

Refugee Participation in Policymaking: The Case of STEM Refugees in the Municipality of Utrecht

Governance of Migration and Diversity – Public Administration Master's Thesis



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Abstract:

The political participation of migrants, especially refugees, who represent one of the most marginalized groups in society, in policymaking processes is a rare phenomenon. This study focuses on STEM as a case study, which involves refugees in Utrecht, the Netherlands. The research delves into the setup of the participation process, examines the dynamics between various actors involved, identifies obstacles and opportunities perceived by these actors, and evaluates the influence of these obstacles and opportunities on the overall participation process. The study employs an in-depth qualitative data analysis combined with the observation of monthly STEM meetings, to gain valuable insights into the participation process and the perceptions of the involved actors.

By specifically investigating local-level refugee political participation, this research contributes to the existing literature on migrant political engagement and presents a comparative analysis of the perceptions of different actors in the participation process. The findings reveal that despite varying perceived opportunities of different groups towards the participation process, there are overlapping obstacles. Primarily, barriers related to the design of the participation process and interactions among participants significantly undermine the process's quality and the satisfaction of the participants with the process. These findings provide valuable insights for governments aiming to enhance refugee participation at the local level and serve as a motivating study for migration scholars to conduct further research in this area.

Acknowledgments:

Approximately 3 years ago, when I arrived in the Netherlands as a refugee, I had very little idea of what awaited me here. My last few years here have been spent trying to adapt to the surrounding life like a newborn baby, learning the language, building a new life, and trying to find my place in society. Sometimes, other people's stories inspire us, but when I started this master's program, I drew inspiration from my own story. The Migration and Diversity Management master's program was the right choice for me. Throughout this process, and during my master's and thesis journey, I've had the support of numerous people. Although it's not possible to thank them all here, I would like to mention a few.

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1. Introduction:

1.1. Problem Statement:

As the number of refugees is increasing in some countries, the integration of refugees for more durable solutions and policies has been occupying a significant part of the political agenda in recent years. Economic, social, or cultural inclusion is often the components of integration that receive the most focus (Jacobi, 2021). However, the political participation of refugees also deserves to be an important element of integration as it undeniably contributes to the other components (Jacobi, 2021). Political participation opportunities for refugees can enable them to represent their interests by making them active political agents, as opposed to discourses that often frame refugees as passive recipients (Bekaj & Antara, 2018; Schammann et. al, 2021).

Furthermore, citizen participation in policymaking processes is regarded as indispensable for governance to be legitimate and just, and for the development of effective policies for especially complex governance challenges in citizen participation literature (Fung, 2006). In citizen participation, the question of who is excluded is as essential as the question of who is included for representativeness. However, while opportunities for political participation are numerous, they are not equally distributed among all citizen groups. The full implementation of democracy is hampered by the exclusion of marginalized populations from participation possibilities, such as refugees and asylum seekers (Jacobi, 2021). Refugees, as non-citizens, are often not involved in the policy-making processes about them, and they are generally only exposed to the consequences of these decisions (Huddleston & Scholten, 2021; Kunz, 2021).

In a recent development, the first Global Refugee Forum took place in December 2019 in Geneva with more than 3,000 participants in attendance, following the affirming of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) by the UN General Assembly in December 2018 (Milner, 2021). The GCR highlighted the engagement of refugees in decision-making: *"Responses are most effective when they actively and meaningfully engage those who are intended to protect and assist."* (UNHCR, 2018; Milner, 2021). Furthermore, for successful coexistence and inclusion of all groups in receiving societies, it is important that the interests of migrants, who often lack formal political participation rights, are represented and heard in political decision-making. However, for migrants without citizenship status, and especially for refugees, most basic political rights such as

voting are limited. For migrant groups in general, advisory groups, especially at the local level, is seen as an alternative to conventional forms of political participation, although their role and impact on decision-making are still unclear (Schiller, 2023). For refugees, even these forms of participation are only recently emerging as a norm after the Global Refugee Compact (Bekaj & Antara, 2018).

1.2. Research Question:

Based on the problem statement outlined above, this thesis will focus on refugee political participation at the local level. In the Netherlands in 2018, the 2013 Integration Act was put under review because it was not in line with the reality of refugees and did not offer fair opportunities. During the development of the New Integration Act, which was launched in 2022, new refugee-led networks were established and consulted to better respond to the needs of refugees (Ponzoni et. al, 2020). At the same time, the New Law has given more authority and responsibility to municipalities for the integration of migrants.

In this study, the STEM project, a refugee counseling board of the Municipality of Utrecht, which has been running since 2018, was chosen as a case study. "STEM" means "Voice" in English and is a sounding board group of refugees included in the policymaking and decision-making process about them in the Municipality of Utrecht. The permanent characteristic of STEM distinguishes it from some other temporary initiatives of different municipalities in the Netherlands. This study deeply explores the set-up of the participation process, examines the interrelations between different actors, identifies the challenges and opportunities perceived by different actors in the process, and the influence of these opportunities and challenges on the overall participation process. In short, the main research question that this research tries to answer is:

How do obstacles and opportunities perceived by different actors in the participation process of STEM refugees in policymaking in the Municipality of Utrecht shape the participation process?

The sub-questions which help to answer the main research question are:

1. How are the participation process of STEM and the interrelationship of different actors set up?

2. What are the obstacles and opportunities perceived by different actors in the participation process and how do they differ between different groups?

1.3. Academic Relevance:

When it comes to academic relevance, despite the importance of citizen participation in democracies and the value of political participation for the inclusion of migrants in host countries, the engagement of refugees in decision-making is still understudied (Bakej & Antara, 2018; Jacob, 2021). Furthermore, while the importance of participation has been emphasized, the conditions under which and how marginalized groups, especially refugees, can participate, how participation takes place in practice, and what potential obstacles and opportunities might be encountered along the way have not been sufficiently studied.

With the emphasis on the representation of refugees in policymaking in the Global Refugee Compact, the issue has gained attention in academia, but the focus has only been on participation in international fora (UNHCR, 2018; Lenette et. al, 2020; Harley & Hobbs, 2020). On the other hand, the processes of participation in decision-making at the local level, which directly affect migrants' lives and migrants directly interact with, have been overlooked.

1.4. Societal Relevance:

In terms of societal relevance, in diverse societies, the participation of migrant groups in policymaking affects not only the quality of democracy but also social cohesion (Ortensi & Riniolo, 2020). However, as mentioned above, opportunities for political participation are limited for refugees, further deepening their marginalized status in society. Therefore, the focus on refugees' political engagement in academia, policymaking, and international and national organizations is crucial for strengthening social inclusion and democratic values (Bekaj & Antara, 2018).

Specifically in the Dutch context, there is a desire to include refugees' perspectives and knowledge in the New Integration Law 2022, but how to do this in practice and which forms can be followed still needs to be clarified (Ponzani et al., 2020; Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2020).

2. Theoretical Framework:

In this section, the main relevant theories from public administration and migration literature used in this study are discussed and conceptualized. While the concept of “citizen participation” from the public administration literature helps to understand how the participation of STEM refugees is set up, the theories presented from the migration literature about the political participation of migrants will contribute to identifying the obstacles and opportunities that different actors may perceive during this process. Furthermore, gaps in the literature are discussed and the expectations of the study are presented.

2.1. Citizen Participation

What is participation and why is it needed?

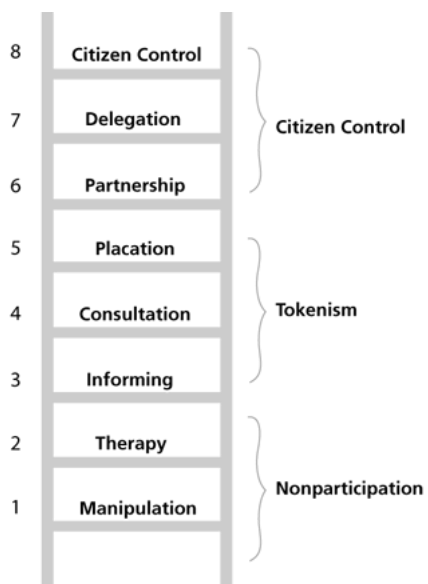
Arnstein's article "A Ladder of Participation" which is published in 1969 to contribute to urban governance, focusing on the redistribution of power, has been frequently cited in the "citizen participation" literature, and the concept of participation has received considerable attention ever since (Arnstein, 1969; Connor, 1988; Fung, 2006; Hulber & Gupta, 2015). Arnstein defined participation as *"it is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future"*. Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation is also an appropriate concept for the political participation of refugees, the focus group of this study, as migrants, especially refugees, are generally seen as have not citizens who do not have many political rights in society. The literature generally views participation as a tool for democracy to function and for the representation and empowerment of those in society who are less likely to have a voice to be heard (Arnstein, 1969; Connor, 1988). Furthermore, as Fung (2006) points out, solving the multifaceted problems faced by contemporary governance requires the participation of those who are subject to these policies and laws.

According to Fung, citizen participation contributes to three values of democracy. These are legitimacy, justice, and effectiveness (Fung, 2006, 2015). Participation process designers may employ participation to serve one or more of these values. Fung defines legitimacy as *"A public*

policy or action is legitimate when citizens have good reasons to support or obey it." The question of whether government operates in the interests of all or only elite groups is one of the questions that seek to understand whether a government is legitimate. Secondly, when some groups are unable to influence the political agenda and decision-making process, are intentionally excluded, or are weakly organized to participate, this may result in political inequality and injustice. Finally, participatory practices serve effectiveness which is the main motivation for citizen participation according to Fung(2006). When elected representatives and administrative officials lack different tools such as knowledge, competence, and resources, it is difficult to develop effective policies (Fung, 2006, 2015). Understanding these motivations in the concept of citizen participation is important for identifying the opportunities that policymakers and those managing the participation process in this study see in this process.

Dimensions of Citizen Participation Processes

There are different dimensions in which participation processes may have different characteristics. These dimensions are specifically included in this study as this study aims to examine how the political participation process of STEM takes place in practice and as these components are factors that determine the set-up of STEM. The level of participation is one of these dimensions which is important for this research. Participation processes are described at different levels in the literature according to the effectiveness of the impact of citizens' involvement and the power citizens have in the participation process. Arnstein's participation



ladder(1969) has been widely used in studies examining levels of participation. The ladder consists of 8 levels, two levels of non-participation (manipulation and therapy), three levels of tokenism (informing, consultation, and placement), and three levels of citizen power (partnership, delegated power and citizen control). At the non-participation level, the aim is to educate the participants and is used as a substitute for actual participation. At tokenistic levels of participation, while have-not citizens have the power to both hear and be heard, there

is no assurance that their participation will change the status quo. On the other hand, at citizen power levels, citizens have significant power and influence to change policies. The Arnstein ladder is important in this study to understand the power relations in the process and the capacity that citizen participants have throughout the process.

Arnstein's ladder of participation is still in use today and impacts the understanding of participation despite some limitations. These limitations can be summarized as powerholders and have-nots are not homogeneous groups as described in the ladder, the differences between the rungs are not so sharp and simplistic in real life, it has normative overtones, and it fails to capture the multidimensional characteristic of participation (Connor, 1988; Fung, 2006; Turnhout et al., 2010). According to Fung (2006), contrary to what Arnstein suggests, even though public empowerment is still intended, there may be some contexts where the level of consultation is more appropriate than citizen control. However, the normative tone of Arnstein's ladder describes this as inequality (Arnstein, 1969).

In addition to the level of participation, who participates is another dimension in the literature. Although participation is encouraged by the desire to open up policy-making to a wider audience, it is clear that it is not possible to include everyone in the participation process. In Fung's 3-dimensional "democracy cube" model of institutional design, which also includes selection methods (2006), some participation processes are open to all who wish to participate, while others may only invite elite stakeholders. The question of who participates is an important dimension in terms of whether the entire population affected by policies is represented. Whether diverse interests and perspectives are included and whether participants have the necessary competence and knowledge to contribute effectively can determine the effectiveness of the process. On the other hand, who is excluded as well as who is included is a component that needs to be considered. In Fung's model, the selection method dimension is divided into 8 subdimensions. According to the model, selection methods are "expert administrators, elected representatives, professional stakeholders, lay stakeholders, random selection, open-targeted recruiting, open-self selection, and diffuse public sphere." (Fung, 2006). This component is also important as this study will also investigate the criteria by which participants are selected in the STEM process and who is included and who is excluded.

The management of the interrelationship between the governmental authority and citizens is also an important component of the participation process. Participation forums frequently operate parallel to official decision-making procedures, impeding their true significance and influence (Van Meerkerk, 2019). Therefore, providing feedback mechanisms about the processing of input and maintaining transparency in participation are critical responsibilities for managers spearheading participation initiatives. This involves the notion that all participants deliberate on the definitions of the problems and the objectives of the participation through authentic dialogue (Van Meerkerk, 2019).

Furthermore, for more equal playing fields among stakeholders, governments can fund capacity development initiatives to guarantee that citizens have the assistance and resources needed to participate (Van Meerkerk, 2019). The quality of the interaction process is also emphasized in the literature. Building trustworthy relationships between government representatives and participants, as well as between various stakeholder or participant groups, is crucial. The quality of information sharing and reciprocal learning is improved by trustworthy relationships, which benefits participants' views of the caliber of the outputs as well as their satisfaction with the participation process (Van Meerkerk and Edelenbos, 2014; Van Meerkerk, 2019).

2.2. Political Participation of Migrants in Host Countries

What is the political participation of migrants and why is it important?

Aspects such as housing provision, welfare, education, and labor market integration are common areas of policymaking and research in migrant integration (Pokojska, 2017; Triviño-Salazar, 2020). However, the political engagement, political participation, and representation of migrants in politics have not been seen as important issues in either academia or politics for a long time (Bloemraad & Karen, 2013; Martiniello, 2005; Ortensi & Riniolo, 2020). At a time when migration is so controversial, migrant political participation is one of the crucial challenges to the democracies of receiving countries (Ortensi & Riniolo, 2020). In discourses on migration, migrants are often framed as passive objects which are affected by the decisions of other political agents, and they are mostly characterized by political apathy (Martiniello, 2005; Ortensi & Riniolo, 2020). However, this is an inevitable consequence of the limited political rights granted to migrants by

host countries rather than their indifference toward politics. Many destination countries have deprived migrants of basic political rights, such as running for election or the right to vote, and created a political environment in which they cannot be represented in any form (Ortensi & Riniolo, 2020).

Political participation of individuals of migrant origin is crucial, as the active participation of migrants and their offspring contributes to the legitimacy of governments, the adoption of democratic forms of government, and the development of a sense of collective responsibility and civic duty (Pilati & Morales, 2020). In democratic societies, everyone has an equal right to influence policy-making on issues that affect them. On the other hand, the political marginalization and exclusion of migrants from political activity undermines the democratic representation of their aspirations and interests and the realization of accountability and further reinforces the notion that migrants are outsiders in that society (Morales & Giugni, 2011; Pilati & Morales, 2020). Migrants' political exclusion also hurts other components of participation, such as economic and social integration, as policy-making fails to recognize their needs in these areas (Morales & Giugni, 2011). Migrants' political inclusion is, therefore, an important indicator of the overall inclusion of migrants and cannot be ignored in communities experiencing increasing diversity (Ortensi & Riniolo, 2020). Furthermore, participation in binding community decision-making serves a “socialization” function by strengthening citizens' sense of belonging and shared identities. Therefore, political participation has a significant positive impact on social integration and cohesion (Zapata - Barrero et al., 2014).

Migrants' Political Participation at Local Level

The context in which political participation is realized is also a question that deserves attention. According to Morales & Giugni (2011), scholars mostly focus on the national context. This is not surprising as citizenship and migration policies are often determined at the national level. However, cities are also becoming more independent and self-sufficient in creating their policies in comparison to the national and regional levels (Schiller, 2017). It is actually at the local level that policy decisions are made and implemented that directly affect the daily lives of migrants (Morales & Giugni, 2011; Pokojaska, 2017). It is also local governments that directly experience the governance challenges arising from ethnic and cultural diversity. Therefore, local policies, local

institutional context, and discourses on the local level significantly determine the integration of migrants into the public sphere. Moreover, the chances of participating in politics are higher at the local level than at the national level. In several European countries, EU and non-EU citizens have the right to vote at the local level (Morales & Giugni, 2011; Pokojaska, 2017).

Furthermore, in different cities in Europe, consultative structures between municipal bodies and migrants or migration groups have been established, enabling migrants to participate in local policymaking. In order to give immigrants the chance to express their interests in local policymaking and to make local policymaking more inclusive of immigrants' demands, several cities established immigrant councils (Schiller, 2023). Therefore, focusing on the local context as well as the national context in policy participation studies can increase the depth of the analysis (Morales & Giugni, 2011). This study, which focuses on examining the participation of refugees in policy-making processes in the municipality of Utrecht, is also an example of this.

Different Forms of Political Participation

In terms of the forms of participation, political participation is generally divided by scholars into conventional and non-conventional forms (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2014; Pilati & Morales, 2020; Martiniello, 2005). Voting or standing for an election is the most well-known conventional form of political participation. Moreover, other major conventional forms of participation are identified as participation in advisory councils, membership in political parties or NGOs, and lobbying activities. On the other hand, non-conventional forms of participation have been indicated as protests, demonstrations, political strikes, hunger strikes, civil disobedience, and boycotts (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2014; Pilati & Morales, 2020; Martiniello, 2005).

Once migrants become naturalized, their political participation expands through voting (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2014). Some states or local governments have also created consultative institutions to deal with immigration issues. These bodies usually have limited power and influence and perform as advisory boards. Also, their roles are often thought of as ambiguous (Schiller, 2023). The idea of creating special consultative bodies for migrants has been criticized by scholars for contributing to the further marginalization of migrants and giving them the illusion of direct political participation (Martiniello, 2005). According to Martiniello (2005), consultation should not

be considered as a substitute for the right to vote or stand for election for migrants, but rather as a complement to fundamental rights such as the right to vote and stand for election. It may also be useful to make a distinction between political participation and political power. Not all political participation, including consultation, always increases the political power of groups holding limited power in politics (Martiniello, 2005). Furthermore, a common assumption is that migrants can only consult on issues that concern them. This assumption is problematic as it has a restrictive tone and it considers migrants as isolated and partial citizens who are not affected by the general changes in society (Martiniello, 1999).

Refugee Participation: Possible Challenges and Opportunities

In citizen participation processes, and specifically in refugee participation processes, empirical research has shown that different motivations and challenges can be perceived by different actors. Although the opportunities and challenges in this study will also be explored inductively and according to the dynamics of the case group, this section will nevertheless address some of the opportunities and barriers that empirical studies pointed to. To start with opportunities, as mentioned earlier according to Fung (2006), participation designers encourage different forms of participation because of their contribution to effectiveness, justice, and legitimacy in democratic governance. As pointed out by Ponzoni et al. (2020), another motivation for policymakers and officials is to ensure that the policies developed are informed by and in line with the realities of refugees. Furthermore, it has been argued in the literature that refugee participation in policymaking processes will positively affect their integration, thus one of the motivations for policymakers to engage in participation processes is to support the integration process of refugees (Strokosch & Osborne, 2016). Although the motivations for refugees to participate vary depending on the context of participation, they can be considered as gaining knowledge and experience, advocacy for policy change, and networking opportunities (Lenette et al., 2020; Johnston, 2015).

On the other hand, different challenges and barriers that may be perceived and experienced by different actors have also been mentioned in previous empirical studies. For process designers and policymakers, ensuring the diversity and representativeness of the group can be a challenge (Lenette et al., 2020). Another challenge perceived by policymakers is how to bring the individual

and emotional stories told by refugees into policymaking and use them even though they are sometimes clashing with their assumptions (Ponzoni et al., 2020). In this case, it can be also difficult to understand whether the story concerns the whole group or not. As Schiller points out(2023), the limited investments of local authorities and the voluntary basis of participation of migrants can be a challenge for both refugees and officials.

As for the barriers perceived by refugees, again Linette et al. (2020) identified poor physical or mental health conditions, cultural constraints, and language barriers in their empirical study on the participation process of young refugees in the international context. Furthermore, while refugee participants may be able to make their perspectives heard by policymakers in a given context, the lack of a real sense of being listened to and the lack of impact of their recommendations can be another obstacle that refugee participants may experience which is identified in an empirical research by Ponzoni et al. (2020). This is also the tokenistic level of participation pointed out by Arnstein in citizen participation literature (Arnstein, 1969). In addition, the assumption that the stories and experiences shared by refugees are not objective and the assumption that policymaking should be developed by actors who can look at these stories with a more distant and objective eye was noted as another obstacle that limits the participation process. This can also lead to the perception that refugee recommendations are seen as less valuable than policymakers and officials (Ponzoni et al., 2020). Moreover, the roles of advisory boards as a political participation form are generally considered ambiguous in the literature (Schiller, 2023). This can lead to a confusing and unclear situation for refugees as to what is expected of them or the board.

2.3. Gaps in the Literature

Following the framing of the concept of citizen participation and the political participation of migrants above, this section will address the gaps in the literature. While "citizen participation" has a significant presence in the literature and the need for participation is recognized by scholars and practitioners, there has not yet been a significant body of work on how participation works in practice, what opportunities and barriers can be experienced during the participation process,

what different participants' perceptions of the process are, and what outcomes can be achieved in different contexts (Turnhout et al., 2010; Hulber & Gupta, 2015).

Furthermore, while the participation of migrants or citizens has been studied, the political participation of refugee individuals or groups as a specific target group has been overlooked. Based on this, the case study in this research will examine the participation of refugees as non-citizens. Refugee participation in decision-making and policymaking in the global refugee regime has started to receive attention in the literature with UNHCR's Refugee Compact, which emphasizes the concept of "meaningful refugee participation" and the self-representation of refugees (UNHCR, 2018; Lenette et. Al, 2020; Harley & Hobbs, 2020; Milner et al., 2022). However, the forms of refugee political participation at the international, national, or local level and the barriers and opportunities have not yet been studied thoroughly. Given that the political participation of refugees is a new area to study and given the gaps pointed out in the literature on participation, this study aims to contribute to filling this gap in the literature by analyzing a case study in depth.

2.4. Expectations of the study

As outlined in the section "Dimensions of the citizen participation process", the quality of citizen participation processes depends on many components. These components determine how the process and the relationship between different actors are set up. If they are not managed successfully, participants may have limited influence and power throughout the process and the participation process will cease to be meaningful. On the other hand, the roles of consultative bodies, which are to involve migrants politically and allow them to make their voices heard, are characterized as vague and they are seen as having limited power in the literature (Martiniello, 2005; Schiller, 2023). Based on all these, STEM has the risk of being one of the participation processes that take place at a tokenistic level, and this is one of the expected findings of this study.

Furthermore, considering the theories presented in the theoretical framework, different challenges and opportunities are expected to be perceived by different actors, including policy advisors, those who manage the participation process, and refugee participants in this study. It is expected that while opportunities can sustain the process and participants' interest in the process,

perceived barriers can prevent the realization of expected outcomes and opportunities in the process and also harm the quality of participation.

3. Research Design:

This section will describe the methods of the study including, case selection, data collection, and method of data analysis. Furthermore, the ethical considerations will be presented at the end of the section.

3.1. Methods

Case Selection

The political participation of migrants, especially refugees as one of the most marginalized groups in society, in policymaking processes about themselves, is a rare practice (Bekaj & Antara, 2018). STEM, as the case selection in this study, is one of the examples that consist of refugees as non-citizens in the Netherlands. STEM is a sounding board group that the Municipality of Utrecht started in 2018 with a group of refugees in the Netherlands. Utrecht ranks as the fourth-largest municipality in the Netherlands in terms of population at the beginning of 2023 with 368,024 residents. Utrecht also hosts approximately 2,660 refugees with resident permits (Gemeente Utrecht, 2023). In the scope of the New Integration Act 2022 which has given more authority and responsibility to municipalities in the Netherlands, the Municipality of Utrecht continues to develop its policy on the integration of new Utrecht residents. In the integration report of Utrecht, the municipality emphasizes meaningful governance and accountability, while at the same time dialoguing and cooperating with different partners and people being integrated (Voortgangsrapportage Utrecht, 2023). It is also noted that the involvement of a large number of people in the city is required to make people feel at home in a short time. Utrecht has adopted the slogan "We doen het samen" (We do it together) for the development of the new law. STEM also serves this purpose as an advisory board of former and current refugees who share experiences and give advice on integration (Voortgangsrapportage Utrecht, 2023).

STEM group is mostly composed of fixed refugee participants, even if new participants join the group over time or some participants no longer attend the meetings. The emphasis of the Utrecht municipality to develop its new integration policy in cooperation with refugees and different actors from the city and the fact that the STEM group is an advisory board consisting of permanent members are the reasons why I chose STEM and Utrecht as the case in this study. The fact that the participants of STEM are fixed is useful for this study in that their observations reflect the

whole process, not just one occasion. Furthermore, the diversity of the group of different ages, gender, and backgrounds contributes to the overall representation of refugees and to drawing more inclusive conclusions from this one case study. As for sampling within this case, the purposive sampling method was used in which the researcher selects the most appropriate, useful, and representative participants based on the goal of the search (Babbie, 2020, p.187). On the other hand, given the limitations of case selection, examining a single case study and the inability to compare different case studies can be a limitation in using the study to generate solutions to broader policy and public issues.

Data Collection

Qualitative interviews with a variety of STEM participants, including refugees, policy advisors, and project leaders, served as the main data collection method for this thesis. As Fedyuk and Zentai (2018, p.175) note, interviewing is an important tool in migration research for the coproduction of knowledge and for creating space for participants' voices to be heard. Since the participation of refugees in policymaking is not a common practice, a deep exploration is necessary for this field. Furthermore, to focus on the process in detail and to explore the motivations, expectations, interactions, and perceptions of different actors, the most appropriate method is in-depth interviewing the participants. The interviews combine factual and perceptual questions and are semi-structured. Interviews were conducted online or face-to-face, depending on the preferences and suitability of the interview participants. The interview language was determined as English, Turkish, or Dutch according to the participant's preference.

As a second data source, observations of the researcher during the 6 STEM meetings were used. I was one of the participants invited to the STEM group, as I myself am a refugee living in Utrecht. The existence of such a project by the Municipality of Utrecht excited me and I decided to write my thesis on this subject at the first meeting I attended. During my research, I attended meetings not as a refugee STEM participant, but as an observer. Still, this made the participants see me as one of them, not a stranger. Observing in close proximity to the participants their daily lives, or their behavior and interactions in a particular social context is seen as a valuable data collection tool in many social sciences disciplines (Boccagni & Schrooten, 2018, p.211). In this study, observations during the meetings contributed to shaping the research question, focusing on the

opportunities and obstacles experienced and perceived during the process. In the analysis section, while answering the research questions, the findings are shared by stating if the analysis is based on interview or observation in order not to interfere with the data collected from the participants in the interviews and avoid the researcher's own bias.

Interviews:

Interviewee	Role	Gender	Country of Origin	Length of interview
1	Policy advisor	Female	The Netherlands	43 min.
2	Policy advisor	Female	The Netherlands	37 min.
3	Project Leader	Female	The Netherlands	45 min.
4	Process Leader	Male	Syria	75 min.
5	Refugee participant	Male	Syria	38 min.
6	Refugee participant	Male	Syria	59 min.
7	Refugee participant	Female	Iraq	40 min.
8	Refugee participant	Female	Syria	32 min.
9	Refugee participant	Male	Iran	31 min.
10	Refugee participant	Female	Syria	24 min.

Observations:

The subject of the meeting	Number of participants	Date
Year Planning and Opening	25	11.01.2023
Physical Health	17	3.02.2023
Mental Health	14	17.03.2023
Municipal council information meeting	55	4.04.2023

Work and Income: activation from day 1/AZC(Refugee Camp)	14	28.04.2023
Women	18	2.06.2023

Data Analysis

This study conducts an abductive analysis to avoid the limitations of inductive and deductive approaches (Haverland & Yanov, 2012). The abductive method, created by Reichertz based on grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), was used to analyze interviews. By combining both in a multi-stage process, this technique solves the drawbacks of both the inductive and deductive approaches (Reichertz, 2007, p.260). In this method, open coding is paired with deductive codes, which are based on the operationalization of theoretical framework notions, to detect new data. The operationalization of the theoretical concepts can be found in Appendix 1. So during the process, I alternated between open and axial coding. With such a strategy, it was possible to conduct a systematic study based on a well-developed theoretical framework while yet leaving the opportunity to explore and be flexible and open-ended (Reischertz, 2007, p.262).

The content of the interviews was analyzed by coding. Atlas.ti software program was used to perform the analysis systematically and efficiently. Coding was first started with open coding, this choice is logical because it allows the identification of various related concepts in the interview transcripts (Babbie, 2020, p.388-389). The data was categorized, and themes were found using open coding. Second, these themes were further honed, aligned, and categorized into core codes by axial coding. "*Axial coding involves a regrouping of the data, in which the researcher uses the open-code categories and looks for more-analytic concepts*" (Babbie, 2020, p.388-389). These core codes were created with some help from the theoretical framework but frequently also from empirical facts in conjunction with doing an abductive analysis. A detailed coding scheme can be found in Appendix 4.

3.2. Ethical Considerations

This study took into account ethical issues that may arise in qualitative migration method research. Firstly, although participant observation is a valuable data collection strategy, it is

important to combine it with a second data collection method as it is based on the researcher's perception and observation (Boccagni & Schrooten, 2018, p.211). For this reason, another method used in this study is in-depth interviews with the participants. Privacy and data protection are other crucial ethical concerns. In particular, transparent information regarding the goal of the research and the process after interviewing were provided before the interviews with the participants, and a consent form was filled in by each interviewee. On the other hand, the protection of the information obtained in the interview, confidentiality, and anonymity of the data was carefully considered (Zapata-Barrero & Yalaz, 2018). To this end, the records of the interviews, and the transcriptions of them were anonymized and are being stored in a secure area.

Furthermore, since I am a refugee myself, it may be relatively easier for me to empathize with the participants, especially during the interviews, and create an environment of trust, while on the other hand, it may be a challenge to keep my thoughts to myself and try to remain objective. The author of this study is aware of this possible bias and I had peer and supervisor feedback during the interviewing and analysis process to avoid this.

4. Analysis:

This section presents the results from the interviews with STEM participants. The findings are organized to answer the two sub-questions of this research respectively. Therefore, first, the set-up of the STEM group's participation in policy-making in the municipality of Utrecht will be described, followed by the opportunities and obstacles perceived and experienced by different participants in the process. The findings are also compared and supported by my observations during the STEM meetings.

4.1. Set-up of the STEM participation process:

In this section, the set-up of the STEM participation process and the interrelationship between different participants will be analyzed with the components of participant selection, participation forms, defining the meeting agenda, structure of the meetings, and level of participation. The findings from impressions and observations of the 6 STEM meetings that took place during the research process will also be presented in this section.

Participant selection:

During the selection of participants, both project leaders emphasized that STEM is open to all refugees in the city and that the only criterion was to select participants who would not harm the free and safe environment they have provided so far during the meetings. Selection methods, one of the dimensions of Fung's 3-dimensional "democracy cube", is important to understand who is included in the participation process as well as who is excluded. In this case, STEM adopted an open-targeted recruiting method, as it openly targets refugees in the city according to Fung's model (Fung, 2006). In response to the question of how they were invited to STEM, refugee participants stated that they were invited by the contact officials in the municipality who were responsible for their integration, or by the STEM project leaders.

Participation Forms:

If we look at the form of participation of STEM refugees in decision-making processes in the municipality, the most regular and frequent form of participation is the monthly meetings. This form of participation, referred to in the literature as advisory boards or consultancy meetings, is one of the conventional forms of political participation (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2014). Almost all

the refugee interviewees expressed that they regularly attend these meetings on a monthly basis, and only 1 stated that she could not attend as often as she would like because she was working and had children. Furthermore, STEM participants came together with the municipal council for the first time this year to discuss questions about the New Integration Law, which the municipal council had prepared in advance. This was a different and more formal consultation than the monthly meetings with policymakers.

Surprisingly, there are also other forms of participation. Policy advisors also invite STEM group refugees to consult on different projects they are working on outside the meetings. Policy advisors emphasized several times the importance of communication with refugees outside the meetings. Although this form of participation is not as regular as STEM meetings, it was also mentioned by policymakers as a form of including refugees in policymaking.

"Because I think the meetings are quite long and that's very good. You need that time, but for the cooperation that I also need, it is also nice to have extra time to talk to people and get to know people." (Interviewee 2, Policy Advisor)ⁱ

"I am also the project leader of the Welkom Huis and I was looking for a new location, then I asked project leader X if there was anyone from the STEM who could accompany me to view the location, to see if someone feels welcome, to look at it from the point of view of the person integrating, whether that would be a potential Welkom Huis. So then I took him Y, so that was also very nice in such a way that they kept directly involved in choosing such a location." (Interviewee 1, Policy Advisor)ⁱⁱ

Finally, the co-development of some products is another form of participation that I heard during the interviews. Some of the STEM refugees were involved and shared their ideas, for example, in the creation of a flyer to promote the different integration routes in the New Integration Law to new refugees coming to the city.

In short, the forms of STEM refugees' participation in policymaking can be summarized as monthly advisory meetings, individual consultations on different projects, and co-development of some products. While the forms of participation outside the monthly STEM meetings were not among

the expectations of this study, they were brought to my attention by the participants during the interviews.

Defining the meeting agenda:

STEM started in late 2018 with the idea of Participant 1, one of STEM's two project leaders, who also has a refugee background. Project leaders indicated that there was no annual plan in the beginning and meetings were held whenever the municipality had a question or needed to meet with refugees. However, now, in the year planning meeting in which I also participated as an observer, the annual agenda is determined by the inputs of refugee participants, policymakers, and project leaders.

Currently, at the end of the year, the topics for the next meetings are determined based on the needs and priorities of the refugee participants and the municipality. According to Interviewee 3, the project leader, meeting agendas that are not included in the annual agenda but received from policymakers can also be spontaneously added to the calendar. The project leaders are responsible for following up on this process, inviting refugee and official participants to the meetings, and sending the meeting notes to the participants who are present or to the policymakers who are not present at the meeting.

To summarize, currently, STEM's meeting agenda is determined with the input of different stakeholders, and meetings are held monthly according to the annual plan.

Structure of the meetings:

According to interviews with project leaders of STEM, in the last two years, STEM has become more important in the Municipality of Utrecht. Due to the authorization and responsibilities that the New Integration Law places on municipalities, the municipality wanted to include the voices of refugees living in the city more in policymaking. STEM prepared an advice report on the themes of “work, education, and culture” and made recommendations to the municipality for the New Law. After this report, for the last two years, STEM has had a more active role in the municipality, with monthly meetings on the first Friday of each month on different themes.

Based on my observation and the answers from different participants in interviews, meetings basically take place in two ways. Commonly relevant policymakers listen to refugees' experiences, problems, and advice on different topics. In a second way, policymakers make presentations about the projects they are planning and seek refugees' opinions on that specific projects. However, the structure of the meetings depends on the topic and the need of the participants and the municipality as Interviewee 4 expressed:

“That actually depends on which subjects are, because sometimes the expectation is more from the participants and sometimes more from the policymakers. Each topic actually has a different need, so I look at, every meeting to see how I am going to set this up.” (Interviewee 4, Project Leader)ⁱⁱⁱ

A change that I have also observed in the STEM meetings is that refugees are now having a more active role in the planning and preparation for the meetings. From the “Work and Income: activation from day 1/AZC(Refugee Camp)” meeting onwards, refugees are taking the steer by determining the questions that would be discussed during the meetings and also chairing the meeting. This change was also referred to by both project leaders in the interviews. They shared that one of their visions for the future is to give more power to refugees within STEM and enable them to self-manage. According to project leaders, with these changes, STEM aims to work more systematically and professionally and also be inclusive of all stakeholders at different phases.

Having more say in the process is also taken positively by some refugees. One of the refugees who steered one meeting expressed:

“There have been some positive changes in the plan of the STEM. So, I'm participating actively in the preparation of the STEM meetings and also presenting the meetings, thinking about how we can just run these meetings.” (Interviewee 6, Refugee Participant)

To summarize the key findings regarding the structure of meetings, the municipality aimed to consult STEM more systematically in order to ensure that the New Integration Law is in line with the reality of the target group, and this demand has led to more regular and planned STEM meetings. The project leaders are now also trying to achieve that STEM refugees have a more

active and leading role in the meetings. Refugees having more power in the process may lead to a change in the level of participation in STEM meetings according to Arnstein's Ladder(1969) in the future.

What level of participation?

According to my observations during the meetings, while the refugees are sharing their experiences and recommendations on predetermined topics during the counseling meetings, the policymakers are asking them questions or in some cases just listening to them. In one of the meetings policymakers participated online and in one meeting the expected policymaker could not come due to health problems. In this case, the meetings usually take place between the project leaders and the refugee participants. Project leader interviewee 3 shared that if the relevant policymakers are not present at the meetings, she conveys the recommendations given by the refugees to them and follows up on what kind of improvements or changes can be made in this regard.

In addition, refugees receive information from policymakers and policy advisors about the policies and projects that the municipality is developing and refugees are consulted in the light of this information. For example, in the meeting on mental health, which I attended as an observer, the policymaker informed the refugees about her new project and which organizations refugees can contact in case of any psychological problems. Afterward, she asked questions about how to build up the refugee network necessary for the realization of the project and to understand the difficulties refugees face in accessing psychological help.

When I asked the refugee participants how they would describe the communication and experience-sharing environment during the meeting, almost all of them stated that they can freely share ideas and advice during the meetings. This is also in line with my observations. Apart from some obstacles, which will be presented in section 4.3., refugees have an open environment to share their experiences with other refugee participants and policymakers. This was also specifically indicated by one of the policy advisors interviewed.

"I hope that I am open and approachable so that people do feel safe enough to be able to express their opinions. I also hope that we are interested to listen to them and they feel that they are heard." (Interviewee 1, Policy Advisor)iv

In the interviews, STEM project leaders also attach importance to communication with refugees in order to ensure that the meetings take place in a safe and free environment, they also try to maintain communication with refugees outside of STEM. Refugees can communicate with project leaders if they have any problems with work, social life, etc. Especially, interviewee 4, the project leader, describes the communication he tries to establish as sincere and friendly. This is also due to the fact that he tries to motivate them to attend the meetings and at the same time he wants to thank them for their participation as they do not receive anything in return for their participation from the municipality.

As I mentioned above, there is two-way communication between refugees and policymakers/policy advisors and information is exchanged in an environment that feels safe. However, there is no constant communication between policymaking and STEM, and refugees are not informed about the contribution or results of their advice to policymaking. Van Meerkerk (2019) emphasized the importance of co-determination of problems and goals of participation via authentic dialogue and the importance of equal relationships and mutual learning between governmental officials and citizens. This is something that has not been fully realized in the STEM refugees' participation process. In line with the expectations of this study, this causes participation to be stuck between consultation and placement levels according to Arnstein's ladder (Arnstein, 1969). These are the tokenistic participation levels at which STEM refugees have limited power to influence the result of policies. One of the policy advisors emphasized that even if they sometimes take decisions against their advice, it is important to explain this, but this is not possible to do this in the current process. This is because the design of the participation process does not create space for sustainable communication between refugees and policymakers.

4.2. Opportunities:

This section will present the opportunities perceived by different participants in the process: policy advisors, project leaders, and refugees. Confirming the expectations of this study, different

groups perceived the process to be instrumental in realizing different opportunities. In this section, opportunities are identified through the analysis of the answers to open-ended questions asked during the interviews about motivation to participate.

Municipal officials:

Both policy advisors interviewed mentioned the importance of learning from refugees and learning about different cultures for policy making. It was emphasized that developing policies by listening to refugee experiences and recommendations would contribute to the formation of policies in line with the realities of refugees as a target group. This opportunity has also been recognized by Ponzoni et al. (2020) in the literature on migrants' policy participation. According to policy advisors, developing policies only from their own offices, without knowing how the policies actually work in practice and whether they meet the needs of the target group, can result in failure. This is why they need to be informed from the field.

"That's crucial in my opinion. I mean we make that policy obviously for people integrating so the STEM and the experiences of the people who actually go through that are super important. If you want to make policy in a good way, you always have to involve the people whom it concerns, who are actually experiencing it. We do that as Utrecht I think." (Interviewee 1, Policy Advisor)^v

According to Fung (2006), it is impossible to realize effective policies when policymakers do not have the necessary knowledge about the target group and effectiveness is the main goal for citizen participation. Consistent with Fung's statement, the most significant opportunity in STEM expressed by policy advisors was also to contribute to effective policy development in the municipality. Moreover, the diverse character of STEM was also emphasized in the interviews as it contributes to understanding the different needs of different groups. Surprisingly, two other key contributions of citizen participation to democracy according to Fung(2006), justice and legitimacy were not mentioned by municipal officials in the interviews.

Another opportunity is that STEM serves as a network to reach refugees for different projects in the municipality. Being able to get direct feedback from refugees for projects that are being

developed and to test policies' outcomes was also indicated as a contribution of STEM. Another notable response was to utilize the skills that refugees bring along.

"That is not always that easy, but among the status holders, including in the STEM group, there are people who are psychologists in their own country and we can use them here to help other people, so we actually want to use those powers" (Interviewee 2, Policy Advisor)^{vi}

On the other hand, project leaders often mentioned opportunities similar to those mentioned by policymakers. It was also emphasized by them that through STEM, refugees and the municipality come to the same table as partners without any mediator which contributes to direct communication with them.

"Refugees and the municipality are at the table equally. Without mediation, without Vluchtelingenwerk, without Open Embassy, without any other organization. So here is the municipality, then here is the target group." (Interviewee 4, Project Leader)^{vii}

Furthermore, the STEM project leader, who himself has a refugee background, mentioned the aim of STEM as a democratic platform for rebuilding trust in democratic values and institutions, especially for refugees from countries where trust in government is low.

"Because I come from a dictatorship myself, from Syria where I actually have no confidence at all with the municipality, the government, and those people who have actually fled here. They came for political reasons. So it was for me, how do we ensure that we create the platform in a democratic way where people can also share their story in the right way." (Interviewee 4, Project Leader)^{viii}

To summarize, policymakers and project leaders drew attention to opportunities such as building communication between refugees and municipalities, getting to know the target group and producing effective policies that fit them, using the skills of refugees, and building trust in the government for refugees. As Fung (2006) points out, effectiveness was also evident in STEM as a major motivation for participation processes. Contrary to expectations, however, justice and legitimacy were not mentioned.

Refugees:

The main opportunities for STEM refugees to participate in the process are gaining knowledge and experience, advocacy for policy change regarding refugees, and networking opportunities as also explored by Lenette et al.(2020) and Johnston(2015). While some refugees considering a career in local governance would like to network with municipal staff and understand how the municipality works, others find it valuable to learn from other refugees and other cultures.

"I also like to gain experience by listening to what my colleagues and people from the municipality share, and it's also making my experience more and more and it's giving me more thoughts about what could happen to me in the future."(Interviewee 10, Refugee Participant)

Almost all refugee interviewees aim to help the new refugees in the city by sharing the challenges they faced in the past and contributing to the solution to these problems. Refugee respondents emphasized the importance of their participation in municipal decision-making, even if they did not know how their sharing would contribute to policy changes or even if they know that the municipality is experienced enough to make integration policies.

"The reason why I participate here is to explain to them if something is going wrong. The municipality may have given them everything, all the opportunities, but there is a small hole here and some water is leaking out of this hole. I'm trying to explain to them how to close this hole, which is difficult because they have been doing this for 60 years." (Interviewee 9, Refugee Participant)^{ix}

Also, practicing the language is one of the opportunities perceived by refugees who cannot use the language as proficiently as they would like. In addition, some of the refugees shared that through STEM they are also gaining some skills that may be necessary for their careers, such as working in a team, presenting in front of a group, and discussing with them.

Lastly, when I asked the refugees what they think STEM can contribute to policymaking and what they think is the municipality's purpose in establishing STEM, some refugees shared that STEM is

a means to make visible the presence and situation of the refugees in the city and STEM is the first step towards change.

STEM is the first step to achieving change. I meant the municipality has goals to avoid mistakes that occurred in the past. So, STEM makes the voice of the people who have been living in the Netherlands heard in the municipality. So that's important and it's like a main goal of STEM. Always the first step is going to be the hardest step, but at least they achieved it. (Interviewee 10, Refugee Participant)

STEM is the eye of the municipality looking at the refugees to understand how to help them. (Interviewee 9, Refugee Participant)^x

In short, confirming the expectations, different opportunities were identified by municipal officials and refugees in the process. Municipal officials perceived the process as an opportunity to develop appropriate and effective policies for the target group, to learn from refugees, and to create a communication channel between the municipality and refugees. On the other hand, refugees perceive the process as an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience, to network and to help new refugees coming to the city. Neither group mentioned that participation can be a tool and opportunity for justice and legitimacy other than for utilitarian purposes to improve integration policies, a surprising finding contrary to expectations.

4.3. Obstacles:

This section will present the obstacles identified through the analysis of the responses of policy advisors, project leaders, and refugees to questions about the barriers that negatively affected the process and their participation. In line with the expectations of this study, participants with different roles perceived different obstacles, although some overlapped.

Municipal officials:

Starting with policy advisors, one of the key obstacles highlighted by both policy advisor participants during the interviews was the lack of sustainable coordination between STEM and policymaking. According to policy advisors, the role of STEM is vague for some colleagues of them

and there is a distance and disconnection between STEM and policymaking. The reason for this was indicated as the positioning of STEM within the organization under the implementation department rather than policymaking.

Related to this, policy advisors emphasized that it is insufficient to meet and listen to refugees only in STEM meetings and that collaboration should continue at all stages of policymaking outside the meetings, and that STEM should become a standard part of policymaking. They also highlighted that policy advisors do not have the opportunity to inform refugees about the results of their recommendations or to explain the reason if their advice is not followed.

"My answer is to really do things together. So not only, 'thank you for the information in the meeting, now we will move on but really do projects together.'" (Interviewee 2, Policy Advisor)xi

"A little more connected. I always really enjoy being there myself, so I notice that I look for something more. I think it's important for everyone that it's just actually a standard part of the work. So if you come up with something new or you want to adjust something, if it's really bigger things about policy, that you always talk to refugees integrating themselves as well." (Interviewee 1, Policy Advisor)xii

Also noteworthy was the need for policymakers to have the ability to contribute more spontaneously to the agenda setting, rather than working with STEM's own agenda, and the need for more collaborative decision-making on the organization of STEM.

Not all advice and input from refugees can result in a change in policymaking, which leads to frustration among refugees. Policymakers, therefore, identified potential failures in expectation management and lack of clarity on expectations from participation as barriers.

"I think it is also important to be clear, also in expectations. For example, there is a discussion about things that the municipality can't really change that much. That is for example national policy. Doesn't fall under at all the responsibility of the municipality, so I think it's also important to say what can and can't do."(Interviewee 1, Policy Advisor)xiii

Moreover, in line with the expectations, it is difficult for policy advisors to understand whether refugees' stories are only individual stories or whether they are relevant to many refugees' situations. How to use individual and emotional stories in policymaking even if they don't confirm the assumptions of policymakers was also found a potential challenge, by Ponzoni et al. (2020). Related to this, the question of whether it is accurate to get an impression of the whole target group only from the feedback of STEM participants and whether STEM is representative enough is another obstacle for one of the policy advisors.

"Everyone speaks from a certain color or perspective. How do you weigh that up? How do you actually do the right things, then you have to have a lot of key people from Syria to understand the different perspectives and to make a good decision."
(Interviewee 2, Policy Advisor)xiv

In addition to the above barriers, both project leaders identified the lack of an official status for STEM within the municipality as one of the most important barriers. This leads to limited financial and human resources allocated to STEM by the municipality and prevents refugees from receiving a reward for their participation and a regular participation allowance. Limited investments of local authorities and the voluntary basis of participation of migrants as barriers have been already explored by Schiller(2023).

"I actually want STEM to have more control, more position within the process of the municipality. STEM does not have a status or a real position within the process. STEM is referred to as an advisory group for that policy, for the new integration law, and for the old law. But STEM has no status yet. If it had an official status, we could say: Here we want money, here we want more time, again we want to invest more."(Interviewee 4, Project Leader)xv

Although project leaders strive to ensure that each recommendation and issue reaches the relevant policymaking, they stated that they can't follow up on each one and monitor whether a change has taken place, as they do not have enough time and energy. Again, this can be thought of as the consequence of not having enough resources and being positioned separately from policymaking within the organization.

According to interviewee 4, the project leader, motivating refugees to participate is also one of the most challenging issues. Since they do not receive a voluntary work allowance, he tries to motivate refugees individually by helping them with their issues and establishing sincere communication between them. Some concerns were also expressed by him about how to approach refugees in a friendly way or a businesslike way.

"But I actually work with people in a loving and friendly way. If I actually do it in a businesslike way, those people won't come anymore." ."(Interviewee 4, Project Leader)xvi

"The big challenge is how do I approach the participants. Because if we send an invitation to the participants and they don't respond. So I send an email, "We have a meeting on June 2, please come to the meeting." 60% to 70% of people don't take that seriously. They don't actually read the content of the e-mail. That's the experience I have, so that's why I often talk to people one on one. And, that takes a lot of time, but so we create the space to allow everyone to play an active role, and also to give everyone the feeling that STEM is very important, we do that together." (Interviewee 4, Project Leader)xvii

Furthermore, creating a safe and free environment when discussing sensitive and controversial topics in meetings is also one of the obstacles project leaders face in the process. Trustworthy relationships between different actors are crucial to realize the objectives of the participation process (Van Meerkerk and Edelenboos, 2014). In addition, as Linette et. al (2020) also point out, ensuring the diversity of participants is also a barrier encountered during the organizing phase. Consistent with the finding by Linette et. al (2020), while it is easy to reach refugees from Syria, it is not as easy to reach those from Eritrea, making it difficult to ensure diversity.

Refugees:

One of the challenges that I encountered most from refugee participants is, as the policy advisors also pointed out, the lack of understanding of what STEM does and what is expected of them at the beginning of their participation. This can be related to the fact that the participants were not adequately explained what STEM is and its role description within the municipality before their

first participation. Moreover, 3 refugees stated that they are not provided with enough information about the agenda before the meetings.

"I didn't know exactly what I had to do and what was expected from me, what kind of information. So, it took me more than six months to get to know what actually STEM does." (Interviewee 6, Refugee Participant)

The lack of an official status for STEM is also a barrier mentioned by refugees as well as project leaders which creates frustration for refugees.

"I don't have a special official status as STEM within the municipality. I do not have that, and this is just painful for me to be honest. Recognition." (Interviewee 6, Refugee Participant)

Another frequently mentioned barrier is the lack of language proficiency of some refugees and the high level of Dutch spoken by policymaker participants. The language barrier which refugees face is also confirming the finding by Linette et al (2020). As Van Meerkerk (2019) points out, it is the responsibility of governments to ensure that participants have the necessary resources and assistance for equal deliberation spaces. In my view, the most important resource that STEM refugees need to become equal participants is language skills.

Another remarkable barrier, which is also supported by the statements of the project leaders, is that refugees do not receive any reward or certificate for their participation. This significantly affects the motivation of refugees and makes them think that their participation is not valuable. One refugee expressed his frustration about this referring to the Municipal Council meeting.

"We never get a certification from Wethouders, it would have been great. For example, they could thank us and like giving us certificates of participation just on paper. For example, this would have been such rewarding." (Interviewee 8, Refugee Participant)

Another obstacle I found important is that refugees are completely unaware of how the post-meeting process works. This is one of the problems that policy advisors also mentioned. The lack of a continuous and sustainable flow of communication between refugees and policy advisors can be a factor creating this. At the same time, some refugees are disappointed that their expectations

for change have not been met and feel that the municipality does not take them seriously enough, which they attribute to a lack of power.

"Before I felt like I was really doing something. Something for the newcomers, but now I actually feel like they're just getting information from us...We actually discussed that earlier at STEM as well, because we don't have enough power. We're not officially working at the municipality." (Interviewee 5, Refugee Participant)xviii

In addition, some refugees started to participate in the process with the hope that STEM would contribute to their careers and that they could find a job in the municipality. However, this turned into an element of disappointment when it became clear that this was not going to happen. Again, this problem can be explained as a result of the lack of a clear explanation of the role of STEM and what is expected of refugees.

"There are those who come there for a dream. They have been coming and going for four years and nothing happens. They just answer a few questions and leave. Some people come for a career, for example. They come to find a job. But they couldn't start working there." (Interviewee 9, Refugee Participant)xix

Finally, one refugee expressed, due to cultural differences, talking about some controversial or sensitive issues causes some tension and prevents them to express their thoughts. This barrier in multicultural participation settings was also identified as one of the important barriers affecting the participation process in Lenette et al.'s (2020) study.

"Some ideas are controversial. So, people have different ideas about some notions, for example, the concept of religion, and the concept of politics. Sometimes these sensitive points or aspects create just like a sensitivity gap I would call, it creates a negative influence or negative communication among the participants." (Interviewee 6, Refugee Participant)

To summarize, different barriers were experienced by different participant groups in line with expectations. However, I also noticed that many of the barriers were also overlapped by different groups. The lack of official status of STEM and the lack of any reward for refugees

for their participation is a barrier that affects both project leaders and refugees. The lack of a sustainable relationship between refugees and policymakers outside of meetings was also mentioned by both policy advisors and refugees. While expectation management was a management challenge for municipal officials, refugees were disappointed that some expectations were not realized. Policy advisors and refugees also mentioned the unclear role of STEM. Institutionalizing and structuring the advisory board within the organization in a way that lacks power and clarity can exacerbate its ambiguous role. These findings are also confirming the expectations of the study.

5. Conclusion and Discussion:

This thesis examined the process of participation in the policymaking of a group of refugees, namely STEM, living in the Municipality of Utrecht. With the new Integration Act in the Netherlands, the municipality of Utrecht is seeking the advice of refugees in order to address the failures of the earlier law and to develop policies more in line with the reality of the target group. In order to answer the following research question: *“How do obstacles and opportunities perceived by different actors in the participation process of STEM refugees in policy-making in the Municipality of Utrecht shape the participation process?”*, Arnstein’s (1969) and Fung’s (2006) citizen participation models were employed. These two models helped me to learn how and at what level the participation process takes place by examining the different components of STEM. At the same time, the literature on the political participation of migrants and specifically refugees helped to identify the obstacles and opportunities encountered in the process.

Firstly, this study has gone beyond the limitations of the previous literature, by comparatively showing that refugees and municipal officials perceive different opportunities and obstacles in the participation processes. While creating effective policies that reflect the realities of refugees and facilitating communication between the municipality and refugees were the opportunities most frequently mentioned by municipality officials, the most opportunities for refugees were learning and networking, and advocating for policy change. Nevertheless, there was often overlap in the barriers, indicating that the barriers were significant and obvious enough to affect each participant group and undermine the process. This study also contributed to the previous migrant political participation literature by focusing specifically on refugee participation, which has not been often examined before, and revealed the barriers and opportunities that they specifically perceive in the process with their refugee identities.

Secondly, STEM, as a form of citizen participation, was seen by policy advisors as a tool that serves to develop policies effectively, as also pointed out by Fung (2006). On the other hand,

justice and legitimacy, which Fung (2006) identifies as two other potential contributions of participation to democracy, were unexpectedly not mentioned as opportunities by either group in this case. Thirdly, while refugees can share their experiences and advice on certain issues in an environment where they feel free and safe, the impact on policymaking is limited and refugees are not informed about the outcomes of their advice. More recently in STEM, refugees have been given more power to direct the meetings, but their influence in decision-making is still limited and their engagement with policymaking is not continuous and sustainable. This has resulted in participation being caught between consultation and placement levels, which are tokenistic levels of participation according to Arnstein's ladder (1969). In the STEM case, policymakers also stated that they could not provide sufficient and spontaneous input throughout the process and stated that they wanted to establish a more sustainable and accountable relationship with refugees. This showed that, beyond the Arnstein ladder, there may be situations where the impact of not only citizens but also governmental officials in the process may be limited, as a result of how the process and the interrelations are designed.

Finally, in line with expectations, major opportunities, such as ensuring communication between refugees and the municipality, networking, and gaining knowledge and experience, keep the process going even if it is not effectively contributing to policy development and realization of expectations. Although not all the opportunities considered in the process have come true, the fact that some of them are realized ensures that most of the participants do not give up on participating in the process. On the other hand, the most important obstacles that undermine the process are related to the components that constitute the way the STEM participation process and the interaction between actors are organized. These can be summarized as where STEM is positioned within the organization, its lack of a formal position, and the fact that the relationship between the participants is not established to be professional and continuous. The fact that the purpose of the process and the problems it will address were not jointly determined by all actors when the process was established and that the relationship between the participants was not sustainable and

of high quality throughout the process, reduced the effectiveness of participation, obscured its role and caused it to be stuck at a tokenistic level.

The lack of clarity on the role of STEM for policy advisors and refugee participants has created confusion, which has led to diverging expectations and perceived opportunities. Unrealized expectations led to disappointment, especially among refugees. In particular, the lack of official status of STEM and insufficient budget allocated affected refugees' motivation and created the perception that their participation was worthless. Furthermore, positioning STEM under the implementation department rather than under policymaking within the organization reduces its contribution to policy development and creates distance between policymakers and STEM. All of this suggests that although different opportunities are perceived by different actors in the process and some of them may be realized, the realization of every expected opportunity, satisfaction with the process, and the quality and effectiveness of the process depend on how the components reflecting the design of the process and the perceived barriers related to them are managed.

Limitations:

Even though this study's findings have interesting implications, there are several limitations that should be regarded. First, the refugee participants interviewed in this study were active participants. It was not possible to reach participants who had stopped participating in the process. Therefore, the findings on refugees reflect the experiences and perceptions of refugees who had sufficient motivation, interest, and time to continue the process. For further research, it would be valuable to explore the experiences of participants who do not actively participate in the process and the reasons why they do not continue to participate.

Secondly, a total of 10 participants were interviewed, of which only 2 were policy advisors and 2 were project leaders. Although I would have liked to interview more policymakers, due to policymakers' busy schedules, unfortunately, it did not happen. The sample of policymakers could be expanded to better understand how advisory boards interact with policymaking and to more comprehensively examine policymakers' experience of the process. This would allow both sides of the process, refugees and policymakers, to contribute equally to the findings. Future scholars can take this into account.

Finally, this research is based on in-depth interviews and observations of a single case. Studying a single case allowed me to examine the process in more depth and detail and also to compare the experiences and perceptions of the different actors involved. However, comparing the process with a different case would facilitate the generalization of the findings to different contexts. For future research in this area, it is recommended to conduct a comparative case study in different cities. This would increase the generalizability of the study and make the findings more concrete.

6. Recommendations:

Throughout the interviews and my observations, I reflected with respondents and participants, both refugees and municipal officials on how the participation process could be improved. The following recommendations are based on their responses and my reflections.

1. *Think about why you need refugee participation.* While it may seem like a useful tool for policymakers to involve citizens in policymaking processes in many ways, it is important to clarify what the purpose of this is. Having a clear goal helps to identify which participants will be invited to the process, how the process will be managed, and what the potential opportunities will be for different participants. This will also assist to define the role of the advisory board and eliminate the ambiguity of its function.
2. *Determine the expectations and agenda for participation with all stakeholders.* Once the purpose and the role of the advisory body are clear, share this transparently with all stakeholders and reflect with all stakeholders on what the expectations from the participation might be. Being on the same page about expectations in the process will support participants' trust in the process and facilitate accountability. This will also avoid failures in expectation management and disappointments at the end of the process. At the same time, the topics to be discussed should be jointly determined with input from all stakeholders for meaningful participation.
3. *Strategically locate the advisory board within the organization.* In participation processes, it would be wise to think strategically about which unit should work more closely with refugees in the organization so that the advice and input received can make an effective contribution to policymaking and the process runs more smoothly. For example, if your main objective is to improve policy in a specific area, such as language learning or housing, positioning it under that unit will ensure effective collaboration between the advisory board and policymakers.

4. *Ensure to allocate sufficient resources and budget.* It is important to show refugee participants that their participation and time are valued and to give them the reward they deserve for their participation. Giving participants a volunteer allowance per hour of involvement or developing a training program to help participants get the most out of the process are two examples of how to do this. As also suggested by some of the refugees in this study, giving refugees an official certificate for their participation can be a good reward that can also contribute to their career goals. It may also be a good strategy for effective management of the process to ensure that project leaders have sufficient time to focus on the process or to appoint a separate coordinator for specifically for the organization of participation process.
5. *Inform refugees about the outcomes of their recommendations.* Refugees should learn how their shared experiences in various fields contribute to policymaking. Failure to inform refugees about the outcomes undermines their trust in the participation process and reduces their motivation to participate. How the post-participation process is managed is as important as the participation process. If recommendations have not been implemented for various reasons, this should also be explained with reasons. Only in this way are refugees truly included in the decision-making.

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8. Appendix:

Appendix 1: Operationalization Table

Concept	Definition	Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Indicators	Methods	Sources
Opportunities	What are the motivations of different actors to participate in the process?	Perceived by policy advisors and project leaders	Legitimacy (Fung, 2006)	"A public policy or action is legitimate when citizens have good reasons to support or obey it."(Fung, 2006)	Interviews, observation of meetings	Policy advisors and project leaders
			Justice (Fung, 2006)	"Injustice often results from political inequality. When some groups cannot influence the political agenda, affect decision-making, or gain information relevant to assessing how well policy alternatives serve their interests because they are excluded, unorganized, or too weak, they are likely to be ill-served by laws and policies."(Fung, 2006)		
			Effectiveness (Fung, 2006)	Inability to address social problems due to lack of experience, knowledge, or resources, and understanding the needs of the target audience. Involving those exposed to problems in the decision-making process can increase the effectiveness of solutions (Fung, 2006)		
			Contributing to the integration of refugees (Strokosch & Osborne, 2016)	Participation encourages and facilitates integration by involving those subject to integration in the decision-making process, creating a route for refugees to act as citizens (Strokosch & Osborne, 2016)		
		Perceived by refugee participants	Provision of information (Lenette, et al., 2020)	Obtaining information during meetings that will benefit participant's integration process	Interviews, observation of meetings	Refugee participants
			Advocacy for policy change (Lenette, et al., 2020)	"Organized, systematic, and intentional actions aimed at changing policies and positions of decision-makers on specific issues of concern." (Lenette, et al., 2020)		
			Network opportunities (Johnston, 2015; Lenette, et al., 2020)	Opportunities to meet and discuss with other participants(refugees and policymakers) from different backgrounds throughout the participation process (Lenette, et al., 2020)		
Challenges	What are the barriers and obstacles that impair the	Perceived by policy advisors and	Ensuring the continuity of the participation	Ensuring continuous and regular participation of the same participant group in meetings and events	Interviews, observation of meetings	Policy advisors and

	participation process?	project leaders	of the participants			project leaders
			Dealing with individual stories (Ponzoni et al., 2020)	How to approach individual stories and use them in policymaking even though they are sometimes clashing with their own assumptions		
			Limited budget from the municipality (Schiller, 2023)	If the municipality does not allocate a sufficient budget for the organization of the process and allowance of refugee participants		
			Ensuring diversity and representativeness (Lenette, et al., 2020)	Efforts to create a diverse group of participants in terms of gender, country of origin, and background		
		Perceived by refugee participants	Poor physical or mental health/traumas (Lenette, et al., 2020)	Post-traumatic health problems that negatively affect participation	Interviews, observation of meetings	Refugee participants
			The ambiguity of what is expected of them and their role in the process (Schiller, 2023)	Refugees' lack of understanding of the process and their role in it		
			Lack of impact of their input (Ponzoni et al., 2020)	If refugees feel that they are not actually listened to the by municipality and their feedback has no impact on policymaking		
			Cultural constraints (Lenette, et al., 2020)	Cultural differences and constraints that prevent the active participation of the participant		
			Language Barriers (Lenette, et al., 2020)	Lack of confidence in language, inability to understand spoken language, or lack of language proficiency to express oneself		
Participation	"the redistribution of power that enables the have-	Level of participation (Arnstein, 1969)	Manipulation	Citizens are involved in advisory committees where they cannot participate but the aim of their inclusion of them is mostly to educate them	Interviews, observation of meetings	All stakeholders(policy)

	not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future" (Arnstein, 1969)		Therapy	The aim of involving citizens is to cure them		advisors, project leaders refugees)
			Informing	Citizens are involved to be informed of their rights and responsibilities, however, they don't impact change. One-way flow of information.		
			Consultation	Citizens may give advice but there is no assurance that their advice will be taken into account(surveys, neighborhood meetings, and public hearings)		
			Placation	Citizens have some degree of influence, but the powerholder still have the final say		
			Partnership	Powerholders and citizens share responsibility and co-work on decision-making processes		
			Delegated power	Citizens have the dominant decision-making power		
			Citizen control	Citizens can govern a program and they are fully in charge of different aspects of the policymaking process		
		Selection methods (Fung, 2006)	Expert administrators	Expert managers working in public bureaucracies.	Interviews, observation of meetings	All stakeholders(policy advisors, project leaders refugees)
			Elected representatives	They are selected by competitive elections to represent the interests of some groups.		
			Professional stakeholders	These people typically work as paid advocates for public officials and organized interests.		
			Open-targeted recruiting	They are open to all chosen recruits from groups with lower participation rates.		

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Questions for project leaders:

Introduction of interviewee:

- Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?
 - What is your name, age, professional, and background?
- What is your role in the municipality?
- What is your role in STEM?

Participation:

- What is your role during the meetings?
- Can you describe the sharing feedback and participation environment in STEM meetings?
 - How does participation take place?
- Are all participants actively participating, and speaking up during the meetings?
 - If not, why do you think they are unwilling to speak up?
- How do you experience the interaction between municipal officers and refugees?
- How do you ensure a safe and free environment during participation?

Opportunities:

- Was STEM initiated by you or by a different department in the municipality?
 - If initiated by a different unit, what was the purpose of the initiation?
 - If it was suggested and initiated by you, what was your motivation for setting up such a group?
- What do you think STEM will contribute to?
 - How can it benefit the refugees and the municipality?

Obstacles:

- Are there any obstacles that you observed or felt during the participation process that you had difficulty managing?
 - If so, what do you think these obstacles are, and why do they exist?
- What do you think the participation process would have been like without these barriers?
- How did you select the participants, which factors did you consider to make a selection?
 - How do you make sure that diversity is ensured and everyone is represented?
- What are your experiences in ensuring their participation?

Closing:

- If you were doing this research on the STEM group, what would you ask, is there anything you think I missed?
- Do you have any questions?

Questions for policy advisors:

Introduction of interviewee:

- Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?
 - What is your name, age, professional?
- What is your role in the municipality?
- What is your role in the integration process of refugees?

Participation:

- How many times have you participated in STEM meetings?
- Can you describe the sharing and participation environment in STEM meetings? How does participation take place?
- What was your role during the meetings?
- How would you describe your relationship with STEM refugees in the moments of contact?
- Did you find the feedback from refugee participants helpful?
 - Did you feel that your expectations of participation were met?

Opportunities:

- What was your purpose for attending STEM meetings?
- What expectations did you have from the STEM meeting(s)?
- What do you think STEM will contribute to? (Policymaking)

Obstacles:

- Do you think that there are barriers that undermine the participation process?
- How do you think these barriers affected the participation process?
- How do you think the participation process would have been if the barriers had not existed?

Closing:

- If you were doing this research on the STEM group, what would you ask, is there anything you think I missed?
- Do you have any questions?

Questions for refugee participants:

Introduction of interviewee:

- Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?
 - What is your name, age, professional, and background?
- How long have you been living in the Netherlands?

Participation:

- Can you briefly tell me your story about joining STEM?
 - How did you join? How did you learn you would be participating?
- How long have you participated in STEM?
- How regularly do you participate in the meetings?
- Can you describe your role in STEM meetings? What do you do during the meetings?
- How do you experience the exchanges/communication in the meetings between different actors?
- What kind of relationship do you have with the municipality officials and guest policymakers during the participation process?

Opportunities:

- What does being part of STEM mean to you?
- What are your goals/objectives for participating in STEM?
 - (What do you hope to achieve/gain by participating in STEM?)
- Can participating in STEM benefit you and (your integration)? If so, how?
- What do you think is the purpose of the municipality in establishing the STEM group?
- Do you think that STEM is important for the municipality? What makes you think that?
- How can STEM contribute to changes in policies regarding refugees?

Obstacles:

- What are the obstacles and problems that you have encountered during the STEM process and that you think have negatively affected your participation?
- How do you think these barriers affect your participation?
- How do you think your participation process would be if these barriers did not exist?

Closing:

- If you were doing this research on the STEM group, what would you ask, is there anything you think I missed?
- Do you have any questions?

Appendix 3: Information and Consent Form

English:

Information sheet

Introduction

My name is Fatma Köse. I am a student at Erasmus University where I am following the master's program in Governance of Migration and Diversity. For my master's thesis, I am researching the participation of STEM refugees in policymaking in the Municipality of Utrecht and the experiences of different actors in the process.

You will participate in an interview where we will talk about your personal experiences within STEM and your interaction with other participants. For further clarifications or any questions please contact me via 661474fk@eur.nl or 0618555978.

Data collection

You can expect questions about your perceptions and experiences in your participation in STEM meetings, and your interaction with other participants during your participation.

Potential inconvenience & risks

There are no physical, legal, or economic risks associated with your participation in this study. It is not mandatory to answer all questions. Your participation is voluntary and you can stop at any time.

Confidentiality & data protection

The collected data will be used for an aggregated analysis and no confidential information or personal data will be included in the research outcome. The data is stored in a secure location and will be kept for 10 years.

Data Sharing

I will share the data with my thesis supervisor and my immediate thesis colleagues for the research and writing of my master's thesis which is mandatory for the completion of my studies at the Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Erasmus University.

Furthermore, the (anonymized) results of the thesis (not the interviews) will be shared with the municipality because of the collaboration between the researcher and the municipality.

Voluntary participation & individual rights

Your participation is voluntary and you can stop at any time. When you participate in the research, you have the right to request more information about the data collection, and analysis or withdraw the consent and ask for data erasure before the dataset is anonymized or the manuscript is submitted for publishing. You can exercise your rights by contacting Fatma Köse.

If you have any complaints regarding the processing of personal data in this research, please contact Fatma Köse.

Consent form

Upon signing this consent form, I confirm that:

- I've been informed about the purpose of the research, data collection, and storage as explained in the information sheet;
- I've read the information sheet, or it has been read to me;
- I've had an opportunity to ask questions about the study; the questions have been answered sufficiently;
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research;
- I understand that the information will be treated confidentially;
- I understand that I can stop participation at any time or refuse to answer any questions without any consequences;
- I understand that I can withdraw my consent before the dataset is submitted for approval.

Additionally, I give permission to:

	Yes	No
I give permission to audio record the interview		
I give permission to video record the interview (only for online interviews)		
I give permission to use quotes from my interview		
I give permission to use my name with the quote(s)		

Name of research participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Dutch:

Informatie Formulier

Inleiding

Mijn naam is Fatma Köse. Ik ben student aan de Erasmus Universiteit waar ik de masteropleiding Governance of Migration and Diversity volg. Voor mijn masterscriptie onderzoek ik de participatie van STEM-leden in de beleidsvorming in de gemeente Utrecht en de ervaringen van verschillende actoren in het proces.

U neemt deel aan een interview waarin we het hebben over uw persoonlijke ervaringen binnen STEM en uw interactie met andere deelnemers. Voor verdere uitleg of eventuele vragen kunt u contact met mij opnemen via 661474fk@eur.nl of 0618555978.

Gegevensverzameling

U kunt vragen verwachten over uw percepties en ervaringen bij uw deelname aan STEM-bijeenkomsten, en uw interactie met andere deelnemers tijdens uw deelname.

Potentieel ongemak en risico's

Er zijn geen fysieke, juridische of economische risico's verbonden aan uw deelname aan dit onderzoek. Het is niet verplicht om alle vragen te beantwoorden. Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt op elk moment stoppen.

Vertrouwelijkheid en gegevensbescherming

De verzamelde gegevens worden gebruikt voor een analyse en er wordt geen vertrouwelijke informatie of persoonlijke gegevens opgenomen in het onderzoeksresultaat. De gegevens worden opgeslagen op een beveiligde locatie en zullen worden bewaard gedurende 10 jaar.

Gegevensuitwisseling

Ik zal de gegevens delen met mijn scriptiebegeleider en mijn directe scriptie collega's ten behoeve van het onderzoek naar en het schrijven van mijn masterscriptie verplicht ter afronding van mijn studie aan de Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Erasmus Universiteit.

Verder zullen de (geanonimiseerde) resultaten van de scriptie (dus niet van de interviews) gedeeld worden met de gemeente vanwege de samenwerking tussen de onderzoeker en de gemeente.

Vrijwillige deelname en individuele rechten

Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt op elk moment stoppen. Wanneer u deelneemt aan het onderzoek, hebt u het recht om meer informatie te vragen over de gegevensverzameling, de analyse of om uw toestemming in te trekken en te vragen om gegevens te wissen voordat de dataset wordt geanonimiseerd of het manuscript wordt ingediend voor publicatie. U kunt uw rechten uitoefenen door contact op te nemen met Fatma Köse.

Als u klachten heeft over de verwerking van persoonsgegevens in dit onderzoek, neem dan contact op met Fatma Köse

Toestemmingsformulier

Bij ondertekening van dit toestemmingsformulier bevestig ik dat:

- Ik ben geïnformeerd over het doel van het onderzoek, de gegevensverzameling en -opslag zoals uitgelegd in het informatieblad;
- Ik het informatieblad heb gelezen, of dat het aan mij is voorgelezen;
- Ik de gelegenheid heb gehad om vragen te stellen over het onderzoek; de vragen voldoende zijn beantwoord;
- Ik ga vrijwillig akkoord met deelname aan dit onderzoek;
- Ik begrijp dat de informatie vertrouwelijk zal worden behandeld;
- Ik begrijp dat ik op elk moment mijn deelname kan stopzetten of kan weigeren vragen te beantwoorden zonder dat dit gevolgen heeft;
- Ik begrijp dat ik mijn toestemming kan intrekken voordat de dataset ter goedkeuring is ingediend.

Daarnaast geef ik toestemming om:

	Ja	Nee
Ik geef toestemming om de audio van het interview op te nemen		
Ik geef toestemming om het interview op video op te nemen (alleen bij online interview)		
Ik geef toestemming om citaten uit mijn interview te gebruiken		
Ik geef toestemming om mijn voornaam te gebruiken bij de quote(s)		

Naam van deelnemer onderzoek:

Datum:

Handtekening:

Appendix 4: Coding Scheme

Categories	Axial Codes	Open Codes
Participant Selection	Open to all refugees	No fixed criteria to select
		Open to every refugee in the city
	Protection of a free and safe environment	No laughing at each other
		Freedom to speak
	Invitation by the contact person	Contact person invited
	Invitation by project leader	Project leader invited
Participation Forms	Monthly STEM meetings	Regularly attend
		Other responsibilities- can't attend
		Meeting with Municipal Council
	Consultation for projects	Meetings are not enough
		Individual contact outside the meeting
		Location visit
	Product co-development	Route Card
Agenda setting	No annual plan at the beginning	
	Currently, agenda-setting together	
	Spontaneous topics from policymakers	
	Sharing agenda and meetings notes	
How do meetings take place?	More authorization	More responsibility
		Advice rapport
		New Integration Law
		More active role in the municipality
	Every meeting is different	Refugees receive information
		Refugees share experiences
		Refugees give advice
	Refugees' active role now	Chairing meeting
		Preparing for meetings
What level of participation?	If policymakers are not present	Sending notes
	Safe and free to talk	Friendly way
		Open discussion
		Interested to listen
	No constant communication	No result sharing
		No accountability
Municipal Officials	Effectiveness	Learning from experiences
		Learning from cultures
		Listening to their needadviceces
		Importance of their feedback
	In line with the realities of refugees	Get to know the target group
		Being fed from the field
		Being close to citizens

		Diverse
	Network	Refugees needed for specific projects
	Test policies	Testing plans Testing outcomes
	Democratic platform	Trust in government
	Using the power of refugees	They have different abilities
Refugees	Gaining knowledge	Experiences of other refugees
		Learning about municipality
		Understanding how policies are developed
		Projection about future possibilities
	Advocacy for refugees	Sharing problems
		Helping women
		Contributing to solutions
		Assist the municipality
		Helping refugees in their integration
	Network	Get to know policymakers
		Social network
		Career in policymaking
	Language	Can't express thoughts
	Career skills	Working with team
		Discussion
	STEM is a first step to change	The first step is difficult
		Municipality tries to avoid past mistakes
	Indicator of refugees	Eye of the municipality to refugees
Municipal Officials	No sustainable communication	Why some choices have been done
		Communication during the whole policymaking
		No accountability
		Explaining why some decisions are made
	Role is vague	What STEM does is not clear to colleagues
	Expectation management	Expectations about policy change
		Only volunteer work
		Being clear about expectations
	Positioning in organization	Under implementation
	More collaboration	Meetings are not enough
		Disconnection between STEM and policymaking
		Standard part
	Policymakers want more impact	STEM works its own agenda
		Spontaneous topic to agenda
	Representativeness	Different perspective

		Conflicts
	Individual stories	Is this only her experience? Speaking only from personal experience
	No official status of STEM	
	Not enough resource allocation	Limited financial resources Not enough time Coordinator is needed Voluntary participation Limited human resource
	How to approach refugees	
	How to motivate refugees	How to make it interesting for refugees
	Ensuring a safe environment	Controversial topics Trust and openness Sensitive topics Women
	Ensuring diversity	Finding people from different countries
Refugees	Lack of information	Don't know what to do No clear explanation Themes are too general What to expect STEM role Not knowing the scope of meetings
	No official status	
	No reward	No subsidy No certificate
	Language barrier	Policymakers speak fast Language level
	What happens after?	Lack of communication between refugees and policymakers We don't know about the result of our feedback
	Frustration	We are not taken seriously No change Not sure if it will change anything Lack of power No carrier opportunity
	Cultural differences	Tensions about sensitive topics Communication on controversial topics

Appendix 5: Quotes in Original Languages:

i Want ik denk dat de bijeenkomsten zijn best lang en dat is heel goed. Die tijd heb je nodig, maar dan nog voor de samenwerking die ik ook nodig heb, is het ook fijn om nog extra tijd te hebben om mensen nog te spreken en mensen te leren kennen.

ii Ik ben ook projectleider van de Welkom Huizen en ik had een nieuwe locatie op het oog en toen heb ik een Amer gevraagd of er iemand is van de STEM die met mij mee kan om de locatie te bezichtigen, om te kijken of iemand zich welkom voelt om te kijken naar echt vanuit het oogpunt zeg maar van de inburgeraar van wat voor locatie dit is en of dat een potentieel Welkom Huis zou zijn. Dus toen heb ik hem Camiel, in dit geval heb ik hem meegenomen naar die bezichtiging, dus dat was ook heel fijn op z'n manier dat echt. Zij hield direct betrokken zijn bij de keuze voor zo locatie, bijvoorbeeld.

iii Dat hangt eigenlijk af van hoe en welke onderwerp zijn, want soms het verwachtte meer vanuit de deelnemers en soms het verwacht meer van de beleidsmaker. Bij elke onderwerp eigenlijk ligt een andere behoefte, dus ik kijk elke moment, elke bijeenkomst op welke manier ga ik dit oprichten.

iv Ik hoop dat ik even open en benaderbaar over kom, dus dat mensen wel zich veilig genoeg voelen om hun mening te kunnen geven en dat we daar ook hè echt in geïnteresseerd zijn dat mensen ook dat gevoel hebben dat ze hè dat hun mening gehoord wordt.

v Dat is cruciaal volgens mij. Zeker ik bedoel we maken dat beleid natuurlijk voor inburgeraars dus de STEM en de ervaringen van de mensen die dat daadwerkelijk meemaken. Die zijn superbelangrijk. Als je op een goede manier beleid wil maken, dan moet je altijd de mensen om wie het gaat, die het daadwerkelijk meemaken betrekken vind ik zelf en dat doen we als Utrecht inderdaad volgens mij.

vi Dat is nog niet altijd zo makkelijk, maar bij de statushouders, ook in de groep van de STEM, zijn mensen die psycholoog zijn in hun eigen land en die we hier goed kunnen gebruiken om weer andere mensen te helpen, dus we willen eigenlijk die krachten ook gebruiken.

vii De gemeente zet aan tafel gelijk. Zonder bemiddeling, zonder vluchtelingenwerk, zonder open embassy, zonder enkele organisatie. Dus hier is de gemeente dan hier is de doelgroep.

viii Want ik kom zelf uit dictatorisch, uit Syrië waar ik zelf eigenlijk helemaal geen vertrouwen heb met gemeente, de overheid en die mensen zijn ook die hier gevlucht eigenlijk. Die kwamen vanuit politieke redenen. Dus het was voor mij, hoe zorgen wij dat op een democratische manier het platform creëren waar de mensen kunnen ook op juiste manier hun verhaal kunnen delen.

ix Benim buraya katılmamın sebebi onlara yanlış giden bir şey varsa sebeplerini açıklamak. Sen her şeyi vermiş ve yapmışsın ama burada ufak bir delik var. Şu delikten biraz su sızıyor. Deliği nasıl kapatacaklarını anlatmaya çalışıyorum. Bu biraz zor çünkü onlar 60 senedir bu işi yapıyorlar.

x STEM ise belediyenin mültecilere baktığı gözüdür. Nasıl mültecilere yardımcı olunur onu anlamak için.

xi Mijn antwoord is om echt samen dingen te doen. Dus niet alleen, maar dankjewel voor de informatie. Nu gaan wij weer verder, maar echt samen projecten te doen.

xii Nog iets meer met elkaar in verbinding staat. Ik vind het zelf ook altijd heel leuk om erbij te zijn, dus ik merk gelijk dat automatisch iets meer opzoek. Maar ik denk dat het voor iedereen belangrijk is dat het

gewoon eigenlijk standaard onderdeel is van het werk. Dus als je iets nieuws bedenkt of iets wil aanpassen, als het echt grotere dingen over beleid gaat, dat je dan altijd ook in gesprek gaat met inburgeraars zelf.

xiii Ik denk dat het ook belangrijk is om duidelijk te zijn, ook in meer ja verwachtingsmanagement, want ik wat ik soms wel eens meemaak, is dat. Er gesproken wordt over dingen waar de gemeente eigenlijk niet zoveel aan kan veranderen. Dat is bijvoorbeeld of rijksbeleid of nou hè? Licht totaal niet in binnen de verantwoordelijkheid van de gemeente, dus ik denk dat het ook belangrijk is om hè te zeggen van wat wel, hè? Wat wij wel en niet kunnen doen en dus dat duidelijk te maken, naar de mensen toe.

xiv Dit vind ik een ingewikkeld op kan een obstakel zijn dat je dat iedereen spreekt vanuit een bepaald kleuren of perspectief. Hoe weeg je dat af? Hoe doe je de goede dingen eigenlijk moet je dan heel veel sleutelpersonen hebben uit Syrië om te goed te begrijpen wat er verschillende perspectieven zijn en om een goed besluit te hebben.

xv Ik wil eigenlijk dat de STEM wel meer regie, meer positie krijgen binnen het proces van de gemeente....STEM ligt bij iedereen, maar heeft niet een status of een echte positie binnen het proces. Die STEM wordt het genoemd als een adviesgroep voor de dat beleid, voor de new wet inburgering, voor oude wet. Maar STEM heeft nog geen status. Als het een officiële status had, zouden we kunnen zeggen: Hier willen wij geld, hier willen wij meer tijd weer willen wij meer investeren.

xvi Maar ik werk met de mensen eigenlijk op een liefde en vriendelijke manier. Als ik zakelijk manier het eigenlijk doe, die mensen gaan niet meer komen.

xvii De groot uitdaging dat hoe benader ik de deelnemers zelf. Want als wij sturen een uitnodiging voor de deelnemers en ze reageren niet. Dus ik stuur email: 'we hebben op 2 juni een bijeenkomst, kom alsjeblieft naar de bijeenkomst.' 60% tot 70% van de mensen nemen dat niet serieus. Zij weten, zij gaan komen maar zij reageren niet aan vaak. Zij lezen e mail eigenlijk over die inhoud niet. Dat is de ervaring die ik heb, dus daarom praat ik vaak met de mensen en één op één. En, dat kost heel veel tijd, maar achterkant creëren de ruimte om iedereen actief rol kunnen krijgen, maar ook iedereen beetje ook gevoelens krijgen dat de STEM heel belangrijk is, doen wij samen, dat doe ik niet alleen voor mijzelf, dat doen wij voor de doelgroep.

xviii Eerder voelde ik me echt iets aan het doen ben. Iets voor de nieuwkomers, maar nu, niet helemaal echt. Ik voel me eigenlijk dat ze gewoon een informatie van ons krijgen....We hebben dat eigenlijk eerder ook gediscussieerd bij STEM, omdat wij geen kracht hebben. We zijn niet officieel bij de gemeente aan het werken zijn. Ik heb eigenlijk bij de gemeente gesolliciteerd. Maar ik werd niet aangenomen.

xix Oraya bir hayal için gelip gidenler var. Dört senedir gelip gidiyor ama bir şey de olmuyor. Sadece birkaç soruya cevap verip gidiyorlar. Bazı insanlar örneğin kariyer için geliyor. İş bulmak için gelenler var. Ama orada çalışacak mertebeye ulaşmamışlar.