7. Conclusion

7.1 Views on Citizens
Henk Voogd (2001) proves that communicative planning is not the “Holy Grail” by using “social dilemma theory”, which is based on a utilitarian view on citizens that “actors would behave ‘rationally’ - in the sense that they are attempting to maximise ‘individual utility’ in a consistent way” (p.86). According to him, communicative planning cannot protect “collective interests”. However, communicative theorists and other participationists must have a strong objection to such a view on citizens, because, for them, citizens have infinite political capabilities, and can become other regarding citizens through participation.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, participationist views on citizens are highly unrealistic. On the other hand, utilitarian views on citizens seem also unrealistic and too simplistic. Delivering precise and convincing criticisms of utilitarianism, including pluralism and public choice theory, Plamenatz (1973) argues, “If we take every part of a man’s life (...), it makes no sense to speak of his maximizing the satisfaction of his wants” (p.163). The reason is, “No man has a stable order of preferences among even his predictable wants, and many of his wants are unpredictable or so vague that their objects cannot be defined” (pp.163-4). Indeed, facing a political choice, for example at elections, citizens would not or cannot calculate the possible total amount of their interests. Moreover, our interests are not completely dominated by self-interest. We also have “the love of beauty (...); the love of order (...); the love of power, not in the limited form of power over other human beings, but abstract power (...); the love of action” (p.98), as J.S. Mill (1963) enumerated, bitterly criticising Bentham’s view on human nature.

Most citizens are not so well-informed and public-spirited, but also not so individualistic and calculative. Therefore, it could be concluded that liberal-democratic views on citizens are most realistic, taking “a middle way between a Hobbesian pessimism about the nature of human beings and a naïve faith in their perfectibility” (Lindsay cited in Wintrop, 2000, p.152). Liberal democrats do not require citizens to directly participate in decision-making, but also do not leave citizens to indulge themselves in personal interests. They expect an electorate to have “some education in the use of the franchise and some capacity of discussing the issues on which it casts its vote” (Barker, 1942, p.266).

7.2 The Public Interest
Liberal-democratic theory adopts the most reasonable views also on the public interest. Utilitarianism rejects the existence of such interest, recognising only individual interests. However, most people would agree with the necessity of avoiding war, protecting the environment, creating jobs, and so on. These goals are indeed consistent with individual interests, but not the same as individual interests. It is also a strained interpretation to regard these goals as the “maximum possible satisfaction of wants and needs” or the
"maximisation of consumers’ satisfaction at minimum cost". These goals should be simply interpreted as the public interest to be pursued by every society.

In addition, concrete measures to realise the public interest should and can be decided as objectively as possible, based on scientific knowledge available. In other words, there are objectively correct measures, which liberal democrats urge government to take. The VCP and the closure of Noorderplantsoen would be examples of such measures. Communicative theorists oppose the idea that correct measures can be decided objectively apart from discussion in an ideal speech situation. All arguments are socially framed, and therefore should be equally respected. All truth should be established discursively, they argue.

However, it is one thing how an argument is socially framed. It is quite another whether that argument is objectively right or not. For example, Healey (1997) argues that all our arguments originate from our personal cultures. This is, at least partly, correct. My argument in this study must also be more or less influenced by my culture formed through what I have experienced personally so far in my life. My mother was rather critical about the Japanese Government, and had many friends with leftist-thinking. She was also enthusiastic about organic farming, and often brought me to organic farms weekends in my childhood. These facts might influence my argument in this study. Healey’s argument must also be influenced by her personal culture. However, I will not say that, that is why, my argument is nothing more than subjective opinion. Moreover, Healey herself would not say, either, that her communicative planning theory should be regarded as equal to emotional opinion.

In addition, communicative theorists face the well-known self-contradiction relevant to relativism in general. Namely, "If all truth is relative, so also the assertion that truth is relative is ‘relative’" (Sartori, 1987, p.501). If all truth should be established discursively, then the assertion that truth should be established discursively also should be established discursively. Advocating discursive democracy, Dryzek (1990) argues that "pure proceduralism is incoherent, for a commitment to the procedures of communicative rationality implies approval of certain broad kinds of political institutions". He justifies this standpoint by referring to Hannah Arendt: "just as Arendt’s commitment to variety leads her to endorse the councils that allow variety to flourish, so a commitment to communicative rationality leads me to endorse the institutions of discursive democracy" (p.18). However, whereas Arendt endorses the absolute value of "variety", Dryzek espouses communicative rationality, which does not endorse any absolute value. The "commitment to the procedures of communicative rationality" is precisely the commitment to “pure proceduralism”, and therefore communicative theorists are not allowed to advocate particular political institutions. Moreover, they have to leave it to discussion even whether participants strive for communicative rationality or technical rationality. However, Dryzek insists that "political science must criticize society and polity to the extent they violate the principle of communicative rationality" (p.219). Therefore, communicative theory seems in fact based on a “reinforced dogmatism” in Karl Popper’s term (cited in

As mentioned earlier, citizens cannot reach a consensus, but they do not have to reach it. Because some opinions are objectively correct, while some opinions are objectively wrong. It undermines the public interest to force correct opinions to compromise with wrong ones. Criticising the sociology of knowledge, Sartori (1987) concludes as follows: “I persist in believing that ideas (of philosophers no less than of scientists) are to be understood and not unmasked, and that our first task remains to inquire whether they are true or false, verifiable or unverifiable, consistent or contradictory” (p.503). This conclusion should also be applied to ideas put forward by citizens and politicians.

7.3 Liberal-Democratic Theory
Liberal-democratic theory is based on reasonable views on citizens and the public interest. Therefore, it almost necessarily puts forward political institutions and prescriptions for citizens and politicians that contribute toward realising the public interest while ensuring popular control. That is why, in Groningen, liberal democracy has been consistent with the public interest. The VCP was introduced through the liberal-democratic procedure, and the liberal-democratic institutions and liberal-democratic mindset played a decisive role in closing Noorderplantsoen to cars. Although the case study has focused on traffic planning, such consistency between liberal democracy and the public interest can also be recognised in land-use planning and urban development in Groningen. For example, the municipal council of Groningen decided the Broad Local Land Use Plan for the Inner City in 1978. This plan had been effective in protecting the historical structure of the inner city until it was revised in 1995. Although the decision-making process of this plan, just like the VCP, provided only limited opportunities for public participation (Tsubohara, 2003b), the plan was completely consistent with the party frameworks of the PvdA.

7.3.1 Compatibility between Democracy and the Environment
However, some environmentalists argue that democracy has to be sometimes compromised for the sake of the public interest, specifically the environment. For example, William Ophuls (1973) argues that, to save the environment, we can rely neither on “individual conscience” nor “a collective conscience in the form of a world view or religion”. Indeed, the state has to regulate the freedom of citizens. This is rather a normal idea. However, based on this idea, he jumps to a radical conclusion: “Now we have rediscovered that the logic of individualism creates conditions that require the reimposition of some kind of absolutism in order to avoid ruin” (p.228). Liberal democracy has no hesitancy in limiting the freedom of citizens for the public interest, as J.S. Mill explicated in his book On Liberty (1981b). Freedom to be protected under liberal democracy is political freedom against arbitrary state power.

According to Ophuls (1973), “it is not too much to say that the central problem for all theorists about politics” is “how to protect and advance the interests of the whole when men behave or are impelled to behave in a selfish, greedy, and quarrelsome fashion”
Therefore, Ophuls seems to misunderstand that “all theorizers about politics” are utilitarians, and unconsciously ground his democratic view on utilitarianism. Indeed, utilitarianism cannot protect the environment. But he does not have to succumb to absolutism.

Michael Saward (1996) reveals a similar but more confused misunderstanding about democracy. First of all, he puts forward two utilitarian assumptions about human beings. One is “fallibilism”, based on which “our knowledge is never absolute but swims, as it were, in a continuum of uncertainty and of indeterminacy”. Another is an assumption that “people must be regarded as the best judges of their own interests” (p.81). Based on these assumptions, he adopts the utilitarian view on government: “The more responsive a government is, the more democratic it is” (p.79). He describes the “best definition of democracy” as follows: “there should be necessary correspondence between acts of government and the equally weighted express wishes of citizens with respect to those acts” (p.82). At this stage, he already shows a confusion. His definition means that government should just accept the outcomes of referenda. However, this does not realise responsive government, because referenda do not represent the strength or weakness of each opinion. That is why, pluralists do not advocate referenda, but pressure group politics.

From this definition, Saward draws a conclusion that “compatibility between green imperatives and democracy could be little more than contingent”. The reason is, “If democratic rule is responsive rule, then (...) the majority should get what it wants. If it does not want (vote for) green outcomes, so be it” (p.83). Again a confusion. The rule based on which “the majority should get what it wants” is majority rule, which does not guarantee responsive rule in practice, as Dahl admits (1976). Those who get what they want under responsive rule are the most active and influential groups, on condition that free competition among groups is guaranteed. Moreover, he confuses responsive democracy with participatory democracy as follows:

Greens or political ecologists who place faith in decentralisation, participative and/ or direct democracy (...) may feel that in an open, educative and responsive democratic system of the type I have outlined people will be more conscious of environmental problems and more willing and active in seeking solutions to them. (...) The fact remains, however, that such a democracy may not promote green outcomes if we think in majoritarian terms. (p.84)

Aside from these confusions, the argument that responsive government does not ensure green imperatives is correct, because the most influential groups are not necessarily dedicated to environmental protection. However, Saward himself admits that there are “[m]any strong environmental imperatives”, which are “first-order political principles” (p.92). In other words, these environmental imperatives are not subject to fallibilism, and, at least concerning these imperatives, people are not the best judges of their own interests. Now that Saward approves the existence of absolute values, he does not have to yield to utilitarianism.
However, sticking to utilitarianism, he tries to find out a way to still reconcile the environment with democracy. He suggests advocating the environment based on a “possible broader democratic right to adequate health care” (p.87). He concedes that all the arguments for the environment cannot be based on this right. For example, “when green parties define their principles and proposals, they go far beyond narrow considerations of health care” (p.89). In such cases, “it ought to be recognised and acknowledged that democracy is being diluted” (p.93). In his view, however, this is not a problem. “Democracy is not the ‘first virtue’ of a society: there are other reasonable values people will promote” (p.94), he concludes.

Once Saward recognised liberal-democratic theory, he would not have to stretch the interpretation of a democratic right, nor have to accept democracy to be diluted. If green parties present election programmes “far beyond narrow considerations of health care”, win the majority of Parliament, and enforce policies based on the election programmes, then those policies are completely consistent with liberal democracy.

On the other hand, Robert E. Goodin (1992) argues that the green theory of “value”, namely, environmental protection, is “separate” from the green theory of “agency”, among others, participatory theory. It is the former that should dominate the “core of the green political agenda”, and the theory of agency is rather “subsidiary”. Therefore, to form wide coalitions for their value, Greens should not hesitate to compromise their theory of agency, he says. However, as far as the “agency” is about political institutions, the theory of agency is closely related to the theory of value, and participatory democracy is harmful in defending the natural world, as witnessed repeatedly in Groningen. Greens should put forward alternative theory of agency that could protect the environment.

To realise value, we have to insist on democracy, but it is neither utilitarian nor participatory but liberal democracy. Indeed, liberal democracy is also not immune from contingency, because green parties, or more generally, parties that give first priority to the environment do not necessarily win the majority. However, it is still a more secure way in protecting the environment than responsive or participatory democracy, in which government is required to accept public opinion about each political issue. In addition, absolutism is by no means a secure way, because it is a regime entirely dependent on the benevolence of absolute rulers.

7.3.2 Representatives and Delegates
Another reason why liberal democracy can realise the public interest is that liberal-democratic theory urges political leaders to stand for the public interest. Although the New Left politicians of Groningen advocated public participation, they after all maintained liberal-democratic mindset, and exercised political leadership to realise the public interest.

Arblaster (1987) squarely opposes this view on political leadership. He quotes Burke’s speech in Bristol as introduced at the beginning of this study (p.10), and says: “This idea of
the representative having a right, and even a duty, to exercise an independent judgement, with this independence being the core of what is held to distinguish a representative from a mere delegate, is a notion which has long survived Burke’s formulation of it” (p. 83). This “Burkean idea” has not only survived but also “prevailed in Western democratic politics” (p. 84), he says. Therefore, in his view, most politicians seem to already behave in accordance with the liberal-democratic prescription.

The Burkean idea “has always been a puzzle” (p. 84) to Arblaster. He insists, “A representative chosen by the people of a particular constituency should presumably speak for that constituency” (pp. 83-4). In other words, a representative should be a delegate of particular groups: “A true representative (...) is a delegate, carrying a mandate and acting under instructions” (p. 84). Strikingly, based on this definition of representatives, which is currently not prevalent, Arblaster casts doubt on representative democracy.

First, representatives as delegates cannot precisely speak for all the interests they represent: “Given the uniqueness of each individual, and given the gradations and shadings of opinion (...), representation, even of one person by another, let alone of a group by a single person, must always be approximate and imperfect” (p. 85). Second, voices of those who cannot send representatives are entirely ignored: “in a representative system, where the representative speaks and votes only on behalf of the majority of the group represented, the minority in that group is not represented in the decision-making process at all”. Arblaster highlights this problem with the following example:

    At the extreme, if it turned out that one opinion was in a minority in every group or constituency mandating its one representative, then the gathering of representatives would be unanimous in its support for the other opinion, while the minority opinion would be entirely unrepresented, even though, in principle, it could be held by 49 per cent of those taking part in the mandating process. (p. 86)

However, because of these problems, representatives all the more should not behave as delegates. They should strive for the public interest. According to Arblaster himself, this view is already widely shared. Therefore, at least, this is not an unrealistic requirement. Indeed, politicians would normally not entirely ignore opinions held by “49 percent”. A representative assembly with such representatives can settle disputes much more peacefully than a popular assembly with conflicting citizens.

### 7.4 The Role of Political Parties

#### 7.4.1 Party Government
In realising liberal democracy, political parties should play a central role. Although negative images of them have been consistently prevalent, “they are one of the few remaining conduits between citizens and national centres of power” (Wintrop, 2000, p. 253). Particularly so-called party government, or meerderheidscollege, in the parliamentary system can be effective in substantiating elections on one hand and guaranteeing political
leadership on the other. Based on party government, political parties compete for votes at an election with party programmes, and parties that won the majority in a representative assembly form the cabinet. Under the direction of the cabinet, civil servants elaborate policies, and the cabinet proposes the policies to the representative assembly, whose members from government parties support the policies in unity. After prescribed years, not so short but not so long, at the next election, the electorate are asked to judge the effects of those policies, for which government parties are clearly responsible. In Groningen in the 1970s, precisely this system of party government realised the VCP and the Broad Local Land Use Plan in a liberal-democratic manner. Nongovernment parties criticised this procedure as “undemocratic” or even “dictatorial”. However, “party government is not intrinsically undemocratic as long as two key conditions are met, namely that elections are free and the rights of the opposition are respected” (Frognier, 2000, p.22). These two conditions have been, of course, consistently met in Groningen.

Therefore, party government seems a reasonable way for realising the public interest while securing popular control, not only theoretically but also empirically. Empirically in planning as shown in this study, but also maybe in other areas. However, based on misunderstanding, participationists dismiss not only liberalism or liberal-democratic theory, as seen in Chapter 2, but also liberal-democratic institutions as a whole.

For example, according to Dryzek (1990), one of the methods of “liberal democracy” to resolve disputes is “for one side’s position to prevail, perhaps by carrying a legislative majority” (p.123). Indeed, liberal democracy adopts majority rule, although not “unqualified majority rule” but “limited majority rule” (Sartori, 1987). Dryzek raises an objection to this method, because “[d]efeated parties can always return to fight again”. “The consequent vacillation in policy content can produce results far worse than if one of the competing positions were chosen at random and given a long-term commitment” (p.123), he argues. However, under party government, policy content is stable between elections, and, as long as the effects of policy content are judged positively by the electorate, it can be stable beyond elections. If the stability of policy content is particularly required, the interval of elections can be lengthened, in accordance with the procedure prescribed in the constitution.

Healey (1997) examines “representative democracy”, pursuing the ideal “forms and styles of governance”. She describes representative democracy as follows:

We (that is, most adults) elect our representatives, the politicians, who oversee the work of officials in the departments of government. The task of politicians, guided by their officials, both administrators and experts, is to articulate the “public interest” on any issue, and to develop government action to achieve that interest. The officials are answerable to the politicians, and the politicians are answerable to the people through the ballot box. (p.221)

Therefore, she recognises neither the distinction between the parliamentary system and the presidential system, nor the distinction between political parties, cabinets, and representative assemblies, dumping all these into one word “politicians".
Based on such a shaky understanding about representative democracy, she argues, “This model could work well in a relatively homogeneous society, with limited cultural diversity” (p.221). However, a relatively homogeneous society has been required by participationists, including Rousseau, as a condition to realise direct democracy. This is understandable, because it is easily expected that citizens with conflicting interests cannot make a decision in face-to-face assemblies. On the contrary, liberal democracy was devised precisely to meet the challenge of “making sense together while living differently”. As Sartori (1987) argues, liberal democracy, as opposed to Greek direct democracy, is “related to, and conditioned by, the discovery that dissent, diversity, and ‘parts’ (the parts which became parties) are not incompatible with social order and the well-being of the body politic” (pp.288-9), and that “difference, not uniformity, is the leaven and the nourishment of states” (p.289). Therefore, “it is liberal democracy, not ancient democracy, that is based on dissent and diversity” (p.290).

Healey (1997) further argues that representative democracy “encourages the development of hierarchically-structured bureaucracies” (p.221), and even equates representative democracy with the “technocratic state” (p.246). In fact, the development of bureaucracies dates back to ancient time: “From the dawn of the political history, certain large empires promoted a highly specialized, differentiated, and functionally competent bureaucracy” (Farazmand, 1997, p.49). Characterised as a “technocratic state” or a “bureaucratic polity” is not representative democracy, but “military rule” (Riggs, 1997, p.10). Moreover, the “hierarchically-structured bureaucracies” themselves are not evil. The bottom line is how to keep them under popular control, and liberal democracy puts political executives on top of the bureaucracies, whose heads are accountable to those executives. As mentioned earlier, Healey suggests holding civil servants directly accountable to citizens, but this could certainly degenerate into the technocratic state by nullifying liberal-democratic institutions.

Although she concludes that representative democracy, along with “corporatism”, seems “out of tune with contemporary tendencies” (p.231), the argument for giving up representative democracy is by no means new. In the 1960s, the advocates of participatory democracy insisted that there had been “a breakdown in the authority and legitimacy of those [representative] governments” (Cook & Morgan, 1971, p.16). The following counterargument put forward by Cook and Morgan (1971) almost forty years ago seems still entirely applicable to the current criticism of representative democracy:

Although it cannot be said that these societies have handled all changes and problems successfu lly and with a minimum of friction, a strong case can be made that they have substantially adapted to emerging problems (...). It would be very difficult to point to other forms of government, of either the past or present, that have a record of equal or greater success in this regard. (p.16)

7.4.2 The Party Identity
In order to function as conduits between citizens and government, political parties have to
present distinct party frameworks, which reflect public opinion, and party leaders have to stick to those frameworks. This is also essential in encouraging citizens to go to the ballot box. The New Left politicians in Groningen in the 1970s strived for this under the slogan of “polarisation”. However, the term “polarisation” can have a negative or radical connotation, unnecessarily adding to the negative images of political parties. It should be rather called the clarification of party identity.

On the other hand, it has been argued that party identity would increasingly blur and all political parties would gradually converge into “catch-all parties”, a concept introduced by Otto Kirchheimer in 1966. According to this argument, because the division in society based on classes has weakened, political parties would more and more try to appeal to all the voters across social groups, diluting their ideological commitments and rather emphasising the personal characters of their leaders.

Party history since the 1960s has disproved this prediction. “Many party systems now do have some ‘catch-all’ parties” (Ware, 1996, p.228), but catch-all parties are far from being dominant. The reason is, as Schattschneider argued in 1960, that the class division is just one of various potential social divisions, which political parties can selectively elicit (cited in Ware, 1996). Therefore, “the central task of party leaders remains that of trying to get their definition of what is the most important division (or divisions) accepted by voters” (Ware, 1996, p.231). Without dividing people, the catch-all parties “may succeed in the short term in mobilizing voters, but in the longer term large numbers of them may exit to parties that are ‘exploiting’ cleavages” (p.232). If, for example, society is divided between those who place first priority on the environment and those who place first priority on the economy, political parties that present only ambivalent policies will not be able to survive. In fact, in Groningen, the afspiegelingscollege has never revived since 1972, and, on the contrary, the left-wing meerderheidscollege has revived in 2006. Political parties in Groningen might have rediscovered the viability of emphasising party identity.

A formal document representing party identity is a party programme. While the party programme should clearly present basic policies advocated by a party, it should not be too precise so that party leaders can exercise political leadership. Therefore, the party programme should give party leaders neither “imperative” mandate nor “personal” mandate but “outline mandate”:

The type of representation based on programmes on the one hand, and on individuals on the other, can be defined as characterised by an “outline-mandate”, at some distance from both the “imperative” mandate, whereby electors choose delegates in the strong sense of the word, and the “personal” or “trusteeship” mandate which maximizes the autonomy of the representative. The “outline mandate” gives those who are elected the right to carry out in parliament and, if they become the government, in the executive, the policies which have been formulated in the programme in broad terms, but also leave the government some room for manoeuvre. (Frognier, 2000, p.29)

The party programme should be a document showing how to realise not interests of party
members or supporters, but the public interest. Successive liberal democrats have urged political parties to stand for the public interest. In an attempt to establish the “Reform” Party, as opposed to the Conservative Party, J. S. Mill (1963) enumerated possible constituents for the party, such as the “middle classes”, the “skilled employments”, and the “working classes”. While stressing that these various “classes” could be united into one party, he cautioned, “In calling upon all these sections to knit themselves together into one compact body, we are not seeking to build a party on a mere combination of classes for the promotion of separate interest”. “We are appealing in behalf of the general interest of all, to those whose particular interests have opened their eyes” (p.282), he said. Pointing out that “professional political parties” were “close to the mainsprings of the State”, Barker (1942) encouraged them to use that position “in the interests of the programme and the policy of their party”, not “in the interests of their party organization and their party adherents” (p.93). From the same point of view, Sartori (1976) stresses the necessity of distinguishing “parties” from “factions”: “a party is a part of a whole attempting to serve the purposes of the whole, whereas a faction is only a part for itself” (p.25).

Once in government, party leaders have to carry out the party programme. As Laver and Budge argues, “If a party says one thing to the voters and then goes into a government which does something quite different, then its supporters have been disenfranchised (...) just as effectively as if they never had a vote in the first place” (cited in Ware, 1996, p.316).

Arblaster (1987) refutes the idea that a governing party “has a mandate for doing something which it said it would do in its election manifesto” (pp.84-5). Because it “is quite likely that the voters are in fact ignorant of those plans”, and “opinion polls sometimes indicate that a majority of those who support a party or government do so while opposing one or more of its particular policies” (p.85). Concerning the first reason, it is remarkable that Arblaster, who insists on citizens directly participating in decision-making, considers political capabilities of citizens so poor when he downgrades representative democracy. The second reason rather proves the advantage of party programmes. Citizens tend to have contradictory demands personally as well as collectively. Thanks to party programmes, which should be consistent, citizens are forced to choose from among them, and ad hoc and opportunistic policies can be prevented.

### 7.4.3 Intra-Party Democracy

As mentioned earlier, it is necessary to enforce so-called party discipline among members of a representative assembly in realising party government. However, as Sartori (1994) argues, “party voting discipline is not, per se, a negation of intra-party democracy” (p.193). Moreover, lively discussion within political parties is essential in creating party frameworks that reflect public opinion and forcing party leaders to respect them. Although, in Groningen in the 1980s, PvdA leaders tended to divert from party frameworks, intra-party discussion still sporadically forced them to stick to party frameworks. As a result, PvdA leaders chose to close Noorderplantsoen to cars, and they also decided not to allow large retail stores to locate outside the inner city¹.
Michels and the New Left Movement regarded organisation or bureaucracy and leadership within political parties as opposed to democracy. Based on such a view, the West Germany Green Party at first dispensed with paid party functionaries and gave its legislators the “imperative mandate”, which “required individual legislators to be bound by the instructions of local meetings.” “This practice did not work, and subsequently had to be replaced”, according to Ware (1996, p.109). Both bureaucracy and leadership within parties are not only compatible with liberal democracy, but also essential in managing large organisations like political parties. In addition, “policy and strategy initiatives are far more likely to develop among officials and leaders than with members” (p.110), particularly when parties constitute government. This is also acceptable and even necessary, as J.S. Mill talked about the leader of his Reform Party: “The leader must not wait to receive his measures from his supporters. It is his business to know, better than they know themselves, not only what is in itself right, but what they are prepared to support.” (1963, p.286) However, it is a precondition that lively discussion is maintained within parties and basic policies are subject to the approval of party members. While party leaders have to give information to and keep intimate communication with party members, party members should refrain from regarding party leaders as delegates of their specific interests.

The role of intra-party organisations, such as district teams and working groups of the PvdA, should be examined not in terms of participatory democracy but in terms of liberal democracy. These organisations cannot participate in preparing each of government policies, but they should play a central role in creating party frameworks. In this respect, the intra-party organisations of the PvdA in the 1970s might have worked almost ideally in terms of liberal democracy, although the party leaders struggled to define their role.

Citizens’ organisations, including new social movements, are essential in stimulating autonomous public opinion in liberal democracy. However, they cannot replace political parties, which have much more direct connections with political power. Therefore, “the members of most cause groups have little alternative but to work through one or more of the existing parties”. Or, as the West German Greens did, “an alternative strategy may be to put forward their own candidates for election and, possibly, found their own party” (Ware, 1996, p.84). The latter strategy has not necessarily worked, because “existing parties have displayed considerable capacity to respond to new divisions” (p.231), including those related to the environment.²

7.5 Conclusion
We should adopt liberal-democratic theory, and recognise the significant role political parties can play in realising liberal democracy. As long as we strive for liberal democracy based on political parties in accordance with liberal-democratic theory, popular control can be indirectly but surely secured, and the public interest can be realised at least after a period of trial and error.

The most formidable obstacle to this direction is the fact that there are now very few who

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expressly advocate liberal-democratic theory, while participatory theory enjoys successive
generations of followers and theorists. According to Wintrop (2000), participatory theory, or
utopianism in his term, “has become a major part of 20th-century Western culture not
because a majority of people or intellectuals are extreme revolutionaries but because so
many of them are moderate utopians” (p.78). Particularly political parties, from left to right,
seem to vie in proving how dedicated they are to public participation, although they can
play a significant role precisely in liberal democracy.

In addition to various misconceptions around liberalism or liberal-democratic theory, as
mentioned in Chapter 2, it has also been connected with conservatism. Indeed, liberalism
or liberal-democratic theory is compatible with conservatism. Therefore, conservatism is
said to have reached “its maturity” with Burke (Quinton, 2007, p.291), and Tocqueville can
also be called conservative. However, there is no reason to confine liberal-democratic
theory to conservatism. Liberal-democratic theory provides promising democratic theory
for the majority of social democrats who have dismissed nationalisation, eco-activists who
struggle to reconcile the environment with democracy, or planners who face difficulties in
public participation through research and practise. I hope that this study can urge those
wide-ranging people to stand up and advocate liberal-democratic theory, without fearing to
be labelled as elitists or conservatives.

Notes
1 The general member meeting in April 1985 adopted a motion that the party group should not accept
large retail stores for the time being.
2 In his book Rationality and Power (1998), Bent Flyvbjerg argues, based on his case study on the
Danish city, Aalborg, that political power essentially neglects technical rationality. He regards political
power itself as something evil, saying, “Power, quite simply, often finds ignorance, deception,
self-deception, rationalizations, and lies more useful for its purposes than truth and rationality” (p.38),
“the possession of more power appears to spoil reason even more” (p.37), “Power, quite simply,
produces that knowledge and that rationality which is conducive to the reality it wants” (p.36), and so
on. This view is gross simplification. First of all, society cannot be governed completely based on
technical expertise, although such a “utopia” was dreamed of by early socialists. Society always
needs political judgement, and, as a result, needs politics, which is also considered essentially evil by
Flyvbjerg. Second, society therefore needs somebodies who make political decisions, that is, political
power holders. Political power is, far from being evil, indispensable to society. Third, indeed, power
holders compromise technical rationality with political judgement, but, as a matter of course, they
should respect it. To what extent they do respect technical rationality and how they try to achieve the
public interest depends on the quality of power holders. That is why, the critical issue for democracy,
whose meaning Flyvbjerg never elaborates despite his frequent use of the word, is how to secure
competent power holders, keeping them under popular control.
In this respect, I advocate liberal-democratic theory, and the failure of the Aalborg Project, as Flyvbjerg reveals it, seems to indicate the importance of political parties and their initiatives. The political situation in Aalborg recalls that in Groningen until the 1960s. However, although he argues, "it has been my aim to present my findings in the form of a narrative that would help readers move about in the dense case material, so as to provide them with the basis to form their own judgments about the case and its implications" (p.1), he after all picks up some events and drops others, keeping in mind his very general hypothesis and conclusion that "power has a rationality that rationality does not know" (p.2). As a result, his narrative is indeed very detailed in some respects, but not necessarily precise in politics. Following his narrative, readers have to construct, little by little, the political configuration of Aalborg, including the party division of the municipal council and the political executive. Moreover, there is very little information about how political parties worked internally. It is therefore impossible to draw some conclusion related to democratic theories based on his case study.