).

Numerous studies have shown that majorities exert more public influence than minorities (Nemeth, 1986). Members of groups tend to conform to the majority position due to two factors that are at work: informational influence and normative influence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Informational influence is seen as the basic human need to be right and to have an accurate perception of the situation at hand and around oneself. This means that, when people are uncertain, they will tend to look to others for help in interpreting and understanding the situation. Here, majority judgments are likely to be seen as correct, and people will therefore conform to the majority's position. The term normative influence refers to the individual's need to be accepted. Individual group members generally wish to avoid the disapproval that derives from maintaining a minority viewpoint, and therefore conform to the majority's position. In other words, due to a need for social approval and to avoid rejection, individual group members conform (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Gross, 1992; Kiesler, 1963; Nemeth, 1986; Sabini, 1995). As the size of the group grows, conformity can increase (Gerard, Wilhelmy, & Conolley, 1968). The larger the number, the larger the group with whom individuals can compare themselves and the more likely they are to conform.

Nemeth (1986) studied the contributions of both majority and minority influence and found that the processes through which majorities and minorities exercise influence appear to be different³⁷. She claims that if the concept of influence is broadened from simply 'prevailing' to include issues of attention, thought, problem-solving, and decision-making in groups, one sees that majorities foster convergence in terms of attention, thought, and the number of alternatives considered. However, minority viewpoints are also relevant, not because they tend to prevail, but because they stimulate divergent attention and thought. Consequently, even when they are wrong, minority viewpoints contribute to the identification of novel solutions and to decisions that are qualitatively better because they stimulate reappraisal and the consideration of more alternatives. In other words, minority views provide a creative contribution to problem-solving and decision-making.

4.4.3 The influence of size on group productivity: the Ringelmann, social loafing, and bystander effects

One of the variables that is often investigated in group productivity experiments is group size. Max Ringelmann, a French agricultural engineer, is said to be one of the first researchers to gather data showing a fall-off in group performance with increasing group size (Ingham, Levinger, Graves & Peckham, 1974; Kravitz & Martin, 1986). Even though Ringelmann's data were gathered at the end of the nineteenth century, and comparing individual and group performance was not the primary interest

³⁷ Although her study was conducted in small groups, she offers practical implications for society at large.

in his experiment, the 'Ringelmann effect' has been widely cited and elaborated upon (Kravitz & Martin, 1986). Steiner (1972), for example, found that groups tend to become less productive as group size increases. Other studies have also shown that individuals in groups can become passive and assume that others will do the work and take the responsibility (e.g. Comer, 1995). The reduction in effort by individuals when working in groups was termed the 'social loafing' effect by Latané, Williams, and Harkins (1979), after they found that individuals working alone shouted and clapped harder than those in groups. They refer to social loafing as "the decrease in individual effort when performing in groups as compared to when they perform alone" (p.822). Latané and Darley (1970) had earlier found that, the larger the group, the less likely people are to help. As Latané and Darley (1970) put it: "the presence of other people serves to inhibit the impulse to help" (p.38). In other words, people in a group are less likely to help, simply because there are other people present. Latané and Darley called this social psychological phenomenon the 'bystander effect'. The bystander effect is often witnessed in emergency situations, as for example when people on the street pass an injured person and do not stop to help. According to Latané and Darley, two major factors are at work in such situations, namely a diffusion of responsibility and social influence. When people do not help the injured person because they assume that someone else will have intervened (for example by phoning for an ambulance), the process of diffusion of responsibility is at work. In this situation, people have turned into bystanders and feel less responsible, because there are others around that can help. Another option is that people do not act because of social influence. In this situation, people first observe the reactions of the other people around, to see if they think help is needed. If nobody is reacting, people conclude that help is not necessary.

4.4.4 Intergroup relations

In Section 4.3.2 it was explained how heterogeneity and diversity in large groups can increase the complexity and anxiety within the group. To deal with this complexity and anxiety, members of large groups can spontaneously start to form subgroups within the large group setting (Agazarian & Carter, 1993; Storck, 2002). Large groups can therefore easily contain all sorts of subgroups, both formal and informal and of varying size. The larger the group, the greater the number of possible subgroups, including median groups (Hopper & Weyman, 1975; Storck, 2002). Having a diversity of subgroups within a large group context creates enormous complexity. The group and each individual group member are confronted with a reality of multiple 'truths' within the whole. As a consequence, the dynamics of intergroup relations become apparent (Storck, 2002).

Intergroup relations is seen as a complex domain with a large scope (Tajfel, 1982), in which interaction between and among groups can be studied (Alderfer, 1987). To get a better understanding of the behavior that takes place between groups and their members, both the properties of the groups themselves as well as the consequences of membership for individuals need to be looked at (Sherif, 1966). Studies of intergroup relations therefore look into processes on the intergroup, intragroup, and individual levels.

4.4.4.1 Intergroup conflicts

Intergroup conflicts occur in all kinds of social organizations (Forsyth, 1990). Sources of intergroup conflict have been studied in an attempt to reduce intergroup conflict. The understanding of intergroup behavior was enhanced by the, now classical, contribution of social psychologist Sherif (1966). In the Robbers Cave experiment, Sherif and his colleagues studied the behavior of two groups of boys during a summer camp to gain insight into variables that may cause intergroup conflict. Realistic Conflict Theory (Sherif, 1966) was then used to explain intergroup conflict in terms of the ‘negative’ interdependence of two or more groups in terms of attaining material profit (Sherif, 1966). Essentially, realistic conflict theory maintains that limited resources, such as food, power, and territory, lead to conflict between groups.

In addition to intergroup competition, social categorization (see below) may result in an intergroup conflict. If members of in-groups and out-groups both participate in a larger group, conflicts may arise (Sherif, 1966), and the performance of the group can decrease (Van Dick et al., 2008). Forsyth (1990) further points out that negative intergroup exchanges fan the fire of hostility between the groups. As examples of contentious exchanges, he offers threats, insults, and humiliations.

Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) address the role of emotion in intergroup conflict. They argue that tensions are often increased by affective or expressive concerns that have little to do with instrumental or task-focused concerns. Often the conflict itself becomes a focal point and its original cause is forgotten. Moreover, minor disagreements can quickly escalate into major conflicts with groups becoming polarized in rival camps (Ashfort & Humphrey, 1995).

Coser (1956) argued that intergroup conflict need not only be destructive. He found that groups in conflict often became more cohesive (see also Sherif, 1966). Group cohesion is defined by Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) as “the attractiveness of a group to its members, highlighting the affective bond between individuals” (p.112), and this might be important for a group’s existence as cohesive groups tend to retain their members (Cartwright, 1968; Coser, 1956). Group cohesion is generally considered as beneficial for groups in carrying out their tasks (Cartwright & Zander, 1968). There are, however, some exceptions such as in the area of decision-making (e.g. Janis, 1972) where cohesiveness may lead to faulty decisions due to the absence of critical thinking. A high degree of group cohesiveness is therefore said to be dangerous. Dovidio, Saguy, and Shnabel (2009) also emphasize that conflicts can lead to positive results, namely healthier group development, greater creativity in problem-solving, and fairer processes and outcomes within the group.

4.4.4.2 Social categorization and social identification

The process that makes it possible for people to distinguish between the members of their group ('us') and the members of other groups ('them') is known as social categorization (Tajfel, 1978, 1981, 1982; see also Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). Tajfel claims that individuals categorize things in order to understand their social environment. In other words, social categorization helps people to understand

the world around them. People in groups search for membership of social categories with other group members based on, for example, demographic characteristics (such as race, gender, or age) or functional characteristics (such as professional connections, knowledge, and skills).

Tajfel introduced the concept of social identity as “that part of the individuals’ self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership” (Tajfel, 1981, p.255). According to social identity theory (e.g. Tajfel, 1981, 1982), “individuals validate their social identity (and thereby accrue self-esteem) by showing favoritism to their own social category or in-group, at the expense of out-groups to which they do not belong” (Schneider & Northcraft, 1999, p.1448). Social identity theory is based on three assumptions. The first being that people, because of social categorization, distinguish between members of in-groups and members of out-groups. Secondly, that people are motivated to maintain a positive social identity. Thirdly, that people derive a great deal of their social identity from their group identities. Combining these three assumptions suggests that people favor their in-group in order to gain reassurance and to protect and maintain their own social identity (see also Hogg, 2005).

In social identity theory, a sharp distinction is made between social identity, i.e. the self-concept defined in terms of specific group memberships, and personal identity, i.e. the self-concept defined in terms of idiosyncrasies and close personal relationships (Turner, 1982). According to the social identity perspective, group processes – and particularly large group processes – cannot be fully understood in terms of interpersonal processes alone. Group behavior can be said to occur when social identity becomes the contextually salient basis for self-conceptualization. That is, the collective self (we/us) is associated with group phenomena (Hogg & Williams, 2000).

The argument above is essentially that people’s sense of self is shaped by the process of social categorization and identification. Social identification is referred to by Forsyth (2010, p.78) as: “accepting the group as an extension of the self, and therefore basing one’s self-definition on the group’s qualities and characteristics”. In other words, as people’s self-concept becomes connected to the group, the value of the group influences their feelings of personal worth. Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine and Broadnax (1994) found that when individuals believe that the groups they belong to are valuable, they will experience a heightened sense of personal self-esteem (see also Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). As social identification increases, individuals come to think that their membership of the group is personally significant. Members feel connected and interdependent with other members, are pleased to belong to the group, feel good and proud about the group, and experience a strong connection to the group. The nature of their attachment to the group also becomes more affective (Forsyth, 2010).

4.4.4.3 In-group/out-group bias

Social categorization can create bias between in-groups and out-groups. Individuals that share the same social category, or in-group, are often assumed by others to share similar values and interests. The in-group members themselves similarly believe that their group members are easier to

communicate with, can be better trusted, are more predictable, and more likely to return favors than out-group members (Schneider & Northcraft, 1999). In other words, in-group members are likely to view the members of their own group (the in-group) more favorably than members of the out-group. This phenomenon is known as in-group/out-group bias (Sumner, 1906/2008) (see also Hewstone, Rubin & Willis, 2002; Scheepers, Spears, Doosje & Manstead, 2006). Among larger groups such as nations or tribes this bias is referred to as ethnocentrism (Sumner, 1906/2008). Sumner refers to ethnocentrism when one's own group (or in-group) is the centre of everything and all others are regarded and measured with reference to this own group.

Social identity theory helps explain how prejudice, like stereotyping, can emerge in groups. Forsyth (1990) describes stereotypes as "cognitive generalizations about the qualities and characteristics of the members of a particular group or social category" (p.406). Stereotyping consists of ascribing, to members of a group, the same characteristics, without regard to possible individual differences (Doise, Deschamps & Meyer, 1978) and is said to be biased in the sense that it usually paints a picture of the out-group that is too simplistic, too extreme, and too uniform (Forsyth, 1990). According to social identity theory, stereotyping is a manifestation of the need to create a meaningful social identity by differentiating oneself from an out-group. As members' self-esteem is linked to the groups they belong, their feelings of self-worth can be improved by emphasizing the superiority of the in-group. Hence, people protect their collective self-esteem just as they protect their personal self-esteem. In that case, group members credit their group for its success, but deny that their group possesses negative qualities and blame outside influences when their group fails (Van Vugt & Hart, 2004). Accordingly, members of groups that are criticized often respond by defending their group and reaffirming their commitment to it (Dietz-Uhler & Murrell, 1998).

4.4.5 In-group/out-group bias in multiparty collaboration processes

Intergroup relation studies have predominantly focused on processes of intergroup conflict and variables that may cause conflict between groups. Rather than conflict, some authors (e.g. Gray, 1989; Huxham & Vangen, 2000a, 2005; Schrijver, 2006; Schrijver & Vansina, 2004; Vansina, Taillieu & Schrijver, 1998) focus on processes of collaboration between groups. They argue that, within a society that is becoming increasingly complex, a joint effort involving various stakeholders is required to address problems (such as economic development, unemployment, environmental issues, poverty) that do not have single problem-owners but multiple stakeholders (Gray, 1985, 1989; Huxham & Vangen, 2005; Schrijver & Vansina, 1997). In their search for an understanding of the conditions needed for collaboration, such authors study the complexity and psychological dynamics of collaboration involving more than two groups. This is in contrast with research into intergroup relations, where the interaction is generally limited to just two groups (Schrijver, 2006; Schrijver & Vansina, 2004).

According to Schrijver (2006), collaboration between parties (persons, groups, or organizations³⁸) is desired “when one party possesses something that is of value to another (person, group, organization) while the latter has something to offer that is of value to the former” (p.224). In a real collaboration, parties are interdependent but retain autonomy. As Schrijver argues: “real collaboration means working with diversity, rather than reducing it via power, stereotyping, conflict avoidance, or conformity” (p.224). In other words, collaboration is sought because parties are different and thus have different resources, interests, etc.

Vansina, Taillieu and Schrijver (1998) define multiparty collaboration as “the characteristics of an emerging or developing work-system of people who, because of their membership of other groups, institutions or social categories, come to work together on a largely self-constructed task or problem domain” (p.162). Vansina (2007) identifies four major sources of anxiety in most multiparty processes. First, parties consider the ideology of collaboration as involving giving up one’s own interests, and sometimes even one’s identity, for the benefit of reaching an agreement. Second, the confrontation with diversity, conflicting interests, and differences in resources, power, and knowledge creates anxiety. A third field of tension in multiparty processes is the lack of know-how on how to achieve an acceptable agreement among the different-interest parties. Finally, a lack of trust in the neutrality of the facilitator is often a major source of anxiety (Vansina, 2007).

To gain an insight into the complexity of multiparty collaboration, Vansina, Taillieu, and Schrijver designed a two-day simulation experiment involving seven parties (for a description of the set-up see Vansina, Taillieu & Schrijver, 1998) that would be set the task of dealing with one another in a context characterized by several problems, interests, and interdependencies³⁹. Some of the dynamics found in these simulation exercises, as well as in other ‘real’ multiparty collaboration processes, are characterized by an in-group/out-group bias. Rather than considering the situation from a multiparty perspective (that is, looking at the interests of all the parties concerned), they found that the parties participating in the simulation tended to define the world from an in-group point of view. According to these authors, strong in-group identification may prevent participants from perceiving the reality that they have interdependencies with other parties. Parties in the simulation tended to establish goals which fulfilled only their own needs and, as a consequence, a win-lose dynamic emerges in a collaborative setting. In a win-lose climate, limited information is exchanged, perceptions are biased, mutual distrust is created, and negative stereotyping and positional bargaining takes place (Schrijver & Vansina, 2007; Vansina, Taillieu & Schrijver, 1998). Rather than developing a collaborative climate, participants create a power game in which beating the other parties becomes the most important aspect (Schrijver, 2006).

³⁸ From now on I use the term parties, rather than ‘persons, groups, or organizations’.

³⁹ Schrijver and Vansina (2007) note that this simulation was run on more than eighty occasions.

4.5 Emotional climate in large groups

In this section, psychodynamic theory on the emotional climate in large groups is presented. Some of the dynamics that are discussed below as being related to large groups, are not exclusive to large (and median) groups and also appear in small groups. The reason that these dynamics are included under large group dynamics is that, even they can also be found in small groups, their appearance in large groups is much more complex, powerful, and primitive as is explained below.

4.5.1 Contributions from Crowd Psychology

I have included some major contributions from Crowd Psychology in this section (instead of Section 4.4.1, which concerns social psychological theory) because I wish to focus on how these mechanisms influence the emotional climate in large groups.

4.5.1.1 Suggestibility, Anonymity, and the Contagion of Affect

Le Bon's (1896/1973) classic work, *The Crowd*, can be seen as the origins of studying the psychology of large numbers of people when they come together in a large group setting (Forsyth, 1990; Schneider & Weinberg, 2003). Le Bon was fascinated by large groups and discussed how individuals can temporarily lose their rationality when submerged in a crowd. According to Le Bon, all individuals act unreasonably and in extreme ways once they are immersed in mobs because individuals in a large group have a strong tendency to give up their 'selves'. Le Bon called this mechanism 'suggestibility'. According to Le Bon, people give up their selves in order to be part of a large 'whole', which subsequently releases the primitive part of the individuals' personality. The reason for the individuals' changes in behavior is that the crowd gives the individual group members a feeling of power. Further, at the same time, the crowd diffuses power and responsibility, transforming the individual into an anonymous individual within the crowd. Due to this mechanism of anonymity, individuals in large groups conform to the group and its norms, and the distinction between individuals disappears. According to Le Bon, the crowd not only has enormous power over the individual group members; it also has the potential to contaminate. People can start to experience certain feelings, not because they feel these feelings themselves but because they feel them in others. Feelings in the group can thus be transferable, just like a cold. Le Bon calls this mechanism the 'contagion of affect'. This contagion of affect, according to Le Bon, can result in an unmanageable and subduing negative tone in the group.

4.5.1.2 Freud's mass psychology theory

Freud (1929/1959) considered Le Bon's crowd psychology theory (see above) in his publication on groups: "Group Psychology and the analysis of the ego". Freud argued that individuals join collectives to satisfy their own repressed unconscious desires. Even though Freud was impressed by Le Bon's work, he believed that Le Bon had failed to recognize the role of the individuals' unconscious needs. According to Freud, desires, impulses, and tendencies within individuals are controlled by their own psychological mechanisms. When individuals are in a group setting, control over their behavior is transferred to the leader or to other group members and, consequently, each individual is released

from their own restraints and guilt. As a result, formerly repressed needs come to motivate behavior and unusual actions become more likely. In contrast to Le Bon, who believed that the crowd forces people to act in a certain way, Freud argued that collective behavior is carried into the crowd by the individuals themselves.

4.5.2 Large groups in therapy and training settings

Most of what has been written about the emotional climate in large groups is based on insights derived from large group therapy sessions and large group training events⁴⁰ (Hopper, 2003; Kreeger, 1975; Weinberg & Schneider, 2003). During and after the Second World War, pioneer psychotherapists such as Bion, Foulkes, Main, Bridger, and De Maré started to work on therapeutic community rehabilitation, which led to an emerging awareness of the exploratory power of large groups in therapeutic work (Weinberg & Schneider, 2003)⁴¹. More recently, the Tavistock Institute and the Institute of Group Analysis (and many other international and local institutes) have worked, since 1964 and 1972 respectively, with large groups in their group conferences. In the training programs of these institutes, participants principally meet in the large group setting with the task of studying the large group processes in play by researching what happens in the ‘here-and-now’ (Island, 2003; Luggin, 2004; Miller, 1990), and consequently gaining a better understanding of the underlying dynamics within and between groups and organizations and their environments.

In large group training settings, group members share their thoughts and associations with the other members of the large group. Consultants (the number varies) help the group to understand the dynamics that emerge. The task of the consultants is thus to support the group in ‘finding out’, rather than to steer the process. In both the Tavistock and the Group Analytic approaches, there is a particular focus on hidden and unconscious processes within the large group. Incidents, statements, and actions that happen in the ‘here-and-now’ of the large group are therefore often interpreted as expressions of unconscious forces. In the group relations conference held at the Tavistock Institute, the large group meets once a day. There are clearly various ways to work with large groups in training events or conferences and, as a consequence of the different conference set-ups, the dynamics that are found in large groups can differ (Luggin, 2004).

The knowledge accumulated on ‘the large group’ in therapy and training settings was for the first time pulled together in 1975 when Kreeger edited the book “The Large Group: Dynamics and Therapy”, to which major players such as Foulkes, Main, Turquet, De Maré, and Hopper and Weyman contributed (Weinberg & Schneider, 2003). Eighteen years later, a special edition of the journal Group was

⁴⁰ Klein, E.B. (1993) observes that most empirical work has been done with training, rather than therapy groups. For clarity, I use the first initials when referring to this author, because another author with the same surname (Melanie Klein) has been cited above.

⁴¹ Some publications on large group dynamics discuss whether large groups are valuable to group therapy (e.g. Klein, E.B. 1993, Kreeger, 1975). As the objective of this thesis is to study large group dynamics, and not the functions of large groups, these discussions are not presented here.

published in response to the need to understand processes in large groups (Bernard & West, 1993). More than twenty-five years after Kreeger's book, Scheider and Weinberg (2003) 'revisited' the topic to show how large group theory had evolved since 1975.

Some of the major findings related to large group dynamics that have emerged from large therapy and training groups are described in the following sections. The findings are not split into those derived from large group therapy and those from large training groups. Rather, as in Kreeger (1975) and Schneider and Weinberg (2003), the findings are merged.

4.5.2.1 Projective processes

Projecting is a primitive defense mechanism in which a person attributes their own feelings, thoughts, and/or characteristics to someone else in an attempt to relieve internal pains (Luggin, 2004; Main, 1975). According to Main (1975), projective processes can be very prominent in large groups. When the receiver 'accepts' the projection, projective identification takes place, meaning that the receiver finds themselves forced by the sender to feel and own the projected feelings, thoughts, or characteristics that are otherwise unfamiliar. When projective identification takes place, the sender of the projections can feel weakened and defenseless through having lost the parts projected. Moreover, the receiver of the projections can feel strange and uncomfortable because they have internalized the projective parts which are otherwise unknown. Projective identification takes place in all human relationships, usually without the parties being aware. Similarly in groups, people may be unconsciously forced by the group to feel certain things or to carry out particular roles. Main (1975) explains that projections and projective identification can more often be reality tested and then reversed in small groups. Reality testing of projective processes helps an individual to better understand both themselves as well as the other group members. As a result, the individual feels better recognized by the other group members and can, moreover, recognize more of themselves. However, large groups are much more complex and confusing, and projective processes can be massive and forceful (Main, 1975), making it more difficult for group members to test or reverse projective processes. Consequently, according to Main (1975), unchecked and uncheckable fantasies about oneself and the other especially arise in large groups.

4.5.2.2 Identity problems: I-ness, One-ness, and Me-ness

Various authors (e.g. McMillan, 1981; Turquet, 1975; Weinberg & Schneider, 2003) have argued that large groups can be difficult for participants to deal with. Members are said to be confused by the group situation since this presents the individual group member with a large number of other participants with whom one-to-one relationships are difficult to establish and maintain. As a consequence, individual group members can feel lost, alone, and isolated. To protect themselves from experiencing these feelings, participants try to find order and make sense of the chaos in the large group. Weinberg and Schneider (2003) argue that some participants may sense their increasing anxiety and react by, for example, sitting next to someone they know. Turquet (1975) describes another approach to protecting 'the self' in the large group setting, namely by staying a 'singleton'; the individual who is alone in the crowd. According to Turquet (1975), individuals in large groups

experience a changing membership state. He argues that group members enter large groups as singletons, since they are not part of the group. Their wish (and therefore their first task) when entering the group is to evolve from their 'none-role' (the singleton state) to a group role, that of being an individual member (IM). The singleton can develop into an IM by establishing relations, both with the group as a whole as well as with other group members. However, according to Turquet (1975), a continuous threat exists within a large group, namely that the group changes the individual member into a membership individual (MI), in which group membership dominates over individuality and thus destroys the IM state. In other words, the group can turn an IM into an instrument or puppet. When the large group attempts to destroy the IM state, the group member may either accept that attempt (and thus move to the MI state), or repel it and move back to the singleton state. Turquet also identifies a transitional state between the three possible membership states outlined above. In that transitional state, one has the possibility (at least theoretically) to make a choice concerning the group state, and to manifest individuality, or 'I-ness'. The individual in this state is however very vulnerable (Luggin, 2004). Individuals in a large group continually need to deal with the dynamics of fusion and of separation. That is, the other group members may stimulate the individual's desire to relate to them (and thus move to a MI state), or increase the individual's desire to separate (and move back to the singleton state). These dynamics can be very confusing to individuals and consequently group members can become very insecure, puzzled, and anxious. Moreover, individuals need to deal with belated or missing responses to their own projections (see above) and to the projections of others. According to Turquet, individuals in large groups are therefore constantly fighting, both to survive and to preserve their identity.

Adding to Bion's basic assumptions, Turquet (1974) introduced a fourth basic assumption which he called one-ness. One-ness is explained as the behavior of group members that "seek to join a powerful union with omnipotent power, unobtainably high, to surrender self for passive participation and thereby to feel existence, well-being and wholeness" (Turquet, 1974, p.357) or, as Klein, E.B. puts it: one-ness is "the desire to deny differences" (1993, p.203). Rather than deal with their individual identity, members surrender their self so as to link to the group as a whole, and experience a feeling of unity and wholeness within the group. In other words, members act out the requirements of 'the group' as membership individuals (MI) (see above).

McMillan (1981) applied Turquet's basic assumption to large group behavior and claimed that one-ness has great relevance in a large group. Namely, that one-ness can help members escape anxiety and the difficult identity problems (see above) that appear in large group settings (McMillan, 1981). When, in Turquet's terms, the group becomes the 'omnipotent force' that directs membership behavior, members collude in the belief that 'the group' can anonymously do things to them. In that case, members may speak of the group 'not liking them', or may say that 'the group is angry today' (McMillan, 1981). The 'group' may then be acting as a container for projections (see Main, 1975). When members collude in the belief that the group can anonymously do things to them, they are also colluding in the belief that individual differences have disappeared within the group (McMillan, 1981),

and this may cause other dynamics to occur according to McMillan. Members perceiving ‘the group’ as ‘good’ can experience feelings of goodness and wholeness through projective identification. If, on the other hand, ‘the group’ contains a member’s bad projections, then the surrender of self may become frightening. The belief that individual differences have vanished has another consequence: communication that requires diversity within the group stops and, as a result, communication becomes simplified. Subsequently, dogmas, stereotypes, and clichés can prevail (McMillan, 1981). Schruijer (2006) refers to the phenomenon ‘collusion’ in multiparty processes. According to her, some multiparty processes seem to lack conflict: communication between parties seems to take place in a peaceful atmosphere and no feelings of frustration or anger can be sensed (Schruijer, 2006). However, when interactions are strongly focused on avoiding conflict, participants may end up creating a collusive climate. Such a climate is often characterized by a lack of reality testing and escaping into a rosier future. Instead of dealing with the real complexity, parties develop wonderful plans for the future and so escape the complicated reality of the here-and-now. Moreover, vague language can often be observed, new information is ignored, comments are interpreted without being checked, and parties converge towards a vague and meaningless denominator (Schruijer, 2008). Schruijer (2008) argues that a conflict-avoiding climate is often misinterpreted as a sign of a successful collaboration. However, the interests of the various parties are not being looked after in such a climate, and the potential benefits of their diversity are not utilized.

Based on Turquet’s contributions regarding large-group membership experiences, Lawrence, Bain, and Gould (1996) proposed a fifth basic assumption, called me-ness. By contrast to one-ness, where the individual’s self fuses with the group, me-ness emphasizes separateness. Under me-ness, an individual anxious to disappear in the group separates themself from the group. According to Lawrence, Bain, and Gould (1996), individuals living in contemporary, turbulent societies are increasingly pressed into their own inner reality to deal with disturbing realities perceived in the outside world. In other words, the inner world offers comfort and security within the risky, modern society. People in large groups therefore may “behave as if the group has no reality, and cannot even have reality, because the only reality to be considered and taken account of is that of the individual. It is a culture of selfishness in which individuals appear to be only conscious of their own personal boundaries, which they believe have to be protected from any incursion by others. The nature of the transactions is instrumental, for there is no room for affect, which could be dangerous because one would not know to where feelings might lead” (Lawrence, Bain & Gould, 1996, p.36).

4.5.2.3 Difficulties with speaking and hearing

Large groups are by definition too large for group members to have face-to-face interactions. In comparison, each individual in a small group of, for example, ten to fifteen participants has a reasonable possibility to speak, and to be heard and responded to. However, in larger groups, it is not possible to interact in the same way because, with so many participants, there is simply insufficient time available for everyone to speak (Hopper & Weyman, 1975; Main, 1975). Apart from having less

time to speak, Weinberg and Schneider (2003) claim that individuals can have difficulties speaking in a large group. According to them, some members of large groups are silent for the entire large group experience. Anxiety associated with attempting to talk, and furthermore having to deal with whether what they say is accepted or dismissed by the group, is too much for them to cope with. Weinberg and Schneider also argue that some participants can feel that they have achieved something major if they have spoken even only once in the large group, and that these participants may therefore try to speak again.

Group members are not only said to have difficulties with speaking, but also with hearing what is being said in a large group (Weinberg & Schneider, 2003). Weinberg and Schneider distinguish sensory auditory input from auditory perception when they refer to hearing problems in large groups. The former is related to physiology and acoustic structure, and the latter is related to emotional auditory perception. Weinberg and Schneider state that members of large groups often complain that they cannot 'hear' (see also Kreeger, 1992). However, after the initial auditory obstruction clears, group members do hear and are even able to recall what they 'did not hear' earlier on. Similar experiences are described by others such as Shaked (2003), who describes one of his large group experiences: "the willingness of the group members to listen and understand each other increased and it became evident that the difficulty of hearing in the large hall was largely a psychological rather than a physical problem" (p.152). According to Weinberg and Schneider (2003), emotions and especially anxiety can block abstract thinking processes in large groups and regress members to a more concrete mode of understanding. They state that a shift from flexible feeling and thinking to a more inflexible mode is part of the psychodynamic process in large groups.

4.5.2.4 Strong emotions

Large groups tend to generate strong emotions in their members. As described above, participants in large groups can face massive and forceful projective processes, bombardments by stimuli, and threats to identity and the boundaries of the self, etc. Given these traumatic experiences, strong emotions such as annihilation, anxiety, envy, aggression, anger, hate, and sometimes compassion can erupt (Hopper; 2003; Kreeger, 1992; Main, 1975; Turquet, 1975; Weinberg & Schneider, 2003) in potentially uncontrollable and uncontainable ways (De Maré, 1975). As a consequence, polarized feelings and affects such as extremism, prejudice, and stereotypical thoughts, feelings, and behavior can develop in a large group (Weinberg & Schneider, 2003). Many authors who study large group dynamics (e.g. Main, 1975; Turquet, 1975) focus on the destructive, powerful forces in large groups and argue that negative and destructive dynamics are a result of unconscious, psychological defense mechanisms, such as projection, splitting, and projective identification.

However, strong emotions do not only result in destruction. De Maré (1985) argues that hate can also be seen as the driving power for constructive transformation in large groups. He believes that hate, derived from frustration in participants, initiates mental energy in the group. This mental energy is then transformed into dialogue which, through a process of learning and reflection, should result in

'kiononia' (De Maré, 1985, p.85). 'Kiononia' is described by De Maré as a form of togetherness and amity, an impersonal, not individualistic, fellowship where cultivated dialogue finds place. De Maré believes that the development of kiononia can turn a large group into a highly sensitive thinking apparatus.

While De Maré focuses on hate between members within a group, Nitsun (1996) focuses on hate towards the group. In his attempt to understand the negative and destructive processes in groups, Nitsun introduces the term 'the anti-group'. According to Nitsun (1996), anti-group phenomena, such as fear of the group, distrust, devaluation, and withdrawal, can be found in all groups and threaten their functioning. Nitsun argues that anti-group phenomena are intensified in large groups, partly through the intense anxiety and discomfort generated, and partly through a process of amplification linked to the greater number of participants. However, he, like De Maré, stresses that if the negative and destructive forces can be contained within the group, then they can lead to a creative potential.

4.5.2.5 Contextual dynamics

Members of large groups can differ enormously from one another. Participants can come, for example, from different countries, cultures, organizations, and social classes. Further, they can differ in gender, age, religion, profession, sexual orientation, educational background, and so on. In participating in a large group, individuals 'bring' their different contexts into the large group setting. As a result, large groups reflect more than 'only' the psychological processes occurring in the 'here-and-now' setting. Various authors (e.g. Carr, 1993; Hjelholt, 1972; Jarrar, 2003; Schneider, 2003; Shaked, 2003; Storck, 2002) explain how society's feelings and experiences are reflected in large groups through their participants. In this way, the large group reflects society-at-large. The large group can therefore function as a symbolic container to understand social interactive processes and interrelationships within society as a whole. Among others, Gunnar Hjelholt (1972; see also Madsen, 2006) has experimented with large groups to gain knowledge about society. He set up small-scale societies, called Mini Societies, to mirror some of the structural features and procedural mechanisms of macro-societies and, in so doing, to create a better understanding of the psychological and sociological roles and motivating forces that lie beneath the problems of society (Higgin & Hjelholt, 1990; Hjelholt, 1972).

Shaked (2003) elaborates on how political and social events (or processes) are reflected in large groups. He describes how, for example, the German and Jewish memories of the Holocaust, the end of the Cold War, and the terrorist attack in New York's World Trade Centre have influenced processes in the large groups that he has worked with. Shaked argues that the complex interactions within the large group, caused by social, historic, economic, cultural, and national differences, are emotionally experienced as a threat to identity by the members of the group. Nevertheless, confronting the stranger and the unknown also offers an opportunity for individuals to acquire an understanding of the 'stranger' within themselves, that is, of the unconscious, deeply engraved elements of their soul (Shaked, 2003).

A large group is influenced by its environment as participants ‘bring’ their contexts into the group setting and therewith influence the large group process. However, at the same time, the large group influences its surrounding environment. That is, participants in the large group learn and develop during their large group experience. When participants come out of the large group setting, they can utilize the knowledge acquired in ‘real society’. James (1994) claims that participants in large groups can develop connections and feelings of belonging to society through being confronted with society, or at least a larger whole, within the large group setting. Consequently, members take a more active role, emotionally or physically, and learn to see things from different perspectives (James, 1994). Participants in large groups can thus learn how to be good ‘citizens’ within the group and/or in society (see also De Maré, 1985; Higgin & Hjelholt, 1990) and this is important in the development of citizenship in society (James, 1994).

The above discussion has seen how contextual dynamics are interpreted as dynamics that reflect society as a whole. However, Island (2003) points out that the dynamics in large groups are also influenced by the ‘smaller’ context in which the large group operates, for example a training community.

4.6 Working with large groups

The dynamics found in median and large group settings were described in Sections 4.4 and 4.5. Clearly, the issue arises of how to work with the dynamics described. How should the dynamics occurring in large group contexts be dealt with, so as to minimize process losses (Steiner, 1972)? In other words, how can we, by taking their dynamics into account, get the most out of large groups? Accordingly, this section focuses on working with large groups.

The first topic to be discussed in this section is the facilitation of large groups. Subsequently, ‘Large Group Interventions’ are the focus. Large Group Interventions (LGI) were developed in the 1990s as a method for working with large groups and addressing some of their dynamics. Some of the design principles of LGI are now explained to illustrate how large group dynamics can be worked with. Following this, the concept of collaborative leadership is introduced.

4.6.1 Facilitating large groups

The word facilitation is derived from the Latin word *facilis*, which means easy or easily done. In relation to groups and group work, facilitation means creating the right conditions (Schrijver & Vansina, 2007) to make the group’s work easier and overcome problems that would otherwise hinder group performance (De Lichtenberg & London, 2008). In line with De Lichtenberg and London (2008) and Kolschoten, Den Hengst, and De Vreede (2007), Wardale (2008) emphasizes that effective facilitation does not solely involve an intervening event, but includes a whole process. According to Wardale (2008), the process of facilitation involves both careful program design and the execution of a facilitated event to achieve both effective and affective outcomes for the group, as well as assisting

with an ongoing implementation phase. A facilitation process can therefore amount to several interventions that are eventually expected to improve the group's outcomes (De Lichtenberg & London, 2008). Interventions include tools, tactics, and processes that help a group to achieve its tasks and increase its capacity (De Lichtenberg & London, 2008).

As large groups have complex dynamics, working with large groups can be difficult (Agazarian & Carter, 1993; Bunker & Alban, 1997; Gilmore & Barnett, 1992; Turquet, 1975; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000). A structure can support large groups; it can provide coherence, purpose, and a sense of order to the group (Bunker & Alban, 1997; Luggin, 2004). In providing structure, one should seek a balance (Bunker & Alban, 1997; Gilmore & Barnett, 1992) since too little structure is likely to generate behavior that increases anxiety (acting out) rather than help in reaching objectives, whereas too much structure can restrict the dynamics and creativity of the group.

Bunker and Alban (1997) pose the dilemma that one does not know how much anxiety exists, and therefore how much structure is needed in the group. In practice, when working with large groups, structure and bureaucracy are often unconsciously over used in an attempt to suppress dynamics (Gilmore & Barnett, 1992; Luggin, 2004). According to Gilmore and Barnett (1992), excessively structuring time is a good example. For example, a conference opening session may be filled with presentations such that there is no time left for questions because the group has to move on to the next item on the program. Often the large group is then split into small subgroups, where the work then needs to be done is organized in a very structured and controlled way (Gilmore & Barnett, 1992). In other words, the large group, in the plenary session, is turned into an audience, which is often more comfortable for both the speakers as well as the participants. Further, by doing the real work in subgroups, the large group can avoid thinking about the performance of the whole, and the real differences within the group (Gilmore & Barnett, 1992). Effectively, one has put a lid on the group's anxiety and the dynamics below the surface. However, the dynamics in large groups should not simply be neglected or suppressed if one is to let the group learn and develop or, in other words, to get the most out of the large group it is necessary to acknowledge and work with the dynamics (Gilmore & Barnett, 1992; Storck, 2002).

As was explained earlier, emotions such as anger, frustration, and anxiety occur more frequently in large rather than in small groups. People who facilitate large groups are often used as projection-receptacles (Main, 1975; Turquet, 1975) and therefore need to be comfortable in dealing with complex dynamics and a range of very strong feelings (Agazarian & Carter, 1993; Bunker & Alban, 1997; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000, 2007). Turquet (1975) argues that facilitators often intervene more regularly in large groups than they would in smaller groups. The difficulties that facilitators face in large groups mirror the difficulties the participants face (Turquet, 1975). In order to deal with the complexity in large groups, one first needs to be able to recognize the various dynamics. Rather than reducing or suppressing the dynamics, people working with large groups need to understand if, and if so which, interventions are needed since interventions and interpretations can have strong effects on the group

(Bunker & Alban, 1992b, 1997; Foulkes; 1975; Gilmore & Barnett, 1992; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000, 2007). To be able to understand the dynamics emerging, and know which interventions are needed, experience and psychological insight is required. Thorough and continuous training is needed to understand and to learn to work with the complexity of large groups (Bunker & Alban, 1992b, 1997).

4.6.2 Large Group Interventions as working methods

In the 1990s, experience was increasingly gained with large groups and how to work with them. Theoretical insights from the fields of social psychology, psychoanalysis, and systems theory were combined and applied in new conference methodologies and in interventions that were used to develop organizations (Bunker & Alban, 1997). These methods for working with large groups are known as Large Group Interventions (LGI). Bunker and Alban (1997) offer the following description: "Large Group Interventions for organizational and community change are methods for involving the whole system, internal and external, in the change process. These methods may go by different names, but the key similarity is that these methods deliberately involve a critical mass of the people affected by change, both inside the organization (employees and management) and outside it (suppliers and customers)" (p.xv).

Bunker and Alban (1997) describe twelve different LGI methods that are all designed around some basic principles. One of the principles, included in the definition above, is the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process. So, not only members of the organization itself are invited for a work conference, but also stakeholders surrounding the organization such as suppliers, customers, and community groups. Stakeholders that would be affected by change, participate in an open, democratic process. Decisions that are made during the conference can therefore claim to be supported by all participants (Bunker & Alban, 1997). Moreover, the methods are designed in such a way that participants are stimulated to accept their responsibilities (Bunker & Alban, 1997). LGI methods include the Search Conference, Open Space, Real Time Strategic Change, Future Search, and the Conference Method (Bunker & Alban, 1997). Various other participatory approaches to working with large groups have been developed in recent years (e.g. Van den Berge & Wortelboer, 2002) including the World Café (Brown & Isaacs, 2005). The World Café is a conversational process "that helps groups of all sizes to engage in constructive dialogue, to build personal relationships, and to foster collaborative learning" (Tan & Brown, 2005, p.84).

LGI have been used in the field of organization development and have created a new awareness of group dynamics and acted as a vehicle for understanding and working with processes in large groups (Bunker & Alban, 1992a, 1992b). LGI are effective in working with some of the large group mechanisms described in Sections 4.4 and 4.5. Below, some of the design principles of LGI are explained.

4.6.2.1 LGI design principles

As mentioned above, one of the principles of LGI is that the work is carried out within the ‘larger system’. If parties in the whole system talk to each other and share perspectives, people begin to understand what it is like to be in other organizational roles (Bunker & Alban, 1992b, 1997; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000). As a result, the organizational egocentrism that comes from working in a particular role can be reduced. Consequently, the perspectives of others are better understood, and creative energy, learning, and commitment can result (Weisbord & Janoff, 2000). Moreover, a common ground, or a shared picture of reality, is created within the group (Weisbord & Janoff, 2000). The assumption is that change will be more effective when parties have the same picture of the organization and its environment (Bunker & Alban, 1992b; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000).

Another LGI principle is combining working in large and small group settings. Besides spending time in plenary sessions, participants in conferences should spend much of their time in small groups doing specific tasks. Often, these subgroups have structured interactions. Everyone is, for example, asked to share their perspectives in the subgroup before the discussion starts. After the subgroup sessions, the group meets again as a whole, and all the subgroups are asked to share their contributions (Bunker & Alban, 1997; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000). The principle of small group structures within the larger frame allows a sense of identity to develop (Bunker & Alban, 1997). Firstly, because each individual has contributed in their own subgroup, so they feel heard and can see that their contributions are brought back to the larger group. Secondly, participants can identify with their subgroup as each subgroup has a distinct ‘voice’ in the larger context (Bunker & Alban, 1992b). The principle of having large and small workgroups can decrease participants’ difficulties with speaking and hearing in the large group setting (Bunker & Alban, 1997). Further, the use of small groups allows people to participate fully and feel engaged (Bunker & Alban, 1997). Individual group members can see a connection between their individual efforts in the small group and the overall group outcomes, a link likely to reduce social loafing. Additionally, Bunker and Alban (1997) claim that having small groups interacting within a large group setting substantially reduces the likelihood of ‘contagion of affect’ aspects emerging.

A third principle of LGI design is to work with various dynamics. Sometimes chaos can occur in LGI-based work conferences (Bunker & Alban, 1997). Groups can generate confusing and contradictory information (Weisbord & Janoff, 2000) and, consequently, participants may get overwhelmed by all the data they have collected, or by having made an inventory, and realized how much needs to be changed or done in the organization. Following moments of chaos, information overload, and confusion, the next step in the process is to provide structure and clarity. Participants, for example, may be asked to analyze, prioritize, and select data (Bunker & Alban, 1997). The idea of LGI is to provide enough structure to prevent going backwards, but not so much as to foreclose on real learning and development in the group. By ‘allocating worry’ in appropriate amounts, the group can progress (Gilmore & Barnett, 1992).

Fourthly, Weisbord and Janoff (2000) argue that conferences should offer various work forms to involve participants that have different ways of learning. Some people are, for example, visually focused, while others are more auditory. To acknowledge and connect with these different strengths, Weisbord and Janoff (2000) work with different work forms in their Future Search conferences.

Even though LGI are said to build mutual understanding, commitment, and learning, and to stimulate rapid action when diverse stakeholders are involved (Bunker & Alban, 1992a, 1992b, 1997; Polanyi, 2001; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000), Polanyi (2001) nevertheless observed that there was little research available on the richness of the human interaction or the effectiveness of LGIs. He (2001) therefore carried out an assessment of a Future Search conference. The Future Search method, designed by Weisbord and Janoff, is defined by Polanyi (2001) as “a large group, participatory planning process aimed at building common directions for action on complex social issues” (p.466). A Future Search conference generally lasts two and half days and is designed to let sixty (or more) diverse - and often conflicting - stakeholders work towards shared ground and action (Polanyi, 2001; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000). Polanyi (2001) found that participants at the conference needed greater clarity about what to expect. They were unsure of both what was expected of them, as well as of what they themselves could expect from the process. Furthermore, Polanyi (2001) reported that participants of the Future Search conference were unclear about what common ground existed within the group. He therefore proposed using clearer criteria about what constitutes common ground. Despite this lack of clarity concerning common ground, Polanyi's study (2001) did suggest that the Future Search method has the potential to build common ground when bringing together a group of diverse parties.

4.6.3 Collaborative leadership

Traditional leadership theory often focuses on situations in which the goals and strategies are specified, the groups are somewhat homogeneous, and the leaders take decisive actions. However, collaborative initiatives, on the other hand, are characterized by unclear goals and strategies, significant complexity and ambiguousness, and diverse groups (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Huxham & Vangen, 2000b, 2005; Schrijver, 2011). Chrislip and Larson (1994) studied fifty-two instances of successful collaboration and found another form of leadership that could be characterized by the varied roles and tasks, which they refer to as collaborative leadership. The concept of collaborative leadership has similarities to what others have called transforming, servant, facilitative, or democratic leadership (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Huxham & Vangen, 2005).

The collaborative leadership perspective is considered relevant for this study for three reasons. First, collaborative initiatives often cross many boundaries (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). Participants come from many different organizations and institutions, from the private and public sectors, and from the broader community. Consequently, there are many different values represented in the group, and participants vary in relevant training and experiences. I see the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform as very much fitting this description: it was a collaborative process across organizational boundaries in which citizens and the national government worked together to address a public issue. Chrislip and Larson

(1994) moreover claim that collaborative leaders lack a stereotypical managerial role based on formal power or authority. Collaborative leadership is primarily focused on the success of the collaborative effort, rather than on individual leaders taking decisive actions. The staff of the Assembly had a leading role, but this role was supposedly facilitative and neutral. Moreover, the staff did not have decisive authority. In other words, the role of the staff was not based on a formal position of power (power based on a person's title, role, or position in a functional structure).

Secondly, Chrislip and Larson (1994) argue that the strategies required to achieve results in situations demanding collaboration are often unclear. Usually, the problems are complex: there is little agreement on the problem itself, let alone on possible solutions or how to proceed. I view the situation of the Assembly as rather ambiguous: the task was complex (see Chapter 3) and the process unclear, both before and during the Assembly's period of operation.

Thirdly, leadership in collaboration activities does not rely on content and subject-matter expertise in the same way as other leadership approaches in clearer situations tend to (Chrislip and Larson, 1994). Rather collaborative leaders promote and safeguard the collaborative process, and rely on the group to work with the content and substance of the issues. The questions that collaborative leaders face have no given answers, only the answers that the group can agree upon. Their task is to ensure that the process is constructive and leads to results, not to impose their own answers on collective issues. This situation can also be seen in the Assembly; the staff made information on electoral systems available, but the Assembly deliberated on the content and came up with advice.

Chrislip and Larson (1994) see the role of leadership in collaboration as to engage others by designing constructive processes for working together, to convene appropriate stakeholders, and to facilitate and sustain their interaction. "If you bring the appropriate people together (being broadly inclusive) in constructive ways (creating a credible, open process) with good information (bringing about a shared understanding of problems and concerns), they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the organization or community" (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p.146).

Leadership across organizational boundaries has not been researched that intensively (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, Schrijver, 2011). However, researchers other than Chrislip and Larson have studied this theme, for example Huxham and Vangen (2005) and Schrijver and Vansina (2008). Huxham and Vangen focused specifically on how leadership does, or could, play a role in the shaping and implementation of collaborative agendas. They write about what 'makes things happen' in a collaboration. One of the concerns of Schrijver and Vansina (2008) is how to work with the whole system and create conditions for the various parties to come to a common problem definition and a strategy to deal with it. According to them, it is important to bring all the relevant stakeholders together and to proactively legitimize the presence of all parties, including those that are small or relatively powerless. Parties that have a stake in the collaboration (and its outcomes) and are not invited or are, but are then neglected, may block the process. However, bringing all the parties together in large

group meetings is not enough to ensure collaboration. Schrijver and Vansina (2008) refer to the importance of working with underlying dynamic processes and having real differences in roles and tasks during these meetings. They argue that a large group meeting “can backfire if it is used as a kind of illusory participation tool thatonly goes through the motions at the surface level” (p.401). Moreover, working across organizational boundaries involves working with complexity on the interorganizational and interpersonal levels. Schrijver and Vansina (2008) stress that if the focus is too strongly placed on the interorganizational relationships, and so representing the interests of one’s own party, it may become difficult to develop interpersonal relationships. However, good interpersonal relationships that are built at the expense of representing one’s constituency are also unlikely to result in success. In order to address the quality of the relationships and create conditions for collaboration, multiparty interactions have to be facilitated according to Schrijver and Vansina (2008): “The establishment of ground rules helps in agreeing on some minimal principles that guide the interactions, such as interacting respectfully, accepting psychological equality despite role inequality, etcetera. Ground rules like this, jointly formulated, provide security and make behavior more predictable. When people stick to the ground rules this can be a basis for trust development. Other conditions for trust to develop pertain to not avoiding difficult issues yet helping the parties to explore these together... Further, it is important to pay attention to perceived fairness and equity.” (p.403). Furthermore, real collaboration means working with differences. According to Schrijver and Vansina (2008), only when these differences surface can ways forward be found. However, a natural tendency often exists to suppress differences (by exercising power or by conforming), or to ignore them. Some task conflict, that is a confrontation of different perspectives, ideas, resources, goals, identities etc., is an important condition for creativity and innovation to arise.

Leading collaboration is clearly not that simple! Collaborative leaders must be able to face a lot of ambiguity, uncertainty, and tensions without falling into a position of judging others, making black-and-white distinctions or categorizing as good or bad (Schrijver & Vansina, 2008). Schrijver (2005) attributes the following competences to a collaborative leader: a person with thorough psychological insight into themselves, others, relations, and organizational dynamics, and who can handle ambiguity and complexity, can deal with projected frustrations, can neutralize power differences, can handle conflicts, and can operate without having to rely on hierarchical authority.

4.7 Critical dynamics within the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform

In this chapter, a theoretical framework for addressing large group dynamics and working with large groups has been suggested. It has been argued that a ‘large group’ is a complex phenomenon and that, as a result, dynamics within large groups are more complex than those in small groups. Large groups can be quite destructive and regressive if one is not careful. Defensive mechanisms can easily emerge, both at the group level and within individual participants. However, large groups also offer an enormous potential for creativity, dialogue, and development. Strong emotions and the diversity found in the large group are said to generate energy for learning, change, and transformation. Moreover, a

large group is said to reflect society-at-large and can therefore be seen as an important tool for understanding society as a whole.

The framework developed in this chapter will be used in an attempt to get a deeper understanding of the group dynamics that appeared in the Citizens' Assembly, in order to discover how these dynamics have influenced the effectiveness of this citizen assembly and what that means in terms of facilitating similar large groups. The research questions that reflect this objective are presented below.

4.7.1 Research questions addressed in this study

In this study, I am interested in exploring the specific group situation of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform in an attempt to get a deeper understanding of how the Citizens' Assembly's outcome was affected by critical dynamics, and how these dynamics were dealt with by the staff. Given the nature of this study's objective and research question, interpretive research is conceptually seen as the most relevant approach since interpretive research is focused on understanding and interpreting the meaning of behavior in social situations (see Chapter 5). No specific hypotheses are therefore tested in this study. Instead, some sub-questions are formulated based on the relevant theoretical perspectives presented in this chapter:

- a. *How were the Assembly's dynamics affected by context?* This question will be addressed in Section 6.2.
- b. *How were the Assembly's dynamics affected by diversity?* This question will be addressed in Section 6.3.
- c. *How were the Assembly's dynamics affected by size?* This question will be addressed in Section 6.4.
- d. *How was the Assembly's outcome (proposal and process) affected by its critical dynamics?* This question will be addressed in Section 6.6.2.

Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research strategy for the study is first presented. Following this, the various methods for data collection are described and, where applicable, the method used in selecting respondents is explained. Finally, the data analysis and quality of the research are addressed.

5.2 Research strategy

This section explains that this study is considered as an interpretive study, using a flexible design.

5.2.1 An interpretive stance

Social scientists have different perspectives on what it means to understand the social world. Rather than a positivistic stance, in which it is argued that there is 'a truth' or an objective reality, this study predominantly adopts an interpretive stance (Bailey, 1996; Geertz, 1973; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2006; Swanborn, 1994). The interpretive perspective argues that there is no objective reality independent of the social meaning given to it by those in the setting (Geertz, 1973). Moreover, the interpretive model assumes that people in a shared setting may not even experience the social reality in the same way (Bailey, 1996). The task of the researcher is therefore to understand the multiple social interpretations of meaning. To acquire multiple perspectives, several research methods, such as observations and interviews, are used in interpretive studies (Robson, 2002). Interpretive researchers often participate in the situation being studied: they try to interpret developments from inside the situation, as well as from the perspectives of the participants ('t Hart, Van Dijk, De Goede, Jansen & Teunissen, 2003). The belief is that it is through inductive reasoning that a researcher may reveal meaning to events and issues that arise.

This study's objective is: *to gain a deeper understanding of the group dynamics in the Citizens' Assembly in order to discover how these dynamics have influenced the effectiveness of this citizen assembly and what that means in terms of facilitating similar large groups.* Given the nature of this objective, interpretive research is conceptually seen as the most relevant approach since interpretive research is focused on understanding and interpreting the meaning of behavior in social situations ('t Hart et al. 2003; Swanborn, 1994). In other words, interpretive (and often qualitative) research tries to give meaning to behavior, rather than just detecting or observing it like many positivist (often quantitative) research methods.

To position the stance of this study more clearly, Swanborn's (1994) overview of traditional contradictions in social research is presented below. On the left side of the table, characteristics of the positivistic tradition are listed and, on the right side, characteristics of the naturalistic, constructivist, interpretive tradition are presented. I should emphasize here that Swanborn uses this overview to

introduce the development of, and approaches to, social science; as such he deliberately compares two extreme positions. The two traditions have influenced each other over time, and several 'compromise' approaches to research can today be found. Current approaches in social sciences include positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, critical approaches, realism, and naturalism (see Robson, 2002 for a description of these approaches).

Table 6: Traditional contradictions in social sciences (Swanborn, 1994, p.341)

Quantitative	Qualitative
Natural sciences	Social and humanity sciences
Positivistic	Naturalistic
From outside, seen through the microscope	From inside, seen through the eyes of the respondents
Objective	Subjective
'Erklärend'	'Verstehend'
Causal explaining	Explaining through the respondents' meanings and interpretations
Structure-focused	Process-focused
Survey, experiment	Participating observation, unstructured interviews, documents
Variable language	Normal language
Hard	Soft

Even though this study adopts a predominately interpretive stance, it does not rigidly follow one specific approach. In practice, qualitative research designs can embed quantitative data collection methods. As with Robson (2002), who introduced the term flexible research design, I advocate a pragmatic, flexible approach that focuses on what works best for the particular research problem at hand. The flexible research design develops during the process of data collection and analysis, and involves almost always the collection of qualitative data, but can also involve collection of quantitative data⁴². Hence, labeling research designs in 'quantitative' versus 'qualitative' terms is not seen as useful. Robson is not the only author that has discussed the positioning of research designs; similarly

⁴² Alternatively, fixed design research is a research strategy where the research design is fixed (i.e. highly pre-specified) prior to the main phase of data collection and almost always involves the collection of quantitative data and the use of statistical analysis (Robson, 2002).

Miles and Huberman (1984), Swanborn (1994), and others claim that the history of research shows shifts from 'either - or' to 'both - and' formulations.

To summarize, I consider this study to be an interpretive study, using a flexible research design. Maybe because of this 'free' positioning, I have attached value to adopting 'a scientific attitude' (Robson, 2002) while carrying out this research project. Robson describes three elements involved in having a scientific attitude (p.18): the research is carried out systematically, skeptically, and ethically. As these three elements are included in this study, their meaning is explained in the table below. The right-hand column indicates the section in which each element is applied in this study.

Table 7: Elements of a scientific attitude (Robson, 2002, p. 18)

Element	Robson's explanation	Further discussed in...
Systematic	Giving serious thought to what you are doing, and how and why you are doing it; in particular, being explicit about the nature of observations that are made, the circumstances in which they are made and the role you take in them.	Sections 5.2.3 and 5.2.4
Skeptical	Subjecting your ideas to possible rejection and also subjecting your observations and conclusions to scrutiny (by yourself initially, then by others).	Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2
Ethical	Following a code of conduct in the research which ensures that the interests and concerns of those taking part in, or possibly affected by, the research are safeguarded.	Section 5.4.3

5.2.2 Flexible design

Following Robson's reasoning, this study has a 'flexible' design with both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods being used. Robson (2002) discusses three influential design traditions within flexible design research: case studies, ethnographic studies, and grounded-theory studies. Even though this study can be placed in the ethnographic tradition (see below), its design is not purely ethnographic. Combining elements from several design traditions has been useful in this study of the Citizens' Assembly. Apart from the ethnographic tradition, influences from action research (see below) and the psychodynamic tradition (see below) can be found in this research project. All three design traditions (ethnographic, action research, and psychodynamic) are termed subjective processes. Generally, one can say that, in subjective processes, participants or respondents are not seen as just a source of information, and the researcher is not seen as just an objective observer. Rather, the assumption is that the subjectivity of the researcher inevitably generates data about what is going on in the system (see also Section 5.2.1).

Below, the underlying principles of the three traditions are briefly introduced in order to explain the characteristics that were used in the research design. Then, in Sections 5.2.3 and 5.2.4 respectively, how the ethnographic and action research traditions were applied in this study is explained in more

detail. The psychodynamic approach is not discussed in greater depth because its underlying principles were only used during observations and data analysis, and not in the study's overall design.

5.2.2.1 Ethnographic tradition

The roots of ethnographic studies lay in the field of cultural anthropology and sociology. Originally, ethnography was seen as involving an immersion in the particular culture of the social group or society being studied, so that life in that particular community could be described in detail (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2006; Miller, Hengst & Wang, 2003; Robson, 2002). A central characteristic of this tradition is that people are studied over a long period in their own natural environment. The idea behind this is that, in order to truly grasp the experience of people from their point of view, one has to enter into relationships with them. The goal of ethnographic studies is often to produce 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973, and see Section 5.4.1.2), which allows others to understand the culture from within. In classical ethnography, the researcher may be in the field for several years. Nowadays, this is viewed as unrealistic in many research situations. Here, one may refer to the ethnographic approach, rather than to full-scale ethnography (Robson, 2002)⁴³. Modern ethnography is said to be characterized by observation and in-depth interviewing, but researchers often remain in a unique position to 'speak across cultures' on behalf of the group being studied (Miller et al., 2003). All researchers should therefore also be aware of their own history, training, personality, and status characteristics that they bring to the research setting (Bailey, 1996)⁴⁴. What is ultimately learnt from ethnography is based on the subjective understanding and interpretation of the researcher. It is therefore important that the researcher is open-minded and curious, rather than just looks for what they expect to find (Bailey, 1996; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2006).

The research design of this study is not purely ethnographic. That is, in the Citizens' Assembly, meaning is not only understood to be structured by culture; that is, by collectively shared and transmitted symbols, understandings, and ways of being, as would be the case in a pure ethnographic approach (Miller et al., 2003). However, the characteristics and the methods of ethnography described above were found useful in describing and understanding the Assembly's 'group dynamic situation'. To emphasize that, while this study's design is placed in the ethnographic tradition, it does not focus on culture as such, and that I do not have a background in cultural anthropology, I use the term field research from now on. The terms ethnography and ethnographic study (developed by cultural anthropologists) are often used interchangeably with field research and the choice of terms is said to be more an artifact of disciplinary training than a genuine methodological difference (Bailey, 1996).

⁴³ From now on, when I use the term ethnography I am referring to the ethnographic approach, rather than to full-scale ethnography.

⁴⁴ In order to be transparent about the perspectives that were brought into this research project, my professional background is described in CV.

5.2.2.2 Action research tradition

Generally, action research can be described as a practical-oriented, or applied, research strategy to study actions and change, usually in participative processes with the participants concerned (Boog, Slagter, Jacobs-Moonen & Meijering, 2005; Greenwood & Levin, 1998). However, Eden and Huxham (2006) comment that the field is confused, with a myriad of terms and approaches used in connection with action research (for example participatory research, appreciative inquiry, and process management). They posit that the distinguishing feature of research-oriented action research, compared to other research methods, is “the involvement by the researcher with members of organizations over matters that are of genuine concern to them and over which they intend to take action together with is a primary commitment by the researcher to advance a field of knowledge in a manner that has some general implications” (p.393). According to Eden and Huxham, this implies two important things: firstly, the declaration of intent to change will create tensions that will reveal a particular form of data; and, secondly, the researcher will analyze this data to both inform action and develop knowledge. In other words, action research is thus likely to produce insights which cannot be gleaned in any other way (Eden & Huxham, 2006). By being in the system, and trying to change things, the researcher gets a deeper insight into the complexity of the system, which might not have been possible in other ways.

Characteristics of action research, such as being in the system, trying to change things, involving a participative process, and gaining insights into the complexity of the system, were all useful in the design of this study. Its underlying principles were used in a very practice-oriented way during meetings of the Assembly's staff (of which I was a part-time member). Section 5.2.4 further describes how characteristics of action research were applied in evaluating and designing the Assembly's weekend meetings. However, it would be wrong to view this study as pure action research. Firstly, because data collection and analysis during the staff meetings was not carried out sufficiently systematically to warrant this description. Secondly, because the objective of this study is to create a deeper understanding of the group dynamics of the Assembly (of which the staff were clearly a part), rather than developing knowledge (and theory) about working with a large assembly, although this to an extent was the relevance of the exercise. And thirdly, because not all stakeholders who participated in the project were allowed to express their opinion and influence the process. For example, Assembly members and externals were not invited to the staff meetings.

5.2.2.3 Psychodynamic tradition

Psychodynamic research focuses on both the manifest and the latent meaning of experiences. The researcher tries to bring the subjective experience of the respondents to the surface and interpret the meaning of these experiences. The aim is to understand phenomena in their full complexity (Prins, 2006). A psychodynamic researcher listens with a ‘third ear’ to the participants and pays attention to the ‘hidden music’ in the stories (Gilmore & Krantz, 1985; Prins, 2006). As such, the researcher has to be sensitive to both the manifest and the underlying dynamics. Observations therefore cover aspects such as the energy level, silence, things that are not said, and non-verbal cues. Moreover, the

researcher needs to 'listen' both to the other and to the self (Gardner, 1989; Prins, 2006). By so doing, the self becomes an instrument in sensing and exploring. The reasoning behind this view is that the researcher might well be experiencing what others are experiencing. Psychodynamic research therefore requires self-reflection: the researcher needs to be aware of their own emotions, nervousness, tiredness, boredom, etc., and should be careful in making assumptions and explorations.

Characteristics that reflect the psychodynamic tradition were used while observing the Assembly. Reflections were noted in the 'third column' of my notebook while observing (see Section 5.3.1.1). Moreover, in my role as a researcher, I was able to position myself 'in and out' of certain settings so as to be in touch with the emotional dynamics. Data analysis also included a psychodynamic perspective.

5.2.3 Field research in the Assembly

A common strategy in interpretive research is field research ('t Hart et al., 2003), a research method in which the researcher is situated within the field being studied. The researcher participates in the daily life of the group or social system under study (Bailey, 1996; Swanborn, 1994). The objective of field research is to describe, interpret, and explain phenomena that are observed in a group or social system. Given this objective, field research usually has a descriptive character and is particularly useful in studying longer-term social processes. That is, the field researcher continuously participates in the field and can consequently develop an understanding of behaviors, events, and interactions occurring within the social system (Bailey, 1996; 't Hart et al., 2003; Swanborn, 1994). Field research is a particularly useful research strategy when there is little theory or knowledge available about the research problem, for example because the situation is very specific. Other reasons for using field research are that a study lacks a concrete problem definition ('t Hart et al., 2003; Swanborn, 1994) and that flexibility is needed (Bailey, 1996). Both these arguments for using field research apply to the current work. Firstly, theory on working with group dynamics in large groups, such as the Citizens' Assembly, was limited as outlined in the introductory chapter of this thesis. Secondly, the problem definition was not very specific at the start of this study. The objective of gaining a deeper insight into the effect of group dynamics in the Assembly implied a descriptive study in which the large group dynamics within this particular group were explored, as well as how these dynamics were dealt with by the staff. To find out how large group dynamics might have influenced the effectiveness of the Assembly, the observed group dynamics have not only to be described, but also interpreted. In that way, this study hopes to discover the implications of large group dynamics in terms of facilitating large groups, such as the Citizens' Assembly. Thus, the main purpose of this study is not to generate theory, as is often the goal in case study research (Yin, 2009). Rather, this study aims to create a deeper understanding of the behavior in the Assembly.

Below, Table 8 sets out the main characteristics of field research. The second row indicates how these characteristics were related to this study.

Table 8: Main characteristics of field research ('t Hart et al., 2003).

	What?	Where?	Who?	How?
Field research	Behavior, views, incidents, interactions	Field	One or more groups	Various methods, triangulation
Field research in the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform	Large group dynamics Working with the Citizens' Assembly	Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform	The Citizens' Assembly including its various subgroups (both ad-hoc and semi-permanent)	Various methods (see Section 5.3), triangulation

One of the characteristics of field research given in the table above is the use of various methods for data collection. By using multiple methods, it is argued, the field to be studied can be looked upon from different views and perspectives. This technique is called triangulation ('t Hart et al., 2003; Swanborn, 1994) and is used to increase the quality of field research (see Section 5.4.2).

5.2.3.1 Role and position of the researcher

Field researchers are typically in the field when doing their research. By becoming 'immersed' in the situation, they can put themselves in the situation of the participants or respondents, and better understand their situation (Bailey, 1996; 't Hart et al., 2003). To be able to participate in the field that is to be studied, researchers have to take on a role or position. Various choices can be made when filling the research role, depending on the research objectives and also on the practical possibilities of both the research situation as well as the researcher himself.

One of the choices to be made in field research is to what extent the researcher participates in the activities ('t Hart et al., 2003). In the case of the Citizens' Assembly, there was no possibility to fully participate in the activities of the Assembly as I was not appointed as an Assembly member. Nevertheless, I had full access to all the activities of the Assembly members, both during as well as outside the weekend meetings. My role in Assembly activities varied from full observer, in for example plenary and subgroup sessions, to a more participative observer during breaks and other informal moments. However, these roles were not static; I remember for example, during a subgroup session in the second weekend meeting, that the facilitator asked me to help facilitating the rest of the session. In staff meetings, both during as well as outside the weekend meetings, my role was different than that during Assembly activities. I generally fully participated in staff meetings and as such had a similar role to the other staff members. This choice is explained in Section 5.2.4.

Another choice in field research is to what extent the research is announced to the participants in the field (Bailey, 1996; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2006; 't Hart et al., 2003). In the case of the Citizens' Assembly I made the choice, together with the chair and project secretary, to inform the Assembly members as well as the staff members about the research that I was carrying out. One of the reasons

for being open about the research was that we all considered it ethically irresponsible to hide the fact that observations were to be used for a PhD. Moreover, practically, it would be impossible to hide my dual role. As I was not a member of the Assembly, Assembly and staff members would soon wonder what I was doing in the project. During one of the first staff meetings I was briefly introduced to the other staff members as a researcher and as a confidant. When the chair introduced all staff members to the Assembly during the opening dinner at the first weekend meeting, the Assembly members were informed that I was studying the group's dynamics and the facilitation of the Citizens' Assembly, and that I had been appointed as confidant (see below) and consequently would be present at all weekend meetings. Members were also told that they could contact me personally about the research.

One of the problems that field researchers face at some stage is their degree of commitment toward the participants and the research theme ('t Hart et al., 2003). As the researcher puts themselves into the position of the participants and, in so doing, tries to get a deeper understanding of the situation, a certain degree of identification with the participants is inevitable (Bailey, 1996; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2006; 't Hart et al., 2003). In other words, the research method implies a certain degree of commitment. Moreover, field researchers need to make contact with key informants to gain access to certain data. These relationships can become intensive and sometimes emotional ('t Hart et al., 2003). In the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, I tried to be largely engaged in my role as a researcher, because I expected this attitude to be beneficial in understanding the participants' situation. However, I found it hard not to get excessively involved during the project. Sometimes the number and the diversity of the participants were overwhelming, and the processes, both among the Assembly members as well as within the project secretariat, were complex. Further, the relationships with key informants were intensive at times. In Section 5.4.2, I reflect on how my commitment might have influenced the data collection.

The final choice concerning the role of a field researcher to be discussed is what role the researcher should take. Most field researchers take a role that has both a 'field' as well as a 'research' element ('t Hart et al., 2003). My role in the Citizens' Assembly contained both elements. First, I had the role of a researcher and, secondly, I was appointed as a confidant for the Assembly members. Members who had personal issues that hindered their Assembly work could consult me. The 'field' element of the confidant role gave me access to additional data, which could be used to deepen my understanding of the overall situation in the Citizens' Assembly. Moreover, I was, as a confidant, part of the staff and thus had access to staff activities that might have been otherwise inaccessible had I only a research role. However, the role of confidant had implications for my role as a researcher. There were, for example, moments when someone would contact me, in my role as confidant, while I was observing interesting incidents in the large group in my role as researcher. At those moments, I had to prioritize my responsibilities as a confidant. Moreover, I can imagine that my 'double' role as confidant and researcher might well have confused the Assembly members, as well as the staff members, in certain situations. I will return to this issue in Chapter 7. The implications of this 'double' role for the quality of the data collected is discussed in Section 5.4.2.

The choices made concerning my role and position as a researcher in the Citizens' Assembly are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9: Outline of my research role in the Citizens' Assembly

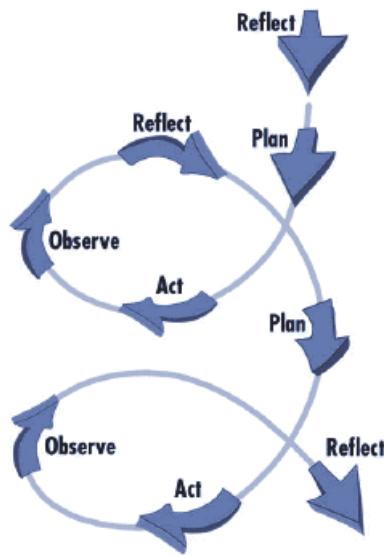
Choices to be made in field research	Choices made for the research into the Citizens' Assembly
Degree of participation	Assembly activities: Full observer, active observer Staff activities: Full participant
Degree of announcing	Assembly activities: Open research Staff activities: Open research
Degree of commitment	Assembly activities: Large commitment Staff activities: Large commitment
Role	Assembly activities: Researcher, confidant Staff activities: Researcher, staff member

5.2.4 Action research in the staff setting

Field research is usually used to study single projects and the research results are usually only made available once the project studied has been completed. Then, the whole situation can be reflected upon and the broader picture drawn. This way of working in field research also has a disadvantage: insights gained during the research can only be used afterwards, and thus in other projects, and there the circumstances might be very different (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2006; 't Hart, et al., 2003; Swanborn, 1994). In the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, it was desirable that research data were accessible while the Assembly was active, so that adjustments could be made if the research gave good reason. Consequently, field research was not the only research strategy adopted in this study. To be able to work with the data in the 'here and now', action research was applied as a second research strategy during the Assembly's period of operation. By using action research as a strategy, I could study the staff's leadership while the Assembly was active, and also reflect and act upon it together with the staff.

Action research usually follows a cyclic process of acting and learning (Boog, et al., 2005; 't Hart et al., 2003; Swanborn, 1994). The cyclic process starts by reflecting upon a situation or action. After the reflection, certain actions and interventions are planned to improve or change the situation. The planned actions are then carried out and observed, after which reflection again follows. The cycle then starts again, with new actions and interventions planned, and so on. This cyclic process is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The cyclic process of action research (<http://withfriendship.com/user/sathvi/action-research.php>, April, 2011)



This cyclic process of action research can be observed in this study. I observed the staff's leadership during the weekend meetings of the Assembly. Reflection and planning then took place in evaluation sessions together with the staff. After each weekend meeting, two types of evaluation were planned. First, I would meet with the chair and the project secretary to share my observations of the preceding weekend⁴⁵. The three of us reflected together and discussed whether the improvements and interventions proposed in our previous meeting had been successful. Moreover, we discussed whether any new adjustments and interventions concerning facilitation and group dynamics were needed for the Assembly's next weekend meeting. An example of an adjustment planned in these evaluation meetings was a reduction in subgroup size. Besides these three-party gatherings, a second evaluation took place. This evaluation session, organized by the secretariat, would be scheduled after I had met the chair and the secretary. In these evaluation meetings involving all the staff, my observations were not the focus. Each staff member (including the chair and myself) shared their perspectives on the previous weekend meeting. On the basis of that inventory, we reflected together upon the way in which the Assembly had worked on its task and decided if any improvements or adjustments should be made in the program design for the following weekend meeting. The two evaluations had different objectives. My meetings with the chair and secretary were primarily focused on how to work with the group dynamics that were emerging during the process, whereas the evaluation meetings with the project secretariat were mostly intended to evaluate the overall weekend meetings, including logistical and content-based issues.

⁴⁵ Some of these evaluations were not held face-to-face as it was sometimes impossible to meet for practical reasons. In these cases, I emailed a summary of my observations to the chair and secretary and, afterwards, had a telephone discussion with the Chair.

5.3 Data collection methods

As noted above, the empirical data⁴⁶ for this study were collected both during and after the period when the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform was working on its task. The methods that are described in this section are therefore divided into two subsections. Those methods that were used to collect data while the Citizens' Assembly was active are described first. Then, the methods used after the Assembly's period of operation follow in Section 5.3.2.

5.3.1 Data collection during the Assembly's period of operation

The different forms of data collection used during the Assembly's period of operation are listed in Table 10. Data that were collected using these methods were then analyzed and used by the staff to adjust and intervene in the facilitation process (see also Section 5.2.4). Below the table, each form of data collection is described in more detail.

Table 10: Overview of data collection methods used during the Assembly's period of operation

Data collection method	Sources of data
Observations	Weekend meetings 1-10
Consultations (in role as confidant)	Weekend meetings 1-10
Documents	Material prepared prior to weekend meetings, flip charts - weekend meetings 7 and 10, reports from student assistants - diary trainee weekends 2-5, evaluation forms - weekends 1-9
Conversations	Chair, staff members, Assembly members, external parties
Notes	Evaluation meetings with chair and secretary, evaluation meetings with project secretariat

5.3.1.1 Observations

During all the weekend meetings I observed the plenary sessions and some subgroup sessions of the Assembly to gain a deeper understanding about how the Assembly worked together as a unit and what kinds of dynamics consequently arose. I tried to be open to all kinds of incidents and phenomena as I did not know what would, or would not, influence the group's dynamics: I observed the physical surroundings (lighting, color, smell, sound, objects, weather, and temperature) and nonverbal and verbal behaviors (such as body language, verbal behaviors, characteristics of speech and speakers, energy levels, silence, and what was not being talked about) (Bailey, 1998; Gilmore & Krantz, 1985; Prins, 2006).

⁴⁶ I use the term 'data' although I realize that this term, to some, might imply a more positivistic approach.

During the plenary sessions, I observed from various positions on the side. I sat on a stool to be able to look over the crowd. My observing positions in the subgroup sessions varied; depending on what I considered the least disturbing for the participants, I sometimes stood on one side, and sometimes I sat on a chair within the group.

I observed all the Assembly's plenary sessions. I could naturally not be simultaneously present in all the subgroup sessions, when workshop rounds were being held. My general approach was therefore to visit a few subgroups in each workshop round so that I could get an impression of the different groups and therefore avoid collecting data biased toward any particular subgroup. I randomly selected the subgroups to be observed unless I was expecting something especially interesting, such as a conflict, to occur in a certain subgroup, or I had been told that something special had just happened in a particular group. In those cases, I first decided to attend that particular subgroup, and then selected one or two others at random. Occasionally, I would visit all the subgroups very briefly in a workshop period rather than focusing on a selected few.

I registered all my observations directly in a notebook that I took with me to all the activities I attended in the weekend meetings. My notebook was divided into three columns; one for observations about group dynamics, one for observations about leadership and facilitation, and one for my own thoughts, reflections, and feelings. Section 5.2.2.3 explains why this 'third column' was relevant for this study. After each weekend meeting I made a summary of my observations. This summary was then discussed in the evaluation meetings I had with the chair and project secretary.

5.3.1.2 Consultations (in my role as confidant)

Most Assembly members who consulted me in my role as confidant contacted me during the weekend meetings. In some cases, we talked directly about the problem they were experiencing, in others we made an appointment to talk at another time, either during the weekend meeting or afterwards. There were, however, also members who contacted me between the weekend meetings (\approx 45 such contacts in total⁴⁷), of these approximately 60 percent were in the form of an email, and the remainder by phone. Conversations with these members were generally held immediately they contacted me.

The length and nature of the consultations varied. Some conversations took only a few minutes, whereas others lasted for more than an hour. Some problems that were discussed were very straightforward, while others were more complex. Further, the members had different needs. Some just wanted to share their problem, while others wanted advice or help in another form. There were also situations in which members just wanted to share their private problems (\approx 25 percent of the conversations held during the weekend meetings) rather than discussing a problem that was directly hindering their work within the Assembly.

⁴⁷ Twenty-four of these reactions were made on May 13th/14th 2006 (immediately after weekend meeting 4) and concerned feedback on that meeting.

I kept a list of these consultations so as to gain an overview of the various problems that members had in dealing with the Assembly. During the evaluation meetings with the chair and project secretary, I indicated the number of contacts that I had received. When I found it necessary, we anonymously discussed some of the consultations, for example those conversations that involved criticism of the staff's performance. The number of consultations held during each weekend meeting can be found in Table 11. The themes discussed during the consultations are listed in Appendix 12.

Table 11: Number of consultations held during each weekend meeting

Weekend meeting	Number of consultations held
Weekend meeting 1	17
Weekend meeting 2	11
Weekend meeting 3	5
Weekend meeting 4	11
Weekend meeting 5	10
Weekend meeting 6	20
Weekend meeting 7	16
Weekend meeting 8	17
Weekend meeting 9	18
Weekend meeting 10	5+ ⁴⁸

5.3.1.3 Documents

I also collected data and background information from various documents that were produced by both the Assembly members as well as by the staff. An example of the sort of documents produced by the staff were the weekend programs sent to the Assembly members prior to each weekend meeting. These documents provided me with background information about the various electoral systems, and this helped me to understand discussions in the Assembly. An example of the material produced by the Assembly members and collected is the flipcharts from weekends 7 (see Appendix 13) and 10 (see Appendix 14). At the start of weekend meeting 7, which followed the summer break, the Assembly members were asked to list, on large flipchart sheets, their motives for participating in the Assembly, their expectations for the coming period concerning teamwork, their expectations concerning the Assembly's results, and other thoughts, wishes, and ideas. This 'assessment' offered

⁴⁸ Even though I only registered five consultations during the final weekend meeting, I held many more conversations. These consultations were unfortunately not logged due to lack of time.

additional information on what was going on in the group. At the end of weekend meeting 10, the members had to work on a debriefing assignment. They had to create their own subgroups, with a minimum of ten and a maximum of twenty participants, and were asked to share and discuss their positive and negative experiences from the last nine months (the length of the entire project). Each subgroup was joined by a staff member, who also participated in the assignment. The assignment was intended to help the Assembly members in processing their experiences and concluding the Assembly process. The flipchart sheets from the subgroups provided an overview of those positive experiences, and criticisms that remained at the end of weekend 10.

Moreover, I collected all the reports that the student assistants made regarding the plenary and subgroup sessions of the Assembly. In these reports, the discussions that took place in the plenary and subgroup sessions were summarized. The student assistants were asked to make these reports so that Assembly members who missed a meeting could be informed about the topics that had been discussed in the Assembly. After each weekend meeting, these reports were placed on the Assembly's intranet. I used the reports to supplement my own observations. Furthermore, the trainee that also worked as a staff member wrote a personal diary during weekends 2, 3, 4, and 5. In this, the trainee shared his experiences during, and reflections about, the weekend meetings. These documents were made available to me.

Additionally, I collected the results of all the evaluation forms sent out after each of the first nine weekends (see Appendix 15-22). These evaluation forms were designed by the staff and sent out to the members directly after each weekend meeting. Questions in the evaluation forms concerned logistics and organization, as well as the design of the weekend meeting, the facilitation by the chairs, and collaboration within the Assembly. The results of these evaluation forms were collated by the staff and shared in their evaluation meeting. By accessing the results of the evaluation forms, I obtained quantitative data that supplemented the qualitative data that I collected myself. Table 12 indicates how many members completed an evaluation form after each weekend meeting.

Table 12: Evaluation forms responses

Evaluation form on meeting	Responding members
Weekend meeting 1	53
Weekend meeting 2	76
Weekend meeting 3	75
Weekend meeting 4	101
Weekend meeting 5	72
Weekend meeting 6	31

Weekend meetings 7 & 8	⁴⁹	64
Weekend meeting 9	⁵⁰	62

5.3.1.4 Conversations

As described in Section 5.2.3.1, I operated as an active observant during Assembly activities other than plenary and subgroup sessions. This means that I also held conversations in which I asked questions that could deepen my understanding about the situation in the Assembly (for example: how are you?, why did you make that contribution?). Nevertheless, during most conversations, members shared things with me on their own initiative. These conversations provided me with additional data. The conversations I held during the Assembly's period of operation had an informal character and the talks varied in length. Some only lasted a few minutes, while others were longer, sometimes up to half an hour.

I had various conversations with the chair during and between weekend meetings. Moreover, we had a longer conversation in the form of an interview during the summer break. This interview took place roughly halfway through the Assembly's period of operation, so that we could both look back upon the past months, as well as look ahead to the months to come. Further, the interview was deliberately planned for a quiet period, so that we would have time to reflect extensively. We spoke about the Assembly as a group, the organization of the project as a whole, the chair's tasks and role within the staff, the chair's leadership and facilitation, and my tasks and roles as both a researcher and the confidant.

In addition to conversations with the chair, I also talked on a regular basis with staff members about how they thought things were going in the Assembly and with the project secretariat. I was mostly in touch with the policy staff because I spent more preparatory meetings with them than with other staff members, and they also approached me most during and between the weekend meetings.

Furthermore, I had conversations with various Assembly members. Besides the spontaneous contacts that arose during the weekend meetings, I kept contact with eight members on an ongoing basis. I did not select these eight Assembly members at random, but chose them during weekend 1 because I felt that contact was quickly made and that the conversations were longer and more intense than with other members during that weekend meeting. As such, I thought it would be easier to maintain frequent contact. The potential bias in selecting on the basis of personal preference is discussed in Chapter 7. To keep the situation in the Assembly as natural as possible, I never told the eight

⁴⁹ Weekend 7 and 8 were evaluated using a combined evaluation form which was distributed after weekend 8.

⁵⁰ Weekend 10 was not evaluated.

Assembly members that they had a special role in my study. These eight members (four men and four women) provided me with field information about how things were going.

Finally, I held conversations with external parties who were involved in the Assembly's process. As these parties were collaborating with the Assembly on an external basis, they could provide other perspectives than those who were integrally involved.

Those parties that I had regular conversations with (the chair, the policy staff, and the eight Assembly members) are considered as the key informants of this study.

5.3.1.5 Notes

During the evaluation meetings with the chair and secretary, as well as with the project secretariat, I tried to make notes regarding observations and reflections shared by the other staff members. In that way, I tried to follow the staff's perspectives on the dynamics present in the Assembly. Moreover, the note-taking helped me to follow the staff's preparations in facilitating the Assembly. I did not, however, always have time to make extensive notes during evaluation meetings, as I was also a staff member and therefore needed to participate in the meetings. The notes as such do not therefore present a complete picture about the staff's perspectives and their preparation activities. The evaluation meetings were not recorded because I anticipated that the presence of a recorder would be disturbing.

5.3.2 Data collection after the Assembly's period of operation

The various forms of data collection employed after the Assembly's period of operation are listed in Table 13 and the methods described below.

Table 13: Overview of data collection methods after the Assembly's period of operation

Methods for data collection	Sources of data
Questionnaire	145 questions
Interviews	chair, secretariat staff, 6 external parties, 13 Assembly members, 3 ex-Assembly members
Focus groups	Staff of secretariat, student assistants, Assembly members group 1, Assembly members group 2
Inventory success criteria	15 Stakeholders

5.3.2.1 Questionnaire

On November 11th 2006, directly after the final weekend meeting, I sent out a questionnaire to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire and covering letter were sent to all 137 Assembly members who had remained with the Assembly until it had finished its task. Five members had relinquished their membership during the Assembly's period of operation. Of those five people, one member dropped

out very close to the end but, as they had participated in nine weekend meetings, I decided to include that member in the questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was therefore sent to 138 people.

At the time I started processing the questionnaires, 131 people had returned their questionnaires, a response rate of ≈ 95%. People could include their name or return the questionnaire anonymously, and only five took the latter option.

The questionnaire consisted of 145 questions, of which nine were open. The questions in the questionnaire were divided into six categories and Table 14 lists these along with the number of open and closed questions in each. The questionnaire, as well as the covering letter can be found in Appendix 8. The questions were designed on the basis of the observations made during the Assembly's period of operation. Some questions were formulated positively and others negatively in an attempt to decrease bias. The draft questionnaire was sent to the chair and secretary for approval.

Table 14:

Table 14: Questionnaire categories and number of open and closed questions in each

Topic Category	Open questions	Closed questions
Chair		28 questions (five-point scale)
Project secretariat		14 questions (five-point scale)
Confidant and researcher		17 questions (five-point scale) 6 questions (two-point scale) 1 question (8 possible answers)
Group process	1 question	37 questions (five-point scale) 5 questions (two-point scale) 1 question (15 possible answers)
Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform	5 questions	20 questions (five-point scale) 1 question (5 possible answers)
Personal situation	3 questions	3 questions (2 possible answers) 1 question (5 possible answers) 1 question (6 possible answers) 1 question (8 possible answers)

5.3.2.2 Interviews

To deepen the qualitative data I had collected during the Assembly's period of operation, I interviewed several parties after the Assembly had finished its task. Interviews were held with the chair, the staff members (see Appendix 9), six external parties (see Appendix 10), thirteen Assembly members and three ex-Assembly members. All the interviews were unstructured. I prepared three general themes (the group process, leadership and facilitation, and the citizen assembly instrument) that I wished to talk about with the various parties. I asked general questions regarding those themes, and I made sure that the general themes were the same in all interviews. In that way, I could compare the answers and perspectives of the different parties. Further, I had some other general questions that depended on the position and role of the party concerned. The interviews were not recorded because I expected the parties to withhold information if their contribution would be taped. The length of the interviews varied from one hour to two and a half hours.

I visited the chair at her home, where we talked for two and a half hours. First, I asked my questions about the general themes (see above) and then we talked about her experiences and reflections. After two hours, I presented the main discussion points of the interview we had held during the summer break. I compared the answers from the summer interview with those given in the present interview. The last half hour of the interview was subsequently spent comparing the perspectives and expectations from the summer to what had actually happened, and reflecting on that.

The permanent staff members of the secretariat were interviewed in two interview rounds: the first round was held at the end of November 2006, the second in December 2006. In the first interview round, the Assembly's facilitation, the organization and communication within the project secretariat, and the citizen assembly instrument were discussed with the secretariat members individually. The conversations in the second round were focused on the dynamics within the group of Assembly members, and this time the members were interviewed in pairs. The reason for dividing these topics into two interview rounds was that I expected confidential information to arise regarding the Assembly's facilitation, and the organization and communication within the project secretariat, and therefore that it would be better to hold individual interviews in the first round. In the second interview round, I opted for joint interviews both to save time and in the expectation that the staff members could inspire one another, leading to new insights and perspectives. Holding joint interviews has potential downsides such as the interviewees influencing each other, or being intimidated by one another. I therefore asked the staff members in advance whether they had any objections to these joint interviews, and none did. Nevertheless, two staff members were not interviewed in pairs. One was a staff member that had been absent in the first interview round and I had a long conversation with her during the second interview round in which the themes of both interview rounds were touched upon. The other person interviewed individually was the secretary, and he was interviewed alone as he had no equivalent colleague in the project secretariat. The administrative assistants were not interviewed in the second round as they had not attended the weekend meetings of the Assembly. Note also that the student assistants were not included in either interview round as they were not part of the

permanent staff⁵¹. Appendix 9 includes an overview of which staff members were interviewed in each round.

I also interviewed the six main external parties that supported the Citizens' Assembly: the two lecturers and four external consultants. These interviews were held to gain greater insight into the observations and reflections of those who were involved on an external, but still intensive, basis. The parties interviewed are listed in Appendix 10 along with their roles in the Assembly and where and when the interviews took place.

I interviewed thirteen Assembly members (approximately ten percent of the number that were left when the Assembly finished its task). Rather than selecting thirteen members at random, I identified those members that I had spoken to least during the process and picked five out of that group. By talking with those members individually, I tried to reduce the likelihood of collecting too biased information. While interviewing these five members, I asked them to share their experiences and reflections on the Assembly. A second group of five members, I selected out of the list of members that I had spoken to regularly (again interviews were held individually). This gave me the possibility to deepen the information that I was already familiar with. Finally, three members approached me themselves and asked to be interviewed as a group. At this point, I considered the data gathering to be sufficient in the sense that no new information was forthcoming. Namely, all the information I was collecting during the interviews I had heard before, either during the period the Assembly was active, or through other data collecting methods carried out after the Assembly's period of operation had ended.

Five members resigned from the Assembly during its period of operation. I interviewed three of these to listen to their experiences and reflections, and to talk about why they had left the Assembly. Of the other two, one had moved abroad and could not be contacted, and the other had left after the first weekend meeting because of health problems. I did not contact this ex-member because I did not think it was appropriate or useful.

5.3.2.3 Focus groups

In November and December 2006, I organized four focus groups to collect more data about the dynamics that emerged within two main subgroups of the Assembly, namely the staff members and the Assembly members. The composition of the focus groups and the method used are described below.

During the Assembly's period of operation, I made two observations that I used when organizing the focus groups. The first observation was that the student assistants formed a subgroup within the group of staff members. I therefore organized a separate focus group for the professional staff members of the secretariat and one for the student assistants. The second observation I made was that there

⁵¹ An exception was the student who had a dual role as a junior member of the policy staff who was interviewed.

seemed to be a ‘core-group’ within the Assembly members - members that were more active and influential than others. Therefore, a third focus group was organized for these ‘core Assembly members’. To avoid selecting core members based only on my own observations, I asked five staff members and three Assembly members to list who they considered the most active and influential Assembly members. I merged those eight lists together with my own list and invited all the thirty-one members mentioned. The fourth and final focus group consisted of those Assembly members that I had spoken to least during the Assembly’s period of operation. In this way, I tried to include their perspectives and data, in case I had missed things during the process. An overview of the participants in the four focus groups can be found in Appendix 11.

I used the same working methods in all four focus groups so that the results could be compared. I started the sessions by asking the participants to describe those ‘Assembly moments’ that they found most characteristic, memorable, or striking⁵². This warming-up exercise was used to draw a general picture of the past nine months of the Assembly. After the introduction, I asked the participants to reflect on their period in the Assembly and, anonymously, to list their high points and complaints of any kind. Each point was to be written on a single post-it and placed individually on ‘the wall of joy’ or ‘the wall of complaints’. The idea was that the participants would not be influenced by their fellow participants. When all the post-its were on the ‘walls’, the participants were invited to take a look at both ‘walls’ and see what others had written. Those who became inspired by post-its from others could anonymously add further post-its. Participants were, however, not allowed to remove post-its that they had put up in the previous round. After this inventory exercise, I divided the participants into two subgroups. These subgroups were asked to cluster the post-its and categorize them. One subgroup was asked to cluster the post-its on the wall of joy, the other group to work with the wall of complaints. The groups were free to choose their own subcategories. After the clustering round, both subgroups were asked to present the sub-categories and contributions hanging on ‘their’ wall. During these presentations, all the participants were allowed to ask questions or comment on anything that was presented. I facilitated this discussion and ensured that both walls had equal presentation time. During the discussion round, I made notes on flipcharts. The focus groups were rounded off by asking the participants as a group whether they had some advice for a possible new citizen assembly, or whether they still wanted to add something else to the discussion⁵³.

5.3.2.4 Inventory success criteria

Success criteria were not mentioned in the Assembly’s process design, or in the Assembly’s process report. To get some insight into whether the Assembly was perceived as a successful experiment, I

⁵² Due to a lack of time, the warming-up exercise was omitted in the focus group of staff members

⁵³ The staff-member focus group was asked to offer advice for staff in a possible next assembly. The focus group of the “core” Assembly members was asked to offer advice to possible new Assembly members. In the focus groups for student assistants and for “less prominent” Assembly members, participants were asked whether they wanted to add anything to the discussion.

asked various stakeholders (see below) which success criteria they had been applying in their work with the instrument.

I asked the following question by email:

'What, in your perspective, were the requirements that the Citizens' Assembly should meet in order for the project to be considered successful?'

I tried to approach stakeholders that represented the broad spectrum of the Assembly by sending an email to thirty nine stakeholders: the chair, the secretary, the two lecturers, a member of the Committee of Experts (a professor of political science), the ex-Minister for Governance Renewal (Alexander Pechtold), two external parties and thirty-one randomly selected Assembly members. Of the selected Assembly members, only seven members responded (by email). In comparison, all the other stakeholders answered the question, either by email, telephone, or in a personal meeting. The results can be found in Appendix 25.

5.4 Data analysis and quality criteria

This section describes the process of data analysis, as well as the choices that were subsequently made. Further, the study's quality criteria and potential ethical issues are considered.

5.4.1 The process of analysis

Initially, the study's problem definition was not very specific, namely 'the description of large group dynamics in, and facilitation of, the Citizens' Assembly'. Immediately after the start of this study, the Citizens' Assembly began its task and therefore I did not have a lot of preparation time. As a result, the first step was to choose a research strategy that had a flexible character, so that I could start collecting data straight away but retain flexibility to develop the research question along the way. In this section, I describe how the process of collecting data, generating concepts, and interpreting the data was organized.

5.4.1.1 Data collection

Hammersley and Atkinson (2006) explain how fieldwork is a very demanding activity. As a result, engaging in sustained data analysis alongside collecting data is often very difficult. For this reason, the bulk of the data analysis in this study was carried out after the collection phase. However, in my role as an action researcher, I naturally 'analyzed' some of the data together with the staff as the project progressed. Although these 'analyzing processes' are not reported extensively, I did make notes during the meetings (see Section 5.3.1.5). As a consequence, these 'analyzing processes' have become data in themselves and are thus analyzed, together with all the other data, as part of the formal data analysis carried out after the project was concluded.

As already noted, I started collecting data without a theoretical framework due to the short preparation time available. This meant that I was not thoroughly familiar with the specific theory on large group dynamics or working with large groups. However, my professional background as an organizational consultant meant that I had worked with large groups myself, so I was able to use my ‘common sense and practical knowledge’ while observing.

The fact that I started this research project by collecting data clearly has some consequences. On the one hand, I could have overlooked relevant phenomena through lacking a full awareness of the theoretical context of large groups. Conversely, as I was not focused on certain concepts emerging, I could well have been more open to all kinds of phenomena.

During the data collection phase, I kept a chronological record with all the data filed under the particular weekend meeting to which they related. The data collected after the Assembly’s period of operation were similarly chronologically filed. Once I had finished collecting data, and had developed the theoretical framework (Chapter 4), I first classified the data by collection method before searching for emerging patterns.

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2006), it is not unusual for field researchers to only really know what their research is about at the end of the data collection phase. My research question had indeed become more specific along the way. By the end of the Assembly’s period of operation, it had developed into: *How was the outcome (proposal and process) of the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform affected by critical group dynamics, and how were these dynamics dealt with by the staff?*

5.4.1.2 Generating concepts

The initial task in the analysis process was to identify some concepts that would help make sense of what was going on in the Assembly. The first step in generating concepts was to carefully read through all the data to get thoroughly familiar with them. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2006), the aim of this stage is to ‘think with the data’: can any interesting patterns be identified?, what was surprising or puzzling?, how do the data relate to what might have been expected (for example based on theory)?, and are there any contradictions among the views of the different respondents or between people’s expressions and actual behavior?

After the reading phase, the large volume of data was used to create a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of the process in chronological order. Thick descriptions are highly detailed accounts of what was experienced in the field (Bailey, 1996). The thick description of the Assembly included data that were collected during the Assembly’s period of operation (by observations, consultations, documents⁵⁴, conversations, notes) and after its period of operation (by interviews and focus groups). The aim of this description was to compare and relate what was happening in the Assembly at different places and times in order to identify patterns and concepts that transcended local contexts

⁵⁴ Qualitative as well as the quantitative data from the evaluation forms were included in the thick description.

(Hammersley & Atkinson, 2006). The thick description of the Assembly amounted to approximately one hundred pages and all the data included in this description included a reference to the collection method. Naturally, not all the material that was collected ended up in the thick description (see Miles and Huberman (1984) for details on data reduction); for example because the material was found to be too general or unspecific and therefore unusable. Other material was not seen as contributing to a better understanding of ‘the group dynamic situation’ within the Assembly and was therefore also excluded. This highlights an important aspect of this type of study: the influence of the researcher. In the process of selecting, or rejecting, raw data, I chose the materials that would be further worked with. This means that I could have overlooked what were actually relevant data in the selection process. For reasons of confidentiality, the thick description is not included in this thesis (see also Section 5.4.3).

As a next step, the description was linked to the theoretical framework and, where necessary, with other theory in order to code the data. I used a different code for each significant phenomenon or dynamic. Then, I categorized the dynamics found in three meta-themes; context, diversity, and size.

To explore the meanings of the dynamics found, the three meta-themes, with their underlying dynamics, were subsequently explored, analyzed, and interpreted from three theoretical perspectives:⁵⁵ the social psychological perspective, the psychodynamic approach, and a leadership perspective (or more specifically a theory on leading large groups). These explorations and interpretations can be found in Chapter 6.

5.4.1.3 Analysis of quantitative data

The quantitative data from the evaluation forms were initially used in developing the thick description as described above. In that way, they were included in the process of generating codes and the meta-themes (context, diversity, and size). After this process, it was considered preferable to present the quantitative results from the evaluation forms separately. In this way, qualitative and quantitative data would not become blended. Consequently, the quantitative data from the evaluation forms were filtered back out from the thick description and are now separately presented in Section 6.5. One could say that the quantitative data from the evaluation forms were analyzed twice: once in the process of coding the thick description, and again in Section 6.5.

The quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) after the qualitative data had been analyzed and interpreted. Section 6.5.1 describes the analysis methods used and presents the results.

5.4.2 Quality criteria

Generally, qualitative data can be viewed as attractive as they are a source of a well-grounded, rich description and explanation of processes in local contexts. With qualitative data, one can maintain a

⁵⁵ It is explained why these three perspectives were selected in Chapters 1 and 4.

chronological flow and present an insight into complexity that is not always possible with quantitative data (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yin, 2011). However, the subjective stance of qualitative, interpretive research causes some concerns, for example concerning the validity and verifiability of the data collected (see below). Processes of data analysis are frequently not reported in detail and procedures used in data analysis are not always fully presented or are used unsystematically (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yin, 2009, 2011).

By adopting an interpretive stance, I have doubtless influenced this project (and the people in it) in various ways; by collecting data, by functioning as a confidant and action researcher in the process, by selecting raw material, by generating concepts, and by interpreting data. As was explained earlier, the purpose of qualitative research methods is not to take away the bias, but to represent them consciously. In this section, three quality criteria for social science research are explored: validity, generalizability, and reliability (Robson, 2002). This will provide a sounder basis for discussing the study's quality. I address the study's quality in Chapter 7 where I reflect more extensively upon the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods used.

5.4.2.1 Validity, generalizability, and reliability

Validity, generalizability (also referred to as external validity), and reliability are central concepts in establishing trustworthiness in studies (Robson, 2002). According to Robson, the three concepts were originally developed in the context of traditional fixed designs collecting quantitative data (see Section 5.2.1 for the explanation of fixed and flexible designs), and there is significant debate about their applicability for flexible designs with qualitative data. Hence, Robson discusses trustworthiness separately, respectively covering fixed and flexible designs. Below, I consider the three concepts, following Robson's reasoning regarding flexible designs.

Validity is the degree to which what is observed or measured in the study is the same as what was purported to be observed or measured (Robson, 2002). In other words, validity is concerned with "whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about" (p. 93). The subjective nature of flexible design research is such that it is often problematic to be 'true' or 'correct'. This makes it difficult to operationalize validity in standard means, as is often done in fixed design research. Instead, one can refer to circumstances and situations that make validity more likely. Conversely, the possible threats to validity can be identified.

Maxwell (1992) identified three kinds of understanding involved in qualitative research: description, interpretation, and theory. Each of these understandings has particular threats to validity and can possibly be found in this study. Firstly, the main threat to providing a valid description concerns the inaccuracy or incompleteness of the data. Secondly, the main threat to providing a valid interpretation is that of imposing a framework or meaning on what is happening rather than this occurring or emerging from what the researcher learns during the involvement with the setting. Thirdly, the main threat concerning theory is in not considering alternative explanations of the phenomena that are

studied. Robson (2002) suggests several strategies for dealing with these threats to validity, which are listed here in Table 15. Below the table, I explore the extent to which these strategies were applied in this study.

Table 15: Strategies for dealing with threats to validity (Adapted from Robson, 2002, p.174)

Strategy	Researcher bias	Respondent bias
Prolonged involvement	Increases threat	Reduces threat
Triangulation	Reduces threat	Reduces threat
Peer debriefing, peer support	Reduces threat	No effect
Member checking	Reduces threat	Reduces threat
Negative case analysis	Reduces threat	No effect
Audit trail	Reduces threat	No effect

The first strategy, prolonged involvement, was clearly used in this study. That is, I was in the field collecting data from March 2006 until February 2007; indeed I was there from before the first meeting to beyond the final one. According to Robson, this lengthy interaction decreases the risk of generating and accepting biased contributions from respondents. Effectively, with prolonged involvement, the subjects of a study become used to the researcher being around and this reduces the likelihood of this presence influencing behavior. However, due to the prolonged involvement, the researcher might lose their neutrality and become biased. I was aware that I increasingly felt more and more part of the group as time went by, and that this may have influenced my observations, thoughts, and feelings (see also Chapter 7), and thus my interpretations.

The second approach, triangulation, was deliberately adopted as a strategy to reduce threats to the study's validity. Triangulation was incorporated in several ways; between different researchers and different methods (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2006), between different theoretical perspectives, and between different time perspectives (Eden & Huxham, 2006). Even though there were no other formal researchers appointed in this study, data were collected by student assistants (reports, diary) as well as by the staff (evaluation forms). Moreover, several qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Furthermore, the data were analyzed from three theoretical perspectives; a social psychological perspective, a psychodynamic perspective, and a leadership perspective. Finally, different time perspectives were used. That is, initially events and processes were observed, then later the accounts which respondents offered in various settings were added, and finally the changes in these accounts and interpretations as time passed were included.

Thirdly, I also received peer debriefing/support from various parties. I presented the project and its design at the MOPAN (Multi Organizational Partnership, Alliances & Networks) conference that was held in Belgium in 2007. I also had conversations with external parties that were involved in the process of the Assembly and received feedback and support from various colleagues, network partners, and clients from the two consultancy firms (Maatschap voor Communicatie and Udviklingskonsulenterne) that I was working for during the period of this project. Further, I joined two PhD groups in the Department of Psychology at Aarhus University in Denmark in 2009 and 2010. The first was a PhD review group and the second a Qualitative research group with whose members I was able to discuss my work. Furthermore, I discussed elements of my project with several researchers, professionals, and friends in my network. Last but not least, I had regular meetings with my PhD supervisor.

I also used member checking, the fourth of Robson's strategies for dealing with threats to validity. After the qualitative results had been analyzed and interpreted in an early draft of what is now Chapter 6, I sent this to the chair and later discussed it with her. Following this, the chapter was sent to an ex-Assembly member and three Assembly members (two members with additional roles, namely a subgroup chair and a spokesperson, and one member without any additional roles) for feedback. None of these three Assembly members were key informants, only one (the subgroup chair) had taken part in the focus group sessions, and none were interviewed after the Assembly's period of operation. By getting Assembly members who were not key data sources involved in this way, possible bias was likely to be detected and could be rectified. At the same time, draft texts of the majority of this thesis (excluding Chapter 7) were sent to the chair and secretary for feedback. Thus, in total, six parties were asked to react to the material I had prepared. I received four reactions, which are included in Appendix 26 and were input as data in revising Chapter 6.

Although I did use negative case analysis, this was not very systematic. Negative case analysis involves searching for, and discussing, elements of the data that do not support, or appear to contradict, patterns or explanations that are emerging from the data analysis. This strategy can be incorporated by working with conflicting hypotheses for example. Even though I did not employ conflicting hypotheses or theoretical perspectives, I did try to be open to conflicting data during the analysis. To an extent this was the natural posture since the purpose of this study was to present the complexity of behavior in the Assembly. Furthermore, I used the quantitative results to search for contradicting patterns.

Finally, I cannot claim to have used the audit trail strategy. Due to the extensive data that have been collected in this study, I have not attempted to present all the material that is available, such as data, notes, methodological decisions, and data analysis procedures. This would simply be overwhelming and reader unfriendly. However, I have tried to present the relevant data in the form of appendices. Another reason for not presenting all the material is confidentiality. Nevertheless, all the material is filed and thus accessible.

Generalizability (or external validity) refers to the extent to which the study's findings are more generally applicable outside the specifics of the situation studied (Robson, 2002). Generalization is a particular concern in flexible design studies. It is often not possible to generalize results to a wider population. Interpretive research usually deals with one case (or at best a few cases) that has intrinsic interest, and understanding and explaining that unique individual case is the primary concern, rather than a desire to create 'statistical generalization' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yin, 2011). However, this does not preclude some kind of generalization beyond the specific setting studied (Robson, 2002). One can imagine that the findings of this study may be helpful to detecting or understanding dynamics in other citizen assemblies and/or large groups, for example.

Reliability is explained by Robson as the consistency or stability of a measure; if the study was to be repeated, would the same result be obtained? Yin (2009) explains reliability as: "demonstrating that the operations of a study – such as the data collection procedures – can be repeated with the same results" (p. 40). In fixed design research reliability is usually related to the use of standardized research instruments. The concern in those cases is whether the instrument produces consistent results. Thinking in these terms is often problematic for researchers using flexible designs, as many methods generally are non-standardized. The reliability of methods and research practices in flexible design studies thus need to be considered seriously and carefully (Robson, 2002). In this chapter, I have tried to be as open as possible in presenting the steps and choices made in this study and in Chapter 7 I address the probable biases as carefully as possible. However, I realize that not presenting all the study's material (see above) can have consequences for establishing its reliability.

5.4.3 Ethical issues

An important principle in field research is "Primum non nocere" or "First do no harm" (Bailey, 1996; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2006). An ethical field researcher should therefore ensure that they do not: harm those being studied, harm the setting, harm the researcher themselves, harm the profession they represent, or abuse the reciprocal relationships formed in the setting (Bailey, 1996, p.13). Therefore, I would like to emphasize once again that the purpose of this study is not, and has never been, to expose or evaluate any specific parties involved in the Assembly. Rather, it is an attempt to describe the complexity of the behavior enacted in the Assembly as a whole.

Moreover, I wish to stress that the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform has been presented as an example of a national experiment. In Chapter 1, I described how such a large-scale citizen assembly had never before been attempted on the national level. Consequently, a lot of learning took place during the project affecting all those involved. The hope is that this learning can now be used to improve future processes. To help in this, this study aims to share some of the dilemmas, difficulties, and learning that appeared along the way. Without the permission and willingness of all the respondents, these insights would never have been accessible for the larger public. This study is therefore carried out under conditions of confidentiality to protect my respondents. That is, I know their

identity, but do not reveal who they are. For the same reason, not all the material collected is being made public.

Chapter 6: Analysis of critical dynamics

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore how the Assembly functioned, and why it behaved in the way that it did, in order to find out how its dynamics helped or hindered the task at hand⁵⁶.

The format of this study offers the opportunity to work with both qualitative and quantitative data that were collected using various methods. First, the findings related to the qualitative⁵⁷ methods are used to explore, analyze, and interpret patterns and concepts in order to understand the performance of the Assembly. In each subsection, the concept in focus is first related to the case of the Assembly by empirical description and analysis. Then, relevant theoretical perspectives are used for interpretation. At the end of each subsection, interpretations are linked and reflected upon. Accordingly, a ‘picture’ is formed of the critical dynamics that emerged. Then, in Section 6.5, the data from the quantitative⁵⁸ methods are presented. Finally, the results from both the qualitative and quantitative methods are reflected upon and the effects of the critical dynamics on the Assembly’s outcome (proposal and process) are explored.

6.2 A system under threat from the outside

In this section, the Assembly’s interface with the outside world - particularly its political context - is explored. This is because in citizen participation projects, such as the Citizens’ Assembly, the political context is crucial. The Assembly started its work in insecure political circumstances and during the Assembly’s period of operation the political context became turbulent⁵⁹. The following statement perhaps suggests that people hoped legitimacy would come over time, even though they cognitively knew that political support was lacking: “*The second (more politically oriented) goal⁶⁰ of creating a breakthrough in the discussion on electoral reform, that had been ongoing for decades, was not reached. Disappointing, but with hindsight not really surprising, as the smallest coalition partner at the time (D66) was the only political party that really supported the idea of*

⁵⁶ In Chapter 3 the overall task of the Assembly is described. In order to fulfill its task, the Assembly members needed to: collaborate, deliberate, share perspectives, listen to each other, discuss, reflect, debate, resolve task conflicts, relate to each other, keep on going, be committed, etc. This collaborative process is seen as the task at hand in this chapter. Consequently, the specific tasks that were worked on during the weekend meetings are not necessarily described in detail.

⁵⁷ Observations, consultations, documents (including qualitative data in evaluation forms), conversations, notes, interviews, focus groups, inventory of success criteria, and member checks.

⁵⁸ Evaluation forms (excluding the qualitative data contained) and questionnaire.

⁵⁹ See Section 4.3.1.

⁶⁰ This goal was not mentioned in the project plan.

*electoral reform.*⁶¹ Based on this reality, it is relevant to explore how the Assembly worked with the insecure political situation it faced and how it related to its boundaries.

6.2.1 An unrealistic work climate

It seems that the Assembly operated in an unrealistic work climate from the start: members expressed the view that the Assembly was supported by the Parliament and by government, even though political support had never been assured. In the evaluation forms of weekend 1 it was noted that: “*The installation was a clear sign that Parliament really supports us and that we have become an important instrument*”⁶². During the Friday night session (in which the Assembly sorted out its regulations for working together), a few members commented: “*This project is supported by the whole government*”⁶³.

In the period between weekends 2 and 5, some members expressed their doubts concerning the Assembly’s political support; some critical questions were raised in plenary sessions and a critical email⁶⁴ was sent around. These doubts were mostly disregarded by the chair and/or members. In fact, the political context was not talked about that much. It was as if the Assembly somewhat ignored the uncertain context in which it operated. The episode below, illustrates that worry and uncertainty were first expressed and then ignored:

... I observed some blank looks and some people seemed to be dreaming. At that particular moment, one of the members made a comment “*I do get the feeling that it's useless what we're doing! This gives me an unpleasant feeling...Political parties are in power anyway*”. When the lecturer tried to react to the comment, the group ‘woke up’. The lecturer explained that even though the Assembly’s proposal would not be binding, it would be taken seriously. Another member continued: “*But, shouldn't we demand that Parliament discusses our work...*” A third member added: “*What is the power of a citizen compared with that of a political party?*” The lecturer answered the question and said: “*You shouldn't think so cynically.*” The discussion had lasted ten minutes when the chair intervened by saying: “*I would like to stop this debate on the purpose of the Assembly for now. It deserves more attention but it is coming at the expense of the content of this lecture. Let's take it up tomorrow, so we can think it over*”. The lecture then continued. At the end of the lecture, questions were raised. The last question being: “*Could you tell me the exact reason for installing the Citizens' Assembly?*”⁶⁵

⁶¹ Member checks, project secretary (see Appendix 26).

⁶² Evaluation form, weekend 1.

⁶³ Observations, weekend 1.

⁶⁴ One of the Assembly members sent an email to all the other Assembly members – excluding the staff – in which he criticized the directive way in which the Assembly’s process was facilitated and in which he questioned the Assembly’s political legitimacy (email message, early June 2006). The member that had sent the email is from now on referred to as ‘email sender’ and the incident is analyzed in Section 6.2.3.

⁶⁵ Observations, student report, weekend 2.

The chair came back to her intervention during Saturday afternoon's plenary session: She informed the group that the discussion on the Assembly's purpose would be moved to the next weekend meeting⁶⁶. However, the purpose was never discussed during weekend 3⁶⁷. I tried to address this in the evaluation meeting after weekend 3: ...I was wondering why the discussion about the purpose and political support of the Assembly... was not taken up by the chair (or the members) as promised. Therefore, I asked some of the staff if they thought that the Assembly felt some kind of political pressure. This was denied by all staff members⁶⁸.

The first time that I heard members talking about the uncertainty over the Assembly's political context was at the start of the third weekend meeting: The temperature in the dining room rose, the energy in the room was high, and people talked about various things, while the chair was visiting each table to welcome everyone... Several conversations, that I observed or joined, dealt with the legitimacy of the Citizens' Assembly and the political context with which the Assembly had to deal⁶⁹.

Between weekends 4 and 5, the email sender sent the critical email referred to earlier. As agreed with the Assembly member that informed me about the email, I contacted the chair and forwarded the email to her⁷⁰. The chair then used a fair amount of time to talk about the incident at the start of weekend 5. The issue of the Assembly's political legitimacy was not touched upon, neither by the chair nor by the members. After her talk, the chair presented the process design and shared the plans for the period after the summer break. An episode taken from this session illustrates the tone: The chair needed to create more question time to get the group focused again⁷¹ ... Another question was asked: "*How can Parliament discuss our proposal that will not be finished until November 2006, when elections are planned for April 2007?*" The chair: "*I'll come back to that in a little while, when I discuss...*"⁷² Another member said: "*Now that we have been creating solutions for the past few weekend meetings but, to me, it is still not clear what the actual problem is. Why are we actually sitting here?*" Nothing was said and the chair started talking about the next subject⁷³.

⁶⁶ Observations and student report, weekend 2.

⁶⁷ Observations and student report, weekend 3.

⁶⁸ Notes after weekend 3.

⁶⁹ Diary trainee, observations, weekend 3.

⁷⁰ Subsequently, the chair contacted the email sender and told him to place the email on the intranet in order to be transparent to all Assembly members. Moreover, the chair sent a reaction by email to the email sender and all other Assembly members. In this message she reacted to the sender's arguments and referred to the telephone conversation she had had with the email sender (email message, 7th June 2006). The sender of the email posted a reply on the chair's reaction (news item on intranet, 8th June 2006), in which he both reacted to the chair's message and also explained why he had sent the email around. His initial email was never posted on the intranet.

⁷¹ Observations, weekend 5.

⁷² Student report, weekend 5.

⁷³ Observations, weekend 5.

Neither the chair nor the members came back to the two questions mentioned above: namely, would it be possible for Parliament to discuss the proposal before the elections, and what was the task of the Assembly?

During weekend 6, four parliamentarians visited the Assembly. When they entered the plenary discussion, the topic of 'political support' seemed to be ignored at first. During the first seventy-five minutes of the session the theme was not touched upon⁷⁴. However, fifteen minutes before the end of the plenary session the topic was taken up. Consequently, the Assembly was confronted with its insecure political support for the first time. Below is an illustration of how the Assembly reacted:

The chair asked the parliamentarians what they thought about "*this fantastic group and this exciting experiment [the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform]*?"⁷⁵ The first parliamentarian answered: "...I'm impressed by your huge enthusiasm and the atmosphere here. We [my political party] haven't installed you, but we did give the Minister elbow-room... Politically seen, there is not much space to do something with your recommendations. I don't want to hold out false hope to you."⁷⁶ The Assembly became totally quiet and one of the members said: "Well, we better go home then!"⁷⁷ The second parliamentarian said that he would judge the proposal on its content and would ask the Minister why he was working on an amendment to the electoral system right now, instead of awaiting the Assembly's proposal⁷⁸. A large applause followed and members were whistling and cheering with their arms in the air. A few members said: "*this will give you votes!*"⁷⁹ The third parliamentarian said: "...The Minister should have promised you that, if you would come up with a unanimous proposal, the government will adopt it." Once more, rapturous applause followed. "But, you have to know, the Minister is not allowed so much by this government."⁸⁰ The Assembly went totally quiet again. When the parliamentarian finished his sentence, the Assembly became very restless and a turbulent atmosphere set in⁸¹. The chair asked for quiet and said: "That might be right, but we are not going to talk about that now". The group almost ignored this comment and kept on murmuring. The second parliamentarian said: "You just need to come up with a brilliant proposal that we cannot resist. Keep on going!" The chair closed the plenary: "We have run out of time. I can imagine that this discussion has given enough 'food for talk' for the subgroup sessions."⁸²

⁷⁴ Observations, weekend 6.

⁷⁵ Observations, weekend 6.

⁷⁶ Observations, student report, weekend 6.

⁷⁷ Observations, weekend 6.

⁷⁸ Observations, student report, weekend 6.

⁷⁹ Observations, weekend 6.

⁸⁰ Observations, weekend 6.

⁸¹ Observations, weekend 6.

⁸² Observations, weekend 6.

Members reacted in different ways to the confrontation with political reality. During the break: ...around twenty percent of the members started to talk very loudly and forcefully...After a little while, they decided to confront the parliamentarians. Five of them yelled: "Well, we can use some drinks now!" Twenty other members...were talking about organizing a party at the beach.⁸³ After the break, each of the parliamentarians facilitated a subgroup session. Afterwards, the members and parliamentarians came back to the plenary:

The chair started the plenary by asking the parliamentarians to reflect on their subgroup sessions. The energy seemed high. One parliamentarian reflected first. According to her, 'the outside world' had come in with the visit of these parliamentarians. People did not want to hear the truth or reality. Moreover, a general criticism of politics could be heard. The chair replied: "*I believe this evening has been extremely interesting. According to one of the members this might have been the most useful thing we have done up to now!*"⁸⁴ The parliamentarian replied that she found the session intense. The chair semi-joked: "*Did member Y participate in this subgroup?*"⁸⁵ People started applauding and member Y raised his arms⁸⁶.

The episode above indicates that the members in subgroup session 1 had a hard time digesting the political reality that they were being confronted with. Furthermore, the chair did not seem to relate to the critical reflection of the parliamentarian. Instead, she said that the evening had been very interesting and useful. The politician tried to make her point again; she replied that she found the session intense. Subsequently, the chair seemed to assume in a joke that the session was intense because member Y had participated in it. The members seem to follow her behavior.

It was not until Saturday afternoon's plenary session that the chair articulated the confrontational visit of the parliamentarians. The chair's optimistic view is somewhat remarkable: "*I have the impression that some members were a little shocked by their statements. I therefore believe that it's very important to operate strategically. [Your] ideas are welcome, but they need to be coordinated by the staff.*" People started to mumble. The chair continued in a calm tone: "*I also experience many things for the first time. Sometimes I think 'where is the script'? But I do believe that things are going pretty well. Moreover, the parliamentarians promised yesterday evening to treat the proposal seriously. And, by the way, we can also call in the Commission for Electoral Systems.*"⁸⁷

Regarding the episode above, it is noteworthy that the chair shared her impressions (that some members were a little shocked) without checking or discussing this with the group. Accordingly, it seemed impossible for members to share doubts or worries. Nevertheless, a little later, doubts were expressed regardless:

⁸³ Observations, weekend 6.

⁸⁴ Observations, student report, weekend 6.

⁸⁵ The chair mentioned the name of the member, which is excluded here for privacy reasons.

⁸⁶ Observations, weekend 6.

⁸⁷ Observations, student report, weekend 6.

...A few members wondered why the present electoral system should actually be changed. According to them, the regional debates had made clear that the Dutch people were satisfied with the existing system. Some other members replied that this conclusion could not be drawn⁸⁸. The chair: “*are there more people who feel like withdrawing, now it comes to the crunch? Are you less willing to change after yesterday night?*”⁸⁹ After a few other comments were made, member Y said that he got the feeling he was sitting in Parliament [I understood that member Y felt that all kinds of incoherent comments were being made and consequently no progress was being made in the group – and this reflected his view of Parliament]. Another member reacted: “*Bullshit!*” The chair reacted: “*Now, I am going to intervene. You’re making us too important, member Y*”⁹⁰...*We are talking on behalf of 140 citizens, not on behalf of the whole Dutch population.*” The Assembly started to applaud. “*Our legitimacy is the focus now, since not all the population has attended the regional debate meetings. You’re drawing conclusions too quickly member Y*”⁹¹. Member X became angry, stood up and ostentatiously left the plenary. Member A said: “*Member Y, you’re just very wrong!*” The chair said to this member: “*you sound very angry member A*”⁹² Member Y replied: “*Yes, because I am not one of the flock! [the email sender had used this expression before]*”⁹³ Another member said: “*I find this discussion a waste of time!*” The chair: “*I don’t totally agree with that. This is going on inside the group and thus it is important to talk about it. But, to be clear: I have a neutral position concerning the content of this discussion.*” Yet another member said: “*It’s time for a break!*” The chair agreed⁹⁴. During the break, a member came up to me and said that ‘the bomb would explode’ in a minute [she expected a serious conflict within the group]. Another member used the break to talk with members X and Y and the email sender. He asked them on behalf of the Assembly to change their critical behavior.⁹⁵

It seems remarkable in the episode above that doubts or critiques expressed by some members were apparently not accepted as such, either by the Assembly as a whole or by the chair (even though the chair mentioned that she held a neutral position). Instead of exploring the worries, they were cut short or ignored. Firstly, some members publically wondered why the electoral system should be changed. This line of thought was first stopped by other Assembly members. Then, the chair came in and seemed to take a position by saying: “*are there more people who feel like withdrawing, now it comes to the crunch? Are you less willing to change after yesterday night?*” Member Y then compared the present situation with sitting in Parliament. This thought was also not allowed to proceed, first by the chair and then by another Assembly member. Then, another member proposed taking a break. Interestingly, the chair accepted

⁸⁸ Observations, student report, weekend 6

⁸⁹ Observations, weekend 6.

⁹⁰ The chair mentioned the name of the member, which is not given here for reasons of privacy.

⁹¹ The chair mentioned the name of the member, which is not given here for reasons of privacy.

⁹² The chair mentioned the name of the member, which is not given here for reasons of privacy.

⁹³ Observations, weekend 6.

⁹⁴ Observations, weekend 6.

⁹⁵ Observations, weekend 6.

the proposal, even though she just had said that it was important to talk about the things that were going on in the group. It seems that neither the group nor the chair could contain the tension that was present in the group.

The resignation of the government had been discussed intensively among the staff during the Assembly's summer break: Mostly the fall of the government, the planning for the decision-making period, and the internal organization of the project secretariat were discussed during the summer period⁹⁶.

During the opening session of weekend 7, the chair informed the Assembly about the problematic situation with the new minister's lack of commitment: She told the Assembly that the new minister had cancelled his visit... Most members sat quietly and listened expectantly. Some members looked distracted and uninterested... Then, she shared some information about political events during the summer and told the members that the new Minister was not that committed to the Assembly. "*But he doesn't stand in our way either. So we can just continue; forward and with character...*"⁹⁷

The episode above illustrates that the chair seemed to interpret the problematic situation positively by pointing out that "*he was not standing in the way*". Subsequently, she seemed to empower the group to continue. Consequences of the political changes were not discussed with the group. The chair continued her introductory speech and informed the Assembly that the email sender had resigned: "*...He sensed a lack of public support (as appeared during the poor turnouts at the regional debates) and political support. Furthermore, he doubted the self-critical abilities of the Assembly and its members...*"⁹⁸ Based on the observations I made during this study, the email sender's criticisms were never stated as clearly as they were in the scene mentioned above. However, the chair seemed to refute his arguments: She said that she did not totally agree with the email sender's arguments. According to the chair, the turnouts at the regional meetings were reasonable and, moreover, the turnouts did not say anything about support for the Assembly's proposal. "*The power of the proposal, which is defined by the Assembly itself, will define the political support. There are a lot of good ideas and the contribution with respect to content is very high. I appreciate this very much...I actually find it quite disrespectful that the email sender doubts these contributions...*"⁹⁹ The chair reasoned that the Assembly's political support would be defined by the strength of its proposal. While one might doubt whether this was true, and more importantly perhaps, she seemed to disregard the unstable political situation in which the Assembly was functioning.

After weekend 7's plenary introduction, members were, among other things¹⁰⁰, asked to write on very large paper sheets what their expectations were concerning the Assembly's result. The following figures seem to illustrate an internal (and maybe unrealistic) focus of the Assembly: ...14% of the comments focused on 'the proposal being taken seriously and debated in political arenas and society', 7% of the comments

⁹⁶ Notes and conversations, after weekend 6.

⁹⁷ Observations, weekend meeting 7.

⁹⁸ Observations, student report, weekend 7.

⁹⁹ Observations, student report, weekend 7.

¹⁰⁰ Motives for participating, expectations concerning teamwork, and 'other'.

mentioned that 'the proposal would be accepted', and 4% of the comments stated: 'no political support'¹⁰¹. In other words, only 25% (14% plus 7% plus 4%) of the comments on the flipcharts dealt with political support for the proposal, or the 'external result'. One could say that 21% (14% plus 7%) of this 25% expressed a positive expectation concerning the 'external result': namely, that the proposal would be taken seriously, debated, and accepted. This outcome could be seen as very unrealistic given that political support was tenuous at this stage in the process. The other three-quarters of the comments on the flipcharts focused on the 'internal result', referring to the quality and content of the proposal¹⁰². It might be that the chair's comment ("political support will be defined by the power of the proposal") had influenced the members. Rather than relating to the turbulent political environment, the members perhaps preferred to focus on 'something they were able to influence'.

During weekend 8 it was once more illustrated that the Assembly operated in an insecure political climate. The reality was somewhat disregarded, with the chair directing focus towards the Assembly's internal process: The chair: "*Politicians are too busy with their campaigns... Very annoying, but we'll continue full steam ahead, on our own!*"¹⁰³ The Assembly stayed quiet¹⁰⁴. The chair: "*Another little damper: [the new] Minister Nicolai is in this conference building at the moment. However, he is not going to show his face.*" People in the plenary session started to murmur. "*Some members have however shaken hands with him. If the mountain won't come to Mohammed, Mohammed will go to the mountain. The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform will not escape his notice. He cannot deny us! Let us start working now!*"¹⁰⁵

6.2.1.1 Basic assumption mode of functioning

According to the descriptions above, critical voices that touched upon the Assembly's political legitimacy seemed to be largely ignored during the first five weekend meetings. It is very possible that the Assembly at this stage believed that political support was achievable. This belief may have helped the Assembly in starting on the task. However, uncertainty also distracted the Assembly from its task. Moreover, a question is whether the Assembly related sufficiently to the complexity of its context to be able to fulfill its task. That is, ignoring the political system may well have created an unrealistic working climate. The following episode supports this interpretation. One could have got the impression that political support was very well achievable. The chair closed her introduction with a report on her visit to a Parliamentary Commission. She told the Assembly that the Commission had reacted quite positively and that a new appointment had been made.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Results flipcharts, weekend 7 (see Appendix 13).

¹⁰² Results flipcharts, weekend 7 (see Appendix 13).

¹⁰³ Observations, student report, weekend 8.

¹⁰⁴ Observations, weekend 8.

¹⁰⁵ Observations, student report, weekend 8.

¹⁰⁶ Observations, weekend 5.

When the parliamentarians that visited the Assembly during weekend 6, as well as some of its members, tried to reflect the Assembly's outside world, the Assembly seemed to find it difficult to relate to this political reality. It seems that the chair, as well as most members, turned away and avoided confronting the reality. In terms of Bion's (1961) reasoning, the Assembly might have moved to an unconscious, defensive mode of functioning during weekend 6, in which the primary goal was to fight or flee the danger (the confronting reality). Groups in this mode behave as if they have gathered with a different goal in mind than the actual task. If this is so, then the dynamics of weekend 6 might have hindered the Assembly in performing its task.

One can argue that the Assembly gradually had arrived in an 'as-if' situation: it was as if it did not really have a problem with political support, or as if the problematic situation would resolve itself. This could be interpreted as the Assembly having found a way to deal with the confronting reality (one might call it a defense mechanism). Consequently, the Assembly stopped relating itself to the reality and ignored any criticism concerning the lack of political support (for example from the email sender and politicians). The following statement illustrates this thought process: "*I only vaguely remember that the email sender had sent an email, I cannot remember the content.*"¹⁰⁷

6.2.1.2 The staff's enclosing of the system

The descriptions above also indicate that the staff had problems relating to the insecure political context in which the Assembly was operating. The subject was mostly touched upon in the chair's plenary speeches, and the consequences of a lack of formal support were not discussed or explored with the group. Therefore, one might conclude that the staff was not really working with the political context.

The Sword of Damocles was continuously hanging over the Assembly's head. When the email sender resigned, when the government fell, and when the new Minister failed to show commitment, the staff might have accepted that there was no way to continue to avoid confronting the reality. However, it could not resolve the problematic situation either. As a consequence, the staff members might, maybe unconsciously, have created a more internally focused working climate. By focusing on its internal processes (for example the quality of its proposal), the Assembly would not be so vulnerable to external confrontation: it had found a way to survive.

Following the above reasoning, one might argue that the staff's strategy may have helped the Assembly to carry out and finish its task, or at least allowed the Assembly to focus on its own task, rather than getting distracted by the turbulent political environment. However, I question whether this enclosure mechanism might have turned the Assembly into a closed system (see for example Rice, 1969; Trist & Murray, 1990) that by the end of its existence excluded itself from its own environment and therewith prepared its own death. Findings below seem to support this thought:

¹⁰⁷ Member checks, member 2 (see Appendix 26).

During the final weekend meeting, the Assembly members were asked to reflect on their experiences during the Assembly's period of operation. Remarkably, no comments were made about the turbulent political context. The only comments that somewhat addressed the 'political environment' theme referred to positive experiences¹⁰⁸: '*Political understanding has increased among some of the participants*' and '*The citizens assembly instrument has decreased the gap between citizens and politics*'.

Moreover, results from the interviews and focus group sessions¹⁰⁹ show surprisingly few comments about the political environment. In the focus group sessions with the secretariat and with the student assistants, the political environment was not mentioned at all. In the two focus group sessions with Assembly members only one related comment was made in each session: '*We should have gone to the Parliament ourselves*'¹¹⁰ and '*The current political situation, but...that has nothing to do with the Citizens Assembly*'¹¹¹. These comments were however not discussed further within the groups.

Finally, political support was not suggested as a criterion for success by the people with an internal facilitation role in the process of the Assembly¹¹² (chair, secretary, lecturers, member of the committee), whereas people with an external role (ex-minister, external consultants) did mention political support as a success criteria. Again, this might illustrate that the Assembly had developed into a closed system that did not relate to its environment. In line with this interpretation, it is also notable that I included only one question in the questionnaire that dealt with the political context.

6.2.2 Focus on media coverage

The media seems to have played an important role in telling the outside world about the existence and importance of the Assembly: "*The media attention enhanced the feeling of importance. It helped to boost our enthusiasm and emphasized the uniqueness and importance of this project. To hear other members speak about their media attention was exciting; this meant it could happen to any of us, including me! I felt proud about the project, the group, and the members that got the media attention, and how they handled the attention.*"¹¹³

Observations of, and conversations during, the Assembly's initiation session seemed to indicate that the Assembly attached importance to the media from the start: A lot of laughter could be heard during the bus trip to the initiation event. As soon as the group arrived at the Binnenhof, people looked excited, thrilled, and maybe even

¹⁰⁸ Results flipcharts debriefing assignment weekend 10 (see Appendix 14).

¹⁰⁹ Focus group sessions 1 and 2 with Assembly members, staff members, student assistants; interviews with chair, lecturers, external consultants, staff members, Assembly members, e-mail sender.

¹¹⁰ Focus group 1 Assembly members.

¹¹¹ Focus group 2 Assembly members.

¹¹² Results inventory success criteria (see Appendix 25).

¹¹³ Member checks, member 2 (see Appendix 26).

intimidated. The Assembly was installed by the Dutch vice-Prime-Minister and the responsible Minister, and the event was covered by national and regional press, which made the members feel that they were being taken seriously¹¹⁴.

A scene at weekend 2's dinner indicates that the chair was also concerned about the media: The chair finished her introduction by informing the Assembly that two newspapers had written some negative articles about the Assembly. "This bothers me."¹¹⁵, the chair said.

During weekend 2, forty minutes were spent on addressing how to deal with the media: The chair started with asking which members had already had media contact. The atmosphere in the group seemed very energetic and those members that had been speaking with the media were given some time to share their experiences in the plenary session. They seemed to be proud of their media contact¹¹⁶... This episode suggests that media activity was related to having a certain position within the group. Members that had contact with the media were given time to speak in the large group setting, which obviously made them visible. The energetic atmosphere during the session could suggest that members felt they had something at stake during this early stage of the process; their internal right to exist, or maybe even an internal position of power.

Another example was seen in weekend 3: ...Afterwards, the chair gave some practical information and asked which members were planning media activities. "Of course, only if it's OK with us [the staff]... No, that's silly"¹¹⁷. Nine Assembly members shared their plans¹¹⁸. The chair asked the Assembly to share future media activities on the intranet so that all the other members could follow. Moreover, people were asked to contact the secretariat if they had media contacts¹¹⁹.

The episode above seems to indicate that the staff adopted a steering role in the members' media performances, maybe to ensure a professional external image of the Assembly. Further, it seems that those members who performed in the media got offered internal platforms by the chair. Firstly, she gave members time in the plenary sessions to share their media activities. Secondly, she asked members to share their plans and activities on the intranet. This suggests that the staff found media performance important.

The following episode suggests that the Assembly felt satisfied and proud to send the Assembly's 'business cards' into the outside world: ...Before the plenary session was closed, some television commercials that were made about the Citizens' Assembly were shown in the plenary. The chair smiled and looked proud when showing the items to the group. Afterwards, loud applause could be heard...¹²⁰. Moreover, the Assembly seemed focused on

¹¹⁴ Observations, conversations, weekend 1.

¹¹⁵ Observations, weekend 2.

¹¹⁶ Observations, weekend 2.

¹¹⁷ Observations, weekend 3.

¹¹⁸ Student report, weekend 3.

¹¹⁹ Observations, weekend 3.

¹²⁰ Observations, weekend 2.

supporting each other in their relations with the outside world. During weekend 4, the program for the regional meetings was presented. One of the members reacted: “*The public might be very critical. Can we organize some sort of rehearsal? It would be a pity if the media's reports are negative!*”¹²¹ In weekend 7, the chair informed the Assembly that the email sender had resigned (this incident is analyzed in Section 6.2.1). A member seemed to be worried about the press: “*Don't you think the media will lap this up?*”¹²² At the end of the process, the members were excited and proud on having reached a final resolution in weekend 10: During dinner a lot of excitement could be sensed. People were energetic and in a festive mood. Members looked proud when they saw themselves on television, and several members were calling home to inform their families about the television coverage¹²³.

6.2.2.1 Searching for positive social identity and self-esteem

Why was the Assembly concerned with the media? Could the Assembly have had a need to be socially approved by the external world (such as family, friends, and politicians)? One can imagine that members, as well as the staff, were focused on showing the external world that their efforts were socially justified given that many hours had been spent on this project and political support was uncertain. Further, media coverage could have helped satisfy the members' and staff's need to be socially accepted within the Assembly.

As the process of social identification developed within the Assembly, members felt more connected to each other and to the group, and their membership became personally significant. The descriptions above suggest that media coverage helped the Assembly members to become proud of belonging to the group and to feel socially accepted by the outside world. In other words, media coverage might have helped the Assembly to create its identity, as well as in disseminating this to the outside world. The former could have helped the members to gain self-esteem and a sense of belonging. The latter could have influenced politicians to support the project. In addition, one could argue whether partial identification of members with the chair also played a role. As the chair was a Dutch TV personality, the members could have identified with her competences in dealing with the media.

The Assembly's concern with the media may have helped it in fulfilling its task. People gain self-esteem from identity groups. Assembly members with greater self-esteem would more likely be capable of fulfilling their tasks. Moreover, the descriptions above suggest that the topic of the media generated energy and commitment in the Assembly, which again would likely help in completing the task. Nevertheless, the Assembly's focus on the media could also have distracted the Assembly from its primary task: “*I remember being surprised when I took it as an assignment for all of us to generate as much media attention as possible. I found it a bit strange though, because it would never have crossed my mind to actively search/initiate*

¹²¹ Student report, weekend 4.

¹²² Student report, observations, weekend 7.

¹²³ Observations, weekend 10.

media attention...I recognize the feeling that our primary task is being overshadowed by the implicit task of generating as much media attention as possible...¹²⁴

The two episodes below also suggest that the media topic might have overshadowed the Assembly's main task. A scene from weekend 10, just before the Assembly started its final voting round: ...One of the members said at the outset: "*I have difficulties with deciding right away!*" The lecturer answered that she just could ask questions if she wanted. The chair: "*I think, but who am I, it might get more complicated the more you speak about it.*" A few more comments were made. Then a member said: "*I believe everybody is nervous because the media is present in this room*"¹²⁵. Then, the Assembly started voting: When the voting numbers were shown on the screen, the chair said: "*May I congratulate the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform for its original, innovative, and yet not revolutionary advice? This news is now spreading over the whole world. Look, RTL News and NOS News are here!*"¹²⁶

The two scenes outlined above indicate how important the media had become. Immediately before and straight after the Assembly's final voting round, 'the media' were mentioned. It is also remarkable that the chair talked about '*news that is spreading over the whole world*'. Although this comment might have been made in an atmosphere of pride, relief, and celebration (because the Assembly had delivered its final result), it might also say something about the Assembly's need for external acceptance.

6.2.3 Pride, kindness, and harmony in plenary sessions

The Assembly seemed to have progressed in an atmosphere of pride, kindness, and harmony. The episodes below indicate that Assembly members felt honored and proud to be part of the Assembly. A quote from the first weekend meeting: "*I believe there's one thing that we have in common here: namely, the fact that all of us have the feeling that people complain too much in this country. Being selected as an Assembly member, we are asked to give our opinion. So, this is our chance to speak up loud. I feel this as a great opportunity that we should grab!*"¹²⁷ Further: six out of twelve group members mentioned...that they felt proud to be chosen as an Assembly member¹²⁸.

The Assembly members seemed to applaud whenever they felt proud. An episode from weekend 3: ...The chair continued her introduction in an energetic tone. She told the Assembly that she had been interviewed on television. The group started applauding. Then she said that the time had come to talk about how the Assembly was doing. "*We're right on track...you're a fantastic group and very motivated!*" People looked proud, and smiled, and afterwards the group started applauding again¹²⁹. Another episode from weekend 9: The chair said that this weekend meeting would be a very

¹²⁴ Member checks, member 2 (see Appendix 26).

¹²⁵ Observations, weekend 10.

¹²⁶ Observations, weekend 10.

¹²⁷ Observations, weekend 1.

¹²⁸ Observations, weekend 1.

¹²⁹ Observations, student report, weekend 3.

important weekend. “...*Imagine yourself when the proposal gets presented!*” People started to look delighted and energetic, and the Assembly started to applaud¹³⁰.

Also the email sender seemed to refer to pride when I interviewed him: “*Maybe we thought ourselves a little too important. I experienced a kind of conceit or omnipotence. Anyway, there was no self-reflection. Not even to mention that this was debatable...People were so kind and friendly...*”¹³¹ Moreover, he in general seemed to discuss behavior in terms of kindness and harmony. The following episode also seems to illustrate the Assembly striving for harmony and agreement: ...The spokesperson of each workgroup was asked to share the subgroup's view on the electoral system elements. The chair walked around with a microphone to collect the feedback. The atmosphere seemed fine; the chair smiled a lot and interviewed the spokespersons enthusiastically. The spokespersons proudly shared what their groups had agreed upon. Some groups openly shared that they could not come to an agreement but contributions were presented as if no problems had arisen. None of the spokespersons shared perspectives that differed from contributions already made in the plenary session¹³². Interestingly, many subgroups seemed to have struggled with the task¹³³ although this was not mentioned during the plenary session described above.

Weekend 5 proved to be quite turbulent due to the critical email that had been sent around before the meeting. Two Assembly members (and the chair) seemed to be striving to achieve harmony at the end of that weekend meeting: ...Two Assembly members stood up and walked towards the stage. They handed a big bunch of flowers to the chair: “*A lot has happened, also for you, we hope you won't resign. These are for you and the staff.*” Around half of the group looked angry and disapproving, but no-one made a comment. The chair quickly said thank you and “*we continue, all of us*” and continued rapidly by presenting some practical information¹³⁴.

Harmony seemed a distinctive feature of the working climate in the Assembly's plenary sessions. Consequently, differences and criticisms were rarely explored and the Assembly did not talk about the way it was working on its task. Some examples of this are presented below.

Observations¹³⁵ suggest that five out of the seven subgroups experienced some kind of facilitation problems during the first subgroup session in weekend 1. The episode below shows, however, that only one member referred to such experiences in the plenary, and only at the very end of that session: ...At the end of the question round, a comment was made. A member mentioned that her subgroup had experienced difficulties with the process...The comment...was not discussed further, as the group needed to start with a quiz¹³⁶.

¹³⁰ Observations, weekend 9.

¹³¹ Interview, email sender.

¹³² Observations, student report, weekend 3.

¹³³ Observations, student reports, diary trainee, weekend 3.

¹³⁴ Observations, weekend 5.

¹³⁵ Observations, weekend 1, reports student assistants weekend 1.

¹³⁶ Observations, weekend 1.

Although the email sender had expressed concerns in the email he sent around between weekends 4 and 5¹³⁷, at the start of weekend 5, the chair seemed to focus on the form in which the email sender had communicated his message. Remarkably, the content of the email was never taken up in the plenary session¹³⁸, neither by the chair nor by the members: “As you all know, one of our members¹³⁹ has sent an email around in which he shared his worries about the content and planning of the process. I have responded to that. Some of you may find my reaction quite strong.” Around thirty members looked at each other when the chair started talking about the email¹⁴⁰. “Let me start by saying that I appreciate everyone’s effort to contribute to the content, but we do not spend a lot of time together. Therefore I am attached to our intranet system. Transparency is desirable and necessary, both for the outside world as well as for ourselves. The radical proposal that was sent by one of our members¹⁴¹ does not match this idea [transparency]. It does not stimulate internal discussion...”¹⁴²

Finally, when the proposal’s draft text was to be discussed in weekend 9, and before the chair read the text out loud, she said: “...Please be patient in listening and show courage in coming with input!”¹⁴³ The Assembly then started to comment on the text. The episode below seems to illustrate that any criticism of the text was not explored by the chair. The chair closed the session before the dynamics were worked through:

A member commented that she found the style of the draft text too childlike. Moreover, she wondered where some of the statements came from. The chair answered that the style was not, according to her experience, too childlike. Moreover, the chair thought out loud about adding references to some of the statements, but found this less preferable. Member X reacted: “I just want to be clear about the procedure now: should we ask questions while you defend the text?” The chair interrupted the member: “I’m not going to defend the text!” ...Another member joined the discussion and said that she heard things in the text that had never been discussed in the Assembly. While the chair answered that these things had been discussed in the Assembly, the unrest increased in the group. People started to talk to each other...Then, member Y said to the chair: “I have the feeling that you feel under attack. Look at the way you are standing, your attitude shows that you feel attacked! I actually wonder who has written the text. I don’t like it that we have not discussed that procedure. There might have been members that would have liked to write it, for example the spokespersons.” The chair opened her arms and said that it was nothing new that the staff would write the text. Moreover, she said that she didn’t want to ‘focus on the person’ in the discussion. She said that she didn’t

¹³⁷ Email message, early June 2006.

¹³⁸ The chair responded to the email sender in an email, which was placed on the intranet (email message, 7th June 2006; news item on intranet, same date.)

¹³⁹ The chair mentioned the name of the member, which is not given here for reasons of privacy.

¹⁴⁰ Observations, weekend 5.

¹⁴¹ The chair mentioned the name of the member, which is not given here for reasons of privacy.

¹⁴² Observations, student report, diary trainee, weekend 5.

¹⁴³ Observations, weekend 9.

feel personally attacked: “*But I do find it exciting. When you notice some tension, that’s it, this is of course an important moment.*”...Afterwards, three members tried to say something, but the chair said: “*I stop now*”¹⁴⁴.

6.2.3.1 Conformity and dissent

Members of groups can conform to the group as a whole due to mechanisms that make individual differences disappear. The descriptions above suggest that members were searching for social approval and avoidance of rejection. Moreover, observations made during the Assembly’s period of operation showed surprisingly few conflicts in the plenary sessions¹⁴⁵ and the chair shared with me that she was surprised about the level of obedience in the group¹⁴⁶. It seems that Assembly members conformed to the group (and its norms) and accordingly suppressed any minority perspectives. Conformity could have helped the Assembly deal with the internal threat of differentiation (this interpretation is further explored in Section 6.3.4), as well as with the threatening outside world. Following the latter reasoning, Assembly members and staff were motivated to protect their social identity. The more good pictures could be shown to the outside world (through the media), the greater the legitimacy the Assembly could potentially achieve. Behaviors of pride, kindness, and harmony were therefore more preferable than behavior of disagreement.

If the Assembly viewed pride, kindness, and harmony as the preferred group behaviors in plenary sessions, any unwillingness to conform to these group norms would have caused social rejection by the group. Below, it is therefore explored how the Assembly reacted to dissent.

The email sender continued to question the Assembly’s legitimacy:

...The email sender wrote on a flipchart sheet that he wanted to stop the Assembly. Fifteen women gathered in the plenary and looked at the flipchart: they talked emotionally and looked upset, maybe even in panic¹⁴⁷. Several members came to me and told me about the flipchart¹⁴⁸. One member asked for an immediate consultation¹⁴⁹. When the Assembly sat down again, the chair presented the various flipchart sheets to the plenary. Then she started to wind up the session: “...*Take your time to put things in perspective. We’ll fix it in September. Then we’ll make the step from creation to building. Which mood do you start the summer with? What expectations do you have? Or maybe doubts? Try to keep your heads up high when you leave this building. Summer is on its way!*” One member reacted: “*I really like it here. I was just talking with my Assembly friends about that and then we heard a rumor that some people want*

¹⁴⁴ Observations, weekend 9.

¹⁴⁵ Observations, weekend 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

¹⁴⁶ Conversations, summer interview.

¹⁴⁷ Observations, weekend 6.

¹⁴⁸ Conversations, weekend 6.

¹⁴⁹ Consultations, weekend 6.

to resign in September?" Another member followed: "Email sender, I saw that it was you writing down that you want to stop the Assembly!"¹⁵⁰

The above episode suggests that the email sender's flipchart sheet was not addressed or explored in the plenary session. Both the members and the chair disregarded the sheet at first. Then, one of the members confronted the email sender. The member seemed to be referring to 'the way we behave here', namely 'we like it here' and 'we are friends'. The session continued and the deviant member was attacked:

The chair: "*Email sender, why do you use the word 'stop', instead of for example 'explore the possibilities'..?*" Email sender: "*Because I want to hold a mirror up, I want to keep us thinking critically about those things we're doing*". The member that started the discussion at first replied: "*I don't feel like that. I'm an enthusiast and don't feel like someone that...What do the others think?*" ...Others shared their worries about this incident or protected the email sender because everybody should have freedom of speech. The atmosphere became turbulent and hostile. "*Let's follow our ground rules! What kind of undercurrent is going on? Who are you addressing email sender?*" ... Two members reacted and proposed to stop discussing this subject. A third member said: "*The email sender and member Y are working on another agenda. We cannot let that happen: join us or leave!*" ...The email sender: "*I'll present a proper proposal on the intranet. I mean it well*". The members started murmuring. The chair reacted: "*In case you do not know; the intranet system is meant to enable us to communicate when we are not together physically.*"¹⁵¹

During the summer break the email sender withdrew. Apparently, dissent was not easily accepted and maybe even rejected in the Assembly.

At the start of weekend 7, members were asked to write down their motives for participating and their expectations concerning the result and teamwork. The first comment that was read out loud by the chair was: "*the Olympic ideal*". The member then explained what he meant by this: "*It's not about support for my own electoral system proposal, for it's all about taking part in this project*". The Assembly started to applaud. This contribution suggests that individual perspectives were less important than the whole. In other words, the member seemed to call for conformity. The group seemed to support him as members started applauding. Later, it was again shown that it might not have been easy to hold a deviant perspective in the Assembly. One member who explained her comment may not have felt very safe: The chair continued. "*One comment touches me a little bit: I'll be good and obedient - top of the iceberg*". Most of the Assembly members looked shocked. The writer then explained her comment: "*I believe there lays a lot more under the iceberg. I'm loyal, but I'm worried about that what is happening underneath the surface. I'm afraid.*" The chair asked: "*Has the email writer been killed, in your perspective?*" The member answered: "*We should be glad for his critique. By the way, I'm happy people don't start to laugh right now.*" The Assembly

¹⁵⁰ Observations, weekend 6.

¹⁵¹ Observations, weekend 6.

members started to applaud. The chair: “Are you surprised about that?” Member: “Yes, a little”. Another member supplied: “Free speech should be allowed! This opinion is expressed well. Admirable, fair and clear!...”¹⁵²

At first, it seems remarkable that the chair linked the member’s worry with the ‘killing’ of the email sender rather than exploring it. However, when interpreting the earlier incident during weekend 6 (see above) as social rejection, it might make sense for the chair to link both situations. The member here also seemed to be representing a deviant perspective. Furthermore, it seems notable that members used the expression ‘free speech’ during both the scenes in weekend 6 (see above) as well as in the episode immediately above. This might suggest that some members had experienced only limited freedom of speech.

One might conclude that conformity prevailed in the Assembly’s plenary sessions. Accordingly, dissenters could have been socially rejected by the majority of the group and any complexities not really worked through. Perhaps conformity helped the Assembly deal with the threatening outside world. However, if complexity was curtailed and minority perspectives not really incorporated, one can question whether the Assembly had used its full capacity and whether its final proposal reflected the perspectives present in the whole group.

6.2.3.2 Suppression of criticism and complexity

The descriptions above also suggest that criticism and complexity were often suppressed in the plenary sessions. Likely, the staff felt pressed by the threatening outside world. This pressure could have motivated them to suppress ‘potential problems’ in the group, instead of working with its complexity. In a sense, the staff might have turned the Assembly into an ‘audience’ and members may have consequently felt few possibilities to take ownership during the process. The following episode illustrates this interpretation: During weekend 2, the Assembly had to discuss its regulations for working together. When the allotted time was up: ...The chair asked whether there were comments regarding the regulations. No-one reacted, and it became clear that none of the groups had discussed the regulations. The chair continued: “who does not agree with the regulations?” The Assembly stayed quiet. “Well, then we can conclude that the regulations are adopted unanimously!”¹⁵³ Clearly, it could have been useful to explore with the group why this task had not been carried out. A similar example from weekend 7: “First, a sort of check: do we go for it, together, in this set-up and work form?” Around ten members who were sitting in the front loudly said ‘yes’ and the other Assembly members started to make noises...The chair continued: “Just to come back to commitment once more. If any of you don’t agree, it will be obvious. You are independent enough, I’ve noticed.” Member X commented: “How do we make it obvious, do we need to stand up, or what?” The chair: “OK, nice, then we’ll drink a coffee [take a break] now!”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Observations, weekend 7.

¹⁵³ Observations, weekend 2.

¹⁵⁴ Observations, weekend 7.

In the following episode, the chair informed the Assembly that the secretariat would detail electoral system variants during the summer break: One of the members interrupted: “*Why are the members not responsible for the open variants? I am willing to write the proposal!*” The chair responded: “*The secretariat is responsible, for practical reasons.*” Before the chair had finished with her sentence the member continued: “*I don't agree with that! Who would like to help me with the writing?*” The member looked around the plenary and five members that were sitting around him reacted positively. No other reactions were given. The chair responded quickly: “*No, member X¹⁵⁵, you talk out of turn!*¹⁵⁶ *Also out of practical reasons I intervene now, as I am responsible for the process. The content is yours, no-one else's. The secretariat's proposal is therefore to be discussed by you*¹⁵⁷. Alternatively, the chair could have explored the issue with the group. Who else did not agree with the secretariat laying out electoral system variants? What would the arguments for and against be? Probably, the group would then have tackled the issue but, instead, the emerging dynamics seemed to be suppressed and accordingly it was unclear how many members supported the staff's decision. Furthermore, the commitment of member X (“*I am willing to write the proposal*”) and probably others might have decreased.

Dynamics in large groups are often unconsciously suppressed by facilitators. However, in order to let the group learn, develop, and be creative, or to get the most out of a large group, one needs to acknowledge and work with the dynamics (Bunker & Alban, 1997; Gilmore & Barnett, 1992; Storck, 2002). The effect on the Assembly of suppressing criticism and complexity might also be reflected in the following quote from an Assembly member: “*What is actually expected from us: are we 'klapvee'¹⁵⁸ or kings; two-year-olds or grownups?*¹⁵⁹

6.2.3.3 Dependency climate during the learning phase

The objective of the learning phase was to let all members become familiar with the basic principles of electoral systems. Hence, the Assembly members spent almost all their time listening to lectures on electoral systems and discussing the lecture materials in subgroup sessions. As appears from descriptions above and information during and after the weekend meetings, the Assembly members seemed very satisfied¹⁶⁰ and confident¹⁶¹ during these sessions. Hogan and Kwiatkowski (1998) studied emotional aspects of large group teaching and suggested that there is a drive towards passivity and dependency in large groups. The descriptions above indicate that the Assembly perhaps developed such a climate of psychological dependency during the learning phase. The members

¹⁵⁵ The chair mentioned the name of the member, which is not given here for reasons of privacy.

¹⁵⁶ Diary trainee, weekend 5.

¹⁵⁷ Observations, weekend 5.

¹⁵⁸ A Dutch word for an audience that is hired to applaud.

¹⁵⁹ Evaluation form, weekend 5.

¹⁶⁰ Evaluation forms weekend 1, 2, and 3; interviews, focus group Assembly members group 1 and 2.

¹⁶¹ Observations, weekend 1, 2 and 3.

seemed to be a little too satisfied with the lectures. Maybe, it suited the members to fulfill the role of dependent ‘docile’ students that worked with the materials they were presented with in a climate of pride, kindness, and harmony? By fulfilling the role of ‘passive observers’, they could deny their uncertainties concerning political support and internal differences, and experience a feeling of warm comfort and anonymity instead. The dependency climate might also have suited the staff as in that way they could be distracted from how to work with the complexity of the outside world and with so many diverse members. Instead, they could focus on starting up the secretariat and learning to work together as a working system.

It was not before weekend 3 that members started to be less obedient and started to intervene: The Assembly was restless during the lecture. Both the chair and the lecturer needed to intervene several times to ask for silence. Moreover, an Assembly member intervened and said that she could not concentrate when the group was making that much noise. People asked more questions during this lecture than in lectures during the first two weekend meetings. The questions were also more critical: both on a content level (“*why don’t you compare the Dutch system with that in the United Kingdom?*”¹⁶²) as well as on a process level (“*why have we not had this information earlier?*”¹⁶³).

The learning phase finished with weekend 3, and weekend 4 was used to assign additional roles. This was done using the sociocratic method: a technique in which people are supposed to reflect, make up their own minds, and argue critically. Hence, it might be no coincidence that many Assembly members¹⁶⁴ and most staff members¹⁶⁵ evaluated weekend 4’s program critically. In assigning additional roles, the Assembly members were forced to ‘break’ the dependency climate.

How could a dependency climate have affected the task? One may say that a certain amount of dependency is useful in a lecture setting. In other words, the Assembly members were to an extent dependent on their lecturers, who were required to teach them the basic principles of electoral systems. However, the Assembly could have been functioning in a basic assumption mode. Following that reasoning, the members’ primary focus would be to get released from the tensions concerning the outside world and being in a large group, rather than to learn about electoral systems, and the Assembly would behave as if the teachers (and the chair) knew everything and were taking care of them.

6.2.4 Reflection

Following the reasoning outlined in this section, one might conclude that the behavior in the Assembly was affected by the environment in which the group was functioning. In dealing with the uncertain political context, confronting reality was mostly avoided and, at some stages, fought against with

¹⁶² Student report, weekend 3.

¹⁶³ Diary trainee, observations, weekend 3.

¹⁶⁴ Consultations, conversations, interviews, Assembly members’ focus groups 1 and 2.

¹⁶⁵ Notes after weekend 4.

members becoming dependent on the staff. Assembly members and staff were motivated to protect their social identity and therewith their own emotional wellbeing and self-esteem. The more good pictures could be shown to the outside world (through the media), the greater the legitimacy the Assembly could potentially achieve. When the political founding father of the project lost power, the staff (including myself) seemed to busy themselves in shielding the Assembly from the painful reality, rather than discussing the dilemma with the group and sharing responsibility. One could say that the staff enclosed the system and acted like an overprotective parent that wanted to keep its child away from the painful reality.

The Assembly's working climate might be viewed as collusive rather than collaborative. Norms such as pride, kindness, and harmony prevailed, task conflicts were rare, and deviant perspectives were not tolerated. Moreover, the Assembly's work environment was internally focused, facts and assumptions often went unchecked, and the plenary sessions were characterized by little exploration and reality testing. Collusive climates are typified by conformity, conflict avoidance, and non-confrontational communication, with parties working together to serve an implicit and often not conscious goal, for example avoiding having to confront a threatening reality (Schrijver, 2008; Schrijver & Vansina, 2008).

The incidents with the email sender seem to show similarities with a phenomenon that Harvey (1999) labeled 'backstabbing'. Harvey (1999) defined backstabbing as "an attempt to discredit by underhanded means, such as innuendo, accusation, or the like" (p.19). Its underlying dynamics are explained in his book with the significant title: 'How come every time I get stabbed in the back my fingerprints are on the knife?' In short, he describes the process in which messengers and potential victims are caught up in a collusive climate and become accomplices to the perpetrator's backstabbing. The incident with the Assembly's email sender can be interpreted as backstabbing since the email sender sent a critical email around but not to the staff. The staff and other members might be seen as accomplices as they created a climate in which diversity was suppressed. Just like collusion, backstabbing is said to serve hidden needs linked to an existential fear of being separated from others, of being truly alone, and reflecting the reciprocal desire to be connected with and emotionally supported by others (Harvey, 1999). The comments below seem to illustrate some of the hidden needs of Assembly members. The members seem to have operated in an illusionary climate in order to deny the problematic reality and to fulfill the task and other personal objectives, such as the need for attention, to be needed, to develop, and to reinforce a positive self-concept (Schrijver & Vansina, 2008): "*I did not let the problems that every now and then arose, stop me. Until the very last moment I tried to stay optimistic and positive in order to deliver good advice*"¹⁶⁶ "*I remember I wanted to learn... I did not want to miss out on all that and, most importantly, for the first time in my life I had the feeling I was part of something big, unique, and important, and that my voice was relevant...I even surprised myself by overcoming my shyness and stated my opinion regarding lectures on politics in schools in front of more than 140 people. Nobody was going to take that away from me, whether politically legitimate*

¹⁶⁶ Member checks, member 1 (see Appendix 26).

*or not!... So, no, I did not want to know about the lack of political support, the flaws in the process design, the potential influence of the staff and chair on the outcome. So, yes, I was willfully ignorant!*¹⁶⁷

The desire to deny differences (described by Turquet as one-ness, rather than collusion) might have helped the members and staff to experience feelings of belonging, unity, goodness, and wholeness, which were necessary to deal with the threatening outside world. My findings¹⁶⁸ show many affective reactions that indicate that members could have experienced such feelings, for example: “*This was an amazing experience. We would love to participate in the next citizen assembly*¹⁶⁹, “*...Thank you for being part of this*”, “*I am proud of the final result*¹⁷⁰, “*I have experienced this time as very special and enlightening. I found it special to collaborate with so many strangers and eventually to be able to create a partnership and come to a common result.*¹⁷¹ Also the extremely high (95%) response rate to the questionnaire could reflect this.

6.3 Internal threat of differentiation

Large groups can be characterized by the complexity of diversity and the presence of multiple subgroups. The following statement illustrates that a complex diversity existed in the Assembly: “*It was quite a challenge to work with such a diversity of people (in terms of gender, age, education, political knowledge and skills)*¹⁷². However, diversity can also stimulate learning, creativity, and the quality of problem solving within groups: “*...I think it was a fascinating process to see how people were different, and also reacted and behaved differently in many of the circumstances we have encountered. This has given me food for thought.*¹⁷³ Below, I explore how the Assembly handled its differences.

6.3.1 The complexity of multiple subgroups

The following scene in the bar helps illustrate the complexity of the multiple subgroups that characterized the Assembly: When the plenary had finished, the chair briefed the subgroup chairs about next morning's subgroup sessions. After about twenty minutes, the chairs joined the other members in the bar. The conversations in the bar seemed to deal with the plenary program. I heard some people say that they had a satisfied feeling now, and that quietness came after all. Some other members were collecting money for a present for the marriage of one of the staff members. Around thirty other members discussed and criticized the staff and the chair. After about half an hour these thirty people started mingling and talking with the other members in the bar about the staff, the chair, and the process design. Seven people went out into

¹⁶⁷ Member checks, member 2 (see Appendix 26).

¹⁶⁸ From the debriefing assignment, focus group sessions, interviews, and the questionnaire's open questions.

¹⁶⁹ Results from flipchart debriefing assignment, weekend 10.

¹⁷⁰ Results Table 55. (see Appendix 24)

¹⁷¹ Member checks, member 1 (see Appendix 26).

¹⁷² Member checks, member 1 (see Appendix 26).

¹⁷³ Member checks, member 1 (see Appendix 26).

town and twenty people kept on discussing these issues after the bar had closed. They discussed the process design, the functioning of the Assembly, and statements that should be used during the online session¹⁷⁴.

The subgroups which emerged in the Assembly are now described. Firstly, the episode below indicates that some members saw themselves in terms of the province they 'represented' in the Assembly: The chair presented the planning for the regional debates starting in May. Some critical comments followed from the members living in the rural provinces, as there were no meetings scheduled in these provinces¹⁷⁵.

Some related to others because they were of similar ages: The younger and older Assembly members were more or less sitting in small groups, made up of young or old members.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, five of the younger members shared with me the view that they did not feel taken seriously, that they believed that the group was 'ruled' by people around the age of thirty to forty. Therefore, both the younger members as well as the older members were being left behind according to the youngsters¹⁷⁷. The younger members grouped together and started a discussion in the smokers' room¹⁷⁸.

Moreover, people seemed to group around hobbies and private interests: One weekend, the plenary started a little later than usual so that members could watch the World Championship football match featuring the Netherlands. Around fifty members collected in the foyer to see the match together¹⁷⁹. Another time, twenty members were talking about organizing a party at the beach, starting straight after the Friday night program.¹⁸⁰

Furthermore, in the plenary sessions, members seemed to relate to those members they had been working with during the subgroup sessions: Spokespersons reported enthusiastically in the plenary on the discussions within their subgroups and seemed to maintain contact with their subgroups while presenting their results¹⁸¹.

In addition, those that were critical seemed to connect to each other: The chair and the secretary had scheduled a meeting with the email sender during a subgroup round. They wanted to talk with him about his view on the Assembly¹⁸². On the Friday afternoon, the chair told this member that he was welcome to bring some other members to the meeting, if he wanted to. He invited three other members (members X, Y and Z) to the meeting¹⁸³.

¹⁷⁴ Observations, conversations, weekend 5.

¹⁷⁵ Observations, student report, weekend 3.

¹⁷⁶ Observations, weekend 2.

¹⁷⁷ Conversations and observations, weekend 3.

¹⁷⁸ Observations, conversations, weekend 6.

¹⁷⁹ Observations, weekend 5.

¹⁸⁰ Observations, weekend 6.

¹⁸¹ Observations, weekend 5.

¹⁸² Notes between weekend 5 and 6.

¹⁸³ Observations, conversations, weekend 6.

Again, those members with additional roles seemed to function as a subgroup: Most of those who were actively involved in making the mind map were members with additional roles (chairs, vice-chairs, spokespeople, media workgroup)¹⁸⁴.

Moreover, members were asked to form subgroups based on their perspectives on electoral systems: After the presentations, members were asked to select one of the six variants or the three themes, and join that particular subgroup¹⁸⁵.

Finally, the staff and the Assembly can be distinguished as two distinct subgroups: A member: "*How are we going to make things concrete?*" Staff member: "*We [i.e. the staff] will do that...*"¹⁸⁶.

6.3.1.1 Characteristics of social categorization

The descriptions above show that social categorization within the Assembly could be based on: geographical origin, age, hobbies, work groups, satisfaction with the process, assigned roles, perspectives on electoral systems, and membership/staff classification. However, many of the descriptions do not seem to reflect subgroups that were lasting or represented certain interests. In other words, members may have grouped to feel safe rather than to build coalitions (apart from the incident with the email sender). Specifically, it seems remarkable that I cannot document evidence that members felt a need to establish long-term bonds around their perspectives on electoral variants¹⁸⁷ given that the Assembly's task was to deliberate on electoral systems. I can only document members working together in subgroups based on their preferred electoral system variants during weekend 8 (and briefly during weekend 9). This could mean that the Assembly members were not that concerned about the varying views on electoral systems. However, I believe it is more likely that the members did not feel a strong identity with a specific electoral system variant, as they were designed quite late in the process. This might have led to task conflicts not widely emerging, and this might have decreased creativity in problem solving.

6.3.2 Unequal participation

In exploring which subgroups were of greatest influence in terms of task effectiveness, the Assembly can be generally classified as a group¹⁸⁸. The descriptions below suggest that the Assembly was generally viewed as consisting of three groups of roughly the same size: a core group, a follower group, and a critical (i.e. negative) group. Categorization is apparently based on the degree of participation: the members' individual efforts in the group and their contribution to the content.

¹⁸⁴ Observations, weekend 7.

¹⁸⁵ Observations, weekend 8.

¹⁸⁶ Observations, weekend 9.

¹⁸⁷ Observations, conversations, interviews, questionnaire.

¹⁸⁸ Based on findings from interviews with staff members, the chair, lecturers, Assembly members, external consultants.

The following picture of the Assembly can be drawn:

Most staff and Assembly members seemed to classify the Assembly into three groups of similar size¹⁸⁹. Their categorizations were based on the members' individual efforts in the group and contribution to the content. First, most believed there was a 'core group'. Around half of this core group were part of what I term the 'elite group' (see Section 6.4.3). The other half were members that were rather active and had some influence, but less than the elite group. Then, the interviewees believed there was a 'critical group', consisting of members that had criticisms about the course of the process, the way the Assembly was facilitated, or the content that the Assembly produced. Furthermore, the critical group included those that had psychologically dropped out, were 'sitting their time out', or were inactive concerning the task. Finally, the interviewees believed there was a 'middle group' of members that followed the core group, but maybe were focused on other things than the task (for example social gathering), or were passive (but with a generally positive attitude). Some interviewees mentioned that many middle-aged women could be placed in this 'middle group'. Surprisingly, none of the interviewees mentioned the staff when categorizing the Assembly.

According to the chair, one of the lecturers, various staff, and some Assembly members, some of the group had serious problems with understanding the material¹⁹⁰. One of the lecturers said: "*a large part of the group could not follow the discussions... thus the core group ruled*"¹⁹¹. According to the chair: "*half of the group did not understand what was going on in the voting rounds*"¹⁹². Further, some of the staff members commented: "*the voting rounds were not necessarily understood by the members... Around twenty-five percent of the members had serious problems understanding the material and there were not enough people that had mastered the material and could consequently design an electoral system variant.*"¹⁹³

The differences in members' understanding of the material had been spoken about by the staff from the first weekend meeting: During a meeting with the chair and secretary it was discussed...how to deal with the Assembly members' differences in understanding the material¹⁹⁴. During the evaluation after weekend 3,...I asked the staff members whether they thought that the Assembly's differences in understanding the material would become a problem in the process to come. The staff members answered that this was not interfering with respect to the content¹⁹⁵.

However, it was only after the summer break that the issue was first seriously discussed among the staff: On the 5th September, I had a telephone conversation with the chair...I told her that I sometimes had difficulties with understanding the material and discussions that were held in the plenary sessions. According to my observations, I was not the only one. Therefore, we talked about the importance of keeping those members that were struggling on track¹⁹⁶. During the

¹⁸⁹ Interviews staff members, Assembly members.

¹⁹⁰ Interviews staff members, Assembly members, chair, lecturer.

¹⁹¹ Interview lecturer.

¹⁹² Interview chair.

¹⁹³ Interview staff members.

¹⁹⁴ Notes after weekend 1.

¹⁹⁵ Notes after weekend 3.

¹⁹⁶ Notes after weekend 7.

evaluation on the 6th September...a staff member thought that the gap between the 'pioneers' and the 'laggards' maybe had become too large... Another staff member believed that the Assembly could be divided in three blocks: a third of the members could keep up and were motivated, a third of the members could just about follow the program but were not too sure, and a third of the members were lost. That staff member closed by saying: "*the content needs to come from the first group*". Not all staff members agreed; two or three members thought everything was going very well and all the Assembly members were happy...The chair said that the program design for the next weekend meeting should include 'valve moments' in which the Assembly members could let off steam and reorganize their thoughts¹⁹⁷.

From weekend 7 onwards, some members also began to admit that they could not keep up: Five members said that they could not understand the terminology that was used (including in the plenary sessions)...¹⁹⁸ During the rest of the evening I spoke with nineteen members who shared with me that they could no longer keep up...¹⁹⁹. During weekend meeting 8, five members asked for a consultation to share similar sentiments²⁰⁰.

6.3.2.1 Loss of motivation

The descriptions above seem to show that a considerable number of the Assembly members could not fully keep up during the process. This probably influenced their participation in the group since it seems likely that those who did not understand the material would not belong to the core group. Naturally, not every member can belong to the core, as groups also need followers and critics. However, if the extent to which members mastered the material limited their participation, then the differences in the Assembly were not being satisfactorily handled since this is likely to have affected the task.

The following documentation seems to indicate that participation decreased during the decision-making phase: During weekend 8's dinner, I joined five tables and the conversations at all five tables dealt with motivational issues: people were admitting that they were now less motivated and that this project had taken a lot of their time.²⁰¹ After the subgroup sessions in weekend 8, six of the student assistants came to me to tell me that many people did not 'feel like it anymore', were tired, or could no longer keep up.²⁰² One member asked me in the bar "*does the chair get it at all that so many members have lost their motivation?*"²⁰³ On 3rd October, I spoke briefly by telephone to the chair before the staff's evaluation meeting. We talked about how many members had lost motivation. During the staff's meeting, I shared with them that I believed that about forty members had 'given up' and were sitting their time out²⁰⁴.

¹⁹⁷ Notes, after weekend 7.

¹⁹⁸ Conversations, weekend 7.

¹⁹⁹ Conversations, weekend 8.

²⁰⁰ Consultations, weekend 8.

²⁰¹ Observations, conversations, weekend 8.

²⁰² Observations, conversations, weekend 8.

²⁰³ Conversations, weekend 8.

²⁰⁴ Notes, after weekend 8.

Generally speaking, groups become less productive as their size increases. Among other things, large groups can suffer from motivation loss due to, for example, the Ringelmann effect (Ingham, Levinger, Graves & Peckham, 1974; Martin & Kravitz, 1986), the social loafing effect (Latané, Williams & Harkins, 1979), and the bystander effect (Latané & Darley, 1970). Those members that were struggling to keep up during the decision phase might have felt that their efforts were not necessary for the group to accomplish its aims, which might have resulted in social loafing behavior. Moreover, they could have become less motivated because they assumed that others would take responsibility: “*Let the core group just continue doing the work*”²⁰⁵.

The documentation below seems to suggest that some members felt demoralized due to a perceived lack of influence in the large group: “*What a sluggish crowd, this group! Pffff, that does not motivate me that much to keep on making a difference ...*”²⁰⁶ Five active members told me that they had lost their hope or belief that the Assembly would come up with a creative or innovative proposal. They believed that there were too few activists to achieve this²⁰⁷. Before the dinner, I spoke individually with seven Assembly members... and all seven admitted that they felt less motivated and committed... They mentioned several reasons for this...and they were disappointed with the possibilities provided in working with a large group...²⁰⁸

Members may also have been affected by other members becoming demoralized. This is illustrated in expressions such as: Twelve members had heard that many participants were no longer motivated, but continued because of the payments²⁰⁹. “*Many have lost their motivation*”, “*Passion has gone in the group*”, “*Many people feel the end is coming and no longer bother*”²¹⁰. Issues related to group performance could also be an explanation for the demoralization: “*It has all been babbling since the summer*”; “*We don't move forward anymore*”²¹¹.

The descriptions above indicate that a decline in motivation may have affected participation in the Assembly. Members seemed to concentrate less, and be less focused on being punctual. This behavior may have decreased task performance:...When I walked to the dinner room, I met nineteen Assembly members who were also late²¹². During the rest of the evening I spoke with eleven people who told me they did not feel like it anymore. These members formed a group and went out into the city²¹³. Before the start of the plenary session, sixteen

²⁰⁵ Conversations, weekend 8.

²⁰⁶ Conversations, weekend 8.

²⁰⁷ Conversations, weekend 6.

²⁰⁸ Conversations, weekend 7.

²⁰⁹ Conversations, consultations, weekend 7.

²¹⁰ Conversations, weekend 8.

²¹¹ Conversations, weekend 8.

²¹² Observations, weekend 8.

²¹³ Conversations, weekend 8.

members told me they wanted to leave early because they had had enough. Some of them stayed, but as the plenary started four rows were empty...Three members had fallen asleep and two members were listening to their MP3 players²¹⁴. At the back of the plenary room, a group of about fifteen members drank beer and used their mobile phones. Two other members came up to me to complain that they could not concentrate because of these people²¹⁵. About half way through the discussion, the group at the back left the room and returned twenty minutes later²¹⁶.

A quote from an evaluation form suggests that people were also influenced in how they reacted: "*I apologize for my very blunt way of reacting. I'm very disappointed about things in the Assembly. I started very enthusiastically, full of good spirit. That has totally disappeared. What a pity...*"²¹⁷

Remarkably, findings related to the focus groups and interviews does not seem to suggest any loss of motivation in the group. One explanation could be that members responded in what they saw as a socially desirable way. Alternatively, one could imagine that members' motivation might have been restored once the Assembly succeeded in its task and that members might then have 'forgotten' they were once demoralized.

6.3.3 Critical attitude towards the external consultants

During the Assembly's period of operation, external consultants were hired to fulfill certain tasks. The Assembly was visited by external consultants for their first significant involvement during weekend 4²¹⁸. The episodes below seem to illustrate that the Assembly reacted in a rather reserved way when these external experts were introduced: The two facilitators that were contracted to facilitate the regional debates were introduced to the Assembly by the chair. One of the members asked in a cautious tone: "*who are these two gentlemen actually?*"²¹⁹ ...The chair then presented an external consultant, who gave a presentation on 'the effect of my behavior on others in the group'. During the first five minutes of her speech, the Assembly was quiet. After ten minutes, two members left the room. About fifteen members seemed very interested in the subject. They answered questions and participated very actively during the session. However, around one-third of the group looked reserved and critical, and lost concentration. The rest of the members seemed somewhat neutral. After about fifteen minutes, one member asked somewhat skeptically: "*On what do you actually base all this talk?*"²²⁰

²¹⁴ Observations, weekend 8.

²¹⁵ Conversations, weekend 9.

²¹⁶ Observations, student report, weekend 9.

²¹⁷ Evaluation forms, weekend 9.

²¹⁸ An external Dutch television personality attended the Assembly during weekend 1 to present and facilitate a quiz. This visit is not considered in this section, as all participants and staff members were new to each other during the first weekend meeting and the distinction between external and internal roles therewith seems irrelevant to reflect upon.

²¹⁹ Student report, observations, weekend 4.

²²⁰ Student report, observations, weekend 4.

While the external experts were involved in weekend 4, an important member of the Assembly left, namely the chair. She had to leave after the end of the Saturday morning session, because of obligations already planned before the start of the Assembly. According to my observations, no members talked negatively about the chair's departure²²¹. During the closure of the plenary session on the Saturday morning: The chair said goodbye, handed the microphone over to the consultant, and left the room. People started talking straight away. The consultant started to explain the way of working...People seemed restless²²². One member asked...The consultant gave an incorrect answer and the project's secretary consequently intervened. The Assembly members started to mumble and murmur²²³. Some of them left the room. The consultant quickly presented the external facilitators for the afternoon and closed the plenary session²²⁴. The Assembly members seemed to project their frustration about the weekend meeting on to the external consultant. After the sociocratic elections had been completed, the members assembled in the plenary room: Around eighty percent of the members looked frustrated, angry, or confused. The atmosphere became increasingly negative and member Y said: "*I find it striking that the chair has left and it becomes a mess straight away. We want to go home!*"²²⁵

The staff also seemed to criticize the external consultant and the facilitators. Findings from the staff's evaluation meeting on the 16th May illustrate that most of the comments made involved attaching blame to the external actors, Finding someone to blame might have been more important for the staff than exploring what had actually happened during that particular weekend meeting: All the staff members were asked to share their thoughts about the previous weekend meeting. Eight (out of nine) staff members only commented on weekend 4's 'bad' atmosphere and the external actors' role in creating that atmosphere. The secretary mentioned at the end of the inventory round that he felt responsible for not discussing the sociocratic method sufficiently well with his colleagues - that he had relied too much on the external consultant. "*Consequently, we are feeling responsible for something that is not our fault*"²²⁶. The next weekend (the fifth), the chair seemed to blame the external advisors during the plenary session: "*Last weekend's meeting has not pleased everyone. Especially the sociocratic elections have resulted in frustration and misunderstanding among some of you...The external facilitators have been the main problem. We have of course given them feedback about that. However, consequently, a sense of time pressure has arisen and that's a pity...*"²²⁷ During the focus group session with the staff once the Assembly's period of operation had concluded, the following contribution was made: "*Externally contracted too often equates to badly contracted.*"²²⁸

²²¹ Observations, weekend 4.

²²² Observations, weekend 4.

²²³ Observations, student report, weekend 4.

²²⁴ Observations, weekend 4.

²²⁵ Observations, weekend 4.

²²⁶ Notes after weekend 4.

²²⁷ Student report, observations, weekend 5.

²²⁸ Focus group staff members.

In addition to the external actors being criticized by the Assembly, it should also be mentioned that the external consultant did not feel totally satisfied with her and her colleagues' performance. Thus, some of the criticism that was expressed during weekend 4 should probably be interpreted as legitimate rather than as blame shifting: "*I took my best and most sensitive people with me but clearly I did not brief them well enough. I would do that differently now... Anyway, I believe that the time was right for something rebellious to happen in this group. We probably played an important role in fulfilling that need; it is easier to behave rebelliously towards external actors.*"²²⁹

During weekend 6, another external consultant was involved in the Assembly in presenting the results from the online discussion that was held on the 21th June. When the consultant confronted the Assembly with its diverse opinions, some members seemed to react in a critical and fierce tone, while others seemed to ignore him: The Assembly was restless and the consultant was difficult to hear. The chair intervened several times and asked for quiet... According to the consultant, the session showed that there were very few items on which all the members agreed. However, there were items on which the majority of the members did agree²³⁰. Most questions were raised by the same few members. These questions dealt with the usefulness of the results and were asked in a critical and fierce tone²³¹. At the back of the plenary room, around twenty members that had gone out on the Friday night were having fun together and not paying attention to the presentation²³². The same consultant was again involved in the Assembly at a later date: Subsequently, the chair presented the external consultant who had come to share the results of the online session that was held on the 11th October. The consultant said that the Assembly was a very critical group: he had never seen a group that was as divided as this Assembly²³³. A member reacted angrily: "*Other groups are something else completely!*"

6.3.3.1 In-group/out-group bias

The descriptions above suggest that the Assembly treated external actors critically. For example, when the external consultant confronted the Assembly with its own lack of unity during weekend 9, he was criticized. In the Assembly members' defense, one could note that his results were presented fairly late in the process, which might have stressed or frustrated the members. However, this cannot fully explain the criticism since, during the same evening, a panel of experts on electoral systems and political science were invited to reflect on the Assembly's preferred electoral system variant. In that session, the members seemed to participate seriously and constructively: The chair continued with introducing the guests of this evening; two Dutch electoral system experts who were invited for the panel discussion and a

²²⁹ Interview external consultant, 15th February 2007.

²³⁰ Student reports, weekend 6.

²³¹ Observations, weekend 6.

²³² Observations, weekend 6.

²³³ Observations, student report, weekend 9.

Canadian researcher in electoral studies. The Assembly started applauding²³⁴ ...Some members asked them a question...Most members participated seriously and were interested in the discussion...²³⁵

I see it as noteworthy that members were so positive during the panel discussion since this was the first time that the Assembly's final ideas were assessed by external experts and there was not much time left to process their feedback. One would therefore have expected more tension. A possible explanation for this acceptance could be that the Assembly was familiar with two of the panel members, the two lecturers that had advised them early in the process, making the panel seem less foreign. Another explanation could be that electoral system experts were seen as an in-group. This argument might also explain why some other visitors were accepted by the Assembly: namely, that they were either electoral system experts or researchers and staff members from the Canadian Assembly: The chair informed the group about today's program and introduced a Canadian guest, who was part of the staff in the Citizens' Assembly of British Columbia. The Assembly members listened quietly.²³⁶ ...The plenary session was closed with an interview with the visitor. People listened quietly and afterwards asked some questions²³⁷.

The episodes above seem to show that Assembly members behaved differently when 'guests' who entered the Assembly were electoral system experts. They seemed to be accepted as if they were part of the Assembly itself. In comparison, consultants who came with other knowledge seemed to be treated as out-group members. Here, the phenomenon of in-group/out-group bias is understood within the framework of dealing with differences. In Section 6.3.6 it is argued that this phenomenon also meaningfully can be interpreted from a perspective of external threat; namely, the external consultants could be viewed as representatives from the outside world that entered the system and threatened the Assembly's existence.

The question is how might in-group/out-group bias have affected the Assembly's task? On the one hand, one could argue that in-group/out-group sensitivity strengthened the cohesion of the group. Members could have found 'a common enemy' in the external actors that entered their group. This might have helped the Assembly since group cohesion is generally considered to be beneficial for groups in carrying out their tasks (Cartwright, 1968; Coser, 1956). Conversely, cohesiveness may also lead to a lack of critical thinking (e.g. Janis, 1972). The descriptions above seem to suggest that the Assembly found it difficult to work with the different perspectives that were presented by the visitors. Being open to this diversity could have resulted in greater creativity and critical thinking.

²³⁴ Observations, weekend 9.

²³⁵ Observations, weekend 9.

²³⁶ Observations, weekend 4.

²³⁷ Student report, weekend 5.

6.3.4 The difficulty of working with differences

The following statements seem to give reason for exploring how the inherent diversity was worked with in the Assembly: “*We haven’t made use of the Assembly’s diversity. Mind you, such a capacity! Especially in such a project it should be possible to have differing perspectives and discuss them...*”²³⁸ “*There was too much focus on the whole and too little on diversity. It seemed like conflicts were avoided... It was emphasized very strongly that ‘we are a group’, instead of ‘everybody has his or her own opinion’...*”²³⁹ “*There was no place for funny ideas*”²⁴⁰

During the evaluation meeting with the chair and the secretary after the first weekend meeting, a topic of discussion was working with the group’s differences and complexity: ...We agreed that the chair would talk about differences in the group and the goal of working together towards the end result. The chair would focus on respect for differences, the importance of listening, and one’s own responsibilities²⁴¹ Later, after the third weekend: ...During my meeting with the chair and the secretary, we first talked about my observation that members were still unclear about how to come to a shared result with 140 people and what their individual role should be in that process²⁴².

However, it seems as if the diversity was talked about, but not worked with, during the weekend meetings. An example from weekend 2: The chair opened the plenary session by asking “*who found the subgroup session very difficult?*” Fifteen people raised their hand. Then, she asked the chairs for feedback, but didn’t give them much time to answer²⁴³. All the weekend meetings before the summer break²⁴⁴ showed a similar pattern: chairs and spokespeople often summarized the results of the subgroup sessions in the plenary setting (and tended to focus on similarities with other groups), and contributions were often not explored afterwards. In other words, divergence was organized and brought into the large group setting, but not worked with.

In addition, the chair and I were focused on the Assembly as ‘a group’. In so doing, differences and complexity were not worked with: I proposed designing a working method that would focus on collaboration and roles in groups: to train the members in working together as a group.²⁴⁵ The chair opened the next weekend meeting as follows: “*I have noticed that there is special kind of Assembly feeling, a ‘we-feeling’. But, it is also striking that you seem to approach the material individualistically*”. She clarified this last comment: “*you’re focused on: do I understand the material*”²⁴⁶.

²³⁸ Interview email sender.

²³⁹ Interview lecturer.

²⁴⁰ Interview external consultant.

²⁴¹ Notes after weekend 1.

²⁴² Notes after weekend 3.

²⁴³ Observations, weekend 2.

²⁴⁴ Observations, student reports, weekend 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

²⁴⁵ Notes after weekend 2.

²⁴⁶ Observations, student report, weekend 3.

The group listened quietly. The chair continued her point by explaining that every member also has a role in the collective and that the group is important for successful collaboration. “*From now on we will focus more on working as a group*”.²⁴⁷

6.3.4.1 The staff’s focus on the whole

The descriptions above suggest that the differences in the Assembly were not really worked with by the staff. Instead of working on a process from divergence towards convergence, the staff seemed to focus on ‘the whole’: ...The chair told the Assembly members that the chairs of the subgroups had a list of questions that should be discussed. “*Try to reach consensus on the questions*”²⁴⁸ The chair gave instructions for the subgroup sessions to come: “*the temptation is great to start discussing too much in detail. Drop your own preferences and focus on the group as a whole instead. This will stimulate the whole.*”²⁴⁹

How would focusing on the whole affect the task? Decisions made in the decision-making phase were not made using a process of divergence and convergence but, instead, voting machines were used from weekend 8 onwards²⁵⁰. This is remarkable since one would expect decisions in a deliberative instrument to be made through a deliberative process, not by majority rule (voting). By using this voting procedure, diversity was decreased. That is, it was ‘only’ the majority that decided; minority perspectives were ‘voted away’. It also seems likely that the group would have been able to come to a result without decreasing the complexity. According to one of the lecturers: “*Voting machines were used too quickly*”²⁵¹.

Effectively working with large groups requires the differentiation and integration of subgroups within the group as a whole (Agazarian, 1997; Agazarian & Gantt, 2005; Weisbord & Janoff, 2007). In that way, the subgroups can contain the large group’s individual members and diversity can consequently be accommodated. Decreased diversity and complexity in the Assembly may have resulted in a less creative process and thus a less rich proposal. One might therefore argue against the sentiment in the secretary’s comment that “*the group turned out to be conservative*”²⁵². Rather, the leadership and facilitation of the Assembly might have made the group conservative.

²⁴⁷ Observations, student report, weekend 3.

²⁴⁸ Observations, student report, weekend 7.

²⁴⁹ Observations, student report, weekend 8.

²⁵⁰ The majority rule was also used during Saturday afternoon’s voting round in weekend 7.

²⁵¹ Interview lecturer.

²⁵² Interview secretary.

6.3.4.2 Incompatible work philosophies

As the staff lacked a detailed plan for the process²⁵³ with which to work, each weekend meeting needed to be planned after the previous weekend meeting, and several work philosophies were used. The descriptions below suggest that the staff's working methods or philosophies were incompatible or used inconsistently. As such, the conditions might not have been optimal for working with diversity.

The process of the Assembly was notionally divided into a training phase, a consultation phase, and a decision-making phase. However, the practice seemed slightly different: As planned, the Assembly was lectured to during the first three weekend meetings. Then, the sociocratic elections were held during weekend 4. Data from weekends 5 and 6 show that the Assembly worked on several things: it received lectures, it got input from the regional debates, the website, and politicians, it was introduced to guests, and it dealt with issues like the media, an online session and summer plans. Then, during weekends 7 and 8, electoral system variants were designed using large group intervention work methods. Finally, during weekends 9 and 10, variants were selected (by voting)²⁵⁴.

The description above seems to suggest that the Assembly could only start working with genuine diversity from weekend 7 onwards²⁵⁵. Namely, members were first expected to take on more of a student role during the training phase. Then, for weekend 4, the working method all of a sudden took on a very reflective character. Weekends 5 and 6 seemed to be full with a variety of elements: lectures, external input, media, etc. As a consequence, the Assembly was constantly being confronted with new information that needed to be processed and it could not spend time on deepening its own discussions. As the email sender put it: "*I experienced the Assembly as a flock visiting a conference*".²⁵⁶

The design for weekends 7 and 8 was based on large group intervention methods, in which electoral system variants would be designed, differentiated, and integrated within the large group setting. However, at the end of weekend 7, when the Assembly had to select elements to put in the system variants, the chair changed strategy: The chaotic and confused atmosphere increased when the group needed to vote again. After the first question, the chair stopped counting individual hands and worked with minority/majority rule instead. This created quietness in the group.²⁵⁷ From weekend 8 onwards, decisions were made by voting machines.

The incompatibilities in the work philosophies applied may have decreased the possibility of working with the diversity. Moreover, it may have confused the Assembly members when carrying out their

²⁵³ The process plan that the Assembly worked with had been designed by constitutional experts, political scientists, and public administrators; it was very general and focused on the content (electoral systems). No 'large group' experts were involved in designing the process plan.

²⁵⁴ Programs for weekend meetings, observations, weekends 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

²⁵⁵ Programs for weekend meetings, observations, weekends 7, 8, 9, 10.

²⁵⁶ Interview with email sender

²⁵⁷ Observations, student report, weekend 7.

tasks. As such, it is perhaps not so surprising that the theme of ‘process design’ was the most commented upon in the evaluation of the project²⁵⁸.

6.3.4.3 Avoidance, confusion, and difficulties with hearing

It seems that the Assembly did not know how to deal with its differences and complexity. Diversity was either not worked with (i.e. avoided) or resulted in chaos and confusion, as illustrated in the episodes below. Moreover, the second episode seems to show similarities to what Weinberg and Schneider (2003) refer to as psychological hearing difficulties in large groups.

During the morning session of weekend 2, the Assembly talked about media coverage. The group seemed to be concerned about how to communicate a message that would represent all its members. To be released from resolving this complexity, some members seemed to be proposing that the secretariat take over: Comments made in the evaluation forms²⁵⁹ showed that quite a lot of members were insecure about how the Assembly could ensure a single shared message was communicated to the media... Several members moreover mentioned that they expected or wanted the secretariat to take over, so that the organization could be centralized.

After the summer break, the Assembly moved into its decision-making phase. The Assembly had deliberated about electoral systems before the summer break but weekend 7 was the first weekend in which the Assembly really needed to address conditions and directions that would underlie its final proposal. In other words, during this weekend meeting, the Assembly needed to work with real differences for the first time: The atmosphere during the subgroup sessions (rounds 1 and 2) was rather tame. People complained that they could hardly hear each other due to bad acoustics and a noisy air-conditioning system. Seven spokespeople shared their subgroups’ contributions in the plenary session. All groups had problems with the assignment; they found it hard to address the core functions of electoral systems and had to get used to the new working method. The content was discussed and some questions were raised about the working procedure. Some members shared their confusion²⁶⁰. The rest of the morning was spent deliberating in small groups on the conditions of electoral systems. The atmosphere seemed quiet, the energy level low. People looked kind of dazed and confused. Nine members shared with me between the assignments that they wondered how decisions were going to be made from now on in this project.²⁶¹ ...When the members came together again in the plenary session, the spokespeople shared with the group that the assignment had not been easy. Some groups did not have enough time, other groups could not agree. The atmosphere was kind of chaotic and confused. Two members started to argue in the plenary and the chair stopped them. The chaotic and confused atmosphere increased when the group needed to vote²⁶².

²⁵⁸ Results of flipchart debriefing assignment weekend 10 (see Appendix 14), Assembly members’ focus groups 1 and 2, interviews with Assembly members and email sender.

²⁵⁹ Evaluation forms, weekend 2.

²⁶⁰ Observations, student report, weekend 7.

²⁶¹ Observations, conversations, weekend 7.

²⁶² Observations, weekend 7.

How might a confused climate have affected task effectiveness? The Assembly could neither finish its program on Friday evening nor on Saturday afternoon during weekend 7²⁶³. Apparently, the confusion had disturbed the group. Moreover, one member said at the end of the plenary session on the Saturday afternoon: “*Arrange more time during next weekend meeting and work with voting machines instead!*”²⁶⁴ From this comment, one gains the impression that members could not contain the diversity, and that voting machines could be used to release them from that complexity.

6.3.4.4 The staff’s diversity

The following statement seems to warrant exploring how differing perspectives within the staff were worked with: One of the staff members told me that he believed that the email sender, member X, and member Y were right in their views about the staff and the way the process was facilitated. He told me that he did not feel sufficiently secure to start such a discussion in the secretariat²⁶⁵.

Notes that I took during the staff evaluation meetings and conversations with staff members suggest that the staff’s diversity in terms of resources and competences were not really worked with. For example, during evaluation meetings, the staff members were asked to reflect on weekend meetings, but their contributions were often not explored or used in the next weekend’s design. Mostly, the weekend meetings were designed by the secretary, the chair, and policy staff, and they were all primarily focused on the content (electoral systems). I gave feedback on the draft programs. Later, from weekend 4 onwards, I was also invited to participate in the meetings in which the weekends were planned. The remaining staff members were essentially not involved in the weekends’ designs²⁶⁶, which means that resources and competences available within the staff might not have been optimally used. Moreover: Internal communication and collaboration within the staff organization were criticized²⁶⁷. Staff members felt that the chair and the secretary paired off together and were isolated from the rest of the organization (“*they operate from their own island*”²⁶⁸). Moreover some staff members found the chair somewhat distant. The chair, in turn, felt that the staff operated independently. Next time, she “*would like to get better acquainted with the team*”²⁶⁹.

It is to be expected that the staff’s way of working affected the Assembly’s process. Program designs for weekend meetings might, for example, not have mirrored all the needs in the group. The following quote illustrates another possible effect; that some staff members might have experienced identity

²⁶³ Observations, student report, weekend 7.

²⁶⁴ Observations, student report, weekend 7.

²⁶⁵ Conversations after weekend 5.

²⁶⁶ Notes, conversations, after weekend meetings, interviews with staff members.

²⁶⁷ Conversations after weekend meetings, focus group session staff members, interview with staff members and chair.

²⁶⁸ Conversations after weekend 6.

²⁶⁹ Interview with chair.

problems within the staff because their capacities were not used or they did not thrive within the staff organization. This might have made it more difficult for them to relate to Assembly members in the large group setting: *"The secretariat is facilitating. What I miss is collaboration. For me it feels like a group that operates separately from the Assembly..."*²⁷⁰

6.3.5 Ambiguity concerning tasks, roles, and process design

Information that was mostly collected after the Assembly's period of operation seems to indicate that tasks and roles were generally unclear in the Assembly's working environment: Assembly members found the roles of the student assistants, the staff, and the confidant unclear²⁷¹. In addition, members thought the division of tasks was unclear: who were responsible for the process and who for the content?²⁷² Members questioned, for example, the staff's role in designing electoral system variants and in writing the draft text for the Assembly's proposal²⁷³. Further, ambiguity was not only expressed by the Assembly members; student assistants also mentioned that their role was unclear. Moreover, they felt insecure about their position as they were effectively "*pushed to the sidelines*" during the project²⁷⁴. Several staff members from the secretariat also admitted that it was unclear to them what their own roles and tasks were²⁷⁵. During their focus group session it was further mentioned that: "*Maybe our division of roles should have been communicated more clearly to the Assembly members*"²⁷⁶. Finally, on this aspect, both lecturers also mentioned that their roles were unclear²⁷⁷.

The following episode illustrates the way the Assembly started its group work during the first weekend meeting. After the Assembly members returned from the formal induction process, they had to establish regulations for working together: The chair welcomed the Assembly members...and started the session enthusiastically by introducing the staff members... The chair continued talking about the strength of being a heterogeneous group. "*However*", the chair said, "*being with many different people also means that we need to respect each other. So, during the coming hours, we will design regulations for working and communicating together.*" Each subgroup was given the task to first become familiar with each other and then share and discuss elements that were seen as crucial for working together... When all the groups had presented their results, the chair informed the Assembly that all content would be collected and put together by the staff. The staff would present the resulting code of conduct to the Assembly during the next weekend meeting²⁷⁸. The code of conduct²⁷⁹ focused primarily on 'how to treat one another'. Once the regulations

²⁷⁰ Evaluation forms, weekend 8.

²⁷¹ Assembly members' focus group 1, results from flipchart debriefing assignment weekend 10 (see Appendix 14), evaluation forms weekends 7 & 8.

²⁷² Assembly members' focus group 1.

²⁷³ Observations, weekends 5, 8, and 9.

²⁷⁴ Focus group of student assistants.

²⁷⁵ Staff members' focus group, interviews with staff members.

²⁷⁶ Focus group of staff members.

²⁷⁷ Interview with lecturers.

²⁷⁸ Observations, weekend 1.

were established, the Assembly started working straight away: Saturday's plenary and subgroup sessions dealt with electoral systems.

The staff did not seem to be fully prepared for the large project and struggled to develop their own organization: The staff had not completely settled after the first weekend meeting. There had not been enough preparation time since the project had started and positions were yet to be filled. So, while the secretariat was running on half its design staff, the project was in full swing. This created a fair amount of chaos and tension in the staff. Moreover, the first three weekend meetings had only two weeks space in between each of them. This created some pressure²⁸⁰.

The following episode perhaps illustrates that the staff's way of working was ambiguous from the start of the project: When I went to the office for the first evaluation meeting, most staff members did not know who I was and what role I had, even though they had seen me during the first weekend meeting. One of my first impressions was that the various staff sections operated fairly individually; they were also still finding out about their tasks, their roles, and their internal position within the organization. The secretary was the only person that had a general overview. However, he spent most of his time in meetings (in starting the project up). Moreover, all communication with the chair went through the secretary, which created some practical problems²⁸¹... Two days after the second weekend meeting...one of the staff members told me that the internal organization and communication within the secretariat was somewhat problematic. According to this staff member, the staff members were too focused on running this large project rather than on their own functioning²⁸².

Apparently, organization concern did not go unnoticed. The staff's lack of preparedness may have been reflected in the Assembly during weekend 4: During the weekend meeting, twenty-five members told me that they got irritated by the staff's attitude. People described the staff as...indifferent, impersonal, and internally focused. Five other members asked me whether there was an internal problem in the staff, as they were experiencing restlessness and inaccuracies²⁸³. However, the use made of the additional organizational time available due to the summer break seemed to be observed: During weekend meeting 7, twelve subgroup chairs told me that they were happy with the additional meeting on the 25th of August as they felt themselves better prepared. Further, seven Assembly members commented that the weekend meeting had been well prepared ("better than normal")²⁸⁴.

The following episode seems to suggest that members (or at least the email sender) were not familiar with the process design:...The sender of the email responded by asking what was planned for the coming months. The chair continued to talk in more general terms rather than giving a direct answer. "*Many of you are concerned about the process: are we going to make it in time? I understand the insecurity amongst some of you. It might help to look more closely at the process to come.*"²⁸⁵ She presented a rough plan for the period to come and the period after the summer break and continued:

²⁷⁹ The code of conduct can be found in Appendix 7.

²⁸⁰ Notes after weekend 1, interviews with staff members.

²⁸¹ Notes after weekend 1, focus group with staff members, interviews with staff members.

²⁸² Conversations after weekend 2.

²⁸³ Conversations, weekend 4.

²⁸⁴ Conversations, weekend 7.

²⁸⁵ Observations, student report, diary trainee, weekend 5.

*"It is a bit like when I need to prepare my sermon for the Sunday morning service [in church]. On Saturday evening I do not have a clue what to write about. Yet, it always works out. I promise you, we will end up offering good advice. I promise. How? By dealing with the questions, step-by-step, even though they might be rather difficult."*²⁸⁶

Findings from the debriefing session, the focus groups, and the interviews show moreover that the 'process design' theme was commented upon most often when evaluating the project²⁸⁷. Comments made during the debriefing session included: "More preparation time for the staff would have resulted in a clearer process design and a better thread"; "More time for the decision-making phase, more effective design of the deliberation phase"; "More focus earlier in the process, then deepening afterwards"; "Due to information overload it was difficult to gain a clear overview."²⁸⁸ Others also criticized how the 'process design' theme was handled. Several staff members, one of the lecturers, and various external consultants mentioned that they had missed this expertise in the staff. Furthermore, the staff members themselves believed that collectively they had been too narrow-minded and detail-oriented because they lacked a good process plan to work from²⁸⁹.

6.3.5.1 Absence of a psychological contract

The descriptions above suggest that the staff had created an ambiguous working environment for the Assembly due to its own unpreparedness and organizational problems. The task's problem definition, the interdependencies between the various parties within the Assembly, and the division of roles, responsibilities, and power were never explicitly explored or discussed. Moreover, the Assembly never made a psychological contract: a framework in which the tasks, roles, and responsibilities were collectively agreed²⁹⁰. It is likely that the ambiguous working environment within the Assembly affected its productivity. If the tasks and roles had been collectively discussed and agreed, some of the misunderstandings and conflicts that emerged (for example the staff's role in writing the Assembly's proposal) might have been avoided.

6.3.6 Reflection

Based on the reasoning outlined in this section, one could conclude that the Assembly was motivated to diminish diversity in order to reduce complexity. In the attempt to control diversity, members seemed to have categorized themselves into subgroups. However, they did not seem to have identified themselves fully with these subgroups since the subgroups' interests were rarely raised in

²⁸⁶ Observations, weekend 5.

²⁸⁷ Results of flipchart debriefing assignment weekend 10 (see Appendix 14), Assembly members focus groups 1 and 2, interviews with Assembly members and email sender.

²⁸⁸ Results of flipchart debriefing assignment weekend 10 (see Appendix 14)

²⁸⁹ Focus group of staff members, interviews with staff members, external consultants, and lecturer.

²⁹⁰ During weekend 1, members were asked to sign a contract ('Agreement between the chair and the members of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform', Appendix II, process report) in which only the general conditions for membership were confirmed (such as payment and required presence).

the larger group setting and conflicts between subgroups were unusual. Further, the staff seemed to lack the competences and conditions required to deal with the complexity of diversity.

The surrender of self and the belief that individual differences had disappeared may have reduced the members' perceived risk of attack from others in the group. However, this could also have threatened members' individual identity and the boundaries of the self, which could have increased anxiety (Main, 1975). This interpretation is supported by the following comments that were made during five consultations I had with members over weekends 8 and 9: "*I found the atmosphere in the group unpleasant, unsafe, and terrible*"²⁹¹ and "*I felt very bad in the group*"²⁹². The denial of differences could have initiated primitive individual defense mechanisms such as splitting (Klein, 1977) and projecting on the group.

The reasoning highlighted in this section seems to correspond with reflections in the previous paragraph about collusion. Namely, that collusive climates are characterized by a desire to deny differences, interests, and identities (Schrijver & Vansina, 2008). Moreover, the findings in this section show that the selected concepts in this study are interrelated. The phenomenon of in-group/out-group bias that in this section was interpreted within the framework of dealing with differences, can also be understood from a perspective of external threats and enclosure of the system, which was considered in Section 6.2.1.2. The external actors that entered the Assembly increased the complexity that the group was attempting to avoid. One of member 2's comments illustrates the primitive instincts that came about when confronted with external threats: "*Because the group size is so similar to the community size of our hunter-gatherer ancestor I think a lot of our primal instincts were triggered to protect and preserve the group...I, for one, definitely experienced in-group/out-group bias! Even though I had not been acquainted with all of the members (including the staff) I would recognize a stranger in less than a second from the corner of my eye. I even remember that in some situations I experienced, for a very brief moment, slight feelings of hostility and distrust when confronted with external actors.*"²⁹³

6.4 Increased emotions

In Chapter 4, it was argued that large groups tend to generate strong emotions in their members due to identity problems. These emotions can erupt in potentially uncontrollable and uncontrollable ways. Given this potential, the emotional climate in the Assembly is explored below.

6.4.1 Strong emotions

During the whole process of the Assembly, members shared with me that they felt distressed by being in the large group. Some members felt lost, alone, and isolated: Before the start of the morning program, a few members had approached me to share their thoughts and feelings about being in the Assembly: "*I feel insecure in this large new group*", "*I find group-forming difficult, especially in large groups*", "*I feel anxious because of the largeness of the group*", and "*I*

²⁹¹ Consultations, weekend 8.

²⁹² Consultations, weekend 9.

²⁹³ Member checks, member 2 (see Appendix 26).

*haven't slept, because of all the impressions from all these people.*²⁹⁴ ... "During last weekend's meeting I addressed the group in the plenary. Then you feel very insecure. It is not easy to do."²⁹⁵ Two members asked for a consultation because they felt lonely in the large group.²⁹⁶ One member felt bad because of a rumor that had been spread about her. She had the feeling that everyone was now watching her.²⁹⁷ One of the lecturers illustrated how he found the Assembly an emotional environment: "*I have experienced the Assembly as a heavily emotional environment. All these members involving me in all their matters... I felt emotionally claimed.*"²⁹⁸

From weekend 3 onwards, criticism and unrest seemed to increase below the surface. First, some people started considering the consequences of withdrawing from the Assembly during weekend 3: A large percentage of the group stayed longer in the bar than they had done during the previous meetings... Around twenty members I talked to, either individually or in small groups, explored the consequences of withdrawal from the Assembly²⁹⁹. Then, after weekend 4, others seemed to be concerned: On Saturday evening nineteen members rang to tell me that a fairly large group of members were considering withdrawing from the Assembly³⁰⁰. During weekend 5, this concern seemed to have developed into unrest and polarized feelings: One of the members came to me during the break and told me: "*the unrest beneath the surface is greater than you think!*"³⁰¹ Most of the thirty members that had collected in the bar on that Friday night were sitting close to each other during the plenary of Saturday morning... One of those thirty members shared with some of the other Assembly members that he probably would resign at the end of the weekend meeting as he did not agree with the way things were going. This rumor spread quickly within the Assembly and people started to become restless...³⁰² ... There were several members who were worried that the group would split into critical and engaged members. Furthermore, three members wanted to talk about the rumor that one of the members had plans to resign, and one member wanted to share her concern with me that "*the number supporting the email sender was increasing*" and talk about that³⁰³. Again during weekend 6: I had three consultations with members who wanted to discuss the increasing criticism below the surface.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁴ Consultations, weekend 1.

²⁹⁵ Student report, weekend 4.

²⁹⁶ Consultations, weekends 5 and 7.

²⁹⁷ Consultations, weekend 8.

²⁹⁸ Interview with lecturer.

²⁹⁹ Observations, conversations, and consultations, weekend 3.

³⁰⁰ Conversations and consultations, weekend 4.

³⁰¹ Conversations, weekend 5.

³⁰² Observations and conversations, weekend 5.

³⁰³ Consultations, weekend 5.

³⁰⁴ Consultations, weekend 6.

Strong emotions such as anger, panic, and hysteria seemed to emerge after plenary episodes that were characterized by tension or turbulence, for example after the parliamentarians' visit and the discussion with the email sender (weekend 6), and the voting round (weekend 9). On the way to the bar, just after the parliamentarians' visit during weekend 6: I observed fifteen members who were upset and talking hysterically about what had happened during the plenary session; "*We're doing this for nothing!*" Five of these members told me the next day in a consultation that they had almost not slept³⁰⁵. Moreover, the twenty members I spoke with in the bar were very worried about what was said in the plenary³⁰⁶. At the end of the weekend meeting: I had five consultations with crying Assembly members after the closure of weekend meeting. The members were upset and in panic about the discussion with the email sender at the end of the plenary³⁰⁷. A similar episode from weekend 9, just after the voting round: During a break, a tense and emotional atmosphere set in. All the members I saw looked very confused, angry, or sad. In the toilet, I heard some members crying. People in the hall were discussing events in heavy and emotional terms³⁰⁸. Two members came to me and said they wanted to withdraw from the Assembly. The day before they also had talked with me about no longer feeling like participating. After a ten minute talk, the two members seemed to calm down a little and decided to stay³⁰⁹. One member came to me, in a panic, and said that she had voted the wrong way during the last round. Consequently she felt that all the commotion in the group was her fault³¹⁰.

Aggression, envy, and anger seemed to appear mostly in the relationships between Assembly members and the staff. When the chair made her usual round past all the dinner tables during weekend 4: One of the members told her in a hostile and aggressive tone that: "*We haven't had our payments yet. Train tickets are expensive and some people are strapped for cash. Don't make promises you cannot keep!*"³¹¹ The following comments about the staff were made in the bar during weekend 8: "*do they find us interesting or would they rather celebrate with their own party?*", "*they let us stew in our own juice*", "*is anyone that interested in me as a person, or am I just relevant because of my content?*", "*the chair gets more satisfaction out of conversations with the secretariat*", "*has she forgotten us?*", "*who is her client: us or the project secretariat?*"³¹².

Assembly members also became romantically attached with each other during the process. Some members asked for a consultation to discuss this: Three people that came to me for a consultation had fallen in love

³⁰⁵ Consultations, weekend 6.

³⁰⁶ Observations and conversations, weekend 6.

³⁰⁷ Consultations, weekend 6.

³⁰⁸ Observations, weekend 9.

³⁰⁹ Consultations, weekend 9.

³¹⁰ Consultations, weekend 9.

³¹¹ Diary trainee, observations, weekend 4.

³¹² Conversations, weekend 8.

with someone in the Assembly and wanted to talk about that³¹³. Two members wished to talk with me because they wanted to get divorced from their partners because they had fallen in love with another Assembly member³¹⁴.

6.4.1.1 Contagion of affect

The descriptions above suggest that strong emotions including anxiety, anger, panic, hysteria, aggression, envy and compassion were to be found in the Assembly. Emotions shown in the period between weekends 3 and 6 seem to have similarities with the contagion of affect mechanism (Le Bon, 1896/1973). This mechanism explains how people in large groups can start to experience certain feelings because they sense them in others. From weekend 3 onwards, people started to be concerned about others withdrawing. Unrest seemed to increase beneath the surface and gradually more and more people started to behave anxiously. According to Le Bon, contagion of affect can result in an unmanageable and subduing negative tone in a group. As such, the phenomenon is most likely to have hindered the Assembly's task effectiveness.

6.4.2 Irrational fantasies and mistrust

The episodes below suggest that Assembly members developed fantasies or maybe even paranoid thinking during the process. Notably, most of the irrational fantasies related to the staff's role: During the third weekend, nine members asked me whether the staff had deliberately given the subgroups a task that was too long and too complex, so problems would arise and the group would consequently develop³¹⁵. Later in the process, one member was worried that the staff members were no longer able to overview the project as they had hired in an external consultant, and another member had heard some rumors about the financial situation of the project and wanted to get this clarified³¹⁶. During a later weekend, on the Friday evening, twenty-one members contacted me (some of them somewhat in panic) as they had heard that I would stop working on the project. Eight of them said that if this was right, they would also consider quitting ("in that case I don't find it comfortable anymore"). Later on in that weekend meeting it became clear to me that one of the members had spread this incorrect information³¹⁷. During weekend 5's plenary session on the Friday evening the following question was raised: "I have read that our secretary and you [the lecturer] have written a proposal for electoral system change. Is that right?" The lecturer answered: "Yes, we have indeed worked on an assignment to develop variants for the German electoral system when we were researchers at..."³¹⁸ This question seemed to cause irrational fantasies and mistrust among some of the members. These members gained the idea that the secretary had secretly written a proposal for electoral reform and that the Assembly was installed only to legitimize his proposal. Comments relating to weekends 5, 6, 7 and 8 illustrate this fear: "How neutral can lecturer 1,

³¹³ Consultations, weekend 4.

³¹⁴ Consultations, weekend 9.

³¹⁵ Conservations and observations, weekend 3.

³¹⁶ Consultations, weekend 7.

³¹⁷ Conversations, weekend 8.

³¹⁸ Observations, weekend 5.

lecturer 2, and the secretary be, when they have been working with electoral systems for a long time?»³¹⁹ One member asked for a consultation to hear whether this project was fake (this member's assumption was that the secretary already had written a proposal for the Assembly). Twenty-two members referred to the division of roles between the chair and the secretary: people were questioning the chair's neutrality as she was always talking in the "we" form and the chair and secretary talked a lot together³²⁰. During weekend 7: one member thought the project was fake³²¹. Further, during weekend 8: Eight members had come to me and said that the secretary had joined in a subgroup discussion. They were therefore convinced that the project was fake³²².

6.4.2.1 Anti-group phenomena

The descriptions above suggest that irrational fantasies and mistrust emerged during the consultation and decision-making phases. The members' worries about withdrawal (see above), irrational fantasies about, and mistrust in, the Assembly seem to show similarities with Nitsun's (1996) description of anti-group phenomena which, according to Nitsun, are more intense in large groups. These negative and destructive forces are most likely to have hindered the Assembly's task. However, Nitsun stresses that if the negative and destructive forces can be contained within the group, they can form a balance and release creative potential. Many of the descriptions presented above were derived from consultations with Assembly members. As such, this illustrates that I was confronted with strong emotions in my role as confidant. Following Nitsun's line of thought, one could argue that, as confidant, I might have taken away the group's possibility of working through its own emotions, which may have affected the group's development.

6.4.3 Turbulence around the identification of an elite group

After the Assembly's period of operation, I made a list of 'elite' Assembly members because I wanted to invite the more active and influential members to one of two focus group sessions: To avoid selecting elite members based only on my own observations, I asked five staff members and three Assembly members to list the most active and influential Assembly members. I merged those eight lists together with my own. This resulted in a list of 31 core Assembly members. Ninety-four percent of these elite group members had also been assigned additional roles in the process³²³. Most of them were (vice-)chairs, spokespersons or members of the media working group.

The description above suggests that around one-fifth of the Assembly members were active and influential in the group. Moreover, most of the members that were assigned an additional role during

³¹⁹ Evaluation form, weekend 5.

³²⁰ Conversations, weekend 6.

³²¹ Consultations, weekend 7.

³²² Conversations, weekend 8.

³²³ Results of sociocratic elections, weekend 4.

the sociocratic elections³²⁴ of weekend 4 appeared in this influential group. This is only a rough estimation since a sociogram has not been constructed.

The episode below seems to show that ‘the elite group’ operated as a leading subgroup towards the very end of the Assembly’s period of operation: After the Assembly had decided on its final proposal, and the supplementary recommendations were put to the vote, the members went to the bar. A member came to tell me that I should join their discussion... A group of around twenty members (all who had participated actively in the Assembly, and most of them with additional roles as a chair or spokesperson) were debating vigorously and emotionally about the recommendations that had just been selected. According to them, these recommendations were inconsistent with the final proposal. They informed the chair about their plan to work on an amendment and worked until late to finish it³²⁵.

The members that had worked on the amendment raised their hand during the next morning’s plenary session and informed the rest of the Assembly of their thoughts. Chaos and panic ensued, and member Y said that he did not want to discuss this as the final decision had been made the previous night. The chair facilitated a discussion on whether this amendment should be put to a vote or not. Her argument for allowing the discussion was that she could not live with the fact that the recommendations were inconsistent with the proposal. Member Y left the plenary and said he would not come back. The tension in the plenary seemed very high and people were very frustrated...After the break, the chair decided to vote about whether or not the amendment should be discussed. Seventy-nine members voted yes and forty-six members voted no. Finally, the amendment was discussed and put to the vote: it was adopted³²⁶.

The size of the Assembly required some form of organization to get the work done. Consequently, through sociocratic elections, additional roles were assigned to various Assembly members. The descriptions above indicate that the Assembly selected members who became its ‘elite group’ during these elections. Given that leadership and power were distributed among the elite group during these elections, it may not be a coincidence that this caused turbulence³²⁷: During weekend 4, I received twenty-four complaints about the weekend meeting. Three members asked for a consultation after the weekend meeting to discuss their feelings³²⁸. Communication on the intranet increased roughly fourfold after weekend meeting 4³²⁹. Some members feared that the members with an additional role would become too influential.³³⁰ The sociocratic elections were mentioned as a ‘significant Assembly moment’ by those Assembly members that participated in the focus groups³³¹. Furthermore, the elections were a

³²⁴ The method and roles are described in Section 3.4.4.

³²⁵ Observations, weekend 10.

³²⁶ Observations, weekend 10.

³²⁷ Student reports, observations, conversations, evaluation forms, weekend 4.

³²⁸ Conversations, consultations, weekend 4.

³²⁹ Number of comments made on intranet: after weekend 1 (50), weekend 2 (59), weekend 3 (54), weekend 4 (226), weekend 5 (63), weekend 6 (119), weekend 7 (58), weekend 8 (111), weekend 9 (287), and weekend 10 until the presentation of the proposal (160).

³³⁰ Observations, conversations, evaluation forms, weekend 4.

³³¹ Assembly members’ focus groups 1 and 2.

topic of criticism during weekend 10's debriefing assignment³³². Below, the turbulence around the identification of the elite group is tried to be understood from a psychodynamic perspective. Alternatively, one could have interpreted the phenomenon meaningfully in Section 6.3.2, which dealt with unequal participation in the Assembly.

6.4.3.1 The membership state of elite group members

Clearly, no-one knew in advance that members given additional roles would become 'elite' members. However, to get the work done during the first four weekend meetings, some members had already carried out roles as chairs and spokespersons. Moreover, the media had been a topic of interest from weekend 1 onwards. So, people would at least have experienced those members that fulfilled the role of chair or spokesperson, or were covered in the media, as visible group members of the Assembly.

Turquet (1975) argues that members of large groups desire to evolve from their 'none-role' (the singleton state) to a group role, that of being an individual member (IM). Following his reasoning, one might argue that holding the position of an elite member would be attractive. Namely, because elite members were able to establish relationships, both with the group as a whole as well as with other group members, through their additional role. As a consequence, elite group members did not have to deal with the ongoing threat of being changed into a membership individual (MI) by the group, a fear which can make individuals very insecure and anxious. While other members might have been fighting to survive and preserve their identity, elite group members were able to maintain their psychological independence more easily and could become more active and influential in the group.

How might the existence of an elite group affect the task? One can imagine that having a group of active and influential members helped the Assembly in carrying out its task. The group seems to have taken leadership in working on the task and was supported by the rest of the group in so doing. Only once the findings seem to indicate the opposite: Between weekends 7 and 8, four members contacted me and said that they had heard (from other Assembly members) that some chairs were misusing their position. According to them, some chairs were steering the subgroup processes towards their own convictions³³³.

6.4.4 Insecurity

The episode below illustrates the emotional climate in the Assembly at the start of its first weekend meeting. Even though one might argue that insecurity emerges in many new groups, the effect of the Assembly's size seemed to be significant: The positive, energetic atmosphere that had characterized the Assembly during the afternoon, changed into a more serious, quiet ambiance on the way back to the conference center³³⁴ ...People talked about the size of the group: "*Gee, it's really a lot of people...*"³³⁵ Moreover, members seemed insecure about the feasibility of

³³² Results of flipchart debriefing assignment, weekend 10 (see Appendix 14).

³³³ Conversations, after weekend 7.

³³⁴ Observations, weekend 1.

³³⁵ Conversations, weekend 1.

the task. Was it really possible to collaborate with 140 people?...It was not only Assembly members that showed and shared their insecurities; staff members were also nervous. “*It is the first time that such a large-scale project has taken place, I really don't know what to expect when working with so many people*”³³⁶ said one of the staff members.

During weekend 6, I had breakfast with member X. He told me: “*I do feel that the management of this tanker heads left and right and left and right. First of all, a tanker is not very maneuverable, so a change of course should be prepared and dealt with in advance. Secondly, it is not the most efficient way of sailing, which is a problem when the tanker is in a hurry. Finally, in this way there is not enough focus on the objective, the final destination. So tell me, how can the crew of this tanker feel safe and focus on its own task?*”³³⁷

Member X’s quote seems to be quite illustrative of the importance of ‘good leadership’ (“management”) within large groups (the “*tanker*”). Moreover, it indicates that the staff had faced problems along the way that had affected behavior in the Assembly. During interviews, as well as in the focus group session,³³⁸ the staff mentioned that they had experienced a high workload and sometimes felt stressed and overwhelmed, especially during the period before the summer break. Weekend meetings were scheduled close to each other and things took a lot of time to organize due to the size of the group. So, it might not only have been member X that experienced the “*tanker’s management*” sailing an erratic course and perhaps not being sufficiently prepared for this trip. The management itself could have felt the same way.

Member X also wondered “...how the crew of the tanker could feel safe and focus on its own task”. Naturally, a stable course and experienced staff would have helped the crew (the Assembly members) to feel safe. However, Assembly members seemed to have felt insecure: During most conversations I had with Assembly members, people told me they were wondering how the Assembly was doing, where the Assembly was standing, and what could be expected further on³³⁹. Moreover, people were wondering what was going on at the group-level. And how it would ever be possible to come to a result with so many diverse people.³⁴⁰

6.4.4.1 Inexperienced staff

The descriptions above suggest that the staff had to work under insecure conditions. Particularly when working with large groups, one needs to be comfortable in dealing with complicated dynamics and strong feelings (Agazarian & Carter, 1993; Bunker & Alban, 1997; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000, 2007). Ongoing training is needed to understand and to learn to work with the complexity present in large groups (Bunker & Alban, 1992b, 1997).

³³⁶ Conversations, weekend 1.

³³⁷ Observations, weekend 6.

³³⁸ Interviews staff members, focus group session staff members

³³⁹ Conversations, weekend 2.

³⁴⁰ Observations, conversations weekend 3.

As confidant, I might have contained some of the insecurity that emerged. Nevertheless, other staff members were also confronted with complex dynamics and emotions. I do not have information to demonstrate that the staff members were unable to deal with the insecurity and tensions in the Assembly, but the documented comments below do suggest that this is plausible: External actors that were involved in the Assembly's process³⁴¹ described the staff as: young or very young, insecure, junior, and inexperienced in working with groups³⁴². Moreover, none of the fulltime staff members was educated or trained to work with groups or large groups in particular³⁴³. An example that illustrates that the staff members were insecure (and inexperienced in working with groups of people):...Then one of the staff members started a discussion about the 'complaining behavior' of the members. According to her, some of the members kept criticizing the food and other things, and she could not really handle this. Other staff members shared with me that they were also frustrated about such behavior and did not really know how to deal with these situations...³⁴⁴

Inexperience in dealing with complex dynamics would have hindered the staff in performing its tasks. In fact, it is very possible that member X was right. Namely, the "*tanker*" (Assembly) set sail without a good enough map (see Section 6.4.4) and without an experienced staff. If so, it is very likely that some of the crew felt unsafe and some members considered open dissent. Moreover, it seems unrealistic to assume that the tanker sailed the most efficient route, which might have meant that members worked on unnecessary tasks leading to time pressures emerging. This might have kept members from looking deeply into important issues, exploring different perspectives, and being creative.

6.4.5 Reflection

The Assembly on Electoral Reform was an experiment. The Dutch government was the first government in the world to organize such a large-scale national citizen assembly and so involve 140 citizens in a public issue. Accordingly, all those involved had to deal with an unfamiliar situation and did not know what to expect³⁴⁵. However, this was not the only insecure condition the Assembly had to deal with. The Assembly did not have a solid fundament on which to operate as it lacked political support and legitimacy³⁴⁶. Its task was said to be technical, abstract, and complex³⁴⁷. Its staff was inexperienced³⁴⁸. Its size and diversity were threatening³⁴⁹. Thus, one can easily say that the

³⁴¹ Interviews external parties, email sender.

³⁴² The staff was also described as enthusiastic, clever and loyal.

³⁴³ Process report of the Electoral System Civic Forum.

³⁴⁴ Notes following weekend 3.

³⁴⁵ See, for example, member checks member 1 and secretary, (Appendix 26).

³⁴⁶ See Section 6.2.

³⁴⁷ See chapter 3, and member checks, member 1, and secretary (Appendix 26).

³⁴⁸ See Section 6.4.4.1.

³⁴⁹ See Chapter 4.

Assembly had more than enough reasons to experience tensions from the beginning. Consequently, the staff was under pressure in leading the Assembly. On the one hand, it had to relate to a turbulent political context and, on the other, it needed to deal with the complexity regarding the Assembly's size and diversity. In various places above it has been illustrated that the staff was not fully in control and might have lacked certain competences that would have been valuable in working with this large group. This might have increased insecurity within the Assembly, which in turn might have added to the complexity for the staff.

The reasoning outlined in this section suggests that the Assembly's size seems to have generated strong emotions in its members. Above, it has been argued that complexity and criticism were not well contained by the Assembly and staff members. As a consequence, negative feelings may have festered below the surface and resulted in strong emotions, irrational fantasies, and mistrust. Schneider and Weinberg (2003) state that emotions, especially anxiety, can block abstract thinking processes in large groups and allow participants to regress to a more concrete mode of understanding. It is not unthinkable that anxiety in the Assembly made members regress. Accordingly, they could have projected assumptions of omniscience and omnipotence onto the staff. (The lecturers and the secretary knew 'everything' about electoral systems, and the chair was "*perfectly in charge and all we need*", "*It's so good that the chair is famous*", "*Yeah, she has charisma and is so intelligent*"³⁵⁰). Others, like the email sender and his followers, might have gone in the opposite direction: they perceived incompetence in the staff and took on the role of savior of the group (Seel, 2001). The staff, also plagued by anxiety, might in turn have introjected the massive projection of competence, resulting in a more omnipotent way of performing. By so doing, the group could be controlled and criticism from the minority could be suppressed, making things easier. ("*It is my observation that a substantial part of the Assembly seemed to become less and less critical...*"³⁵¹).

6.5 Quantitative results

In this section, the findings from the questionnaire are analyzed. First, the analysis of the closed questions is presented in Section 6.5.1. Second, the findings from the open questions are outlined in Section 6.5.2. To an extent, the latter findings could have been presented as qualitative results in the previous sections but, given the enormous quantity of qualitative data, it was felt more reader-friendly to present them in this section, together with the other findings stemming from the questionnaire.

6.5.1 Questionnaire: closed questions

The closed questions in the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) (Huizingh, 2001). First, variables were defined and coded, and data were then

³⁵⁰ Observations, weekend 2.

³⁵¹ Member checks, email sender (see Appendix 26).

entered into the data entry form. Variables were divided into six subcategories, which are presented in Table 16. Most closed questions³⁵² were answered using a five-point scale in which: 1 represents ‘agree very much’, 2 represents ‘agree’, 3 represents ‘neutral’, 4 represents ‘disagree’ and 5 represents ‘disagree very much’. Those that were formulated negatively (for example v19: ‘Manon’s activities have not supported the process’) were recoded (old value 1 = new value 5). That is, all the five-point scale variables in the data entry form correspond to a scale in which a score of 1 is the most positive response in terms of assessing the aspect of the process. Descriptive statistics of all variables (N, Range, Minimum, Maximum, Mean, Standard Deviation, Variance) can be found in Appendix 23.

Table 16: Sub-categories and variables questionnaire

Category	Variables
Chair (vz)	vz1- vz28
Project secretariat (prb)	prb1 - prb14
Confidant and researcher (v)	v1 - 31
Group process (gr)	gr1 - gr58
Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (b)	b1 - b23
Personal situation (ps)	ps1 - ps8

6.5.1.1 Factor analysis

Factor analysis was used to find underlying factors and consequently create meaningful scales. First, I carried out a factor analysis for ‘chair’. This analysis involving Varimax rotation and pairwise deletion of missing data resulted in six factors. I opted to start working with the first factor, since this explained the most variance (37%), which allowed me to interpret it meaningfully as a general evaluation of, in this case, the chair. The scale consisted of sixteen variables³⁵³ and I created an overall scale by summing the variable scores and then dividing by sixteen (Cronbach’s alpha, $\alpha = .929$) and labeled this composite variable as ‘evaluation of chair’. The mean of ‘evaluation of chair’ score was 2.04³⁵⁴. The second factor also seemed interpretable and useful to work with, and this factor explained 6% of the variance and I could interpret this factor as an evaluation of an individual’s relationship with the chair. It consisted of three variables³⁵⁵. I again created a composite scale of the three variables by

³⁵² See Section 5.3.2.1 for a complete overview.

³⁵³ Namely vz1, vz4, vz5, vz6, vz7, vz9, vz10, vz13, vz14, vz16, vz17, vz20, vz21, vz22, vz23 and vz28. The variables were highly correlated ($> .40$ or $-.40$) with this factor.

³⁵⁴ (1 = very good, 2 = good, 3 = fair, 4 = poor, 5 = very poor).

³⁵⁵ Namely vz3, vz8, and vz27.

averaging the scores ($\alpha = .687$) and labeled this composite variable ‘evaluation of individual relationship with chair’. The mean ‘evaluation of individual relationship with chair’ score was 2.12, so ‘above’ the average score of 3 and close to a ‘good’ (=2) evaluation.

Secondly, I carried out a similar factor analysis for the ‘project secretariat’. This analysis resulted in four factors and I decided to work with the first factor only since this explained most variance (36%) and could be interpreted meaningfully as a general evaluation of, in this case, the project secretariat. It consisted of seven variables³⁵⁶. I again created an overall scale by averaging the individual scores ($\alpha = .849$) and labeled this composite variable ‘evaluation of project secretariat’. The mean ‘evaluation of project secretariat’ score was 1.72.

Next, I carried out a factor analysis for the ‘confidant/researcher’ (i.e. myself). This analysis resulted in five factors. I again decided to work with the first factor only, which explained most variance (30%) and could be interpreted meaningfully as a general evaluation of, in this case, the confidant/researcher. This factor consisted of seven variables³⁵⁷ and the composite variable ‘evaluation of confidant/researcher’ was determined as above ($\alpha = .794$). The mean ‘evaluation of confidant/researcher’ was 1.82.

Fourthly, I carried out a factor analysis for ‘group process’. This analysis resulted in five factors and I again opted to work with the first factor only, which explained most variance (17%) and could be interpreted meaningfully as a general evaluation of, in this case, the group process. The factor consisted of ten variables³⁵⁸ ($\alpha = .814$), and the mean score for each respondent was again calculated as the average of their ten individual scores and labeled as ‘evaluation of group process’. The mean of ‘evaluation of group process’ score was 2.28.

Finally, I carried out a similar factor analysis for ‘Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform’. This analysis resulted in five factors and once again I chose to work with the first factor only, which explained most variance (21%) and which I could interpret meaningfully as a general evaluation of the Assembly’s final proposal. The factor consisted of six variables³⁵⁹ ($\alpha = .783$). The averaged, composite variable was labeled as ‘evaluation of proposal’ and the mean score was 1.95.

To summarize, the descriptive statistics of the six composite variables are presented in Table 17.

³⁵⁶ Namely prb4, prb5, prb6, prb7, prb8, prb12, and prb13.

³⁵⁷ Namely v13, v14, v17, v18, v28, v29, and v30.

³⁵⁸ Namely gr1, gr3, gr21, gr22, gr27, gr29, gr32, gr41, gr42, and gr43.

³⁵⁹ Namely b1, b2, b8, b13, b14, and b15.

Table 17: Descriptive statistics of the composite variables

Composite variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Evaluation of chair	2.04	.61	126
Evaluation of individual relationship with chair	2.12	.74	129
Evaluation of project secretariat	1.72	.45	129
Evaluation of confidant/ researcher	1.82	.48	102
Evaluation of group process	2.28	.58	125
Evaluation of proposal	1.95	.62	128

(1 = very good, 2 = good, 3 = fair, 4 = poor, 5 = very poor)

6.5.1.2 Correlation analysis

A correlation analysis (with pairwise deletion of missing data) was used to investigate relationships between the six composite variables. The output of this analysis can be found in Appendix 27. All the composite variables, except for the ‘evaluation of the confidant/researcher’, were correlated with each other. The ‘evaluation of confidant/researcher’ was only correlated with the ‘evaluation of individual relationship with chair’. In other words, the confidant/researcher’s functioning was not related to the perceived functioning of the chair, the project secretariat, or the group process, nor to the perceived quality of the final proposal.

The strongest correlation (.738) was found between ‘evaluation of group process’ and ‘evaluation of proposal’. Thus, the evaluation of the group process related strongly to the evaluation of the proposal (and vice versa). Other strong relationships were found between ‘evaluation of chair’ and ‘evaluation of group process’ (.719) and between ‘evaluation of chair’ and ‘evaluation of proposal’ (.638). In other words, the chair’s functioning was related strongly to the perceived functioning of the group process and to the perceived quality of the proposal (and vice versa).

Subsequently, a correlation analysis (with pairwise deletion of missing data) was used to investigate the relationship between the two output variables ‘evaluation of proposal’ and ‘evaluation of process’³⁶⁰(b21). Here the ‘evaluation of process’ referred to the following specific question in the questionnaire:

‘When reflecting on the way the Assembly has functioned, I evaluate the Assembly’s process with the following mark (scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the worst and 10 the best)’.

³⁶⁰ The definition of process in ‘evaluation of process’ refers to the Assembly’s task performance in general, whereas the definition of process in ‘evaluation of group process’ refers to the way the Assembly had functioned as a group.

The mean ‘evaluation of process’ score was 7.47. The correlation analysis between ‘evaluation of process’ and ‘evaluation of proposal’ showed that the variables were negatively correlated (but note that with one variable ‘1’ was the best score, and with the other the worst). That is, the higher the Assembly’s process was rated, the better the proposal was evaluated (and vice versa).

Table 18: Correlation between evaluation of process and evaluation of proposal

		Evaluation of process	Evaluation of proposal
Evaluation of process	Pearson Corr	1.000	-.646**
	Sig. (two-tailed)		.000
	N	130	127
Evaluation of proposal	Pearson Corr	-.646**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	127	128

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Finally, I clustered variables from the ‘group process’ sub-category into what I believed were six theoretically meaningful scales (group atmosphere/emotional climate, social influence, identification/group identity, subgroups, structure, and output) in order to seek out additional relationships. Only three of these scales had an acceptable reliability: ‘group atmosphere’ ($\alpha = .66$), ‘group identification’ ($\alpha = .66$), and ‘output’ ($\alpha = .59$). Consequently, a correlation analysis was carried out to investigate the relationship between these scales and the composite variables but no significant correlations were found.

6.5.1.3 Regression analysis

I next used a regression analysis to predict the outcome of the Assembly, as reflected in ‘evaluation of proposal’ and ‘evaluation of process’, using the composite variables and other relevant demographic variables, to determine what factors, if any, had predicted the perceived success of the Assembly.

In the first analysis, I used a stepwise regression analysis (with pairwise deletion of missing data), with ‘evaluation of proposal’ as the dependent variable and the following independent variables:

- Composite variables: ‘evaluation of chair’, ‘evaluation of individual relationship with chair’, ‘evaluation of project secretariat’, ‘evaluation of confidant and researcher’, and ‘evaluation of group process’

- Demographic variables: 'gender' (ps1; which I added as a dummy variable), 'education'³⁶¹, and 'age' (ps4)
- Other variables (since they might have reflected individual motivation): 'weekend meetings present' (ps7) and 'time spent outside of the Assembly' (b22)

The output of the predictors is presented in Table 19. In essence, the 'evaluation of proposal' was strongly predicted by 'evaluation of group process' and less strongly by 'age' and 'evaluation of the chair'.

Table 19: Predictors of evaluation of proposal

Predictors of evaluation of proposal	
Predictor 1	Evaluation of group process ($\beta = .602$; $p < .000$)
Predictor 2	Age ($\beta = .165$; $p < .016$)
Predictor 3	Evaluation of chair ($\beta = .232$; $p < .017$)

In the second analysis I again used a stepwise regression analysis (with pairwise deletion of missing data), but this time with 'evaluation of process' (b21) as the dependent variable and the same independent variables as were used in the first analysis (see above). The output of the predictors is presented in Table 20³⁶². To summarize, the 'evaluation of process' (b21) was strongly predicted by the 'evaluation of group process'³⁶³ and less strongly by the 'evaluation of project secretariat'.

Table 20: Predictors of evaluation of process

Predictors of evaluation of process	
Predictor 1	Evaluation of group process ($\beta = -.581$; $p < .000$)
Predictor 2	Evaluation of project secretariat ($\beta = -.183$; $p < .040$)

³⁶¹ I rescaled ps6 with: 1 representing 'primary school, preparatory vocational education and secondary school with 5 or 6 grades' (N=18), 2 representing 'vocational education' (N=29), 3 representing 'bachelor or university for professional education' (N=56), 4 representing 'masters or university research' (N=17). Descriptive data for the new variable 'education' can be found in Appendix 23.

³⁶² Although β was negative this is a positive relationship since, in scoring 'evaluation of group process' and 'evaluation of project secretariat', 1 is very good (on a scale from 1 to 5), whereas with the 'evaluation of process' scoring a score of 1 is the worst possible (on scale from 1 to 10).

³⁶³ The definition of process in 'evaluation of process' refers to the Assembly's task performance in general, whereas the definition of process in 'evaluation of group process' refers to the way the Assembly had functioned as a group.

Finally, I tried to investigate whether there were predictors of the ‘evaluation of group process’ since this had been shown to strongly predict both ‘evaluation of proposal’ and ‘evaluation of process’. Here, I used a stepwise regression analysis (with pairwise deletion of missing data) with ‘evaluation of group process’ as the dependent variable and the following independent variables:

- Composite variables: ‘evaluation of chair’, ‘evaluation of individual relationship with chair’, ‘evaluation of project secretariat’, ‘evaluation of confidant/researcher’
- Demographic and other variables as described in the first two analyses.

The output of the predictors is presented in Table 21. In essence, the ‘evaluation of group process’ is strongly predicted by ‘evaluation of chair’ and less strongly by ‘gender’ and by ‘evaluation of project secretariat’.

Table 21: Predictors of evaluation of group process

Predictors of evaluation of group process	
Predictor 1	Evaluation of chair ($\beta = .626$; $p < .000$),
Predictor 2	Age ($\beta = -.165$; $p < .020$) ³⁶⁴
Predictor 3	Evaluation of project secretariat ($\beta = .178$; $p < .040$)

6.5.1.4 Summary of the closed-question results

Results show that the ‘typical’ or ‘average’ Assembly member was satisfied after the Assembly’s period of operation. The functioning of the chair and staff, as well as the group process and the final proposal, were evaluated positively. Moreover, the members evaluated the Assembly’s process with an average of 7.47 (on a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 is the best).

Second, one is able to predict the perceived quality of the Assembly’s proposal from the evaluations of the group process and of the chair. The perceived quality of the Assembly’s process can be predicted from the evaluation of the group process and the evaluation of the project secretariat. In turn, the perceived quality of the group process can be predicted from the evaluations of the chair and of the project secretariat. In other words, the results in this section have shown that the Assembly’s perceived outcome (proposal and process) was strongly affected by its perceived group process and

³⁶⁴ The negative β for age reflects that the older people were, the lower their score (i.e. the more positive) their ‘evaluation of the group process’.

the perceived functioning of the staff. This seems to underline the importance of good facilitation and a good group process for a successful outcome of group working.

6.5.2 Questionnaire: open questions

Tables 22 and 23 list those areas which members would respectively want to keep as they were, or improve/change, if they could organize the Assembly's process once again. The themes that are included in the tables were mentioned by at least ten percent of the respondents. (More comprehensive lists can be found in Appendix 24). Finally, Table 24 lists 'other feedback that people wanted to provide' and, again only themes that were mentioned by at least ten percent of the respondents are presented.

Table 22: Themes that members would keep in the process

Themes	Frequency	% of total respondents
Support of a secretariat, including a confidant	32	24.4
Design of learning phase, Lecturer 1 and 2	24	18.3
The role of a chair, the present chair or someone with at least similar capabilities	22	16.8
Overall concept, weekend meetings, plenary sessions and workgroups	19	14.5
Working in subgroups	19	14.5
Manon as a confidant	15	11.5

Most of those themes that members volunteered as being satisfied with correspond with results from the evaluation forms³⁶⁵ and the questionnaire. That is, both the open and closed questions in the questionnaire (as well as the closed questions in the evaluation forms) indicate that members were satisfied with the support provided by the staff (chair, project secretariat, lecturers) and with the concept as a whole.

Table 23: Themes that members would improve/change in the process

Themes	Frequency	% of total respondents
Alternative design for the decision-making phase, more time for decision-making phase, earlier creation of electoral system variants, more discussion time in decision-making phase	29	22.1
No sociocratic elections, different program in weekend 4	24	18.3
No summer break	16	12.2
A clearer thread, better insight into process, schedule, and	15	11.5

³⁶⁵ The results from the evaluation forms can be found in Appendix 15-22.

milestones		
More discussion time	15	11.5

The themes that members would improve/change seem to relate to the qualitative results. In other words, the themes that members wished to change seemed to have caused dynamics during the Assembly's period of operation. For example, 'the design of decision-making phase' and 'more discussion time' comments seem to correspond with the reflection that diversity was not really worked with and complexity was suppressed. 'A better insight into the process' seems to relate to the staff's lack of overview and the ambiguous work environment that was created.

Finally, the results presented in Table 24 seem to show the members' general commitment to the project. About one-third of the members spontaneously mentioned that they found the project rewarding and special. The themes seem to illustrate members' social identification with the group.

Table 24: Other feedback that members wanted to give

Themes	Frequency	% of total respondents
I found this a nice, special, fantastic experience	40	30.5
I have learnt a lot from this process, the Assembly has increased my personal development	29	22.1
Good luck with your research, I look forward to the results, thank you for being a part of this	25	19.1
Hats off! Thanks for the organization, care, facilitation	19	14.5
Thanks for being able to participate, I am happy that I could participate	16	12.2

6.6 A meta-perspective on critical dynamics

In this paragraph, the qualitative and quantitative results are compared and reflected upon, and the effects of the critical dynamics on the project's outcome are explored.

6.6.1 Reflection on the qualitative and quantitative results

Initially, the qualitative and quantitative results seem to present different pictures. Namely, the image obtained through the questionnaire presented a positive picture: members seemed to be satisfied with the staff, the group process, and the proposal, and characterized the project as a pleasant experience. However, the qualitative results suggest that critical dynamics largely hindered the task effectiveness. How can this difference be understood?

First, one could imagine that timing might have had an effect on the results. The questionnaire was sent out straight after the Assembly had finished its task. This could have meant that the questions

were answered less critically than when some elements were assessed during the process³⁶⁶. That is, the members were out of ‘the heat of the moment’ and maybe proud and relieved after having finished the task.

Further, socially desirable responses and/or cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Gross, 1992; Sabini, 1995) might have played a role. The questionnaire was sent out before the Assembly’s proposal was presented to the Minister and discussed in Parliament. The members could have had an interest in showing a positive picture to the outside world (maybe unconsciously). In other words, members might have felt that a negative self-evaluation would decrease the likelihood of their proposal being supported by the political system. Moreover, following the reasoning of cognitive dissonance theory, one could imagine that those members who experienced inconsistent cognitions could have revised their unpleasant memories in order to justify the time and effort they had invested in the Assembly.

A third explanation for the different pictures may be bias in either the qualitative or the quantitative datasets due to the set-up of this study. This issue is addressed in Chapter 7 where the weaknesses of this study’s methodology are discussed.

The important question is what are the implications of coming to seemingly inconsistent results in this study? One could argue that even though the quantitative data showed that Assembly members were satisfied and committed once the project had been concluded, that it was still relevant to study the effects of critical dynamics during the Assembly’s period of operation. The results from the questionnaire have not provided profound insights into the reasons why certain behavior occurred and how that behavior might have affected the task during the process. In other words, the fact that the average participant was satisfied once it was all over, does not necessarily say anything about the quality of the process itself.

Furthermore, the questionnaire did not provide sufficient insight in the complexity of the project. The questionnaire was sent out to Assembly members only (and not to staff members and external actors). Consequently, the results from its analysis do not represent the whole spectrum of the Assembly’s work system. For the same reason, the results do not provide adequate insight into the dynamics that emerged during the collaboration.

However, some of the data from the questionnaire did support the qualitative findings. The following results found in the open questions support the critical dynamics explored: ‘keep design of learning phase and lecturers 1 and 2’, ‘other design of decision-making phase’, ‘no sociocratic elections’,

³⁶⁶ See, for example, results of the evaluation forms in Appendices 14-22.

'better insight into the thread of the process', and 'more discussion time'³⁶⁷. The satisfaction among members that was found in the responses to the questionnaire's closed questions can be understood when following the reasoning that the Assembly had worked in a collusive climate. Participants in a collusive work setting often have the feeling that they have been collaborating well.

In brief, data from the questionnaire exercise seem to show a supplementary picture to the one that was drawn in Sections 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4. As such, this seems valuable in putting the critical dynamics that emerged during the process into perspective. Further, it may have provided some additional insights into behavior following the process.

6.6.2 How was the Assembly's outcome affected by its critical dynamics?

How the Assembly's task effectiveness was affected by its critical dynamics has been explored above. Next, I will try to assess the project's outcome, by evaluating the outcomes against the success criteria that were given by various stakeholders (see Section 5.3.2.4 and Appendix 25). My ambition is not to find a definitive answer or to be normative since this is not appropriate given the explorative and interpretive character of this study. Rather, I wish to finish this chapter with an outline of how the Assembly's final result can be assessed, and the role that critical dynamics played in the outcome.

6.6.2.1 Assessment of the final proposal

The stakeholders offered the following criteria for success related to the Assembly's outcome (the final proposal)³⁶⁸:

In order for the project to be considered successful, the final proposal: "*Has not yet been offered by political parties*", "*Is better than all proposals that have been made [by others] until now*", "*Represents the opinion of Dutch citizens*", "*Reflects everyone's effort*", "*Is a good proposal (clear, justified, consistent, feasible, unequivocal)*"³⁶⁹

In reality, the Assembly's final proposal was not very different from the then current Dutch electoral system (see Chapter 3). This means that the first two success criteria were not fulfilled. I cannot assess whether the final proposal represented the opinion of the Dutch citizens as this goes beyond the scope of this study³⁷⁰. Most members felt that the final proposal adequately represented the individual opinions present³⁷¹. However, the questionnaire did not measure whether everyone's effort

³⁶⁷ Other themes that are mentioned in Appendix 24 and support the reasoning in Sections 6.2, 6.3 ,and 6.4 are: 'clearer communication about roles', 'more focus on the responsibility of individual group members to prevent members from hiding behind the group', 'tension at the end of the process', and 'the chair influenced the process too much at the end'.

³⁶⁸ Contributions are clustered (see Appendix 25).

³⁶⁹ Results of inventory of success criteria (see Appendix 25)

³⁷⁰ As far as I know, this theme has not been investigated by others.

³⁷¹ See results of questionnaire.

was reflected in the proposal, so this criterion cannot be definitively assessed³⁷². Finally, I do not have any data that argues against the final proposal being clear, justified, consistent, feasible, and unequivocal. Hence, I deduce that the final proposal can be characterized as ‘good’. To summarize, according to the stakeholders’ criteria, the final proposal delivered by the Assembly can be assessed as good, albeit conventional.

6.6.2.2 Assessment of the process

The stakeholders mentioned the following success criteria related to process:

In order for the project to be considered successful: “Assembly members are satisfied with the process”, “A good majority of the Assembly members supports the final proposal”, “At least half the Assembly members consider the final result as the best achievable group result”, “80% of the members are actively involved in the process”, “Members contribute equally during opinion forming”, “There is little withdrawal from the group”, “The process is not designed by content specialists (lawyers) only”, “Individual members acquire sufficient information and form opinions”, “The political system facilitates the initiative”, “The process is well facilitated and organized”, “Members have shown their commitment”, “Assembly members have shown their willingness to listen to each other”, “The decision making phase is good”³⁷³

Members were satisfied about the process and supported the final proposal³⁷⁴. This means that the first two success criteria were met. However, there are no data to support, or reject, the criterion that half of the Assembly members considered the outcome the best achievable. The data do not show that eighty percent of the members were actively involved in the process or that equal contributions were made during opinion forming. On the contrary, it is argued that most of the work was done by the ‘elite group’ and a ‘core group’. However, since only five members withdrew from the Assembly, I would consider the withdrawal criterion to be satisfied’. The process was predominately designed by content rather than process specialists (even though some external consultants with process knowledge were hired in during the process) so this success criterion was not fulfilled. The next mentioned criterion, sufficient information acquisition and opinion forming, goes beyond the scope of this study³⁷⁵. Although the political system did facilitate the initiative by providing resources, the support was not sufficient. Findings from the questionnaire show that members evaluated the process as well facilitated and organized. In contrast, the qualitative data indicated that the staff was not in control and might have lacked the competences required when working with this large group. Members did show their commitment and were willing to listen to each other. Finally, the decision-making phase has been criticized from various perspectives³⁷⁶. To summarize, even though the

³⁷² For more details on this criterion, I refer to Van der Kolk’s study (2008).

³⁷³ Results, inventory of success criteria (see Appendix 25)

³⁷⁴ See results of questionnaire.

³⁷⁵ For more details on this criterion, I refer to Van der Kolk’s study (2008).

³⁷⁶ See, for example, the results from the open questions in the questionnaire.

members were satisfied with the process and supported the final proposal, the process could be assessed more critically by adopting the various data sources employed in this study.

Finally, the following ‘other’ success criteria were mentioned and found relevant to assess:

In order for the project to be considered successful: “*The Assembly has enriched the members’ lives*”, “*The Assembly adequately represents the Dutch population*”, “*The final proposal will be presented to (and discussed in) the Parliament*”, “*The instrument and its final proposal are politically supported*”, “*The use of this instrument will change something in the Netherlands*”, “*The Assembly is known across the country and has been covered well by the media*”, “*We have gained experience with the instrument and learned from that*”³⁷⁷

Findings from this study³⁷⁸ suggest that the Assembly did enrich its members’ lives, even though this theme has not been studied as such. Moreover, research from Van der Kolk and Brinkman (2008) shows that the Assembly reasonably represented the Dutch population. The Assembly’s proposal was presented to and discussed by a Commission of the Parliament. The political system has shown some interest in the Assembly as an instrument (see Chapter 3). However, the Assembly’s final proposal has never been supported or introduced. In that sense, the Assembly has not changed anything in the Netherlands. The Assembly was generally covered by several media outlets, including TV³⁷⁹. One can naturally discuss whether this coverage was sufficient in relation to the efforts that were invested in it. Such a discussion is felt too specific given the general objectives of this study³⁸⁰. Finally, it should be noted that several research teams have studied the Assembly and, hence, one can assume that the project has yielded both theoretical and practical knowledge. To sum up, except for achieving political support for the proposal and the instrument, the other success criteria seem to have been more-or-less fulfilled.

6.6.2.3 The effect of critical dynamics on the outcome

The quality of the Assembly’s proposal has been strongly related to the quality of the group process³⁸¹. So, what happened in the Assembly’s group process that led to the Assembly’s proposal becoming rather conventional (as argued above)?

In several places in this chapter, it has been indicated that the critical dynamics decreased creativity, problem solving, critical thinking and learning, even though diversity was high. Consequently, the

³⁷⁷ Results of inventory of success criteria (see Appendix 25)

³⁷⁸ Interviews, conversations, open questions evaluation forms, flipcharts debriefing assignment weekend 10, open questions questionnaire.

³⁷⁹ Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006.

³⁸⁰ For further details, I refer to the media analysis that was carried out by a communication firm and the research projects concerning media coverage and public publicity (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

³⁸¹ Based on the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire responses.

Assembly's final proposal could well be less rich than the group's potential initially suggested. Member 1's reflection seems to support this interpretation:

*"...We may only have followed the main path...."*³⁸²

Having a deep understanding of group dynamics is relevant when working with large groups: this study shows that, even though members expressed themselves as satisfied, critical dynamics played a significant role in the Assembly's task effectiveness, which in turn quite likely influenced the Assembly's outcome.

³⁸² Member checks, member 1 (see Appendix 26).

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This final chapter consists of several parts. First, the study's findings are summarized and the methodology is reviewed. Then, the theoretical and practical contributions of this study are discussed. Finally, some final remarks are presented.

7.2 Summary of the results

Assembly members were satisfied after the Assembly's period of operation had come to the end. The functioning of the chair and staff, as well as the group process and the final proposal, were evaluated positively by most of the members. Moreover, the members' evaluations of the group process and of the chair predicted the perceived quality of the Assembly's proposal. The perceived quality of the Assembly's process could be predicted from the evaluation of the group process and the evaluation of the project secretariat. In other words, the results of the questionnaire have shown that the Assembly's perceived outcome (proposal and process) was strongly influenced by the perceptions of the group process and of the functioning of the staff. This would seem to underline the importance of good facilitation and a good group process for achieving a successful outcome of group working.

Initially, the study's qualitative findings showed a different picture. In several places in Chapter 6 it has been argued that the critical dynamics hindered the Assembly's task effectiveness, which in turn decreased creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and learning in the Assembly. As such, the Assembly's final proposal could be less rich than the group's initial potential suggested.

Even though the quantitative data showed that Assembly members were satisfied and committed after the project, this does not undermine the relevance of studying the effects of the critical dynamics in the Assembly. Earlier, I argued that the results from the questionnaire had not provided profound insights into why certain behavior occurred and how that behavior might have affected the task during the process. In other words, the fact that the participants were generally satisfied once it was all over, does not necessarily say anything about the quality of the process itself. Further, it was argued that the questionnaire had failed to provide sufficient insight in the complexity of the project. The questionnaire was distributed only to Assembly members and, consequently, the results from its analysis do not represent the whole spectrum of the Assembly's work system. Nevertheless, some of the data from the questionnaire did support the qualitative findings. Overall, I have therefore concluded that the quantitative findings have provided a supplementary picture to the one that was drawn based on the qualitative findings.

It was argued that perceived threats could have created the critical dynamics that surfaced in the Assembly. The Assembly had several reasons to experience tensions from the start of the project.

First, the project was an experiment and consequently all those involved, including the facilitators, had to deal with an unfamiliar situation, and therefore did not know what to really expect. Second, the Assembly did not have a solid foundation on which to operate as it lacked political support and legitimacy. Third, its task could be viewed as technical, abstract, and complex. Moreover, the staff members were inexperienced. Further, its size and diversity were seen as threatening by several members.

The critical dynamics that I identified in relation to the context showed that behavior in the Assembly was affected by its uncertain political environment. Members and staff felt motivated to protect their social identity and self-esteem during the process. The more that positive images could be shown to the outside world (through the media), the greater the Assembly's potential legitimacy. In dealing with the uncertain political context, members mostly avoided confronting the reality, and, at some stages, actively fought against this. Further, the Assembly's staff contributed to the enclosing of the system. The Assembly's working climate was found to be collusive rather than collaborative. Diversity and complexity were suppressed to serve unspoken needs: there was a shared interest in avoiding having to confront a threatening reality, and instead focusing on fulfilling the task and meeting personal objectives (e.g. the need for attention, to be needed, to develop, to reinforce a positive self-concept). The desire to deny differences and conform to the group and its norms helped the members and staff to experience feelings of belonging, unity, goodness, and wholeness, which were necessary to deal with the threatening outside world. The satisfaction among members that was seen in the responses to the questionnaire's closed questions can be understood if one follows the reasoning attached to working in a collusive climate. Participants in a collusive work setting tend to acquire the feeling that they have been working well.

The critical dynamics that I uncovered in relation to diversity showed that the Assembly was motivated to diminish diversity in order to reduce complexity. Members seemed to categorize themselves into subgroups in the attempt to limit diversity. However, they did not seem to fully identify themselves with these subgroups since the subgroups' interests were rarely raised in the larger group setting and conflicts between subgroups were rare. Moreover, the working climate of the Assembly seemed to be ambiguous.

The critical dynamics found in relation to size showed that emotions were often high in the Assembly. It is argued that complexity and criticism were not well contained by the Assembly members and the staff, which resulted in strong emotions, irrational fantasies, and mistrust below the surface. Denying differences was seen as having threatened members' identities and their boundaries of the self, which in turn could have increased anxiety, leading members to regress. Those members with an additional role might have had fewer identity problems by being given a role since this may have enabled them to maintain a psychological independence more easily than other members, and this could have enabled them to become more influential in the group.

Another conclusion I reached was that the staff members were felt to be under pressure in leading the Assembly. Partly this related to the turbulent political context and, further, there was the need to deal with the complexity stemming from the Assembly's size and diversity. In various places throughout the thesis there are illustrations of instances when the staff members were not fully in control and might have lacked specific competences that would have been valuable in working with a large group. This is considered to have increased insecurity within the Assembly, which could have further added to the complexity facing the staff.

7.3 A review of the study's methodology

In this study, I took an interpretive stance and built flexibility into its design (Robson, 2002). The consequences of this choice were discussed in the methodology chapter, such as the limited ability to draw conclusions, quantify results, and make objective interpretations. I now reflect on the study's methodology from a meta-perspective.

7.3.1 Weaknesses

The exploration of the critical dynamics in Chapter 6 was based on data that were collected during the study. Given its set-up, a large amount of information was collected. However, not all of these data were used in the analysis. Some of collected data were for example not analyzed because they were found to be too general or unspecific, and therefore unusable. Other data failed to provide a better understanding of the group dynamics in the Assembly or could not be related to the selected themes of context, diversity, and size. This leads to perhaps the most important reflection in this study: the influence of the researcher on the outcome. In the process of selecting raw data, I chose the materials that would be worked with further. This means that I may have overlooked relevant data in the selection process and/or may have selected data that supported my own observations.

Another issue is my roles both during and after the Assembly's period of operation. For various reasons it is possible that I collected prejudiced data. Partly due to my role as confidant, I experienced the project as very intense. As part of the staff, I was probably affected by the critical dynamics described in Chapter 6. I was - just as other staff members - inexperienced in the tasks I had to perform. I was a young inexperienced researcher, and I had never been a confidant for so many people at the same time. Looking back, I really wonder why I did not seek regular supervision and guidance beyond the talks I had with my PhD supervisor. A particular concern is that the ambiguity in my roles may have led to the collection of biased data. I found it hard to define the boundaries and separate my roles as researcher and confidant: there were, for example, situations in which I felt a consultation was irrelevant in my role as confidant, but relevant as a researcher. These role ambiguities might not only have affected me and my data collection, but also confused the Assembly members and staff. In other words, I became very much a part of the system I was researching, and this may have influenced the outcome.

Further, one could criticize some elements used in data collection, for example the documents (evaluation forms and the student reports), the conversations, and the questionnaire. The evaluation forms were designed by the staff to assess each weekend meeting. One could argue that not all the questions posed in the evaluation forms were very clear or useful for this study's purposes: some were too general or too detailed, and others irrelevant. Moreover, these forms were not completed by all the members (see Appendix 15-22 for responses), which could have influenced the overall picture gained. Secondly, the student assistants were not asked to record their observations according to a certain structure, which in practice meant that the student reports differed from student to student. Some focused very much on content, and others wrote more about how things were said and what atmosphere they experienced in the group. This meant that not all the data in the student reports were usable in my study. Thirdly, I could have influenced the overall balance of my data through my choice of conversations. Even though I tried to speak with most Assembly members on a regular basis and tried to actively approach those members who were less visible, I certainly spoke more with certain members than with others. Further, I kept in close contact with eight members in order to follow developments in the group (see Chapter 5). The selection of these eight members was based on personal preference and, consequently, it is quite possible that I collected data that suited 'my worldview', rather than gathering more challenging perspectives. Finally, the outcomes from the questionnaire could have been biased because I designed the questionnaire at the end of the Assembly's period of operation and based the questions on my own observations and assumptions.

Further, one could argue that my study's research question might in itself have created critical dynamics. Given that my intention was to investigate the effects of group dynamics and facilitation on the Assembly's task, my 'lens' was naturally focused on these themes from the start. I have tried to minimize any prejudice by using triangulation in the data collection methods. For example, I used material generated by others (the student reports, evaluation forms, sheets from weekend meetings) and I collected quantitative data. Nevertheless, bias cannot be ruled out.

Moreover, and more fundamentally, one could question whether it is even possible to cover the complex dynamics of the Assembly by selecting and analyzing episodes. Dynamics are context-related, interdependent, and interacting. That is, some dynamics could have emerged because of previous group experiences, the concrete task in hand, or because of something that occurred outside the Assembly. Although I have explored the deeper meaning of the critical dynamics, and tried to link the dynamics found to create a better picture of the interacting whole, there is no guarantee that I have addressed the Assembly's full complexity.

Finally, adopting the psychodynamic tradition may have resulted in the focus being predominantly on the 'negative' critical dynamics. Critics of the psychodynamic tradition would likely argue that I gave too little attention to what went well in the process. One's adopted view is a matter of tradition and personal preference, and I found the psychodynamic tradition helpful in gaining a deeper

understanding of the group dynamics in the Assembly and how they were worked with. As such, I did not ‘just focus on problems’, but sought conditions that helped to develop working with large groups.

7.3.2 Strengths

Despite the general concerns that are attached to interpretive research and the weaknesses related to this particular research project addressed above, this study also has certain strengths.

Firstly, the study includes a rich description of group dynamic processes in a large diverse group that worked over an extensive period. As was discussed in Chapter 4, access to such groups is rare and resource demanding. Large group theories are predominantly based on research in large therapy or training groups or in large group conferences that usually last no more than a few days. As such, knowledge of large groups that work over a longer period on a real task is scarce. Given its set-up, this study offers detailed insights into the complexity of large group dynamics and how they can be worked with. Additionally, this study tried to be open to all the dynamics that might arise so that a holistic picture of the group dynamic process in the Assembly could be obtained.

Secondly, I was the only party in the project that was offered access to all ‘internal and external rooms’ both during and after the Assembly’s period of operation. This provided me with a unique and rich understanding of the project’s complexity and the perspectives that were present. I had, for example, access to the staff’s activities and material, to the chair and secretary and to all the other staff members, to all the Assembly members, to all the external parties and guests, and to all other relevant stakeholders (such as Minister Pechtold, other researchers, and the staff of the Canadian Assemblies). Given the study’s flexible design, I was able to use my unique position to collect data from all the relevant parties.

Thirdly, the flexible design of this study made it possible to work with three theoretical perspectives and employ several research methods. The results in Chapter 6 show that the theoretical perspectives were complementary and generated different insights. Moreover, the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods seems to have yielded not only complementary but also divergent results, which has provided additional understanding.

Finally, I tried to close the ‘researcher-practitioner gap’. This term is used by Anderson and Wheelan (2005) in their claim that academics and practitioners appear to move apart due to a fundamental incompatibility in two distinct value systems. Namely, in industry, rewards are based on quick solutions to problems, and, in the academic world, rewards are based on conducting detailed research and publishing its findings. Academics do not necessarily support an emphasis on action and solving practical problems, and industry is not always interested in funding research (Anderson & Wheelan, 2005). The aim of this study has not only been to create a deeper understanding of dynamics in large groups, but also to serve practice.

7.4 Contributions to theory

The object of this study was never to develop new theory. Nevertheless, I believe that some contributions can be made to existing theoretical perspectives. These contributions are presented in Sections 7.4.1 and 7.4.2. Then, in Section 7.4.3, I explore those patterns and concepts which I could not explain by the theoretical perspectives adopted in this thesis, and which could be relevant to explore further.

7.4.1 Group dynamics in large groups

The main contribution of the current study is that it provides a deep and integrated understanding of large group dynamics that emerged during the period of operation of a large group.

Specifically, this study shows how context affected the group's task effectiveness and outcome. The Assembly was negatively affected by the lack of political support. The threats from the insecure outside world resulted in defensive behavior and the emergence of conformity which, in turn, decreased creativity, reflection, and learning within the group. Various authors (including Hendriks, C., 2006a; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Van Stokkom, 2006) discuss the consequences of uncertain political support in deliberative processes and concluded that participants can become discouraged and cynical, and that their trust in the government can decrease further. However, I have not found previous studies that provided data, as in my study, concerning the effects of lacking political support on task effectiveness and group outcome.

Moreover, this study has provided some insights into the effects of diversity in large groups. This study illustrates the complexity and difficulties that Assembly members and staff experienced while working with diversity. Diversity was suppressed, which decreased creativity and reflection in the group. As such, this study has contributed to a better understanding of the impact of diversity in large groups.

Furthermore, this research offers insights into the emotional climate of a large group. Previously, most large group studies related to therapy or training groups. This study shows that large group phenomena previously identified such as contagion of affect, one-ness and collusion, anti-group phenomena, strong emotions, identity problems, and defensive behavior, such as adopting a basic assumption mode of functioning, also occur in large task-oriented groups.

7.4.2 Working with large groups

This study offers insights into the complexity of working with dynamics in a large group. These may complement collaboration and collaborative leadership theory³⁸³ (Chrislip, 2002; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Gray, 1989; Huxham & Vangen, 2000b, 2005; Schrijver & Vansina, 2008). Similar to Huxham and Vangen (2000b, 2005), this study has shown that the coordination and collaboration process is complex and fraught with difficulties and dilemmas.

³⁸³ In Chapter 4, I argued that the collaborative leadership perspective was relevant to this study, even though it focuses on leadership across organizational boundaries.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that Large Group Intervention (LGI) design principles (such as involving the larger system, working in large and small group settings, working with different dynamics and with different work forms) are also relevant when working with large groups over an extended period. Moreover, the study illustrates that combining various work methods or philosophies needs to be carefully considered when it comes to large groups. Lent, McCormick and Skubis Pearce (2005) studied the joint use of Future Search and Open Space and concluded that this combined approach worked effectively in the cases they followed. However, the underlying principles of work methods can be very different, and adopting multiple work methods can be counterproductive as this study of the Assembly showed. Additionally, while many books and articles have been written on how to apply LGIs, the effect of group dynamics on the group result are not always considered (see Van der Zouwen (2011) for an example where the effectiveness of LGI for sustainable organizational change was investigated). Based on my findings, I would argue that incorporating the theme of group dynamics would enrich the existing LGI manuals and guides.

7.4.3 Other, potentially useful, theoretical perspectives

The theoretical concepts that were used in this study to interpret the critical dynamics could not explain all the patterns and concepts that emerged in the Assembly. Some conceptual areas that could be relevant for further exploration in order to create a deeper understanding of the Assembly's critical dynamics are presented below.

Although various authors have different views concerning the number of stages in group development and the order in which the stages occur, the concept of group development over time has gathered significant support (Wheelan, 2005). Initially, I chose not to use this concept to interpret the Assembly's group dynamics over time because this perspective was felt to be too linear for the study's purpose. Moreover, the behavior in groups is affected by intra-group processes as well as by the psychological environment in which the group is functioning (Lewin, 1951). Consequently, group performance cannot be isolated, and both the processes within the group as well as the environment (or situation) of the group need to be studied. However, the Assembly seems to show similarities with the working climate in the initial group phase of small groups, which is characterized by anxiety, inclusion, and dependence (e.g. Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Bion, 1961; Braaten, 1974/1975; Lacoursiere, 1980; Tucker, 1973; Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977; Wheelan, 2005). In this phase, members attempt to identify behavior that is acceptable to the leader and to other group members, and the group's goal seems to be to create an environment in which it is safe to begin contributing ideas and suggestions. A small group's second phase has been characterized as involving counter-dependency, dissatisfaction, and conflict. People become dissatisfied with the earlier situation of dependency which leads to feelings of frustration (and sometimes anger or sadness) against the task and the authority figure. Confrontation with the leader serves to establish inter-member solidarity and openness, and conflict (between the leader and the participants, between subgroups, and between individual participants) seems to be necessary for the establishment of trust

and a climate in which members feel free to disagree with one another. This developmental perspective could be useful in understanding how the Assembly matured, or failed to do so, and how the productivity and effectiveness of the group were consequently affected.

Secondly, the issue of leadership might be relevant to explore more intensively. Huxham and Vangen (2000b, 2005) argue that, in collaborations, leadership occurs through three leadership media: structure, process, and participants. Such a perspective could be helpful in better understanding how leadership emerged in the Assembly and in gaining a deeper insight into the dynamics that emerged between Assembly and staff members. According to Huxham and Vangen, the fact that the three leadership media are often beyond the control of the members of the collaboration is significant. This seems to have been the case in the Assembly. Firstly, the project was administratively linked to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, but lacked a structural connection with its political context: politicians had agreed on the project but it was isolated from existing decision-making structures. Next, the process, defined by Huxham and Vangen as “the formal and informal instruments through which the collaboration’s communication takes place” (2000b, p.1167), was mostly designed by external parties before the Assembly began operation, and then executed by the staff during the project. Consequently, the Assembly members had little control over the Assembly’s process. Thirdly, the staff held the authority in the Assembly, with the chair being the most prominent member. As such, the chair played the most significant role in leading the Assembly’s collaboration, which affected the ability of the other staff and of Assembly members to enact a leadership role. That is, the chair had the power to influence and even dictate the energy with which certain items were driven forward in the process even though, formally, her position was that of a neutral facilitator. Huxham and Vangen (2000b, 2005) have investigated what participants do in order to cope with, or build upon, the constraints or possibilities dictated by structures and processes or by other participants. In their view, a very large component of leadership activity revolves around finding ways to control the agenda within collaboration. Leaders use the power of their position, tools, and skills to influence the activities in collaboration. One perspective on interpreting such leadership behavior is that it may be very effective as it moves the collaborative activities in a desirable direction. From another perspective, one could view this behavior as manipulative (in either positive or negative senses). If the Assembly’s agenda was indeed controlled by its staff, it would be relevant to consider certain aspects that occurred in the Assembly (such as the incident with the email sender, or the significant conformity) from a power perspective. This interpretation would lead to different understandings of certain dynamics within the Assembly. For example, deviants or whistleblowers would be seen as having a hard time because they fight against the existing systems and/or power structure of the majority (Alford, 2011) and, for this, get blamed, rejected, and excluded by the group (Schrijver, 2008). Additionally, one could study how informal leadership behavior, or leadership outside the hierarchical leadership structure, took place in the Assembly, as “anyone can take a lead” (p. 78) in collaborative initiatives (Schrijver, 2011). The role of internal parties, like the email sender and the elite group, could be particularly interesting to explore, as their actions were of importance to the Assembly’s outcome

(see Chapter 6). Moreover, the informal leadership behavior of external parties, like politicians and external consultants, is likely to have influenced the Assembly's outcome.

Another area that might be useful to investigate more deeply in order to understand the Assembly's performance is the concept of collective learning in large groups. Based on Vygotsky's theory on the Zone of Proximal Development³⁸⁴ (ZDP), Wells (1999) and Tinsley and Lebak (2009) have identified a Zone of Reflective Capacity. According to these authors, an adult's capacity for reflection is constructed through their interactions with other adults that have similar goals (Tinsley & Lebak, 2009; Wells, 1999) and expands when adults share feedback, evaluations, and analyses of one another's work in the collaborative environment (Tinsley & Lebak, 2009). This theory promotes the idea of exploring the conditions for reflection and learning within the Assembly and how these subsequently affected the task effectiveness of the group. This could be relevant in gaining a better understanding of the potential of large group work, enabling better designs to be developed for large group processes.

Finally, the themes of context, diversity, and size could be investigated more intensively. In contrast to this study with its flexible design, it could be valuable to carry out a study in similar circumstances but with a fixed design (see Section 5.2.1). A research strategy where the research design is fixed prior to the main phase of data collection (Robson, 2002) would potentially generate more-focused insights into the themes of context, diversity, and size than this study has provided. Another option worth considering is to adopt a grounded theory approach, since this would potentially generate more theory than this study has offered.

7.5 Contributions to the practice of deliberative democracy

In carrying out this study, an ambition was to contribute to practice. Consequently, in this section, the practical contributions of this study are discussed. Firstly, I reflect on the contribution this study made to the ongoing practice of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform during its period of operation. Following this, I present some considerations regarding any similar future projects.

7.5.1 Contributions to the practice of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

An aim of this research project has been to create a deeper understanding of the dynamics in large groups. Additionally, it tried to assist in the practice of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform by sharing and working with the collected data in the here-and-now. In this section, I reflect shortly on whether or not this study did contribute to the project's practice.

³⁸⁴ The distance between the actual developmental level, as determined by independent problem-solving, and the level of potential development as determined through guided problem-solving (Vygotsky, 1978).

A comment from the project secretary, received on the 13th July 2011, illustrates my sharing of observations between the weekend meetings:

*"Grosso modo there is nothing in what she [Manon] describes that I remember distinctly different. But, because of the time that has passed since the Burgerforum took place, it is difficult for me to recall whether what she describes is how I also experienced what happened in the group, or that I simply remember Manon's observations that she at that time already shared with us (the chair and the secretariat) between the weekends."*³⁸⁵

Did this help or hinder the process? As both researcher and confidant I had the role and position to force the staff to discuss and consider certain issues in the group. One could argue that drawing attention to the phenomenon of group dynamics might have helped the group process:

*"At first we did not even realize that there was such a thing as group dynamics, let alone that group dynamics could pose problems that might endanger the project as a whole. By the time we did realize this, we were more than happy to have Manon to advise us on this subject."*³⁸⁶

I may have contained some of the anxiety in the staff by working with and/or explaining behavior and developments in the group, and this may have helped the process. However, I certainly also increased anxiety and frustration by adopting this focus. For example, I felt that I was not always able to sufficiently help the staff by designing interventions or creating the right conditions for overcoming group dynamic problems. Retrospectively, I believe that I was not senior enough to both collect data from within the work system and work with the complexity of these dynamics at the same time. Moreover, I found my role and position confusing from time to time. How much of my time should I devote to helping the staff working with the dynamics in the group: what was my position and what were my responsibilities? In Chapter 6, I argued that ambiguity might have been a wider problem in the Assembly's working environment and, on reflection I feel that I was unsuccessful in creating greater clarity in the system.

In my role as confidant I had to deal with strong emotions and a diverse range of problems that Assembly members wished to speak about. In hindsight, I believe that I contained most of the strong emotions and problems, and this may have helped the individual members. However, in so doing, I might have taken away the group's and the chair's possibilities to contain and work through these emotions and problems themselves. As such, I could have decreased the Assembly's capacity for dialogue, learning, reflection, and creativity.

To summarize, I believe that, on balance, I did not harm the practice of the Assembly by conducting this study. I might have helped practice in some areas, while being unhelpful in others.

³⁸⁵ Member checks, project secretary (see Appendix 26).

³⁸⁶ Member checks, project secretary (see Appendix 26).

7.5.2 Some thoughts regarding future projects

If this study's findings are to be taken seriously, then what recommendations can be made in terms of facilitating large groups, such as citizen assemblies? In other words, how can the quality of future participative and deliberative large-group processes be improved by adopting lessons learnt in this study? Some ideas are presented below.

This study has shown that a participative process which is not supported by the problem owner can increase insecurity and influence the group's outcome. Based on these experiences, it may be useful for future projects, from the start, to be realistic and critical of the purpose of the participatory exercise: what is planned to be done with the group's outcome? Then, the members and staff can address how to work with this situation. Another aspect that might need some consideration in the preparation phase is whether or not all the key stakeholders should be invited to the process in order to deal with the full complexity surrounding the problem domain.

The importance of clarity around the task, objectives, roles, and conditions was illustrated in this study. In a clear working environment, staff and group members can work more effectively, which is likely to positively affect the group's work. To achieve this probably requires intensive preparation and time, both before and during the process, and especially in large groups where the large number of participants may boost organizational issues and complexity. The study showed that working with large groups can be both demanding and difficult. Experienced and well-trained facilitators might be essential to create the right conditions, to be able to work in the here-and-now, and to deal with the complexity on the inter-organizational and interpersonal levels.

One might also wonder to what extent lectures are necessary prior to a group working on its task. This study showed that members and staff of large groups can easily develop a psychological dependency during the start-up phase. Although lecturing can decrease complexity and anxiety in a large group, which may suit both instructors as well as participants, the possibility of dialogue, reflection, and creativity may be decreased as a consequence.

Moreover, both divergence and convergence may require stimulating in order to create learning, reflection, and creativity within the group. Simply sharing different perspectives in the large group setting might not be sufficient. Rather, a group needs to work with its differences and integrate them. Certain work methods could support the group with this process.

To make people responsible and let them explore and learn from the different experiences present in a group, it can be beneficial for each large group meeting to end with a review session (Vansina, 2008b): how are we doing; have we the right conditions to fulfill the task and overcome the problems that are hindering group performance? If the facilitators create an open atmosphere for genuine dialogue to occur during review periods, any problems arising can be brought up and addressed.

This study has shown that a large group process can be very intense. Therefore, it might be important to finish the process with some care. A debriefing session in which participants and staff members share their thoughts, experiences, and feelings may help them all to process the things that have gone on. Further, it might be meaningful for participants if they were informed about results, consequences, and/or news concerning the group's outcome once the formal process is over.

7.6 Final remarks

Although this study set out to contribute to the field of group dynamics, it is also positioned in the discourse on deliberative democracy. As such, I would like to end this dissertation with some final remarks concerning the debate on citizen participation.

Bas van Stokkom, a Dutch philosopher and sociologist, has investigated deliberative processes in the Netherlands in order to create insight into these processes and learn about the design of citizen assemblies and other deliberative instruments. Van Stokkom's findings and interpretations (e.g. 2006) are more theoretical and contemplative, and thus less empirical, than my study. I hope that my work can contribute to the philosophical debate of Van Stokkom and others on deliberative democracy by providing a detailed description of the critical dynamics that emerged in a large-scale deliberative project. This study is not the first to show that while equality and rationality (which are assumed or strived for in the discourse on deliberative democracy) may be theoretical principles, they do not occur in practice. The impact of group dynamics on the democratic caliber of deliberative instruments needs to be brought to the attention of those who facilitate these processes. It would be somewhat ironic to come to the conclusion that democratic processes cannot be guaranteed in citizens assemblies because facilitators cannot work with the complexity that exists and the ensuing group dynamics.

Based on my own and others' findings and practical experiences, I believe that citizen participation is not the full answer to the question of democratic development. I am not saying that a group of thoughtful, committed citizens cannot change the world (see citation by Margaret Mead in Chapter 2), or that democracy as a concept should not be retained. However, I believe that we need to think in other, less standard, directions in order to maintain and develop democracy, and to keep up with today's and tomorrow's society. By working with citizens alone on democratic issues, the complexity of society is overlooked. Established organizations, institutions, and structures that are part of a certain problem domain should also be involved in participative processes so as to create commitment to change and development. Fambrough and Comerford (2006) argue that the purpose of understanding group processes is to apply theoretical findings to social practice, so promoting systemic change toward a greater good. Democratic development would be greatly strengthened if the greater good was to be determined jointly by all the key stakeholders in a specific problem domain (including citizens and politicians), rather than by those in powerful positions or sufficiently privileged to influence others. A deeper understanding of the dynamics and power relations in such a participative set-up is

required to be able to evaluate whether democratic development is taking place. Michel Foucault warned us of this by stating that: "a society without power relations can only be an abstraction".

Summary

In 2006, the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations set up a national citizen assembly on electoral reform. One hundred and forty³⁸⁷ Dutch citizens were asked to work together for nine months to investigate various electoral systems for choosing members of the Parliament, and eventually to decide which system would be most appropriate for the Netherlands. On the 14th December 2006, the Assembly presented its proposal to the Minister for Governance Renewal. The Assembly proposed a system of proportional representation, in which voters would cast one vote; either for the party of their choice, or for the candidate of their choice.

The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform is an example of the instrument called a 'citizen assembly'. A citizen assembly can be described as a group of citizens (the size of the group can vary) in which the participants are either selected, or self-selected, with the purpose of deliberating and making policy or delivering a set of recommendations (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Hendriks, C., 2006a³⁸⁸). The Dutch government was the first government in the world to organize such a large-scale national citizen assembly and, through that, involve 140 citizens in a public issue.

Outcomes in a deliberative group such as the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform can be affected by group dynamics. The German psychologist Kurt Lewin, known for his extensive research on how groups work, coined the term group dynamics to stress the powerful impact of complex social and psychological processes on individuals in group situations (Lewin, 1951). Group dynamics are complex and influence the results and productivity of a group (Steiner, 1972; Schrijver & Vansina, 1997).

In this study, I am particularly interested in how the group dynamics in the Assembly helped or hindered the task at hand. From this, insight into the meanings of particular behaviors can be obtained along with establishing conditions for successful process development. As such, investigating the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform using a social and psychological perspective offered potentially valuable insight into how 140 diverse citizens work together, and what that means in terms of facilitating such a process.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, the subject of study is introduced, the problem definition is presented and the study objective and research question are described. Moreover, the context and some important focus areas of the study are briefly outlined, and the relevance of the research subject

³⁸⁷ For various reasons the Assembly started out with 142 members (see Chapter 3). This difference of two members is not seen as significant in terms of this study. Therefore, I use the number 140 throughout this PhD, as this was the official number of Assembly members.

³⁸⁸ In this PhD, two authors with the same surname, Carolyn Hendriks and Frank Hendriks, are referenced. As they have published in the same year, for clarity I use their first initials when referring to them.

is discussed. The objective for this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the group dynamics in the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform in order to discover how these dynamics have influenced the effectiveness of this citizen assembly and what that means in terms of facilitating similar large groups. To meet the objective for this study, the following research question has been formulated: How was the outcome (output and process) of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform affected by critical group dynamics³⁸⁹, and how were these dynamics dealt with by the staff?

The chosen framework for studying the Citizens' Assembly is briefly introduced in Chapter 1. It is explained that it is beyond the scope of this research to analyze all the critical dynamics that emerged in the Assembly. Therefore, three meta-themes have been identified as significant for the performance of the Assembly: context, diversity, and size. The theoretical perspectives that are considered the most appropriate for analyzing critical dynamics resulting from context, diversity, and size are the social psychological perspective, psychodynamic approach, and a leadership perspective (or, more specifically, theory about leading large groups). These perspectives are seen as having dominated in the development of the field of group dynamics.

In Chapter 2, the context in which the Citizens' Assembly operated is discussed, for this context is relevant when positioning and understanding social and psychological group processes. First, democracy and the participation of citizens are focused upon. It is explained that one of the conditions needed for a well-functioning democratic system is the commitment and participation of its citizens to public and political matters (Dahl, 1998; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Michels, 2006; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Krouwel, 2004). The basic concepts and types of democracy are presented, in order to understand the role of citizens in a democracy. It is explained that this role can be seen in different ways. On the one hand, one can see the citizens' role in democracy as primarily voting for representatives. On the other hand, one can believe that citizens should have a continuous and active role in policy- and decision-making processes.

Hendriks', F. model (2006) on the basic types of democracy is presented to provide a framework to interpret the context of the Citizens' Assembly. It is argued that citizen assemblies (or panels) - like the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform - are seen as instruments that are used in the context of deliberative democracy. Deliberative democracy is one of the main forms of participation democracy (Hendriks, F., 2006). The concept has been intensively explored by Elster (e.g. 1998), Fishkin (e.g. 1995) and Habermas (e.g. 1996) over the last twenty years. Advocates of deliberative democracy favor citizen participation: in their opinion, citizens should be involved in making or executing policy. According to them, this should be done in a certain way, namely in a process of deliberation and consensus seeking (Akkerman, 2004; Hendriks, F., 2006; Leyenaar, 2007). Deliberative democrats reason that deliberative processes can, among other things, be used to increase both the quality of

³⁸⁹ The term 'critical group dynamics' is understood as 'significant group dynamics' or 'important group dynamics', rather than 'unfavorable group dynamics'.

policymaking as well as political trust (Akkerman, 2004; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Fishkin, 1995; Hendriks, C., 2006a; Hendriks, F., 2006; Leyenaar, 2007; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Tonkens, 2006; Van Stokkom, 2007; Verhoeven, 2004). Apart from these arguments that support the deliberative model, there are also criticisms. Some of the perceived major disadvantages of the model, i.e. the problem of inequality and the issue of representation (Akkerman, 2004; Levine & Nierras, 2007; Leyenaar, 2007; Medelberg, 2002; Van Stokkom, 2006), are explored in this chapter. Further, it is argued that authorities should take the efforts of citizens in deliberative processes seriously in order to ensure that the gap between citizens and government does not increase further (Hendriks, C., 2006a; Nationale Conventie, 2006).

As the Citizens' Assembly took place in the Netherlands, the Dutch democratic context is also described in Chapter 2. Several Dutch authors (i.e. Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Engelen, 2004; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hazeu, 2004; Korsten & De Goede, 2006; Krouwel, 2004; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Scheltema, 2004; Tromp, 2004; Verhoeven, 2004) are referred to in order to discuss the 'gap' between the Dutch electorate and their representatives (or between citizens and politicians), reflecting a perception of falling trust between the two parties.

In Chapter 3, the background, the organization, and the process of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform are described in detail. It is described that the Minister for Governance Renewal, Alexander Pechtold, presented his plan to establish a citizen assembly on electoral reform in July 2005. On the 24th March 2006 the Citizens' Assembly was initiated (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). The preparations for the project were delegated to the Directorate of Constitutional Affairs and Legislation, part of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Hence, the Minister no longer had any substantial responsibilities in the project. A project secretariat was responsible for the organization of the entire project. The secretariat was managed by a project secretary. In addition to the project secretariat, the staff of the Citizens' Assembly consisted of a chair and a number of external parties. During the Assembly's period of operation, twenty staff functions were involved (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006).

It is explained how one hundred and forty citizens were selected to participate in the Assembly. For the selection of these people, a random sample of 50,400 people was drawn from all registered citizens entitled to vote in the Netherlands (Van der Kolk & Brinkman, 2008). Those citizens that were selected could apply for membership of the Assembly. Eventually, 1732 people nominated themselves. Out of these 1732 nominated people, 140 were selected by drawing lots. To guarantee representativeness, a few characteristics were taken into account when drawing: the members had to proportionally reflect the inhabitants per province, there had to be as many men as women in the group, and the group had to be representative of Dutch society in terms of age.

Furthermore, the Assembly's work method is described in this chapter. In the period between March and November 2006, the members of the Citizens' Assembly met each other during ten weekend

meetings, starting on a Friday afternoon and finishing on Saturday evening. The weekend meetings were divided into three phases; a learning phase (weekend meetings 1 - 3), a consultation phase (weekend meetings 3 - 6), and a decision-making phase (weekend meetings 7 - 10). During these meetings, the members worked together in a plenary group and in subgroups. The plenary sessions were facilitated by the chair. During most of the weekend meetings she was assisted by two lecturers. The subgroups were facilitated by the members themselves. Some Assembly members played additional roles in the Assembly process. For example, by moderating the subgroups as a chair or vice-chair, providing feedback to the plenary sessions as a spokesperson, or serving as a primary spokesperson toward the national press as a media group member.

To gain a deeper insight in the Assembly's political context, the political background of the Assembly's task and the political commitment toward the project are elaborated on in this chapter. It is argued that the Citizens' Assembly had not been popular with the 'political Hague' from the start (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). On June 29th 2006, the government fell; VVD politician Atzo Nicolaï became responsible for the Citizens' Assembly in this interim period until the next government would be formed (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). In the elections on November 22nd both D66 and the VVD lost heavily. This meant that neither Alexander Pechtold, nor the Minister currently responsible, Atzo Nicolaï, could play a significant role in putting the Citizens' Assembly on the agenda for the next governmental period (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). On April 18th 2008, Ank Bijleveld, the then Minister for Governance Renewal (a State Secretary within the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations), sent a letter to Parliament. In this letter she informed the Members of Parliament that the government did not see sufficient reasons to implement the electoral system that the Assembly recommended (Kabinetstandpunt advies Burgerforum Kiesstelsel, 2008). In Section 3.5, it is explored why the government had decided to reject the proposal.

In Chapter 4, the concept of group dynamics is introduced. It is explained that the term is not only used to refer to those powerful processes that influence individuals in a group. It also refers to the field of study that investigates these group processes (Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Forsyth, 1990; Remmerswaal, 2006). In its development, group dynamics has been inspired by various theoretical schools (Forsyth & Burnette, 2005; Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Remmerswaal, 2006). Some major theoretical orientations and classical contributions that have influenced work in group dynamics are described.

Then, the chosen framework for studying the Citizens' Assembly is presented. Having already placed the Assembly in the discourse on deliberative democracy, the political context of the Assembly is found a relevant study area. In essence, the meta-theme 'context' has been selected to investigate how the Assembly's political environment might have affected behavior in the Assembly. This is believed relevant because groups are said to be continuously influenced by their environments (Lewin, 1951; Rice, 1969; Trist & Murray, 1990). Further, the Citizens' Assembly was a large heterogeneous group. Therefore, the meta-themes of diversity and size are further relevant study areas. The meta-

theme 'diversity' was selected as the differing perspectives found in large groups are said to influence group behavior (e.g. Schrijver & Vansina, 1997). The third meta-theme 'size' is felt significant because processes within groups change as the group size increases (e.g. Shaw, 1976; Steiner, 1972). The theoretical perspectives that are seen as most appropriate for analyzing critical dynamics caused by context, diversity, and size, are the social psychological perspective, the psychodynamic approach, and the leadership perspective³⁹⁰ (or, more specifically, the theory on leading large groups).

Afterwards, relevant theory is described. First, social psychological theory concerning social influence and behavior in median and large groups is presented. Social influence is explained by Napier and Gershengeld (1993) as the process by which a group brings pressure on its members to conform to its norms (common shared standards) or by which a member manipulates the behavior of others. Then, psychodynamic theory on the emotional climate in large groups is presented. Third, theory on working with large groups is explored. It has been argued that a 'large group' is a complex phenomenon and that, as a result, dynamics within large groups are more complex than those in small groups. Large groups can be quite destructive and regress if one is not careful. Defensive mechanisms can easily emerge, both at the group level and within individual participants. However, large groups also offer an enormous potential for creativity, dialogue, and development. Strong emotions and the diversity found in the large group are said to generate energy for learning, change, and transformation. As large groups have complex dynamics, working with large groups can be difficult. In order to deal with the complexity in large groups, one first needs to be able to recognize the various dynamics. Rather than reducing or suppressing the dynamics, people working with large groups need to understand if, and if so which, interventions are needed since interventions and interpretations can have strong effects on the group. To be able to understand the dynamics emerging, and know which interventions are needed, experience and psychological insight is required (Agazarian & Carter, 1993; Bunker & Alban, 1992b, 1997; Foulkes; 1975; Gilmore & Barnett, 1992; Turquet, 1975; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000, 2007).

In Chapter 5, it is explained that this study is considered as an interpretive study, using a flexible design. The interpretive perspective argues that there is no objective reality independent of the social meaning given to it by those in the setting (Geertz, 1973). Given the nature of this study's objective, interpretive research is conceptually seen as the most relevant approach since interpretive research is focused on understanding and interpreting the meaning of behavior in social situations ('t Hart et al. 2003; Swanborn, 1994). Following Robson's reasoning (2002), this study has a 'flexible' design³⁹¹ with both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods being used. Apart from the ethnographic

³⁹⁰ Theoretical insights into 'leading large groups' are derived from social psychology, psychodynamics, and systems thinking and OD.

³⁹¹ Alternatively, fixed design research is a research strategy where the research design is fixed (i.e. highly pre-specified) prior to the main phase of data collection and almost always involves the collection of quantitative data and the use of statistical analysis (Robson, 2002).

tradition, influences from action research and the psychodynamic tradition can be found in this research project. These three design traditions are termed subjective processes. The assumption in subjective processes is that the subjectivity of the researcher inevitably generates data about what is going on in the system. It is argued that the subjective stance of qualitative, interpretive research causes some concerns, for example concerning validity, generalizability, and reliability (Robson, 2002). In Chapter 5, I have tried to be as open as possible in presenting the steps and choices made in this study and in Chapter 7 I address the probable biases as carefully as possible. However, I fully recognize that by adopting an interpretive stance, I have doubtless influenced this project (and the people in it) in various ways.

Then, the data collection methods are described. In the nine months that the Assembly was active, I gathered data by working as a field and action researcher. I observed the weekend meetings of the Assembly, spoke with Assembly members, and shared and discussed my observations with the chair and other staff members. Besides my role as a researcher, I was appointed as a confidant for the Assembly members. Members who had personal problems that hindered their work with the Assembly could consult me. The data collected from these consultations are used anonymously in this study. After the Assembly had finished its task, various interviews and focus groups were organized to collect further data. Interviews were held with the chair, staff members of the project secretariat, Assembly members, ex-Assembly members, and external parties that were involved in the process of the Citizens' Assembly. Moreover, quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire that was sent out immediately after the final weekend meeting of the Assembly.

Further, the process of analysis is presented. It is explained that the initial task in this process was to identify some concepts that would help make sense of what was going on in the Assembly. The first step in generating concepts was to carefully read through all the data to get thoroughly familiar with them. After the reading phase, the large volume of data was used to create a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of the process in chronological order. The aim of this description was to compare and relate what was happening in the Assembly at different places and times in order to identify patterns and concepts that transcended local contexts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2006). As a next step, the description was linked to the theoretical framework and, where necessary, with other theory in order to code the data. I used a different code for each significant phenomenon or dynamic. Then, I categorized the dynamics found in three meta-themes; context, diversity, and size. To explore the meanings of the dynamics found, the three meta-themes, with their underlying dynamics, were subsequently explored, analyzed, and interpreted from the three theoretical perspectives mentioned above. The quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) after the qualitative data had been analyzed and interpreted.

Finally, the ethical issues of this research are addressed in this chapter. It is explained that this study is carried out under conditions of confidentiality.

In Chapter 6, the research findings are described and discussed. It is presented that Assembly members were satisfied after the Assembly's period of operation had come to the end. The functioning of the chair and staff, as well as the group process and the final proposal, were evaluated positively by most of the members. The results of the questionnaire have shown that the Assembly's perceived outcome (proposal and process) was strongly influenced by the perceptions of the group process and of the functioning of the staff. This would seem to underline the importance of good facilitation and a good group process for achieving a successful outcome of group working.

In several places in Chapter 6 it has been argued that the critical dynamics hindered the Assembly's task effectiveness, which in turn decreased creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and learning in the Assembly. As such, the Assembly's final proposal could be less rich than the group's initial potential suggested.

It was argued that perceived threats could have created the critical dynamics that surfaced in the Assembly. The Assembly had several reasons to experience tensions from the start of the project. First, the project was an experiment and consequently all those involved, including the facilitators, had to deal with an unfamiliar situation, and therefore did not know what to really expect. Second, the Assembly did not have a solid foundation on which to operate as it lacked political support and legitimacy. Third, its task could be viewed as technical, abstract, and complex. Moreover, the staff members were inexperienced. Further, its size and diversity were seen as threatening by several members.

The critical dynamics that I identified in relation to the context showed that behavior in the Assembly was affected by its uncertain political environment. Members and staff felt motivated to protect their social identity and self-esteem during the process. In dealing with the uncertain political context, members mostly avoided confronting the reality, and, at some stages, actively fought against this. Further, the Assembly's staff contributed to the enclosing of the system. The Assembly's working climate was found to be collusive rather than collaborative. The desire to deny differences and conform to the group and its norms helped the members and staff to experience feelings of belonging, unity, goodness, and wholeness, which were necessary to deal with the threatening outside world.

The critical dynamics that I uncovered in relation to diversity showed that the Assembly was motivated to diminish diversity in order to reduce complexity. Members seemed to categorize themselves into subgroups in the attempt to limit diversity. However, they did not seem to fully identify themselves with these subgroups since the subgroups' interests were rarely raised in the larger group setting and conflicts between subgroups were rare. Moreover, the working climate of the Assembly seemed to be ambiguous.

The critical dynamics found in relation to size showed that emotions were often high in the Assembly. It is argued that complexity and criticism were not well contained by the Assembly members and the staff, which resulted in strong emotions, irrational fantasies, and mistrust below the surface. Denying

differences was seen as having threatened members' identities and their boundaries of the self, which in turn could have increased anxiety, leading members to regress. Those members with an additional role might have had fewer identity problems by being given a role since this may have enabled them to maintain a psychological independence more easily than other members, and this could have enabled them to become more influential in the group.

Another conclusion I reached was that the staff members were felt to be under pressure in leading the Assembly. Partly this related to the turbulent political context and, further, there was the need to deal with the complexity stemming from the Assembly's size and diversity. In various places throughout the thesis there are illustrations of instances when the staff members were not fully in control and might have lacked specific competences that would have been valuable in working with a large group. This is considered to have increased insecurity within the Assembly, which could have further added to the complexity facing the staff.

In Chapter 7, the results of this study are reflected upon. First, the study's findings are summarized and the methodology is reviewed. Then, the theoretical contributions are presented. It is argued that the main contribution of the study is that it provides a deep and integrated understanding of large group dynamics that emerged during the period of operation of a large group. Specifically, this study shows how context affected the group's task effectiveness and outcome. Moreover, it is claimed that this study has contributed to a better understanding of the impact of diversity in large groups. It illustrates the complexity and difficulties that Assembly members and staff experienced while working with diversity. This research is also said to offer insights into the emotional climate of a large group. It shows that large group phenomena previously identified such as contagion of affect, one-ness and collusion, anti-group phenomena, strong emotions, identity problems, and defensive behavior, such as adopting a basic assumption mode of functioning, also occur in large task-oriented groups. Finally, this study is said to offer insights into the complexity of working with dynamics in a large group. Similar to Huxham and Vangen (2000b, 2005), this study has shown that the coordination and collaboration process is complex and fraught with difficulties and dilemmas. The findings indicate that Large Group Intervention (LGI) design principles (such as involving the larger system, working in large and small group settings, working with different dynamics and with different work forms) are also relevant when working with large groups over an extended period. The study illustrates that combining various work methods or philosophies needs to be carefully considered when it comes to large groups.

In order to create a deeper understanding of the Assembly's critical dynamics, some conceptual areas could be relevant for further exploration. It is argued that the concept of group development could be useful in understanding how the Assembly matured, or failed to do so, and how the productivity and effectiveness of the group were consequently affected. Secondly, the issue of leadership might be relevant to explore more intensively, in order to understand how leadership emerged in the Assembly and in gaining a deeper insight into the dynamics that emerged between Assembly, staff members, and external parties. Thirdly, the concept of collective learning in large groups could be relevant in

gaining a better understanding of the potential of large group work, enabling better designs to be developed for large group processes. Finally, the themes of context, diversity, and size could be investigated more intensively by adopting a fixed design, since this would potentially generate more-focused insights. Another option worth considering is to adopt a grounded theory approach in order to generate more theory than this study has offered.

The practical contributions of this study are discussed at the end of this chapter. The recommendations that can be made in terms of facilitating large groups, such as citizen assemblies are presented afterwards.

In the final remark is argued that the impact of group dynamics on the democratic caliber of deliberative instruments needs to be brought to the attention of those who facilitate these processes. Moreover, it is claimed that democratic development would be greatly strengthened if the greater good was to be determined jointly by all the key stakeholders in a specific problem domain (including citizens and politicians), rather than by those in powerful positions or sufficiently privileged to influence others.

Samenvatting

In 2006 stelde het Nederlandse ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties een nationaal burgerforum in over de hervorming van het kiesstelsel. Honderdveertig³⁹² Nederlandse burgers werden gevraagd om gedurende negen maanden samen diverse verschillende kiesstelsels voor het kiezen van de leden van de Tweede Kamer te bestuderen, en uiteindelijk samen te beslissen welk systeem het meest geschikt zou zijn voor Nederland. Op 14 december 2006 presenteerde het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel haar eindvoorstel aan de minister van Bestuurlijke Vernieuwing. Het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel stelde een systeem voor van evenredige vertegenwoordiging, waarin de kiezers één stem uitbrengen; hetzij voor de partij van hun keuze, hetzij voor de kandidaat van hun keuze.

Het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel is een voorbeeld van het zogenaamde instrument 'burgerforum'. Een burgerforum kan worden omschreven als een groep van burgers (de grootte van de groep kan variëren) waarvoor de deelnemers ofwel zijn geselecteerd, of zichzelf hebben geselecteerd, met het doel te delibereren, beleid te maken, of met een reeks aanbevelingen te komen (Goodin & Dryzek, 2006; Hendriks, C., 2006a³⁹³). De Nederlandse regering was de eerste ter wereld die een dergelijk grootschalig nationaal burgerforum organiseerde en daarmee 140 burgers betrok bij een zaak van publiek belang.

Uitkomsten van een deliberatieve groep, zoals het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel, kunnen worden beïnvloed door groepsdynamiek. De Duitse psycholoog Kurt Lewin, bekend om zijn uitgebreide onderzoek naar hoe groepen werken, bedacht de term groepsdynamiek om de sterke invloed van complexe sociale en psychologische processen op individuen in groepsituaties te benadrukken (Lewin, 1951). Groepsdynamica zijn complex en hebben invloed op de resultaten en de productiviteit van een groep (Steiner, 1972; Schrijver & Vansina, 1997).

In dit onderzoek ben ik vooral geïnteresseerd in de manier waarop de groepsdynamiek in het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel de betreffende opdracht heeft geholpen of belemmerd. Hieruit kan inzicht in de betekenis van bepaald gedrag worden verkregen en voorwaarden worden vastgesteld voor succesvolle procesontwikkeling. Als zodanig bood het onderzoek vanuit een sociaal en psychologisch perspectief, een potentieel waardevol inzicht in hoe 140 verschillende burgers samenwerken en wat dat betekent voor het faciliteren van een dergelijk proces.

³⁹² Om verschillende redenen begon het Burgerforum met 142 leden (zie hoofdstuk 3). Het verschil van twee leden wordt niet als significant beschouwd in dit onderzoek. Daarom gebruik ik het getal 140 in dit proefschrift, aangezien dit het officiële aantal Burgerforumleden was.

³⁹³ In dit proefschrift wordt verwezen naar twee auteurs met dezelfde achternaam, Carolyn Hendriks en Frank Hendriks. Aangezien zij ook in hetzelfde jaar hebben gepubliceerd, gebruik ik hun voorletters wanneer ik naar hen verwijf.

In het eerste hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift wordt het onderwerp van de studie geïntroduceerd, de probleemstelling gepresenteerd en het onderzoeksdoel en de -vraagstelling beschreven. Bovendien worden de context en een aantal belangrijke aandachtsgebieden van het onderzoek kort beschreven en de relevantie van het onderzoek besproken. Het doel van deze studie is om een dieper inzicht te verkrijgen in de groepsdynamiek in het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel, om zo te ontdekken hoe deze dynamiek de effectiviteit van dit burgerforum heeft beïnvloed, en wat dit betekent voor het faciliteren van soortgelijke grote groepen. Om die doelstelling te behalen, is de volgende onderzoeksraag geformuleerd: Hoe is de uitkomst (output en proces) van het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel beïnvloed door kritische groepsdynamiek³⁹⁴, en hoe is de staf met deze dynamiek omgegaan?

Het gekozen theoretisch raamwerk voor het bestuderen van het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel wordt kort geïntroduceerd in hoofdstuk 1. Er wordt uitgelegd dat het buiten het bestek van dit onderzoek valt om alle kritische dynamiek die in het Burgerforum ontstond te analyseren. Daarom zijn drie meta-thema's geïdentificeerd als betekenisvol voor de performance van het Burgerforum: context, diversiteit en grootte. De theoretische perspectieven die worden beschouwd als de meest geschikte voor de analyse van de kritische dynamiek als gevolg van context, diversiteit en grootte zijn het sociaal psychologisch perspectief, de psychodynamische benadering en een leiderschap perspectief (of meer specifiek, de theorie over het leiden van grote groepen). Deze perspectieven worden beschouwd de ontwikkeling van groepsdynamica te hebben gedomineerd.

In hoofdstuk 2 wordt de context waarin het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel fungerde besproken, omdat deze context relevant is bij het positioneren en begrijpen van sociale en psychologische groepsprocessen. Ten eerste worden de concepten democratie en burgerparticipatie behandeld. Er wordt uitgelegd dat de inzet en participatie van burgers in publieke en politieke zaken een voorwaarde is voor een goed functionerend democratische systeem (Dahl, 1998; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Michels, 2006; Nationale Conventie, 2006, Krouwel, 2004). De basisbegrippen en verschillende soorten democratie worden gepresenteerd om de rol van burgers in een democratie te begrijpen. Het wordt uitgelegd dat deze rol kan worden gezien op verschillende manieren. Aan de ene kant kan men de rol van burgers in een democratie zien als hoofdzakelijk het kiezen van volksvertegenwoordigers. Aan de andere kant kan men vinden dat burgers een continue en actieve rol in beleid- en besluitvormingsprocessen moeten hebben.

Hendriks', F. model (2006) van de basistypen van democratie wordt gepresenteerd als kader van waaruit de context van het Burgerforum kan worden geïnterpreteerd. Er wordt gesteld dat burgerfora (of -panelen) – zoals het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel – worden gezien als instrumenten die gebruikt worden in het kader van deliberatieve democratie. Deliberatieve democratie is één van de belangrijkste vormen van participatieve democratie (Hendriks, F., 2006). Het concept is intensief

³⁹⁴ Onder de term 'kritische groepsdynamiek' wordt 'significante' of 'belangrijke' groepsdynamiek verstaan, in plaats van 'ongunstische groepdynamiek'.

onderzocht door Elster (e.g. 1998), Fishkin (e.g. 1995) en Habermas (e.g. 1996) in de afgelopen twintig jaar. Voorstanders van deliberatieve democratie zijn voor burgerparticipatie: in hun ogen moeten burgers worden betrokken bij het maken of uitvoeren van beleid. Dit moet volgens hen op een bepaalde manier, namelijk middels een proces van deliberatie en het zoeken naar consensus (Akkerman, 2004; Hendriks, F., 2006; Leyenaar, 2007). Deliberatieve democraten menen dat deliberatieve processen onder andere kunnen worden gebruikt om zowel de kwaliteit van de beleidsvorming als het politiek vertrouwen te verhogen (Akkerman, 2004; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Fishkin, 1995; Hendriks, C., 2006a; Hendriks, F., 2006; Leyenaar, 2007; Nationale Conventie, 2006; Tonkens, 2006; Van Stokkom, 2007; Verhoeven, 2004). Afgezien van deze argumenten die het deliberatieve model steunen, zijn er ook punten van kritiek. De waargenomen belangrijke nadelen van het model, zoals het probleem van ongelijkheid en de kwestie van vertegenwoordiging (Akkerman, 2004; Levine & Nierras, 2007; Leyenaar, 2007; Medelberg, 2002; Van Stokkom, 2006) worden in dit hoofdstuk onderzocht. Verder wordt gesteld dat de autoriteiten de inspanningen van burgers in deliberatieve processen serieus moeten nemen om ervoor te zorgen dat de kloof tussen burger en overheid niet verder vergroot (Hendriks, C., 2006a; Nationale Conventie, 2006).

Aangezien het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel plaatsvond in Nederland is ook de Nederlandse democratische context beschreven in hoofdstuk 2. Een aantal Nederlandse auteurs (i.e. Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Engelen, 2004; Engelen & Sie Dhian Ho, 2004; Hazeu, 2004; Korsten & De Goede, 2006; Krouwel, 2004, Nationale Conventie, 2006; Scheltema, 2004; Tromp, 2004; Verhoeven, 2004) worden genoemd om de 'kloof' tussen de Nederlandse kiezers en hun vertegenwoordigers (of tussen burgers en politici) te bespreken. Deze kloof lijkt het gevolg te zijn van dalend vertrouwen tussen deze twee partijen.

In hoofdstuk 3 worden de achtergrond, de organisatie en het proces van het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel in detail beschreven. Ik beschrijf dat de minister van Bestuurlijke Vernieuwing, Alexander Pechtold, zijn plan om een burgerforum voor vernieuwing van het kiesstelsel in te stellen presenteerde in juli 2005. Op 24 maart 2006 werd het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel geïnitieerd (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). De voorbereidingen voor het project werden gedelegeerd aan de directie Constitutionele Zaken en Wetgeving, onderdeel van het ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties. De minister had daardoor niet langer wezenlijke verantwoordelijkheden in het project. Een projectsecretariaat was verantwoordelijk voor de organisatie van het hele project. Het secretariaat werd geleid door een projectsecretaris. Naast het project secretariaat bestond de staf van het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel uit een voorzitter en een aantal externe partijen. Tijdens de periode dat het Burgerforum actief was, waren twintig staffuncties bezet (Proces Verslag van het Burgerforum Kiesstelsel, 2006).

Er wordt uitgelegd hoe honderdveertig burgers werden geselecteerd om deel te nemen aan het Burgerforum. Voor de selectie van deze mensen werd een aselecte steekproef genomen van 50.400 mensen uit alle geregistreerde kiesgerechtigden in Nederland (Van der Kolk & Brinkman, 2008). De

burgers die werden geselecteerd, konden zichzelf nomineren voor het lidmaatschap van het Burgerforum. Uiteindelijk nomineerden 1.732 mensen zichzelf. Van deze 1.732 genomineerde mensen werden er 140 geselecteerd door middel van loting. Om de representativiteit te waarborgen, werden er een aantal voorwaarden opgesteld voor de loting: de leden moesten een proportionele afspiegeling vormen van de inwoners per provincie, er moesten evenveel mannen als vrouwen in de groep komen en de groep moest representatief zijn voor de Nederlandse samenleving in termen van leeftijd.

Daarnaast wordt de werkwijze van het Burgerforum beschreven in dit hoofdstuk. In de periode tussen maart en november 2006 ontmoetten de leden van het Burgerforum elkaar tijdens tien weekendbijeenkomsten, van vrijdagmiddag tot zaterdagavond. De weekendbijeenkomsten werden verdeeld in drie fasen: een leerfase (weekend 1 - 3), een overlegfase (weekend 3 - 6), en een besluitvormingsfase (weekend 7 - 10). Tijdens deze weekendbijeenkomsten werkten de leden samen in een plenaire groep en in subgroepen. De plenaire sessies werden gefaciliteerd door de voorzitter. Tijdens de meeste weekendbijeenkomsten werd zij bijgestaan door twee docenten. De subgroepen werden gefaciliteerd door de leden zelf. Sommige Burgerforumleden speelden een aanvullende rol in het proces. Bijvoorbeeld door het modereren van de subgroepen als voorzitter of vice-voorzitter, het geven van feedback in de plenaire sessies als woordvoerder of het optreden als woordvoerder in de landelijke pers, als mediagroepslid.

Om een dieper inzicht in de politieke context te krijgen, worden de politieke achtergrond van de opdracht van het Burgerforum en de politieke steun voor het project uitgewerkt in dit hoofdstuk. Betoogd wordt dat het Burgerforum vanaf het begin niet populair was in 'politiek Den Haag' (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). Op 29 juni 2006 viel de regering; VVD-politicus Atzo Nicolaï werd verantwoordelijk voor het Burgerforum in de interim-periode tot de volgende regering zou worden gevormd (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). Tijdens de verkiezingen op 22 november verloren zowel D66 als de VVD zwaar. Dit betekende dat noch Alexander Pechtold, noch de verantwoordelijke minister, Atzo Nicolaï, invloed konden uitoefenen om het Burgerforum op de politieke agenda te krijgen voor de volgende regeringsperiode (Schulz, 2010; Ten Heuvelhof & Van Twist, 2007). Op 18 april 2008 stuurde Ank Bijleveld, de toenmalige staatssecretaris van Bestuurlijke Vernieuwing, een brief aan de Tweede Kamer. In deze brief deelde zij de leden van de Tweede Kamer mee dat de regering niet voldoende redenen zag om het kiesstelsel dat het Burgerforum had aanbevolen te implementeren (Kabinetstandpunt advies Burgerforum Kiesstelsel, 2008). In paragraaf 3.5 wordt nagegaan waarom de regering had besloten het voorstel te verwerpen.

In hoofdstuk 4 wordt het concept groepsdynamiek (group dynamics) geïntroduceerd. Ik leg uit dat de term niet alleen wordt gebruikt om te verwijzen naar de sterke processen die individuen in een groep beïnvloeden. De term verwijst ook naar het vakgebied dat deze groepsprocessen onderzoekt (Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Forsyth, 1990; Remmerswaal, 2006). De ontwikkeling van groepsdynamiek is geïnspireerd door verschillende theoretischestromingen (Forsyth & Burnette,

2005; Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Remmerswaal, 2006). Enkele belangrijke theoretische oriëntaties en klassieke bijdragen die het werk over groepsdynamiek hebben beïnvloed worden beschreven.

Vervolgens wordt het gekozen raamwerk voor het bestuderen van het Burgerforum gepresenteerd. Na het Burgerforum te hebben geplaatst in het discours over deliberatieve democratie, is de politieke context van het Burgerforum een relevant onderzoeksgebied. In essentie is het meta-thema 'context' gekozen om te onderzoeken hoe de politieke omgeving van het Burgerforum het gedrag in het Burgerforum beïnvloedt kan hebben. Aangenomen wordt dat dit relevant is omdat groepen voortdurend beïnvloed zouden worden door hun omgeving (Lewin, 1951, Rice, 1969; Trist & Murray, 1990). Het Burgerforum was bovendien een grote heterogene groep. Daarom zijn de meta-thema's van diversiteit en grootte ook relevante studiegebieden. Het meta-thema 'diversiteit' werd geselecteerd omdat verschillende perspectieven in grote groepen groepsgedrag zouden beïnvloeden (e.g. Schrijver & Vansina, 1997). Het derde meta-thema 'grootte' is belangrijk omdat processen binnen groepen veranderen wanneer de grootte van de groep toeneemt (e.g. Shaw, 1976; Steiner, 1972). De theoretische perspectieven die worden gezien als het meest geschikt voor het analyseren van kritische dynamiek veroorzaakt door context, diversiteit en grootte, zijn het sociaal psychologisch perspectief, de psychodynamische benadering en het leiderschap perspectief³⁹⁵ (of meer specifiek, de theorie over het leiden van grote groepen).

Daarna wordt relevante theorie beschreven. Eerst presenteert ik sociaal psychologische theorie over sociale invloed en gedrag in middelgrote en grote groepen. Sociale invloed wordt verklaard door Napier en Gershenfeld (1993) als het proces waarbij een groep druk uitoefent op haar leden om zich aan de normen (gemeenschappelijke gedeelde gedragregels) te conformeren of waarbij een lid het gedrag van anderen manipuleert. Vervolgens wordt psychodynamische theorie over het emotionele klimaat in grote groepen gepresenteerd. Ten derde wordt de theorie over het werken met grote groepen onderzocht. Er is betoogd dat een 'grote groep' een complex fenomeen is en dat, als een gevolg daarvan, de dynamiek binnen grote groepen complexer is dan die in kleine groepen. Grote groepen kunnen nogal destructief zijn en regresseren als men niet voorzichtig is. Afweermechanismen kunnen gemakkelijk ontstaan, zowel op het niveau van de groep als bij individuele deelnemers. Echter, grote groepen bieden ook een enorm potentieel voor creativiteit, dialoog en ontwikkeling. Sterke emoties en de diversiteit in de grote groep zouden energie genereren voor leren, verandering en transformatie. Aangezien grote groepen een complexe dynamiek hebben, kan het werken met grote groepen moeilijk zijn. Om met deze complexiteit te kunnen omgaan, moet men allereerst de verschillende dynamieken kunnen herkennen. In plaats van het verminderen of het onderdrukken van deze dynamiek, moeten mensen die met grote groepen werken kunnen begrijpen of, en zo ja welke, interventies nodig zijn, aangezien interventies en interpretaties een grote invloed kunnen hebben op de groep. Om de opkomende dynamiek te begrijpen en te weten welke interventies nodig zijn, is

³⁹⁵ Theoretische inzichten in het leiden van grote groepen zijn afgeleid van sociale psychologie, psychodynamiek, systeemdenken en organisatieontwikkeling.

ervaring en psychologisch inzicht nodig (Agazarian & Carter, 1993; Bunker & Alban, 1992b, 1997; Foulkes, 1975; Gilmore & Barnett, 1992; Turquet, 1975 ; Weisbord & Janoff, 2000, 2007).

In hoofdstuk 5 wordt uitgelegd dat dit onderzoek wordt beschouwd als een interpretatief onderzoek, met een flexibel design. Het interpretatieve perspectief stelt dat er geen objectieve werkelijkheid is die onafhankelijk is van de sociale betekenis daaraan gegeven door de betrokkenen (Geertz, 1973). Gezien het doel van dit onderzoek wordt het interpretatieve onderzoek conceptueel gezien als de meest relevante benadering, aangezien interpretatief onderzoek is gericht op het begrijpen en interpreteren van de betekenis van gedrag in sociale situaties ('t Hart et al., 2003;. Swanborn, 1994). In navolging van de redenering van Robson (2002) heeft dit onderzoek een flexibel design³⁹⁶, waarbij zowel kwantitatieve als kwalitatieve methoden worden gebruikt voor het verzamelen van gegevens. Naast de etnografische traditie, zijn in dit onderzoeksproject invloeden te vinden van actieonderzoek en de psychodynamische traditie. Deze drie designtradities worden subjectieve processen genoemd. De veronderstelling in subjectieve processen is dat de subjectiviteit van de onderzoeker onvermijdelijk gegevens genereert over wat er gaande is in het systeem. Er wordt gesteld dat de subjectieve positie van kwalitatief, interpretatief onderzoek reden tot zorg kan zijn, bijvoorbeeld met betrekking tot de validiteit, generaliseerbaarheid en betrouwbaarheid (Robson, 2002). In hoofdstuk 5 heb ik geprobeerd om zo open mogelijk te zijn bij het presenteren van de stappen en keuzes in dit onderzoek en in hoofdstuk 7 ga ik zorgvuldig in op de mogelijke bias. Maar ik erken dat door mijn keuze van een interpretatieve positie, ik ongetwijfeld dit project (en de mensen die erbij betrokken zijn) op verschillende manieren heb beïnvloed.

Vervolgens worden de dataverzamelingsmethoden beschreven. In de negen maanden dat het Burgerforum actief was, heb ik gegevens verzameld als veldonderzoeker en actie-onderzoeker. Ik observeerde de weekendbijeenkomsten van het Burgerforum, sprak met de leden en deelde en besprak mijn observaties met de voorzitter en de andere stafleden. Naast mijn rol als onderzoeker, werd ik benoemd tot vertrouwenspersoon voor de leden van het Burgerforum. Leden die persoonlijke problemen hadden die hun werk voor het Burgerforum in de weg stonden, konden mij consulteren. De verzamelde gegevens uit deze consultaties werden anoniem gebruikt in dit onderzoek. Nadat het Burgerforum haar taak had beëindigd, werden diverse interviews afgenoem en focusgroepen samengesteld om aanvullende gegevens te verzamelen. Er werden interviews gehouden met de voorzitter, de staf van het projectsecretariaat, leden van het Burgerforum, ex-leden van het Burgerforum en externe partijen, betrokken bij het proces van het Burgerforum. Bovendien werden kwantitatieve gegevens verzameld door middel van een vragenlijst die direct na de laatste weekendbijeenkomst van het Burgerforum werd uitgestuurd.

³⁹⁶ Fixed design research is een alternatieve onderzoeksstrategie, waarbij het onderzoeksontwerp gestructureerd is, voorafgaand aan de periode van dataverzameling. Het betreft vrijwel altijd het verzamelen van kwantitatieve gegevens en het gebruik van statistische analyse (Robson, 2002).

Verder wordt het analyseproces gepresenteerd. Er wordt uitgelegd dat de eerste taak in dit proces was om een aantal concepten te identificeren die konden helpen begrijpen wat er gaande was in het Burgerforum. De eerste stap in het genereren van concepten was het zorgvuldig doorlezen van alle gegevens om daarmee volkomen vertrouwd te raken. Na deze leesfase werd de grote hoeveelheid gegevens gebruikt om een 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) te maken van het proces in chronologische volgorde. Het doel van deze beschrijving was te vergelijken en relateren wat er gebeurde in het Burgerforum op verschillende plaatsen en tijden om patronen en concepten te identificeren die lokale contexten overstegen (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2006). Als volgende stap werd deze beschrijving gekoppeld aan het theoretisch kader en, waar nodig, aan andere theorie om de gegevens te coderen. Ik gebruikte een verschillende code voor elk significant fenomeen of dynamiek. Daarna categoriseerde ik de dynamiek zoals gevonden in de drie meta-thema's - context, diversiteit en grootte. Om de betekenis van de aangetroffen dynamiek nader te onderzoeken, werden de drie meta-thema's, met hun onderliggende dynamieken, vervolgens bekeken, geanalyseerd en geïnterpreteerd vanuit de drie theoretische perspectieven zoals hierboven vermeld. De kwantitatieve gegevens uit de vragenlijst werden geanalyseerd met behulp van SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) nadat de kwalitatieve gegevens waren geganaliseerd en geïnterpreteerd.

Tenslotte worden de ethische aspecten van het onderzoek in dit hoofdstuk behandeld. Er wordt uitgelegd dat dit onderzoek is uitgevoerd onder voorwaarde van vertrouwelijkheid.

In hoofdstuk 6 worden de onderzoeksresultaten beschreven en besproken. Ik beschrijf dat de leden van het Burgerforum tevreden waren nadat zij hun taak hadden beëindigd. Het functioneren van de voorzitter en de staf, alsmede het groepsproces en het definitieve eindvoorstel, werden positief geëvalueerd door de meeste leden. De resultaten van de vragenlijst tonen dat het waargenomen resultaat van het Burgerforum (eindvoorstel en proces) sterk werd beïnvloed door de percepties van het groepsproces en van het functioneren van de staf. Dit lijkt te onderstrepen hoe belangrijk een goede facilitering en een goed groepsproces is voor het bereiken van een succesvol resultaat.

Op verschillende plaatsen in hoofdstuk 6 is betoogd dat de kritische dynamiek de taakeffectiviteit van het Burgerforum in de weg stond waardoor ook de creativiteit, het probleemoplossend denken, het kritisch denken en het leren in het Burgerforum afnam. Als zodanig zou het eindvoorstel van het Burgerforum minder vruchtbaar kunnen zijn dan het aanvankelijke potentieel van de groep suggereerde.

Aangevoerd werd dat de kritische dynamiek die in het Burgerforum ontstond, gecreëerd zou kunnen zijn door waargenomen bedreigingen. Het Burgerforum had verschillende redenen om vanaf het begin van het project spanningen te ervaren. Ten eerste, het project was een experiment en dus alle betrokkenen, inclusief de facilitators, hadden te maken met een onbekende situatie en wisten daardoor niet wat ze moesten verwachten. Ten tweede had het Burgerforum geen solide basis om vanuit te opereren omdat het ontbrak aan politieke steun en legitimiteit. Ten derde kan de (gegeven)

opdracht worden opgevat als technisch, abstract en complex. Bovendien waren de stafmedewerkers onervaren. Verder werden de grootte en de diversiteit gezien als bedreigend door verschillende leden.

De kritische dynamiek die ik heb geïdentificeerd met betrekking tot de context toonde dat gedrag in het Burgerforum werd beïnvloed door het onzekere politieke klimaat. Leden en stafmedewerkers voelden dat ze hun sociale identiteit en gevoel van eigenwaarde moesten beschermen tijdens het proces. Bij het omgaan met deze onzekere politieke context, vermeden de leden meestal de confrontatie met de werkelijkheid en in sommige periodes vochten ze er actief tegen. Ook droeg de staf van het Burgerforum bij aan het insluiten van het systeem. Het werkclimaat van het Burgerforum werd meer opgevat als collusief dan samenwerkend. De wens om de onderlinge verschillen te ontkennen en zich te conformeren aan de groep en haar normen hielp de leden en de staf om gevoelens van verbondenheid, eenheid, goedheid en heelheid te ervaren, nodig om de bedreigende buitenwereld het hoofd te bieden.

De kritische dynamiek die ik vond met betrekking tot diversiteit toonde dat het Burgerforum gemotiveerd was om diversiteit te verminderen om zo de complexiteit te verkleinen. Leden bleken zichzelf te categoriseren in subgroepen in een poging om de diversiteit te beperken. Maar zij bleken zichzelf niet volledig te identificeren met deze subgroepen, omdat de belangen van de subgroepen zelden in de grotere groep aan de orde kwamen en conflicten tussen subgroepen zelden voorkwamen. Bovendien bleek het werkclimaat van het Burgerforum tweeduidig te zijn.

De kritische dynamiek in relatie tot de grootte van de groep toonde aan dat emoties vaak hoog opliepen in het Burgerforum. Er wordt gesteld dat de complexiteit en de kritiek niet goed werden 'gecontaint' door de leden van het Burgerforum en de staf, wat resulteerde in sterke emoties, irrationele fantasieën en wantrouwen onder de oppervlakte. Het ontkennen van verschillen werd gezien als een bedreiging van de identiteiten van de leden en van de grenzen van hun 'zelf', wat zou kunnen leiden tot angst en daarmee het regresseren van de leden. De leden met een aanvullende rol hebben waarschijnlijk minder identiteitsproblemen gehad juist omdat ze die rol hadden, aangezien dit hen mogelijk in staat stelde om gemakkelijker een psychologische onafhankelijkheid te behouden dan andere leden en dit zou hen in staat hebben gesteld om meer invloed in de groep te krijgen.

Een andere conclusie waartoe ik kwam, was dat de stafmedewerkers voelden dat ze onder druk stonden bij het leiden van het Burgerforum. Deels had dit te maken met de turbulente politieke context maar ook was er de noodzaak om te gaan met de complexiteit als gevolg van de grootte en diversiteit van het Burgerforum. Op verschillende plaatsen in dit proefschrift zijn er voorbeelden van gevallen waarin de stafmedewerkers geen volledige controle hadden en misschien specifieke competenties misten die waardevol zouden zijn voor het werken met een grote groep. Dit wordt beschouwd als reden tot hogere onzekerheid in het Burgerforum, hetgeen mogelijkwijs bijdroeg aan nog meer complexiteit waarmee de staf moest omgaan.

In hoofdstuk 7 worden de resultaten van deze studie behandeld. Eerst worden de bevindingen samengevat en wordt de methodiek doorgenomen. Vervolgens worden de theoretische bijdragen gepresenteerd. Ik stel dat de belangrijkste bijdrage van dit onderzoek is dat het een diep en holistisch inzicht geeft in groepsdynamiek die ontstaat tijdens de actieve periode van een grote groep. Met name laat dit onderzoek zien hoe context de effectiviteit en het resultaat van de taak van de groep beïnvloedt. Bovendien wordt gesteld dat deze studie bijdraagt tot een beter begrip van de impact van diversiteit in grote groepen. Het illustreert de complexiteit en de moeilijkheden die leden en stafmedewerkers van het Burgerforum ervaarden tijdens het werken met diversiteit. Dit onderzoek biedt ook inzicht in het emotionele klimaat van een grote groep. Het laat zien dat eerder geïdentificeerde fenomenen in grote groepen, zoals contagion of affect (besmetting), one-ness (eenheid) en collusie, anti-groep verschijnselen, sterke emoties, identiteitsproblemen en defensief gedrag (zoals basis aanname gedrag), ook voorkomen in taak-georiënteerde grote groepen. Tot slot biedt dit onderzoek inzicht in de complexiteit van het werken met de dynamiek in een grote groep. Net als Huxham en Vangen (2000b, 2005), heeft dit onderzoek aangetoond dat de coördinatie en het samenwerkingsproces complex is en beladen met moeilijkheden en dilemma's. De bevindingen duiden erop dat Large Group Intervention (LGI) designprincipes (zoals het grotere systeem erbij betrekken, het werken in grote en kleine groepen, het werken met verschillende dynamiek en met verschillende werkvormen) ook relevant zijn bij het werken met grote groepen over een langere periode. Dit onderzoek toont aan dat het combineren van verschillende werkmethoden of -filosofieën zorgvuldig overwogen moeten worden als het gaat om grote groepen.

Met het oog op een beter begrip van de kritische dynamiek van het Burgerforum kunnen sommige conceptuele gebieden relevant zijn voor verder onderzoek. Er wordt gesteld dat het concept van groepsontwikkeling nuttig kan zijn voor het begrijpen hoe het Burgerforum tot ontwikkeling kwam, of juist niet, en hoe dientengevolge de productiviteit en effectiviteit van de groep werden beïnvloed. Ten tweede, kan de kwestie van het leiderschap van belang zijn voor nadere exploratie, om te begrijpen hoe leiderschap ontstond in het Burgerforum en om een dieper inzicht te verkrijgen in de dynamiek die ontstond tussen het Burgerforum, de staf en de externe partijen. Bovendien kan het concept van collectief leren in grote groepen relevant zijn om een beter inzicht te verkrijgen in het potentieel van het werk van grote groepen, zodat betere designs voor grote groepsprocessen ontwikkeld kunnen worden. Tenslotte kunnen de thema's context, diversiteit en grootte meer diepgaand worden onderzocht door een fixed design toe te passen, aangezien dit potentieel meer gefocuseerde inzichten oplevert. Een andere mogelijkheid is om een grounded theory aanpak toe te passen om daarmee meer theorie te ontwikkelen dan deze studie heeft opgeleverd.

De praktische bijdragen van dit onderzoek worden besproken aan het einde van dit hoofdstuk. De aanbevelingen voor het faciliteren van grote groepen, zoals burgerfora, worden daarna gepresenteerd.

In het nawoord wordt betoogd dat de impact van groepsdynamiek op het democratische kaliber van deliberatieve instrumenten onder de aandacht moeten worden gebracht van degenen die deze processen faciliteren. Bovendien wordt gesteld dat de democratische ontwikkeling aanzienlijk versterkt zou worden als het gemeenschappelijke belang gezamenlijk wordt opgesteld door alle belanghebbenden in een specifiek probleemgebied (inclusief burgers en politici), in plaats van door hen in machtige posities of een bevorrechte situatie, waardoor ze anderen kunnen beïnvloeden.

CV

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Appendices

Appendix 1 An outline of the British Columbian Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

The British Columbian (BC) Assembly consisted of 160 members; two members from each electoral district, plus two Aboriginal members, who were representatives of the province as a whole. Members were chosen in a random way to reflect the gender, age, and geographical make-up of British Columbia. The Assembly's task was to review the current system of voting and either change or not change the way in which the provincial political representatives were elected in BC (Lang, 2007a; Lang, 2007b; Ratner, 2004).

The origins of the experiment laid in a decade of electoral instability in BC. During the provincial elections of 1996, the BC Liberals gained a majority of votes but even though the Liberals received more votes than the New Democratic Party, the New Democratic Party ended up with more seats due to the electoral system. This was because the electoral system gives victory to the candidate who receives most votes in a district, irrespective of whether the total party vote achieves a majority. The discrepancy between votes and seats induced Gordon Campbell, leader of the Liberals, to pledge that, should his party form the next government, he would initiate a Citizens' Assembly to consider electoral reform. Indeed, when the Liberals won the elections in 2001. Premier Campbell followed through on his pledge and appointed Gordon Gibson, a former leader of the Liberal Party, to write a draft constitution on the proposed Citizens' Assembly. In January 2004, the BC Citizens' Assembly started its task (Lang, 2007a; Lang, 2007b; Ratner, 2004). The chair of the BC Assembly was nominated by the BC government and was confirmed by a special committee on the Citizens' Assembly. This committee also reviewed and confirmed all other key staff appointments. The staff consisted of nine staff members, including the chair (full-time) and two academic teachers on electoral systems (full time) (Lang, 2007a; Lang, 2007b; Ratner, 2004).

The process of the BC Assembly was divided into three phases; a learning phase, a consulting phase, and a decision-making phase. The BC Assembly had six weekend meetings in the learning phase, one weekend meeting in the consultation phase, and again six weekend meetings in the decision-making phase. In total, the BC Assembly thus had three more weekend meetings than the Dutch Assembly. The weekend meetings were also divided somewhat differently throughout the process than in the Dutch situation. Moreover, the BC Assembly organized fifty regional and local conferences, compared to fifteen in the Netherlands (Lang, 2007a; Lang, 2007b; Ratner, 2004; Ratner, 2005).

In contrast with the Dutch Assembly, the BC Assembly recommended a totally different electoral system than the one that was currently in use. The BC Assembly proposed a proportional system - the single transferable vote system, whereas BC's current system was not proportional. Under the proposed system, voters would use the ballot paper to rank the candidates in order of preference. Voters could rank as many or as few candidates as they wished. A weighting system during ballot-counting ensures that those candidates with the most preference votes are elected (Lang, 2007a; Lang, 2007b; Ratner, 2005).

The proposal by the Assembly was put as a referendum question on the ballot paper of the first provincial elections, held on the 17th May, 2005. If the referendum was passed, the recommended electoral system would be implemented after the next provincial elections of May 2009. Research showed that public awareness of the referendum was low; two-thirds of respondents knew little or nothing about the referendum (Lang, 2007a). Moreover, the proposal had to meet a double threshold. One of these was not quite met and, consequently, the proposal was rejected. However, given the high level of voter support for the proposal, and the failure to adequately educate the public about the referendum, BC's provincial government announced in September 2005 that it would hold another referendum on the Citizens' Assembly proposal (with the same approval threshold), scheduled for May 2009 (Lang, 2007a; Lang, 2007b; Ratner, 2005). On the 12th May 2009, the proposal was defeated with sixty-two percent of voters opposing the change (<http://participedia.net/cases/british-columbia-citizens-assembly-electoral-reform>; visited on the 1st of March, 2012).

More information about the project can be found on: <http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public>

Appendix 2 Participants in the expert meetings in the preparation phase

Table 25: Participants in the expert meeting on the 6th July 2005 (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006)

Name	Organization	Input
Dr J. Edelenbos	Erasmus University Rotterdam	Reviewed framework of the Citizens' Assembly
Mr T. van Dijk MA	Intomart Gfk	Gave viewpoints on selection method and members' representation of Dutch society
Ms H. Boussen MA	Ministry of Transport	Shared experiences from the Nouwen Committee
Mr J. Weijers	Derde Kamer ('Third Chamber'), part of the NCDO	Shared experiences from the Derde Kamer
Mr E. van Venetië MA	Berenschot Groep	Gave advice about how to approach politicians and media
Mr T. van der Wiel	XPIN, bureau for innovative policy making	Gave viewpoints about the instrument

Table 26: Participants at the expert meeting on the 9th March 2006 (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006)

Name
Professor E.F. ten Heuvelhof PhD LLM
Professor M. van Twist PhD
Professor R.A. Koole PhD
Mr H.B. Eenhoorn MA
Professor P. Dekker PhD
Professor J. de Vries PhD
Ms R. Bouhalhoul
Ms Y. Eijgensteijn

Appendix 3 Committee of Experts

Table 27: Members of the Committee of Experts (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006)

Name	Organization	Function
Professor R.B. Andeweg PhD	Leiden University	Professor of Empirical Political Science
Professor D.J. Elzinga PhD LLM	University of Groningen	Professor of Constitutional Law
Professor M.H. Leyenaar PhD	Radboud University Nijmegen	Professor of Comparative Political Sciences
Professor J.J.A. Thomassen PhD	University of Twente	Professor of Political Science
Dr T. Zwart	Utrecht University	Senior lecturer comparative constitutional and administrative law, comparative law, global law and human rights
Dr H. van der Kolk	University of Twente	University Lecturer Political Science
Professor H.R.B.M. Kummeling LLM	Utrecht University	Professor of Constitutional and Comparative Constitutional Law

Appendix 4 Research during and after the Assembly's process

Table 28: Research projects carried out during and after the Assembly's process (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006)

Researcher and/or organization	Brief description of research project
Dr H. van der Kolk, University of Twente in collaboration with the Université de Montreal	Study to examine the development of the Assembly members' standpoints regarding electoral systems and politics.
Hogeschool InHolland	Study carried out among citizens that were selected for the Assembly, but had not participated, to investigate the perception of citizenship and the reasons for not participating in the Assembly.
University of Amsterdam	Media analysis of the Assembly's political context.
Professor E.F. ten Heuvelhof and Professor M. van Twist, Erasmus University Rotterdam and Radboud University Nijmegen	Study to investigate the effects of the Assembly in the political administrative context.
M.S. de Jongh MA, University of Utrecht	PhD study to investigate the effect of group dynamics and facilitation in the Assembly.
Interview NSS	Study to investigate the degree to which the Dutch public was familiar with the Assembly.

Appendix 5 External parties that supported the secretariat

Table 29: External parties that supported the secretariat (Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006)

Organization	Activities
ARA Groep	Advertising, marketing, website
Concorde Group	Translation of David Farrell's study book
Drukkerij Moretus	Design and production of the final report and DVD
DST Experience Communicatie	Design of the learning module for the first training weekend and the digital learning program for the website, didactic consultancy
Eric Spaans and Gemma van der Ploeg (Future Search)	Consultation on the programs for weekend meetings 7 and 8
Het Portaal	Organization of the New Voters debate meeting in Rotterdam
HVR Groep	Press and PR-services
IPP	Organization of regional conferences during the consultation phase
Leo Dijkema (Synthetron)	Organization of the online discussions, held in June and October
Marcella Kuiper	Editor of the Assembly News
Mediageniek	Production of animation film
Maatschap voor Communicatie	Organization of the information meetings
NFGD Multimediadivisie	Video recordings of the weekend meetings
Organisatie-adviesbureau De Beuk	Organization of workshops for Assembly members
Pondres Direct Mail	Retrieval of personal details for the draw and letter of invitation from the Minister
RVD	Communication studies, pre-testing of campaign messages, collaboration with tendering
Troje Training & Theater	Cabaret and workshops during the information meetings and regional conferences
Wendy van Wilgenburg	Filmmaker of the documentary
Yolanda Eijgensteijn (Why Company)	Consultation on group process and the organization of sociocratic elections in weekend meeting 4

Appendix 6 Program weekend meeting 7

Table 30: Friday the 1st of September 2006 (Scenario weekend 7, own documents)

Time	Program	Work method
14.00 - 18.00	Check in Golden Tulip Bel Air	
18.00 - 19.30	Dinner in WFCC	
19.30 - 20.00	Opening	Plenary: chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome - Effects of the government fall - Introduction to new Minister Atzo Nicolaï - Explanation assignment 1 	
20.00 - 20.45	Where do we stand?	Individual
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motives for participation in the Assembly - Expectations for the coming period concerning teamwork within the Assembly - What are my expectations for the coming month concerning the project result? - Other thoughts, wishes, ideas? - Reactions on each others' contributions (plenary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Think about questions - Write or draw your contribution on the flipcharts - Read each others' contributions - Chair asks some members to share their contribution in the plenary
20.45 – 21.00	Program for September	Plenary: chair
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Assembly's task - What has the Assembly worked on during the past months? - The program for September – November - The program for September - The program for weekend 7 and weekend 8 - Explanation of work methods 	
21.00 – 21.15	Break	
21.15 – 22.15	What is an electoral system used for? (round 1 +2)	Round 1: 14 subgroups (30 min)
	The core functions of electoral systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chairs make inventory - Spokespersons write on flipcharts
		Round 2: 7 subgroups (30 min)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both spokespersons summarize contributions

		round 1
		- Chairs facilitate discussion
		- Spokespersons summarize contribution on 1 flipchart
22.15 – 22.45	What is an electoral system used for? (round 3)	Round 3: plenary
	The core functions of electoral systems	- Chair asks spokespersons to summarize contributions from round 2
22.45	Closure	Plenary: chair
22.45 -	Drinks in hotel Bel Air	Evaluation session with chair and the chairs

Saturday the 2nd of September 2006

Time	Program	Work method
06.30 – 8.45	Breakfast in Golden Tulip Bel Air	
Before 9.00	Check out	
9.00 – 9.15	Opening	Plenary: chair
		- Program of today - Explanation of work methods
9.15 – 9.45	Question round	Plenary: chair, lecturers 1 and 2
	All questions Assembly members have about electoral systems	
9.45 – 10.30	Conditions electoral system (round 1)	Round 1: 14 subgroups
	- What should an electoral system lead to? - What should an electoral system <i>not</i> lead to?	- Chairs facilitate discussion - Spokespersons write on flipchart
10.30 – 10.45	Break	
10.45 – 11.15	Conditions electoral systems (round 2)	Round 2: 7 subgroups
	- What should an electoral system lead to? - What should an electoral system <i>not</i> lead to?	- Both spokespersons summarize contributions round 1 - Chairs facilitate discussion

		- Spokespersons make a joint list of contributions
11.15 – 12.30	Conditions electoral systems (round 3)	Round 3: plenary
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What should an electoral system lead to? - What should an electoral system <i>not</i> lead to? - Chair asks spokespersons to present contributions from round 2 - Plenary joint list, chair facilitates
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch	
13.30 – 14.00	Analysis current electoral system	Plenary
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trends and developments in society - Reflection lecturer 1 and 2 - Plenary group makes mindmap, chair facilitates - Lecturer 1 and 2
14.00 – 14.20	Analysis current electoral system	14 subgroups
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengths current electoral system - Weaknesses current electoral system - Chairs make inventory - Spokespersons write on flipchart
14.20 – 15.30	Elements of the electoral system (round 1 + 2)	Round 1: 14 subgroups (40 min)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What should be removed from the current system? - What should be kept from the current system? - What should be added in the electoral system? - Chairs make inventory - Spokespersons write on flipchart
		Round 2: 7 subgroups (30 min)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both spokespersons summarize contributions round 1 - Chairs facilitate discussion - Spokespersons summarize contribution on single flipchart
15.30 – 15.45	Break	
15.45 – 16.30	Elements of the electoral system (round 3)	Round 3: plenary
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What should be removed from the current system? - What should be kept from the current system? - What should be added in the electoral - Chair asks spokespersons to present contributions from round 2. - Plenary joint list, chair

	system?	facilitates
16.30 – 17.00	Directions for the electoral system (round 1)	Round 1: subgroup free of choice
	- Observations; possible directions for the electoral system	- Spokespersons summarize observations on 1 flipchart
17.00 – 17.30	Directions for the electoral system (round 2)	Round 2: plenary
	- Observations; possible directions for the electoral system	- Chair asks spokespersons to present observations from round 1
	Closure	Plenary: Chair
	- General observations and results weekend meeting	
	- Preview weekend 8	
	- Activities in between weekend meeting 7 & 8	

Appendix 7 Code of conduct for the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

This code of conduct serves as the underlying principles for the Civic Forum's working methods. They have been drawn up by the members of the Civic Forum. Everyone can be called to account with respect to compliance with this code of conduct. The Civic Forum can decide to add or change these ground rules at any required time.

Principle: We treat each other in the manner we wish to be treated in ourselves!

Code of conduct

- Everyone will endeavor to arrive at an appropriate final result
- Everyone is appreciated for their contributions
- We are open to each other's arguments
- We give each other positive feedback
- We discuss differences in insights on the basis of objective arguments
- We keep our verbal contributions brief and to the point
- We deal with each other in an informal manner
- We form one group in public debates

Rules

- Smoking is not permitted at meetings and conferences. Smoking is permitted solely in the designated areas
- Mobile telephones are switched off; in the event of extremely urgent reasons for members to remain accessible they shall be switched to the vibration mode
- We are present at the agreed time

(Process Report of the Electoral System Civic Forum, 2006)

Appendix 8 Questionnaire and covering letter

Dear x,

You've made it; after an intensive period of working together, the Assembly has finished its task after this weekend meeting! A good moment to reflect on the period that has passed. What have we done? Which results have been achieved? And, what have we learnt? Myself, I have learnt an awful lot during this period. Mostly from you, and therefore I wish to thank you very much. I found it very special to be part of such a unique initiative and to gain new insights as a researcher in this project.

My task is not finished after this final weekend meeting – fortunately. In the coming three months I will write an evaluation report for the secretariat that deals with the group process and the facilitation of the Assembly. How do 140 people collaborate in a Citizens' Assembly? And how can this be facilitated?

This evaluation report will be used as material for my PhD thesis, on which I continue working in February. However, a much more important argument for writing an evaluation report is to secure all our 'lessons learnt' from the last months. To sharpen and deepen these insights, I really need your help!

I would therefore really appreciate it if you would complete the questionnaire that is attached. I realize that I ask quite a lot of you; it will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to fill out. Nevertheless, I hope you'll make that time available for me.

There is one thing that is important to tell you; I will process all your inputs in the questionnaire anonymously. That is, in the evaluation report, there will be no participants recognizable in person. In the coming period, I will contact some people personally in order to deepen my understanding of some questions that I still have. If you have problems with that, you can note it on the questionnaire.

In the questionnaire, I am interested in the opinion of each individual Assembly member. So, tick the answer in the questionnaire that you would apply to yourself. Many questions also have the answer option of 'neutral'. Basically this means: I don't disagree, but I don't agree either. Please use this answer option only when you really don't have an opinion on the question. Please can you return the questionnaire before the 27th November in the enclosed envelope, you don't need to add a stamp.

Naturally, I will help if you have questions. My mobile number is 06 26250674 and you can contact me by email on manon@mvc.nl. If you have doubts about something, please don't hesitate to contact me.

When I have received all the questionnaire responses, I'll send you a brief summary of the results. The evaluation report will of course also be sent to you, but that will be in the spring of 2007.

Thanks a lot in advance for filling out the questionnaires. I am really curious to your read your feedback. And, hopefully, we'll speak to each other soon because I am missing you.

Kind regards,

Manon

Questionnaire for Assembly members

Research on the group process and facilitation of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

Questions related to the:

- Chair
- Project secretariat
- Confidant and researcher
- Group process
- The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform
- Personal situation

Chair

[vz1] The chair was open to contact during the weekend meetings³⁹⁷

[vz2] The chair was open to contact outside the weekend meetings

[vz3] The chair was not willing to answer my questions

[vz4] The chair answered my questions carefully

[vz5] The chair was sufficiently engaged with the Assembly members

[vz6] The chair was open to criticism and comment on her role

[vz7] The chair was not open to criticism and comment on the process

[vz8] The chair paid insufficient attention to me

[vz9] The chair was a good facilitator

[vz10] The chair had enough knowledge about the content to fulfill her role well

[vz11] The chair was sufficiently flexible to change the program when developments during the process required it

[vz12] The char was mostly focused on realizing the task

[vz13] The chair facilitated sufficient interaction during the plenary sessions at the weekend meetings

[vz14] The chair was sufficiently neutral during the discussions

[vz15] The chair was independent of the project secretariat

[vz16] Due to the chair I felt safe in the group

[vz17] The chair did not ensure a good atmosphere during the discussions

[vz18] The chair was not focused on relations

[vz19] The chair was decisive

[vz20] The chair stimulated me to stay motivated during the project

[vz21] I did not have any trust in the chair

[vz22] The chair has led the group well

[vz23] The chair has facilitated the group well

³⁹⁷ Where other options are not given, the answer possibilities are: strongly agree – agree – neutral – disagree – disagree strongly.

- [vz24] The chair collaborated well with the project secretariat
- [vz25] The chair collaborated well with the confidant (Manon), when necessary
- [vz26] The chair was a good ambassador for the Assembly to the outside world
- [vz27] I have collaborated pleasantly with the chair during this project
- [vz28] I am dissatisfied with the functioning of the chair

Project secretariat

'Project secretariat' refers to those representatives of the secretariat that were present during the Assembly's weekend meetings

- [prb1] The members of the project secretariat were open to contact during the weekend meetings
- [prb2] The members of the project secretariat were insufficiently open to contact outside the weekend meetings
- [prb3] The role of the student assistants was unclear
- [prb4] The project secretariat has supported the process well
- [prb5] During unexpected developments the project secretariat reacted flexibly
- [prb6] The project secretariat was willing to answer my questions
- [prb7] The project secretariat answered my questions carefully
- [prb8] The project secretariat was engaged with the Assembly members
- [prb9] The project secretariat was not open for criticism and comment
- [prb10] The project secretariat provided sufficient information about the thread of the process
- [prb11] The project secretariat did not have an opinion about the various electoral systems
- [prb12] I have collaborated pleasantly with the project secretariat during this project
- [prb13] I am satisfied with the functioning of the project secretariat
- [prb14] The members of the project secretariat had insufficient expertise to fulfill the needs of this project well

Confidant and researcher

Confidant

- [v1] I find it important that a confidant is available during these kinds of projects
- [v2] There should have been more confidants appointed during this project
- [v3] Did you know that Manon was the confidant during this project? Yes-no

Researcher

- [v4] Did you know that Manon also studied the group process during this project? Yes-no
- [v5] I find it important that the group process is studied during these kinds of projects
- [v6] Did you know that Manon studied the chair's facilitation? Yes-no

[v7] Did you know that Manon discussed relevant signals from the group with the chair?	Yes-no
[v8] Did you know that Manon studied the project secretariat's facilitation?	Yes-no
[v9] Did you know that Manon discussed relevant signals from the group with the project secretariat?	Yes-no
[v10] I find it important that the facilitation is studied during these kinds of projects	
[v11] The research activities of Manon distracted me from performing my tasks as an Assembly member	

Questions below deal with Manon's tasks as both researcher and confidant

[v12] Manon was insufficiently open to contact during the weekend meetings

[v13] Manon was open to contact outside the weekend meetings

[v14] Manon was engaged with the Assembly members

[v15] Manon was not open for criticism and comment on her role

[v16] Manon paid insufficient attention to me

[v17] Manon was easily accessible

[v18] Manon had a neutral role

[v19] Manon's activities have not supported the process

I have spoken at least once with Manon about: (you can give more than one answer)

- [v20] the Assembly's process
- [v21] the facilitation of the chair
- [v22] the facilitation of the project secretariat
- [v23] the group
- [v24] myself
- [v25] other Assembly members
- [v26] something else
- [v27] No, I have never spoken with her

Respond to the questions below only if you have spoken with Manon at least once

[v28] Manon was willing to answer my questions

[v29] Manon has answered my questions carefully

[v30] Manon did not listen carefully to me

[v31] Manon has been very helpful to me well

Group process

[gr1] I supported the code of conduct

[gr2] The code of conduct was not lived up to by Assembly members

[gr3] I found it pleasant to work in the plenary sessions during the weekend meetings

[gr4] I found it unpleasant to work in subgroups of 20 people during the weekend meetings

- [gr5] I found it pleasant to work in subgroups of 10 people during the weekend meetings
- [gr6] I found it unpleasant that the composition of the subgroups was changed every weekend meeting
- [gr7] I have collaborated with other Assembly members outside the weekend meetings Yes-no
- [gr8] I had a sufficient number of friends in the Assembly
- [gr9] I felt home in the Assembly
- [gr10] I felt unsafe in the Assembly
- [gr11] With how many Assembly members have you spoken at least once during the informal moments? With around ...% of the members
- [gr12] During the weekend meetings' informal moments I spoke with other members about electoral systems
- [gr13] I typify myself as a 'group person'
- [gr14] I 'belonged' to a certain group during this project
- [gr15] If yes to [gr 14], the people in that group agreed with my ideas concerning electoral systems
- [gr16] Outside the weekend meetings, I had informal contacts with other Assembly members Yes-no
- [gr17] I expect to stay in contact with other Assembly members after the Assembly's period of operation Yes-no
- [gr18] The chairs had a lot of contact together in the Assembly
- [gr19] The spokespersons did not have a lot of contact together in the Assembly
- [gr20] There were many more conflicts in the Assembly than I had expected beforehand
- [gr21] The Assembly did not function as a team
- [gr22] I am proud of the Assembly
- [gr23] My opinion about electoral systems has changed due to discussion with other Assembly members
- [gr24] I often felt pressed by other Assembly members
- [gr25] I have represented my own opinion about electoral systems consistently
- [gr26] Other Assembly members have represented their own opinions about electoral systems consistently
- [gr27] I have always supported the opinion of the majority
- [gr28] Other Assembly members have always supported the opinion of the majority
- [gr29] Our final proposal reflects the opinion of the Assembly members well
- [gr30] I was insufficiently able to bring in my own ideas
- [gr31] I felt important during the Assembly's start
- [gr32] I felt important around the Assembly's ending
- [gr33] The payment of €400 per weekend meeting was not an important reason for me to participate
- [gr34] The payment of €400 per weekend meeting was an important reason for me not to stop during the project
- [gr35] The payment of €400 per weekend meeting was an important reason for others to participate
- [gr36] I have designed an electoral system Yes-no

- [gr37] I have participated in a workgroup, such as the media workgroup, strategy workgroup or internet workgroup Yes-no
- [gr38] I did not feel like going to the weekend meetings
- [gr39] I could have continued working in the Assembly
- [gr40] I have not learnt anything personal in the Assembly
- [gr41] The Assembly has yielded all it could
- [gr42] It is impossible to work meaningfully with 140 people
- [gr43] My motivation dropped during this project

If your motivation dropped, were the events mentioned below of influence? (you can give more than one answer)

- [gr44] commitment of Minister Pechtold
- [gr45] design of weekend 4 (sociocratic method)
- [gr46] feedback of the parliamentarians during weekend 6
- [gr47] summer break
- [gr48] the fall of the government
- [gr49] the drop out of one or more Assembly members
- [gr50] commitment of Minister Nicolai
- [gr51] the length of the project
- [gr52] too difficult task/content
- [gr53] the design of the weekend meetings
- [gr54] the role of the project secretariat during the weekend meetings
- [gr55] conflicts with other Assembly members
- [gr56] the atmosphere in the group
- [gr57] private problems/stress etc.
- [gr58] other, namely...

The Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

- [b1] I agree with the final proposal
- [b2] I am dissatisfied with the final proposal
- [b3] My task as an Assembly member was sufficiently clear
- [b4] My input was of value to the Assembly
- [b5] I would participate again in a new Assembly
- [b6] I have experienced it as being valuable to work with a representation of society
- [b7] I have insufficient insight into the complexity of our electoral system
- [b8] I felt this topic [electoral system] suitable for a citizen assembly
- [b9] The Assembly's period of operation (March-November) was too short to complete the task
- [b10] The chairs were generally not suitable for their role
- [b11] The spokespersons were generally suitable for their role
- [b12] By attending the external workshop(s) I was able to function better in the Assembly (respond only if you have attended a workshop facilitated by the external training agency)
- [b13] I am dissatisfied with the way our final proposal has developed
- [b14] I believe that the Assembly (and not the project secretariat) should have written the concept text of the final proposal

[b15] I believe that the project secretariat has articulated our final proposal well in the final text

[b16] I felt overpaid by the €400 per weekend meeting

[b17] The media has not paid enough attention to the Assembly

[b18] I have spoken with the media

[b19] I am satisfied with the information that was available on the intranet site

[b20] I found it pleasant to discuss with other Assembly members on the intranet system

[b21] When reflecting on the way the Assembly has functioned, I evaluate the Assembly's process with the following mark

(scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the worst and 10 the best): 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10

[b22] Outside the weekend meetings, I spent on average around ... hours (estimation) per week on the Assembly

[b23] How often have you visited the intranet site?

- Daily
- Several times a week
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Never

If I could organize the Assembly's process once again, I would keep the following areas as they were:

If I could organize the Assembly's process once again, I would improve/change the following areas:

Other feedback:

Personal situation

[ps1] My gender is: man-woman

[ps2] My civil status is: single -cohabiting-married- divorced- widow/widower

[ps3] I have/do not have children

[ps4] My age is:... years old

[ps5] I am:

- Wage laborer
- Entrepreneur
- Student
- Houseman/housewife
- Unemployed
- Pensioner or in the VUT (an early retirement scheme)

[ps6] My highest finished education is:

- Primary school
- VMBO
- Havo
- VWO
- MBO
- Bachelor Degree
- Master Degree
- Other, namely...

[ps7] I attended.... weekend meetings (if you only were present for one day in a weekend meeting, please count that weekend as 'half present', so for example 9.5 weekend meetings is possible).

[ps8] I do/do not have objections if Manon contacts me for further research, my name is.....

Appendix 9 Overview of interviewed staff members

Table 31: Interviewed staff in round 1

Sections in secretariat	Interviewed staff	Absent in interview round
Secretary	Secretary	
Communication staff	Consultant, News editor	Coordinator, due to sickness
Project Coordinators	Coordinator, Deputy coordinator	
Policy staff	Senior, Mid-level, Junior	Trainee, was no longer employed in November 2006
Administrative assistants	Project secretary, secretariat assistant	
Student assistants	Not included	
Confidant	Not included	

Table 32: Interviewed staff in round 2

Sections in secretariat	Interviewed staff	Absent in interview round
Secretary	Secretary	
Communication staff	Consultant & News editor (jointly) Coordinator (rounds 1 & 2)	
Project Coordinators	Coordinator & Deputy coordinator (duo)	
Policy staff	Senior & Medior (duo)Mid-level (together)	Junior, also worked as student assistant. Her input is included in round 1 and in two focus groups ³⁹⁸ .
Administrative assistants	Not included	
Student assistants	Not included	
Confidant	Not included	

³⁹⁸ See Appendix 11 for composition of focus groups

Appendix 10 Overview of interviewed external parties

Table 33: Overview of external parties that were interviewed

External party ³⁹⁹	Role	Date and location of interview
Lecturer 1	Lecturer of the Assembly	30-1-2007, Lecturer's office
Lecturer 2	Lecturer of the Assembly, researcher	25-01-2007, Café
External consultant	Consultant for the online discussion ⁴⁰⁰	3-1-2007, Café
External consultants (2)	Organizational consultants that supported in designing weekend meetings 7 & 8	15-2-2007, Restaurant
External consultant	Consultant that gave advice on group process and designed and facilitated sociocratic ⁴⁰¹ elections in weekend 4	15-2-2007, Telephone
External consultant	Filmmaker of the documentary	23-12-2006, External consultant's office

³⁹⁹ Findings from the interviews were confidentially used in Chapter 6

⁴⁰⁰ See Section 3.4.4 for a description of the online discussion

⁴⁰¹ See Section 3.4.4 for a description of the sociocratic elections

Appendix 11 Composition of focus groups

Table 34: Composition of focus group with staff members

Focus group staff members , held on 27 November 2006	
Selected	All staff members of the secretariat, excluding the student assistants
Present	10 staff members
Absent	Communication coordinator

Table 35: Composition of focus group 1 with Assembly members

Focus group 1 Assembly members , held on 12 December 2006	
Selected	31 core Assembly members ⁴⁰²
Present	20 Assembly members, including 1 that wasn't invited
Absent	11 Assembly members, of which 7 notified their absence

Table 36: Composition of focus group student assistant

Focus group student assistants , held on 14 December 2006	
Selected	All student assistants
Present	6 student assistants
Absent	1 student assistant, who reported absence through other student assistant

Table 37: Composition of focus group 2 with Assembly members

Focus group 2 Assembly members , held on 20 December 2006	
Selected	46 Assembly members that I spoke least with during the Assembly's process, plus 3 members that were absent from focus group 1 and asked to participate
Present	13 Assembly members including those absent from focus group 1
Absent	36 Assembly members, of which 18 notified their absence

⁴⁰² See Section 5.3.2.3 for selection of core Assembly members

Appendix 12 Themes discussed during the consultations with confidant

Table 38: Themes discussed during the consultations

Weekend meeting	Themes discussed ⁴⁰³
Weekend meeting 1	Insecurity about being in a large/new group, what is my role, what should I do when I do not agree with others, I feel disturbed by a group member who talks all the time/the members that are slow, I feel anxious in the large group, I only feel like contacting people that show similarities with myself, I have not slept because of all my impressions from all these people, I do not dare to talk to the chair, I feel disturbed by the chair in the workshop round, how should I communicate with my partner, whom can I talk to when I feel uncomfortable, my wife has died, I feel ashamed because of my handicap, I am afraid of the media.
Weekend meeting 2	Feeling overruled in the workshop sessions, I feel disturbed by a group member, I try to discuss the way we work together but it does not help, what is our role, I do not understand the task, how are we doing, I feel sick, I am confused.
Weekend meeting 3	I feel insecure about something I said in the plenary, I am almost burnt out, my role in the group/personal development, I wish to reflect upon a conversation I had with the chair in workshop session.
Weekend meeting 4	My partner and I have just decided to divorce, I am in love with you, I am stressed, my ex-wife cannot take care of my child and I have contacted the authorities, we have fallen in love with each other and do not know what to do, my partner has depression, I have not eaten during this weekend meeting, I feel very bad about the weekend meeting, I feel we have wasted our time this weekend meeting.
Weekend meeting 5	I feel sick, I am confused about my role as an Assembly member, I feel lonely in the large group, what is my responsibility for other group members, the group that supports the email sender is larger than you know, I am worried about the split in our group (those who are critical and those who are positive), I feel influenced negatively by the criticism of many people, one of the group members is going to leave the group.
Weekend meeting 6	Worries about the situation with the email sender, I believe the staff has too much power, I have not slept due to the session with the politicians, debriefing of the session with the politicians, I believe the staff cheats us, I am afraid that many group members will leave the Assembly after the summer break, I cannot work together with my co-chair in the workshop session, we have had a fire at my workplace, I wish to share why I did not come to last weekend meeting, why does the chair have such a different attitude in the plenary, I feel psychologically bad, I do not feel ready to go home, I believe there should be more confidants available (you do not always have time when I need a consultation).
Weekend meeting 7	I have pain, I feel stressed and I am pregnant, I feel lonely in the large group, I feel bad that the chair has judged the email sender, I believe that the chair should show

⁴⁰³ Some themes were discussed by more than one member. This is not reflected in this table. The total number of consultations held per weekend meeting can be found in Table 11.

more interest in us/she is not sufficiently aware concerning discussions in the workshop groups, I feel the chair dislikes me, I feel demotivated, I believe people are doing this for the money, is there a financial problem in the project, are we an experiment, I miss the function of the email sender, has the staff involved an external consultant because they cannot overview the project anymore?

Weekend meeting 8	I cannot keep up anymore, I do not feel motivated anymore, I feel the atmosphere in the group is unpleasant/unsafe/terrible, I feel pressed by the group and am afraid that this causes consequences after the project, I have had an experience last week which could have killed me, people gossip about me, I feel sick, I feel the chair does not hear me when I share things with her.
Weekend meeting 9	I cannot keep up anymore, I do not feel motivated anymore, I feel bad in the group, we want to go home now, I feel personally attacked by the external consultant, I go home, I would like to talk to you because I like you, I do not feel good, I have voted wrongly which means that our decision is plausible
Weekend meeting 10	Themes were not registered due to lack of time.

Appendix 13 Results from flipcharts weekend 7

Table 39: Motives for participating in the Assembly

Comments ⁴⁰⁴	Number of contributions	% of the contributions ⁴⁰⁵
Duty as a citizen, chance to do something meaningful, important for democracy	61	46
Personal development, interested in group process	34	25
Interest in subject of electoral systems	31	23
Other	8	6
Total	134	100

Table 40: Expectations for the coming period concerning teamwork within the Assembly

Comments	Number of contributions	% of the contributions
Well considered, unequivocal advice that is accepted by all members	22	17
Positivity, enthusiasm	19	14
Respect for and listen to each other, compromises	17	13
Difficult decision-making process, tension, large pressure, difficult to come to one common advice	15	11
Good teamwork	12	9
Together, with everybody's efforts	9	7
Discussion, deepening, deliberation	8	6
Cozy, supportive	8	6
Too many compromises, inconsistent advice,	8	6
Unsatisfactory understanding of each other's perspectives		
Other	8	6
No individual interests or coalitions	6	5

⁴⁰⁴ Similar comments are clustered. Comments that appeared less than four times are placed into the category 'other'.

⁴⁰⁵ Total number of respondents was 135. Respondents were allowed to contribute more than once.

Total	132	100
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Table 41: Expectations concerning the Assembly's result

Comments	Number of contributions	% of the contributions
Supported, converged, a compromise	22	22
Good result	15	15
Advice is taken seriously and is debated in political arenas and society	14	14
Other	14	14
Conservative advice	8	8
Clear, understandable, workable advice	7	7
Advice will be adopted	7	7
No unequivocal advice	4	4
Result consists of several variants	4	4
No political support	4	4
Total	99	99

Table 42: Other thoughts, wishes, and ideas

Comments	Number of contributions	% of the contributions
Organize a party at the end of the final weekend meeting	30	30
Other	24	24
Be open to each other's ideas, for success we have to do our best	12	12
There should be another citizens' assembly organized in the future	9	9
What a special group experience	6	6
Various comments about electoral systems	5	5
We are working towards unity	5	5
We create politically feasible and realistic advice, a contribution to society	5	5

Referendum after presenting our advice	4	4
Total	100	100

Appendix 14 Results flipcharts debriefing assignment weekend 10

Table 43: Positive experiences⁴⁰⁶

This was an amazing experience. We would love to participate in the next citizen assembly

Working in groups has improved/developed our skills

Personal development for many participants

An increased political understanding among some of the participants

The group has stayed together, with so many different people

Respect for each other, despite large individual differences

Opinions have changed because of the process

The Assembly has come up with unequivocal advice, even though we hadn't expect that

Assembly members have had different roles (task-focused, social etc.)

Learning phase was good

Support of a secretary

Manon complemented the secretary well

The citizen assembly instrument has decreased the gap between citizens and politics

Table 44: Negative experiences

More preparation time for the staff would have resulted in a clearer process design and a better thread

More time for the decision-making phase, more effective design of the deliberation phase

More focus earlier in the process, then deepening afterwards.

Involve participants in designing process (during the process)

Feedback of experts earlier in the process

Chair wasn't always part of the group, possibly because of her neutral role. A chair should formally be part of the group.

More clarity/better communication about task and role division between Assembly members, chair, and secretary

Training/preparation for chairs on how to deal with their double role (facilitation of the process and share their own perspectives on content)

No summer holiday break

⁴⁰⁶ The tables below represent an overview of the comments that are mentioned in the different subgroups. The tables do not represent the frequency of each comment, but illustrate the variety of comments made.

Regional conferences haven't provided other perspectives than those that already were represented by Assembly members themselves. Moreover, the conferences were not well attended.

Due to information overload it was difficult to gain a clear overview

Work in smaller subgroups

More clarity about how much time the project costs

Learning phase / training should have been more concentrated on that what really mattered

140 people in a group is the maximum workable number

No sociocratic elections

No use of online discussion tool

Work pace during the weekend meetings varied too much

Better functioning and more user-friendly intranet system

More media coverage

Appendix 15 Quantitative results from evaluation forms weekend 1

Total response: 53 members

Table 45: Response evaluation form weekend 1

Question	Response
How do you evaluate the picture that was taken? (it's allowed to give more than 1 answer)	30 nice, 14 useful, 12 all right, 0 annoying, 2 other
How do you evaluate the installation in the Parliament? (it's allowed to give more than 1 answer)	33 nice, 21 useful, 5 all right, 0 annoying, 6 other
How do you evaluate the hotel room?	46 good, 3 sufficient, 0 bad
How do you evaluate the get-together/drinks?	37 good, 8 sufficient, 0 bad
How do you evaluate the dinner (food, service, room)?	37 good, 11 sufficient, 0 bad
How do you evaluate the service on Saturday (food and beverage during the breaks, lunch)?	34 good, 16 sufficient, 0 bad
How do you evaluate the discussion about the regulations? (it's allowed to give more than 1 answer)	7 nice, 37 useful, 8 all right, 0 annoying, 8 other
How do you evaluate the content of the first training day? (it is allowed to give more than 1 answer)?	0 too difficult, 34 easy to keep up, 13 too easy, 1 too much for 1 day, 13 sufficient for 1 day, 18 too little for 1 day, 33 clear, 0 unclear
How do you evaluate the explanation of the lecturers?	47 clear, 0 unclear
Have you had enough opportunities to ask your questions?	44 yes enough, 4 yes too much, 0 no too little
How do you evaluate the subgroup session?	41 good, 6 not good
Did you know who the members of the staff were during the weekend?	43 yes, 6 no
Did you feel you could call on the staff?	46 yes, 0 no, 3 other

Appendix 16 Quantitative results from evaluations form weekend 2

Total response: 76 members

Table 46: Response evaluation form weekend 2

Question	Response
How do you evaluate the facilities in the hotel (room, breakfast, get together/drinks?)	71 good, 5 sufficient
How do you evaluate the facilities in the conference center (dinner, lunch, food and beverage during the breaks)?	71 good, 3 sufficient, 2 bad
How do you evaluate the content of the lecture of Friday night? (it's allowed to give more than 1 answer)	1 too difficult, 49 good, 3 too easy, 47 clear, 0 unclear, 37 useful, 44 interesting, 0 uninteresting
How do you evaluate the explanation and presentation of lecturer x?	72 clear, 0 unclear, 3 other; namely too scholastic
Have you had enough opportunities to ask your questions on Friday night?	65 yes enough, 3 yes too much, 0 no too less
How do you evaluate the content of the plenary program on Saturday? (it's allowed to give more than 1 answer)	1 too difficult, 58 good, 3 too easy, 5 too much, 27 exactly enough, 5 too little, 48 clear, 0 unclear, 38 useful, 0 uninteresting, 59 interesting.
How do you evaluate the explanation and presentation of lecturer x?	73 clear, 0 unclear, 1 other
Have you had enough opportunities to ask your questions on Saturday?	67 yes enough, 2 yes too much, 0 no too little
How do you evaluate the subgroup session?	63 good, 6 not good
Do the hand outs help you to understand the material?	72 yes, 1 no
Have you used the knowledge site that can be reached via the intranet system since weekend 1?	21 yes, 33 no, 21 I didn't know that the site existed
Did you know who the members of the staff were during the weekend?	69 yes, 2 no
Did you feel you could call on the staff?	69 yes, 0 no
How do you evaluate the way the chair fulfills her role?	50 good, 1 not good

Appendix 17 Quantitative results from evaluation forms weekend 3

Total response: 75 members

Table 47: Response evaluation form weekend 3

Question	Response
How do you evaluate the hotel room?	39 good, 35 sufficient, 1 bad
How do you evaluate the dinner (food, service, room)?	60 good, 11 sufficient, 4 bad
How do you evaluate the get together/drinks?	61 good, 12 sufficient, 2 bad
How do you evaluate the breakfast?	67 good, 7 sufficient, 1 bad
How do you evaluate the food and beverage during the breaks?	61 good, 14 sufficient, 0 bad
How do you evaluate the theme of the weekend meeting (consequences of electoral systems – in general and in the Netherlands)?	70 good, 5 not good
Is there anything that has been discussed during the training, which you don't understand that well?	69 no, 6 yes
Do you evaluate lecturer x's presentation as being a good introduction to the weekend program?	68 yes, 7 no
How do you evaluate the task of Friday night's subgroup session?	37 good, 29 not good, 9 other
How do you evaluate the way the tasks were divided in the subgroup session?	48 good, 19 not good, 8 other
How do you evaluate the collaboration in your subgroup on Friday night?	55 good, 13 not good, 7 other
How do you evaluate the content of lecturer x's presentation?	73 good, 1 not good, 1 other
How do you evaluate the task of Saturday morning's subgroup session?	74 good, 1 other
How do you evaluate the way your subgroup's chair functioned?	65 good, 3 not good, 7 other
How do you evaluate the collaboration in your subgroup on Saturday?	73 good, 0 not good, 2 other
How do you evaluate the session on the media and consultation phase?	61 good, 4 not good, 10 other
How do you evaluate the afternoon session (consequences of electoral systems)?	69 good, 0 not good, 6 other
Do you evaluate the way we discuss together as being pleasant?	73 yes, 2 no

Appendix 18 Quantitative results from evaluation form weekend 4

Total response: 101 members

Table 48: Response evaluation form weekend 4

Question	Response
How do you evaluate the presentation of the external consultant ⁴⁰⁷ on Friday night?	55 good, 13 not good, 33 other
How do you evaluate the sociocratic method?	31 good as the minority also can be heard, 35 all right to get introduced to but don't use it again, 9 useless, 23 other
How do you evaluate the external facilitator of your subgroup session?	27 good, 57 not good, 12 other
Do you evaluate the information about the regional debate meetings as being sufficient?	64 yes, 18 no, 14 other
How do you evaluate the way the statements for the regional debate meetings have been designed?	69 good, 14 not good , 18 other
Do you feel like attending one of the regional debate meetings?	83 yes, 0 no, 8 other
Do you feel sufficiently supported by the staff in the initiatives you take to promote the regional debate meetings?	53 yes, 2 no, 28 other
Do you use Farrell's book?	62 no, 29 yes
How do you evaluate Farrell's book?	48 good, 1 not good, 31 other
Did you find the additional question time useful?	50 yes, 15 no, 26 other
How do you evaluate the hotel room?	57 good, 28 sufficient, 1 bad
How do you evaluate the dinner (food, service, room)?	78 good, 10 sufficient, 1 bad
How do you evaluate it that the get-together/drinks was extended by one hour?	63 good, 7 sufficient, 2 bad
How do you evaluate the breakfast?	83 good, 3 sufficient, 2 bad
How do you evaluate the picnic lunch?	77 good, 15 sufficient, 2 bad
How do you evaluate the food and beverage during the breaks?	76 good, 12 sufficient, 0 bad
How do you evaluate the intensity of the weekend meetings up until now?	50 good, 1 too busy, 1 too relaxed, 32 varying, 6 other
How do you evaluate the way the Assembly functions as a group?	61 good, 3 not good, 27 other

⁴⁰⁷ The name of this consultant is not given for privacy reasons.

How do you evaluate your own role within the group process?	63 good, 6 not good, 24 other
How do you evaluate your own contribution concerning content?	65 good, 1 not good, 17 other
How do you evaluate the way the chair fulfills her role?	82 good, 2 not good, 9 other
How do you evaluate the way the staff is functioning?	84 good, 0 not good, 6 other

Appendix 19 Quantitative results from evaluation forms weekend 5

Total response: 72 members

Table 49: Response evaluation form weekend 5

Question	Response
Is it clear to you where we should stand before the summer?	2 very unclear, 4 unclear, 15 neutral, 40 clear, 6 very clear
Is it clear to you how the process to come will continue?	2 very unclear, 6 unclear, 18 neutral, 42 clear, 2 very clear
Have you already attended a regional debate meeting?	56 yes, 11 no
Do you feel prepared for the regional debate meetings?	0 prepared badly, 4 prepared insufficiently, 11 neutral, 40 prepared sufficiently, 11 prepared well
How do you evaluate external facilitator 1 ⁴⁰⁸ ?	0 bad, 0 insufficient, 3 neutral, 7 sufficient, 36 good
How do you evaluate external facilitator 2 ⁴⁰⁹ ?	0 bad, 0 insufficient, 1 neutral, 7 sufficient, 20 good
How do you evaluate lecturer 1's presentation about proposals for electoral system change?	0 bad, 0 insufficient, 2 neutral, 29 sufficient, 44 good
How do you evaluate lecturer 2's presentation about mix systems and voting procedures?	0 bad, 0 insufficient, 2 neutral, 22 sufficient, 45 good
How do you evaluate the way questions were dealt with?	0 bad, 3 insufficient, 3 neutral, 35 sufficient, 30 good
Did you find your subgroup chair successful in letting everyone participate?	0 no support, 2 insufficient support, 6 neutral, 39 sufficient support, 22 good support
Did you find your subgroup chair successful in generating a good discussion?	1 not successful, 4 not quite successful, 13 neutral, 38 sufficiently successful, 13 successful
Did your subgroup chair present his or her opinion on the right moments?	39 yes, 11 no
Did your subgroup chair facilitate a good observance of the regulations?	0 no observance, 2 insufficient observance, 5 neutral, 34 sufficient observance, 27 good observance
In case you were subgroup chair yourself; were you sufficiently prepared	0 prepared badly, 3 prepared insufficiently, 13

⁴⁰⁸ The name of this facilitator is not given for privacy reasons.

⁴⁰⁹ The name of this facilitator is not given for privacy reasons.

to facilitate the discussion?	neutral, 9 prepared sufficiently, 5 prepared well
Was the role of the spokesperson clear to you?	0 very unclear, 4 unclear, 9 neutral, 43 clear, 11 very clear
Did the spokesperson report the discussion clearly?	2 very unclear, 10 unclear, 16 neutral, 30 clear, 7 very clear
Did you find the report a correct reproduction of the discussion?	1 very incorrect, 11 incorrect, 19 neutral, 28 correct, 5 very correct
How do you evaluate your own role within the group process?	48 good, 8 not good
How do you evaluate your own contribution concerning content?	0 no contribution, 3 almost no contribution, 17 neutral, 36 sufficient contribution, 10 intensive contribution
Do you find it pleasant to get homework prior to the weekend meeting?	1 very unpleasant, 2 unpleasant, 12 neutral, 29 pleasant, 7 very pleasant
How do you evaluate the Assembly functions as a group?	0 bad, 3 insufficient, 16 neutral, 44 sufficient, 6 good
How do you evaluate the way the chair fulfills her role?	1 bad, 1 insufficient, 4 neutral, 12 sufficient, 50 good
How do you evaluate the way the staff is functioning?	0 bad, 0 insufficient, 3 neutral, 14 sufficient, 51 good
Did the weekend meeting meet its objective?	2 totally not, 1 insufficient, 7 neutral, 47 sufficient, 10 totally

Appendix 20 Quantitative results from evaluation forms weekend 6

Total response: 31 members

Table 50: Response evaluation form weekend 6

Question	Response
Is it clear to you how the process to come will continue?	1 very unclear, 4 unclear, 3 neutral, 19 clear, 2 very clear
How do you evaluate the plenary discussion with the parliamentarians?	1 bad, 1 insufficient, 3 neutral, 13 sufficient, 11 good
How do you evaluate the subgroup session with the parliamentarians?	0 bad, 0 insufficient, 9 neutral, 1 sufficient, 11 good
How do you evaluate the plenary review of the regional debate meetings?	1 bad, 2 insufficient, 7 neutral, 16 sufficient, 3 good
Have you learnt a lot from the regional debate meetings?	0 nothing, 7 little, 6 neutral, 11 sufficient, 6 a lot
How do you evaluate the external consultant's ⁴¹⁰ presentation about the results of the online discussion?	0 bad, 2 insufficient, 4 neutral, 12 sufficient, 10 good
How do you evaluate the online discussion tool as a method to support the decision-making process?	2 bad, 2 insufficient, 1 neutral, 9 sufficient, 12 good
How do you evaluate the subgroup session on Saturday morning?	0 bad, 2 insufficient, 1 neutral, 14 sufficient, 8 good
Did you find your subgroup chair successful in letting everyone participate?	0 no support, 1 insufficient support, 6 neutral, 12 sufficient support, 7 good support
Did you find your subgroup chair successful in generating a good discussion?	0 not successful, 2 not quite successful, 10 neutral, 10 sufficient successful, 4 successful
In case you were subgroup chair yourself; were you well enough prepared to facilitate the discussion?	0 prepared badly, 2 prepared insufficiently, 3 neutral, 6 prepared sufficiently, 1 prepared well
How do you evaluate the political strategy that was presented by the chair (after the lunch)?	0 bad, 1 insufficient, 9 neutral, 6 sufficient, 11 good
How you signed up with one or more summer workgroups?	16 yes, 12 no
How do you evaluate your own contribution concerning content?	0 no contribution, 2 almost no contribution, 5 neutral, 15 sufficient contribution, 7 intensive contribution

⁴¹⁰ The name of this consultant is not given for privacy reasons.

How do you evaluate the Assembly functions as a group?	0 bad, 1 insufficient, 11 neutral, 12 sufficient, 5 good
How do you evaluate the way the chair fulfills her role?	0 bad, 0 insufficient, 1 neutral, 10 sufficient, 17 good
How do you evaluate the way the staff is functioning?	0 bad, 0 insufficient, 3 neutral, 14 sufficient, 51 good

Appendix 21 Quantitative results from evaluation forms weekends 7 & 8

Total response: 64 members

Table 51: Response evaluation form weekends 7 & 8

Question	Response
How do you evaluate the work methods of weekend 7 in suiting the objective of the weekend meeting?	0 bad, 1 insufficient, 7 neutral, 40 sufficient, 16 good
Are you satisfied about the way the results were achieved in weekend 7?	0 not at all satisfied, 4 unsatisfied, 13 neutral, 37 satisfied, 10 very satisfied
Could you relate to the variants and themes that were presented during weekend 8?	0 not at all, 3 not, 7 neutral, 38 enough, 13 totally
Have you had enough time and means to deepen the variant or theme with your subgroup during weekend 8?	0 not at all, 12 not, 10 neutral, 26 enough, 16 totally
Are you satisfied with the agreements made concerning the decision-making phase?	0 not at all satisfied, 5 unsatisfied, 15 neutral, 34 satisfied, 8 very satisfied
Do you know that Manon (de Jongh) has the role of confidant?	19 yes, 28 no

Appendix 22 Quantitative results from evaluation forms weekend 9

Total response: 62 members

Table 52: Response evaluation form weekend 9

Question	Response
Did you find the panel discussion with electoral system experts a useful contribution to the weekend meeting?	0 not at all, 0 insufficient, 4 neutral, 21 sufficient, 38 very much
Did you find the presentation of the online discussion a useful contribution to the weekend meeting?	6 not at all, 19 insufficient, 16 neutral, 13 sufficient, 3 very much
Are you satisfied about the way the results have been achieved in this weekend?	2 not at all satisfied, 13 unsatisfied, 10 neutral, 30 satisfied, 5 very satisfied
Are you confident that the Assembly will arrive at good advice during the last weekend meeting?	2 not at all, 8 insufficient, 14 neutral, 27 sufficient, 10 very much
Are you confident that the content and style of the advice will suit you?	4 not at all, 8 insufficient, 14 neutral, 27 sufficient, 8 very much

Appendix 23 Descriptive Statistics

Table 53: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
vz1	130	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.8923	.06575	.74964	.562
vz2	129	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.6667	.06449	.73243	.536
vz3	129	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.9845	.08235	.93528	.875
vz4	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.2077	.07052	.80402	.646
vz5	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.6615	.07371	.84039	.706
vz6	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.3692	.08327	.94941	.901
vz7	129	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.3256	.08884	1.00904	1.018
vz8	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.4077	.09051	1.03202	1.065
vz9	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.6846	.07329	.83559	.698
vz10	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.4846	.05486	.62549	.391
vz11	130	3.00	2.00	5.00	3.9923	.07035	.80209	.643
vz12	130	3.00	2.00	5.00	4.0154	.07160	.81635	.666
vz13	129	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.0543	.07408	.84141	.708
vz14	131	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.2366	.08025	.91846	.844
vz15	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.0462	.07788	.88800	.789
vz16	131	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.8550	.07280	.83318	.694
vz17	131	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.9160	.07192	.82311	.678
vz18	129	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.5736	.08509	.96643	.934

vz19	131	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.6947	.04833	.55322	.306
vz20	131	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.6412	.09200	1.05297	1.109
vz21	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.6615	.07688	.87651	.768
vz22	131	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.8244	.06455	.73882	.546
vz23	131	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.0305	.07885	.90247	.814
vz24	131	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.9008	.05616	.64277	.413
vz25	127	2.00	1.00	3.00	2.3701	.06305	.71050	.505
vz26	131	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.3893	.05262	.60221	.363
vz27	131	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.9771	.07307	.83634	.699
vz28	131	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.8015	.08832	1.01086	1.022
prb1	131	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.5954	.05712	.65373	.427
prb2	131	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.4504	.10062	1.15168	1.326
prb3	131	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.3206	.07683	.87940	.773
prb4	131	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.6107	.05372	.61485	.378
prb5	131	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.7863	.05632	.64459	.416
prb6	131	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.7099	.04660	.53333	.284
prb7	130	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.8692	.05503	.62739	.394
prb8	131	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.7099	.05885	.67355	.454
prb9	131	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.9924	.06178	.70707	.500
prb10	131	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.2443	.08044	.92063	.848
prb11	131	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.3053	.09316	1.06622	1.137
prb12	130	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.7385	.05186	.59133	.350
prb13	130	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.6308	.05689	.64865	.421

prb14		130	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.9308	.08749	.99758	.995
v1		131	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.8626	.07331	.83908	.704
v2		130	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.4000	.08912	1.01615	1.033
v3		131	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.3130	.04479	.51267	.263
v4		131	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.0611	.02100	.24038	.058
v5		131	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.8168	.06111	.69947	.489
v6		131	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.4962	.04770	.54595	.298
v7		131	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.4351	.04348	.49768	.248
v8		131	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.5649	.04348	.49768	.248
v9		131	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.4275	.04339	.49661	.247
v10		131	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.7786	.05764	.65972	.435
v11		129	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.4806	.06427	.72995	.533
v12		129	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.0930	.08485	.96373	.929
v13		128	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.4297	.07247	.81987	.672
v14		129	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.6434	.05697	.64709	.419
v15		128	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.2578	.07037	.79611	.634
v16		129	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.1628	.07687	.87313	.762
v17		129	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.9302	.08101	.92014	.847
v18		127	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.0079	.06373	.71820	.516
v19		129	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.2171	.07701	.87465	.765
v20		65	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
v21		30	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
v22		15	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000

v23		64	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
v24		52	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
v25		38	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
v26		61	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
v27		23	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
v28		105	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.6952	.06647	.68112	.464
v29		105	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.7524	.06316	.64720	.419
v30		106	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.6226	.06209	.63924	.409
v31		104	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.1827	.08285	.84491	.714
gr1		127	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.7087	.06810	.76750	.589
gr2		127	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.6614	.07843	.88390	.781
gr3		128	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.3672	.07754	.87728	.770
gr4		127	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.5669	.09720	1.09538	1.200
gr5		126	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.7222	.05119	.57465	.330
gr6		128	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.0781	.07968	.90152	.813
gr7		124	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.3387	.04267	.47519	.226
gr8		128	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.8750	.05869	.66404	.441
gr9		127	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.8268	.05819	.65580	.430
gr10		128	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.5859	.05713	.64634	.418
gr11		125	88.00	10.00	98.00	49.9080	2.24113	25.05658	627.832
gr12		130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.1923	.06561	.74808	.560
gr13		130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.5923	.08784	1.00152	1.003
gr14		130	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.0231	.09360	1.06724	1.139

gr15	87	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.1034	.09108	.84955	.722
gr16	130	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.3000	.04035	.46003	.212
gr17	128	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.3125	.04113	.46533	.217
gr18	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.2769	.06554	.74725	.558
gr19	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.0923	.06124	.69824	.488
gr20	129	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.3178	.08734	.99203	.984
gr21	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.4308	.08732	.99564	.991
gr22	129	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.6899	.07284	.82725	.684
gr23	129	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.2558	.08183	.92937	.864
gr24	130	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.8077	.05991	.68309	.467
gr25	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.2615	.07765	.88531	.784
gr26	130	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.2000	.05820	.66356	.440
gr27	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.8769	.09830	1.12074	1.256
gr28	129	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.2868	.07480	.84958	.722
gr29	130	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.0846	.06646	.75775	.574
gr30	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.2000	.07905	.90133	.812
gr31	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.7538	.09075	1.03476	1.071
gr32	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.7000	.08781	1.00116	1.002
gr33	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.0231	.09360	1.06724	1.139
gr34	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	4.2308	.08065	.91954	.846
gr35	129	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.8915	.06894	.78303	.613
gr36	130	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.6615	.04166	.47502	.226
gr37	130	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.6615	.04166	.47502	.226

gr38	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.5769	.07150	.81522	.665
gr39	129	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.5116	.11496	1.30573	1.705
gr40	130	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.4154	.04733	.53966	.291
gr41	129	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.4264	.09389	1.06635	1.137
gr42	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.1308	.07357	.83887	.704
gr43	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.3769	.10770	1.22800	1.508
gr44	3	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
gr45	24	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
gr46	15	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
gr47	17	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
gr48	10	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
gr49	5	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
gr50	22	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
gr51	11	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
gr52	1	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.	.	.
gr53	14	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
gr54	3	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
gr55	2	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
gr56	8	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
gr57	6	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
gr58	29	.00	1.00	1.00	1.0000	.00000	.00000	.000
b1	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.8462	.07444	.84872	.720
b2	130	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.8846	.08072	.92035	.847

b3		131	3.00	1.00	4.00	1.6870	.05743	.65731	.432
b4		130	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.1923	.05361	.61122	.374
b5		131	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.6718	.07996	.91519	.838
b6		131	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.5802	.06676	.76414	.584
b7		131	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.0840	.07818	.89476	.801
b8		131	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.7939	.07486	.85681	.734
b9		131	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.8397	.09682	1.10813	1.228
b10		131	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.3206	.06616	.75719	.573
b11		131	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.5725	.07892	.90325	.816
b12		99	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.5960	.10245	1.01940	1.039
b13		130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.3692	.08539	.97359	.948
b14		130	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.0692	.08259	.94162	.887
b15		131	4.00	1.00	5.00	1.7328	.07174	.82111	.674
b16		131	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.4427	.08049	.92121	.849
b17		130	4.00	1.00	5.00	3.4923	.09783	1.11540	1.244
b18		131	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.4122	.10443	1.19531	1.429
b19		131	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.0611	.06570	.75198	.565
b20		131	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.7710	.08842	1.01197	1.024
b21		130	7.00	3.00	10.00	7.4712	.09045	1.03131	1.064
b22		127	19.85	.15	20.00	4.2571	.28351	3.19496	10.208
b23		129	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.2016	.08762	.99514	.990
ps1		131	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.5191	.04382	.50155	.252
ps2		129	4.00	1.00	5.00	2.6589	.09175	1.04205	1.086

ps3	129	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.3101	.04088	.46433	.216
ps4	127	67.00	19.00	86.00	45.2047	1.32978	14.98589	224.577
ps5	130	5.00	1.00	6.00	2.5308	.16424	1.87264	3.507
ps6	131	7.00	1.00	8.00	5.6641	.12194	1.39566	1.948
ps7	131	2.00	8.00	10.00	9.6641	.04612	.52785	.279
ps8	125	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.9520	.01920	.21463	.046
Evaluation of chair	126	3.69	1.00	4.69	2.0387	.05441	.61078	.373
Evaluation of individual relationship with chair	129	3.33	1.00	4.33	2.1189	.06488	.73692	.543
Evaluation of project secretariat	129	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.7243	.03966	.45041	.203
Evaluation of confidant and researcher	102	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.8221	.04828	.48765	.238
Evaluation of group process	125	2.70	1.00	3.70	2.2824	.05263	.58847	.346
Evaluation of proposal	128	3.17	1.00	4.17	1.9492	.05486	.62064	.385
Work	130	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.9000	.07939	.90520	.819
Education	120	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.6000	.08318	.91118	.830
Valid N (listwise)	0							

Appendix 24 Results of questionnaire's open questions⁴¹¹

Table 54: Themes that members would keep in the process

Themes	Frequency	% of total respondents
Support of a secretariat, including a confidant	32	24.4
Design of learning phase, Lecturer 1 and 2	24	18.3
The role of a chair, the present chair or someone with at least similar capabilities	22	16.8
Overall concept, weekend meetings, plenary sessions and workgroups	19	14.5
Working in subgroups	19	14.5
Manon as a confidant	15	11.5
Organization of logistic issues	13	9.9
Everything	10	7.6
Internal atmosphere, contact, group feeling	9	6.9
Usage of an intranet system	8	6.1
Selection of Assembly members, diversity	8	6.1
Courses that were organized apart from the weekend meetings	7	5.3
Changing subgroups	7	5.3
Conference center	6	4.6
Process design: learning, opinion forming, decision-making	5	3.8

Table 55: Themes that members would improve/change in the process

Themes	Frequency	% of total respondents
Alternative design for the decision-making phase, more time for decision-making phase, earlier creation of electoral system variants, more discussion time in decision-making phase	29	22.1
No sociocratic elections, different program in weekend 4	24	18.3
No summer break	16	12.2
A clearer thread, better insight into process, schedule, and milestones	15	11.5
More discussion time	15	11.5
Other or more central conference center	13	9.9
Clearer communication about roles and responsibilities	12	9.2

⁴¹¹ Themes that were mentioned less than five times are not presented in the tables. Furthermore, those themes that were considered similar are clustered.

of secretariat, chair, and confidant		
No chairs and spokespersons from own group	12	9.2
Electoral experts should be involved earlier in the process	10	7.6
No usage of online discussion program	9	6.9
A better functioning intranet system	8	6.1
More focus on responsibility of individual group members, prevent people from hiding behind 'the group'	8	6.1
No regional debate meetings	7	5.3
Lecturing by different lecturers, design of learning phase	7	5.3
Smaller subgroups	5	3.8

Table 56: Other feedback that members wanted to give

Themes	Frequency	% of total respondents
I found this a nice, special, fantastic experience	40	30.5
I have learnt a lot from this process, the Assembly has increased my personal development	29	22.1
Good luck with your research, I look forward to the results, thank you for being a part of this	25	19.1
Hats off! Thanks for the organization, care, facilitation	19	14.5
Thanks for being able to participate, I am happy that I could participate	16	12.2
Group members were pleasant, interesting, respectful towards each other	10	7.6
I would do it again, I herewith apply for the next assembly	10	7.6
In the middle of the process we lost time, which has resulted in extra tension at the end	7	5.3
The chair influenced the process too much at the end	6	4.6
I am proud of the final result, I support the final result	5	3.8
Not so bad after all; we have reached the finishing line with such a large group	5	3.8

Appendix 25 Results of inventory of success criteria

Table 57: Success criteria

Respondent	Success criteria mentioned
Chair	<p>Process-related: Satisfaction amongst Assembly members; little withdrawal from the group; majority supports final proposal</p> <p>Content related: Good final proposal</p>
Secretary	140 members arrive unanimously at a final product; final product is a nice proposal: clear and justified; the Assembly has enriched the members' lives
Lecturer	The Assembly adequately represents the Dutch population; limited withdrawal during the process; sufficient acquisition of information and opinion-forming of individual members; equal contribution of members during opinion forming; clear proposal (consistent, understandable and valid); a widely supported proposal
Lecturer	Coherent, consistent and feasible proposal; supported by the large majority
Member of the committee of experts	<p>Content-related: Assembly's final proposal has not yet been offered by political parties; final proposal represents the opinion of Dutch citizens</p> <p>Instrument-related: We have gained experience with the instrument and learned from that</p>
The ex-Minister of Governance Renewal	Final proposal is unequivocal and realistic; final proposal will be presented to the Parliament; Assembly stays together; both the initiative as well as the final proposal are supported politically
External consultant	The use of this instrument will change something in the Netherlands (regardless of the final result); initiative is supported and facilitated by the political system; Assembly is not falling apart with trouble; final result is really well considered and is the group's conclusion (hence, it is also possible that the group decides not to present a proposal)
External consultant & external consultant	At least half the Assembly members consider the final result as the best achievable group result and supports the content with conviction; moreover, all members recognize the final result as being the group's result; final proposal will be supported and introduced by the political system; 80% of the members are actively involved in the process; 80% of the members keep on participating; process is not designed by

	content specialists (lawyers) only
Assembly member, male, 47 years old	Final result is supported by the large majority; ultimately the proposal will be introduced
Assembly member, male, 74 years old	Final result is better than all proposals that have been made until now; Assembly members represent Dutch population; the process is well facilitated and organized; majority rules; everyone's effort should be reflected in the final result
Assembly member, male, 38 years old	Final result is supported by the large majority; the proposal is introduced by the political system
Assembly member, male, 55 years old	Citizens have shown their commitment; final product proposes a system of regional representation
Assembly member, male, 61 years old	Final product is an unequivocal proposal, Assembly members have shown willingness to listen to each other; parts of the proposal will be introduced by the political system
Assembly member, female, 41 years old	Assembly is known across the country and has been covered well by the media; good decision-making phase; final product gets discussed in the Parliament; TV coverage (focus on the instrument)
Assembly member, female, 55 years old	Little withdrawal; majority supports the final product

Appendix 26 Results of member checks

Member 1 (spokesperson) – received 24th May 2011

Last month, Manon approached me to proofread a chapter of her thesis. I have not hesitated to do this because the whole process has fascinated me enormously and I am curious how Manon has observed and how the others have experienced this period. Next to my role as an Assembly member, I performed the role of a spokesperson.

Because the project took place some years ago, I automatically went back to 2006 in my memories and started to think of what had happened; the information meeting, the selection process, the moment that I was selected to participate, the installation, the stages of learning, the research, and ultimately the decision-making. And, all these new people I met; the people with whom we started and had to accomplish as well.

The recognition was great while reading the text; I really relived things again and felt again what happened during the process. It was quite a challenge to work with such a diversity of people (in terms of gender, age, education, political knowledge, and skills). Additionally, there were the frustrations, the concerns and feelings of several members, the fall of the Parliament, the experience of the sociocratic elections, the increasing tension regarding the decision-making. And last but not least what happened when the external consultant replaced the chair. Actually, all parties concerned in the project had to wait and see how the project would be fulfilled and what would happen. Therefore, it was difficult to determine in advance which directions we had to go. We may only have followed the main paths due to time pressure. Maybe therefore we could not discuss some details. But, it was also the first time that such a project was held. I can totally imagine that the staff sometimes struggled with a number of things.

I have experienced this time as very special and enlightening. I found it special to collaborate with so many strangers and eventually to be able to create a partnership and come to a common result. And I think it was a fascinating process to see how people were different, and also reacted and behaved differently in many of the circumstances we encountered. This has given me food for thought. I did not let the problems that every now and then arose stop me. Until the very last moment I tried to stay optimistic and positive in order to deliver good advice. I did not feel privileged at all in my role as a spokesperson. It made the job heavier, but also more interesting as I was more concerned with the whole process. Anyway, there are always initiators and followers. The only thing I found really difficult was the holiday season. I felt it as some sort of detachment. After this long break, a lot of things had to be refreshed again and it seemed as if we had to regain our interest and excitement. After the break we had to take a lot of steps in a very short time. If the project would have started in September and lasted until March, there would not have been such a long period of non-activity. In that way, the project might have made better progress. That is, the process was divided into three phases that were interrelated. The project was intensive, maybe also because of the subject. Finally, I have experienced the facilitation and support of the staff as pleasant.

Member 2 (chair) – received 9th June 2011

Two additional notes: (1) Only at the end of the process or maybe even at your session in Utrecht⁴¹² I became aware that you were the confidant... Somehow that information had not reached me or had not stuck... (2) I only vaguely remember that the email sender had sent an email, I cannot remember the content.

An unrealistic work climate:

I remember I wanted to learn, about politics, about my own behavior (as a introverted person) in such a big group of diverse people, about being a chair for the smaller group, about sociocratic decision-making, skills like talking to the media, organizing

⁴¹² [focus group Assembly members group 1]

and debating (skills training by external training company). I did not want to miss out on all that and, most importantly, for the first time in my life I had the feeling I was part of something big, unique, and important, and that my voice was relevant.

I even surprised myself by overcoming my shyness and stated my opinion regarding lectures on politics in schools in front of more than 140 people. Nobody was going to take that away from me, whether politically legitimate or not! I was going to participate in the task at hand, observing, absorbing, processing, and trying to form my own opinion.

So, no, I did not want to know about the lack of political support, the flaws in the process design, the potential influence of the staff and chair on the outcome. So, yes, I was willfully ignorant!

Focus on media coverage:

The media attention enhanced the feeling of importance. It helped to boost our enthusiasm and emphasized the uniqueness and importance of this project. To hear other members speak about their media-attention was exiting; this meant it could happen to any of us including me! I felt proud about the project, the group, and the members that got the media attention, and how they handled the attention.

I remember being surprised when I took it as an assignment for all of us to generate as much media attention as possible. I found it a bit strange though, because it would never have crossed my mind to actively search/initiate media attention.

I recognize the feeling that our primary task is being overshadowed by the implicit task of generating as much media attention as possible... Wasn't that a task for the staff?

In-group/out-group bias

As an advocate of evolutionary psychology, I think the natural state for a community of 140 people is one of harmony and kindness. Because the group size is so similar to the community size of our hunter-gatherer ancestors I think a lot of our primal instincts were triggered to protect and preserve the group. I even think that the secluded way we were accommodated in Zeist increased the in-group effect.

I, for one, definitely experienced in-group/out-group bias! Even though I had not been acquainted with all of the members (including the staff) I would recognize a stranger in less than a second from the corner of my eye. I even remember that in some situations I experienced, for a very brief moment, slight feelings of hostility and distrust when confronted with external actors.

The first confrontation with an appointed new leader (chair) that had not earned the groups respect yet was a very unfortunate one. She choose to start by playing a role in which she was acting a bit stupid (cannot remember the details) and very insecure. She was someone whom we had never met, she was small and acting insecure with a weird voice. So I think everybody's first reaction was: how the hell was she going to lead us!? It would have been much better if someone we already knew and who had earned our respect would have replaced our chair (like one of the lecturers), or even better, if we had been given the opportunity (or at least the feeling of being given the opportunity) to select someone ourselves.

Member 3 (no additional role), not received.

On 6th July 2011 member 3 and I found out that the package had been lost in the mail and could not be retrieved.

Email sender, received the 30th of May 2011

Many times referred to in this thesis as the 'email sender', I have been asked to comment on the text. Chapters 1 and 6 were sent to me, but I will confine myself to giving my opinion on the content of Chapter 6. My approach will be whether I recognize

the group processes and dynamics mentioned. As I am writing this, it is about five years ago that the Citizen's Assembly on Electoral Reform (Assembly) took place. While reading, many memories came back.

The subdivision used in the thesis of 'critical dynamics' of the group process in the Assembly, Context - Size - Diversity, makes sense to me. For me it was clear from the start that besides the formal assignment of the Assembly, there were many other processes that would have a decisive influence on the outcome.

During the meetings I also was observing if the staff of the Assembly (the secretary and chair included), were not influencing the Assembly too much. This also applied for the input of the two experts. The reason for this was that I was concerned that the process and thereby the outcome were being politically steered. This concern grew more and more over time. That resulted among other things in 'the email'.

I would like to highlight two aspects mentioned implicitly in the thesis, which seem to have strongly influenced the group process.

1. No 'long-term group process' but a 'long-term discontinuous group process'
2. Steered summarizing / giving steered assignments / using steering mechanisms

In my opinion these aspects have been extremely important in influencing group processes in the three themes of context, diversity, and size. The combination of these two aspects I have noticed has a strong potential. Discontinuous structure of the meetings: Assembly meetings were weekend meetings, with one or more weeks in between. This gave the staff the opportunity to use steered summarizing, giving steered assignments, and use steering mechanisms. In the first place that was possible because there was no schedule or time planning for the Assembly, in the second place, the group's collective memory was not always optimal, possibly due to the large workload in the weekends. The staff summarized the data output of subgroups in a plenary meeting that concluded the weekend and was then able to iterate in a desirable direction. Technical resources were also used, particularly the so-called online discussion session - a real-time online brainstorming tool making it possible to quickly and easily make decisions within large groups - was a strong steering mechanism used by the staff. Questions during these sessions were formulated by the staff. Doing this, divergent views could be quickly and effectively disposed of. This dumping tactic was also used quite often in plenary summaries, along with the mentioned parking method for undesirable questions. (Park and forget).

It is my observation that a substantial part of the Assembly seemed to become less and less critical during the term. Reflecting, one cannot suppress the idea that it would be almost possible to knead a group as heterogeneous as the group of the Assembly in nearly every desirable direction. The staff was constantly emphasizing that harmony was the socially desirable behavior. Further by deliberately ignoring divergent views and implicitly classifying these as undesirable, the group was more and more homogenized. That would have been much harder had the group been homogeneous in the named areas from the beginning. So the groups' heterogeneity made it easier for the staff to steer the process.

Back to the research question of this thesis:

How was the outcome (proposal and process) of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform affected by critical group dynamics, and how were these dynamics dealt with by the staff?

In my observations, the chair did not give the impression of being that independent, looked too much connected with the secretary, staff, and experts. Too much involved with the content instead of presiding over the Assembly. It gave me the impression that the chair and secretary had taken a politically driven obligation regarding the result rather than a commitment to the process of the Assembly. Looking at the group, I observed enormous shifts in each of the three themes used in the thesis, Context - Size - Diversity. The effects of these shifts brought uncertainty. Uncertainty in political backup, uncertainty of individual ideas versus peer pressure, and a shift in the role of assembly members because they were getting more and more educated on the subject. The resulting uncertainties simplified the steering process for the staff.

My answer to the research question would be an affirmative one. Yes, the critical dynamics have had a significant impact on the process and the outcome of the Assembly, and the staff really made use of this. Summarizing, the process of Assembly certainly deserved no applause.

Concluding, I wish to pay a compliment to Mrs. de Jongh for producing this thesis. It cannot have been easy to study such a large scale citizen's assembly; large in the total of members and large in duration. I concur with the observations made by Mrs. De Jongh. Further the straightforward way research findings are described and discussed in Chapter 6 is very convincing. The frequent use of lively descriptions and quotes gives a good idea of the atmosphere during the meetings. When commenting on and sometimes criticizing the functioning of the staff, chair, and secretary, she does that in a very clear, but nevertheless most respectful, way.

I am sure that the processes and the qualitative results as described in Chapter 6 will be most valuable. Even not having had access to the complete thesis, I would recommend reading this thesis to anybody considering planning such large-scale assemblies.

Chair, not received

The first draft of Chapter 6 was discussed on 19th April 2011 at the chair's home. We agreed that I would send the chapter to the other five respondents and that the chair would write a reaction to the chapter, just like the other respondents. However, I have never received any reaction. I contacted the chair several times to ask for her reaction, but gave up during the autumn of 2011.

Project secretary, received the 13th of July 2011

I have been asked to react to the qualitative results of the research of Manon de Jongh (the first part of Chapter 6). I find it not easy to do so. Grosso modo - there is nothing in what she describes that I remember distinctly differently. But, because of the time that has passed since the Burgerforum took place, it is difficult for me to recall whether what she describes is how I also experienced what was happening in the group, or that I simply remember Manon's observations that she at that time already shared with us (the chair and the secretariat) between the weekends.

I would like to add that my focus, especially at the start of the project, was mainly on the actual organization, which had to be done in a relatively short time. It was work in progress. At first, we did not even realize that there was such a thing as group dynamics, let alone that group dynamics could pose problems that might endanger the project as a whole. By the time we did realize this, we were more than happy to have Manon to advise us on this subject.

In my view the Burgerforum as an experiment with citizen participation was a success in that it proved to be possible to ask a randomly selected large group of citizens to produce advice for the government on a rather complex subject such as the electoral system. The second (more politically oriented) goal of creating a breakthrough in the discussion on electoral reform that had been ongoing for decades was not achieved. Disappointing, but with hindsight not really surprising, as the smallest coalition partner at the time (D66) was the only political party that really supported the idea of electoral reform.

Appendix 27 Correlation analysis

Table 58: Correlations composite variables

		Evaluation chair	Evaluation individual relationship with chair	Evaluation project secretariat	Evaluation confidant and researcher	Evaluation group process	Evaluation proposal
Evaluation chair	Pearson Corr	1.000	.546**	.579**	.218	.719**	.638**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.031	.000	.000
	N	126	125	124	98	121	123
Evaluation individual relationship with chair	Pearson Corr	.546**	1.000	.489**	.356**	.340**	.383**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	125	129	127	100	124	126
Evaluation project secretariat	Pearson Corr	.579**	.489**	1.000	.182	.522**	.505**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.069	.000	.000
	N	124	127	129	100	124	127
Evaluation confidant and researcher	Pearson Corr	.218	.356**	.182	1.000	.119	.096
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	.000	.069		.237	.343
	N	98	100	100	102	100	100
Evaluation group process	Pearson Corr	.719**	.340**	.522**	.119	1.000	.738**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.237		.000
	N	121	124	124	100	125	124
Evaluation proposal	Pearson Corr	.638**	.383**	.505**	.096	.738**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.343	.000	
	N	123	126	127	100	124	128

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).