

Energy in the Neighborhood – Dynamics of Collaboration and Stagnation in the Energy Transition: How Collaboration Stalls and Gains Momentum

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Welke
techniek?

Welke
techniek?

Wanneer?

DE UITDAGING VAN MEIJENHORST

Elektrische
warmtepomp

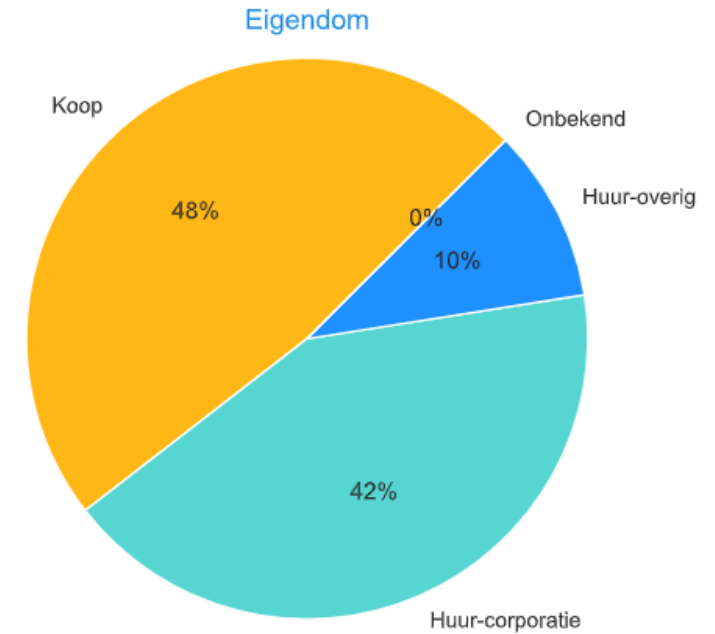


Where is
Meijenhorst?



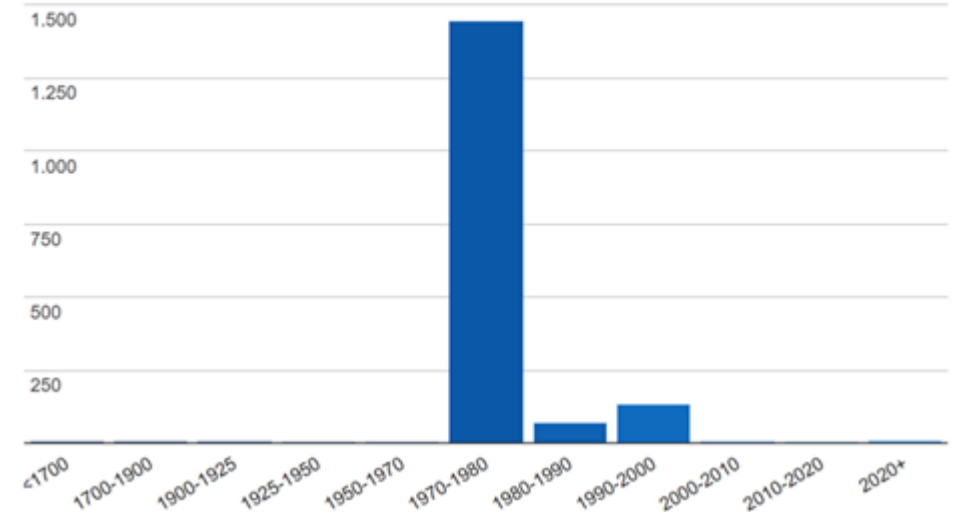
Background Meijenhorst

- 4,525 residents
- 2,188 homes in 2024
- Selected as the first neighborhood to transition off natural gas
- Exploratory process to phase out natural gas initiated in the neighborhood in 2018



Adressen: bouwperiode van panden [↗](#)

Er zijn 1.443 panden uit de bouwperiode 1970-1980





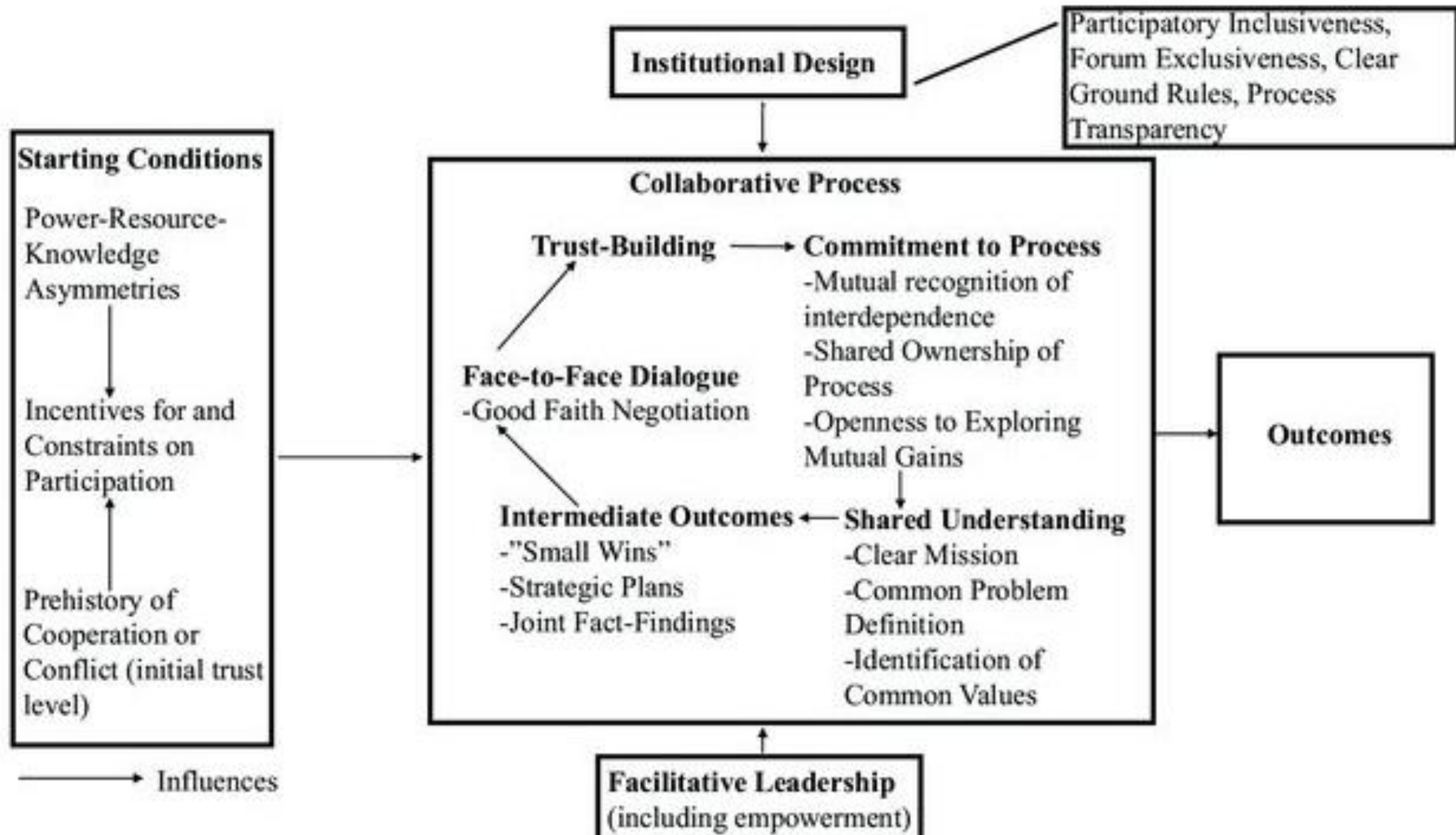
Our research

- **Research questions**
 - How do municipalities, grid operators, housing corporations, and citizen initiatives shape collaboration within the energy transition in Meijenhorst?
 - Which patterns of interaction facilitate or hinder this collaboration?
- **Research methodology**
 - Ethnographic approach: participation in stakeholder steering group meetings and communication meetings
 - In-depth interviews with individual steering group members
 - Change-oriented: qualitative methods aimed at improving multi-stakeholder collaboration
- **Research partners**

HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Tilburg University
- Research started in 2023 (runs until 1 January 2027) (SIA Raak Pro)

Multistakeholder collaboration





Model of Collaborative Governance
Ansell & Gash (2008)

Challenges encountered in the process

- Absence of national government subsidy for Meijenhorst as a pilot area
- Project delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Persistent (local) political and residents' resistance to the use of biomass for heat
- Limited awareness of and support for the energy transition within the neighborhood



Challenges in collaboration

- A subsidy (WIS) granted in 2024, creating pressure to complete the project more quickly
- Stakeholders were in an exploratory phase but are now transitioning to implementation
- Housing corporations must secure 70% tenant approval, requiring broad support
- Numerous interdependencies (different process speeds, communication) within the project
- Residents collective withdrew from participation in the steering group meetings



Collaboration viewed from Ansell & Gash (2008)

- Collaborative Process

- Much physical consultation (**face-to-face dialogue**)
- There is clear **good faith negotiation**
- **Small wins** are celebrated
- There is much openness to **mutual gains** visible as for **joint fact finding**
- There is identification of **common values**

- Starting Conditions

- Large differences in **incentives for participation**
- **Constraints on participation**

- Collaborative Process

- **Unclear mission and common problem definition**
- Partial **shared ownership of process**
- Lack of **mutual recognition of interdependence**

- Facilitative Leadership

- Difficult position for the municipality

Interaction patterns found

Information repetition without anchoring

- Participants are often insufficiently informed when joining discussions, resulting in significant time being lost to repeatedly sharing the same information.

Recurring discussion loops

- Points of discussion frequently resurface and remain unresolved.

Forgotten consensus

- Participants, including the municipality, often seem caught off guard by “new” information that had in fact long been known and previously discussed within the group.

The unspoken iceberg

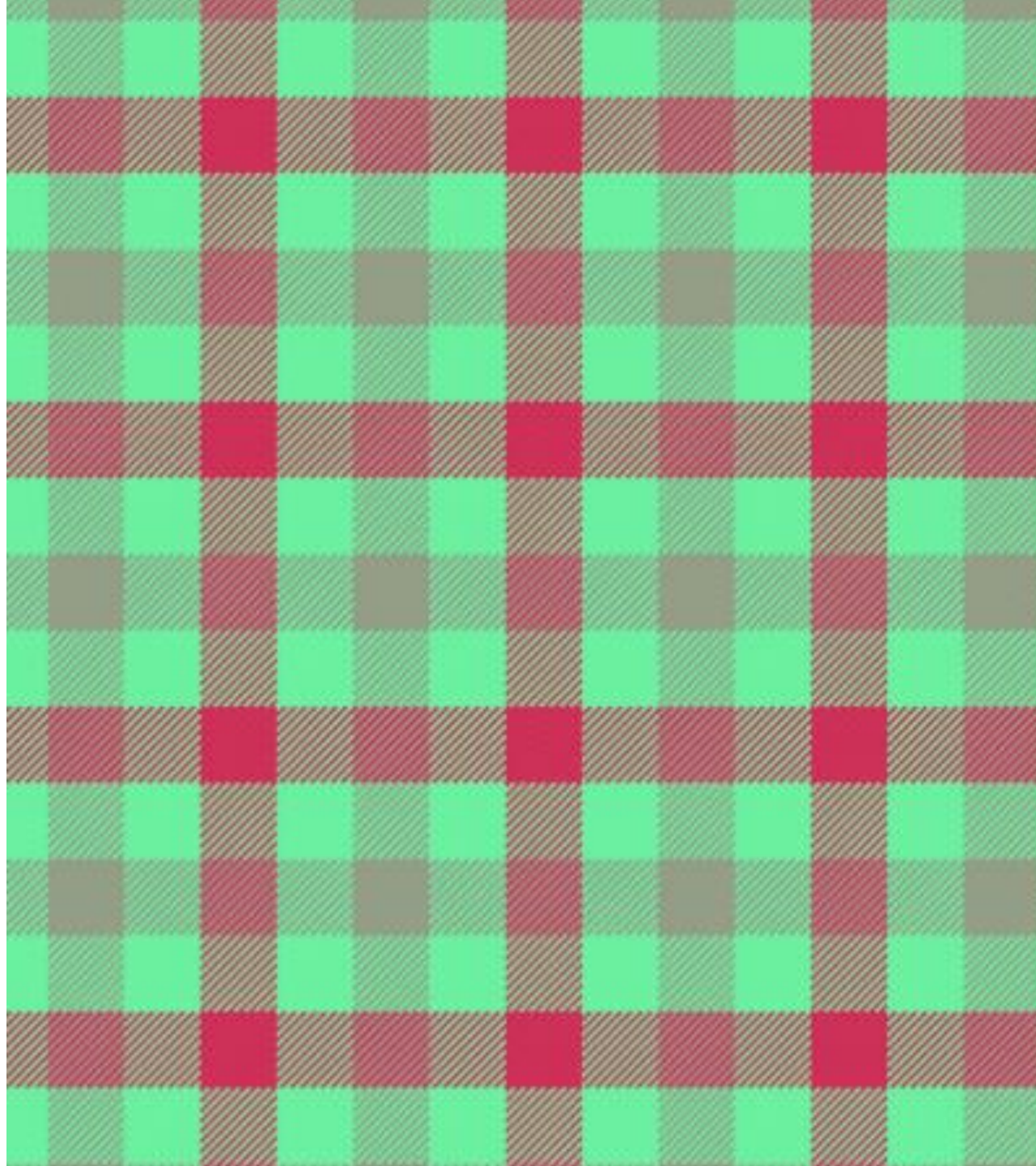
- The passive role and failure to meet commitments cause frustration, yet this problem is not openly discussed, though it is voiced informally among participants.

Delaying decisions

- A recurring need for new insights or additional investigations—whether within organizations or regarding national regulations—that were not anticipated in advance. This often leads to delays and deferrals.

Who should be where?

- There has been considerable debate over who should or should not attend which meetings. There is significant overlap between meetings, with the same information being shared and decisions repeatedly being called into question.



Discussion

- The process of creating the energy transition is very complex and is a ride with bumps and potholes, as well as tailwinds.
- The energy transition process is a marathon and not a sprint. Perseverance is needed.
- Multistakeholder collaboration is inevitable and setting up and paying attention to it is essential to the progress of the process.
- The energy transition is full of uncertainties. This means holding hands and trust each other through thick and thin.
- Recognizing (helping and hindering) interaction patterns can be helpful in making collaboration smoother.





HIER KOMT ALLES SAMEN