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### Summary

The transition to a society in which inhabitants are expected to display self-sufficiency and responsibility takes time and is difficult. It is impossible to have one blueprint for this process.

Every project is different, but also the culture of inhabitants, villages, local governments and countries. Every change demands a customized approach. We experience a broad difference even on a small scale. In one village people may take a lot of initiative, while in another village people must be promoted to take action. What people expect of the local government differs a lot, which means the employees must be flexible in attitude and thinking.

### Issue/Problems

Lochem gained a lot of experience with a variety of project in which inhabitants participate. The main conclusion is that it is a difficult process. The expectations of inhabitants differ from the daily reality. Inhabitants know a lot about their own region and can offer interesting, efficient and creative solutions. But too often those ideas do not gain a hearing at the local government. At the same time, inhabitants are impatient. When a process takes too long, becomes too difficult, has too many interruptions because of a slow decision making process, people can drop out. And they are free to do so, for it is all based on voluntary participation. This is a major problem for the continuity of projects.

Another issue is that the transition to another society demands a lot of its people. Participation is expected on a great variety of subjects, like healthcare, care for elderly people, cultural programs and voluntary service. The risk of over-demanding people is substantial.

### Background

The trend in The Netherlands is decentralisation. In the process a considerable savings on the budget is expected. The idea that the government is fully responsible for the environment, healthcare, care for elderly etc. gives way to a more modern view of self-sufficiency and responsibility. People have become more critical and outspoken over the past decades. They want to get involved in decision making. The expectations of government and participants will have to meet. Working together with inhabitants is also for the government a learning process and asks for a different way of thinking and acting.

### Interests in the issue

Lochem thinks that there is no blueprint for the process of working together with its inhabitants. The cultural differences of people, governments and countries are too big. Every project deserves a custom made approach.

Acceptance and support is possible when projects are launched from the local people, when they benefit of the revenues and when their know-how and ideas are accepted.

## Policy

Lochem recognizes and accepts the cultural differences in and between villages. To know the cultural aspects means that you can deal with them. Every project gets a custom made approach. The objective is the same: to stimulate people to participate in projects that increases the quality of live in rural areas.

Sometimes it is only necessary to facilitate with providing room for meetings and a process facilitator. But in other cases the participants need the help of experts, for example to apply for subsidy.

## Recommendation

It is important that Rural Alliances recognizes the cultural differences between the partners. One blueprint for a process of participation is not the solution. We have to learn from each other, from the problems we face and from our solutions.

## Sources

'Regisserend Lochem'

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