

MASTER'S THESIS

Where the stayers came from: initial motivation and engagement of long-term participants in a citizen humanities project

Wieman, S

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Where the stayers came from: initial motivation and engagement of long-term participants in a citizen humanities project

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Student: Sander Wieman

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Abstract

With the rise of citizen science research, scientists have increasingly attempted to determine the factors that determine participants' engagement in such projects to better predict and stimulate long-term commitment. Previous research on such engagement, often operationalising the construct as collections of motivations and activities, has shown how subgroups of long-term participants focus on different types of activities, whilst being mostly intrinsically motivated. However, research on citizen humanities projects as a subset of citizen science projects is scarce, and rarely touches on newcomer engagement in relation to long-term perspectives. This study uses interviews with 18 long-term participants of the citizen humanities project 'Historische Database Suriname en Curaçao' in a qualitative analysis to determine their initial motivations and behaviours. It shows that participants have intrinsic motivations in line with previous research, while sharing strong extrinsic motivations geared towards the project's outcomes. Transcribing historical records, the main task in the project, is considered by all participants to be central to their commitment, regardless of their motivations and other activities. The study suggests ways of identifying potential long-term participants and highlights a need for more meta-research in the field of citizen humanities.

Key terms

citizen science, citizen humanities, engagement, motivation

Summary

Since the turn of the century, and increasingly since the 2010s, citizen science has grown as a way of crowdsourcing scientific efforts, drawing scientists out of their ivory tower and regular citizens into the world of science. Although its goals are admirable, as a methodology, citizen science comes with a host of challenges. In addition to considerations of scientific rigour, it requires finding suitable participants, persuading them to participate, and figuring out ways of keeping them involved over extended periods of time. These challenges have spurred meta-research into citizen science as a scientific practice, some of which revolves around participants' engagement, a construct often operationalised as collections of motivations and activities.

However, citizen science projects are not as common in the humanities as in, for instance, the natural sciences. This has led to research on engagement overlooking citizen humanities projects, using data from nor formulating recommendations for them. This study therefore provides a rare insight into engagement in such a citizen humanities project: the Dutch 'Historische Database Suriname en Curaçao', in which historical records are transcribed by volunteers. Using a qualitative research design based on interviews with long-term project participants, 18 resulting transcripts were analysed to distil the motivations and behaviours these participants had had as newcomers.

Existing empirical research shows that motivations in citizen science projects tend to be, to a significant degree, intrinsic motivations: participants, often volunteers, are stimulated by the activities they participate in within the context of the project, as opposed to outcomes related to those activities. The activities themselves are quite varied, however: some participants focus on the main project tasks, others on the social activities, etc. Moreover, both motivations and activities can change dynamically. For instance, depending on what levels of involvement a project allows, a participant's role in that project can evolve, allowing experienced participants to perform different tasks than newcomers.

However, the results of this study partly diverge from earlier findings in the literature. First, the main finding here is that long-term participants are not primarily motivated intrinsically. Although they do report intrinsic motivations, most put a strong emphasis on the outcomes of the project. In other words, even though they considered the work (transcribing historical documents) interesting in its own right, it was the wish to see the project's goals fulfilled (making historical documents available to the public) that drove them to join the project, and which sustains them to this day.

This is not to say that intrinsic motivations are unimportant, as the second finding shows that participants do enjoy their project tasks. However, there is more to this aspect, as here the relevance of the project's topic is shown: participants are stimulated not merely by the work they do, but by the way in which it brings to life the stories of people from the past.

Third, participants' sets of activities are shown to be quite varied. However, contrary to findings in previous research, they nonetheless consider the project's main task – transcribing historical documents – to be central to their participation, even if they spend hardly any time on it.

Interestingly, the final finding relates less to the participants' own activities than to those of others: the project leaders. This study finds that, regardless of which activities participants choose to engage in (e.g., only transcribing), *all* participants' engagement is stimulated by being part of a well-organised project, with actively involved project leaders sending regular updates, helping out on the forum or via email, and organising meetups, providing their volunteers with a true sense of community.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Science, once the work of unpaid hobbyists and part-time practitioners, since the late 19th century has developed into the near-exclusive territory of professionals, who at times are seen as disconnected from the broader public (Jones & Spiers, 2018). Although scientific practice and knowledge have become increasingly complex, creating a natural barrier between experts and laymen, in recent decades a movement has been growing to help break down this barrier: involving members of the public in scientific research (Silvertown, 2009; Strasser & Haklay, 2018). The adoption of what is now commonly called citizen science has exploded since the start of the 21st century, and even more so since 2010, spurred on by new possibilities offered by the internet in general and modern web platforms in particular (Kullenberg & Kasperowski, 2016; Watson & Floridi, 2018).

Involving non-professionals in scientific research, however, brings with it a host of new challenges. Among other things, it requires finding suitable participants, persuading them to participate, and figuring out ways of keeping them involved over extended periods of time (Land-Zandstra et al., 2021). Partly to address these challenges, some researchers have made efforts to study how and why people participate in citizen science projects. Rather than focusing on the goals or outcomes of citizen science, they study what is commonly called participants' engagement, a construct which describes a combination of psychological and behavioural factors (Aristeidou et al., 2017). The present study aims to add to this growing body of knowledge through a case study, exploring changes in motivation and engagement among long-term participants in a citizen science project.

1.2. Exploration of the topic

Although non-professionals have been taking part in scientific endeavours throughout much of modern history, the term citizen science is relatively new. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) notes a first use of the term in the MIT Technology Review from January 1989 (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). However, in the roughly 30 years that have passed since then, the scientific community has not managed to reach a consensus on a definition. This has led to definitions that are sometimes context-dependent or even vague (Cohn, 2008; Cooper & Lewenstein, 2016; Haklay et al., 2021). This confusion is compounded by a fundamental dichotomy in the use of the term citizen science, with some researchers using it in relation to a movement to democratise science, while others use it to signify the involvement of non-professionals in scientific work (Strasser & Haklay, 2018). The OED itself follows the second 'stream', defining citizen science as "scientific work undertaken by members of the general public, often in collaboration with or under the direction of professional scientists and scientific institutions" (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). It is this definition that the current thesis will adhere to.

"Engagement is one of the most widely misused and overgeneralized constructs found in the educational, learning, instructional, and psychological sciences" (Azevedo, 2015, p. 1). Whereas most definitions for citizen science at least show significant overlap, there is less consensus on exactly what constitutes engagement. Overall, there is broad agreement on important dimensions, but as studies tend to focus on one or a few dimensions, their results can be hard to compare. Many authors study engagement by focusing on the activities and output of participants, often using that

perspective to categorise participants based on 'levels' of engagement (Land-Zandstra et al., 2021). Others focus on engagement as a construct with behavioural as well as psychological factors, thereby expanding the scope of their research (Aristeidou et al., 2017). Finally, some research decomposes the psychological component of engagement further into an affective and a cognitive aspect (Appleton et al., 2008; De Moor et al., 2019; Fredricks et al., 2004). These main aspects are then sometimes further divided or operationalised into more specific concepts (Phillips et al., 2019). This thesis follows the aforementioned conceptualisation of engagement into three dimensions (affective/emotional, behavioural and cognitive), which is considered to be suitable both within and outside of citizen science (de Vreede et al., 2019). For reasons of feasibility, this study focuses on the behavioural aspect of engagement specifically.

The last concept central to the current thesis is motivation, in the context of citizen science the force that drives participants to become and stay engaged (De Moor et al., 2019). Much of the literature makes a distinction between two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. This distinction hinges on whether someone attaches value to the activity *itself* (intrinsic motivation), or to an *outcome* of the activity (extrinsic motivation; R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the context of citizen science, intrinsic motivation is often considered the most relevant, since the work that participants do is nearly always unpaid (Franzoni & Sauermann, 2014). Of note here is the relation between motivation and engagement, and although some authors wonder whether it even makes sense to see these constructs as separate concepts at all (Martin et al., 2017), most see motivation as either closely connected to engagement (Nov et al., 2014; Ponciano & Brasileiro, 2014), or as a vital dimension of it (Phillips et al., 2019). This has allowed research on various motivations of participants in citizen science projects (Rotman et al., 2012), as well as research linking those motivations to specific measures of engagement, most commonly measures of output (Eveleigh et al., 2014; Tiago et al., 2017).

1.3. Problem statement

As described in the previous section, various theoretical and empirical attempts have been made to build a foundation for understanding citizen science engagement in recent years, resulting in detailed models describing various kinds of engagement profiles (Aristeidou et al., 2017; Phillips et al., 2019; Ponciano & Brasileiro, 2014). However, much of the research on citizen science engagement is based on projects from specific scientific disciplines, often part of the natural sciences (Crain et al., 2014). This can be explained by citizen science approaches being more common in these disciplines, and hence data related to engagement – quantitative data in particular – being readily available. However, citizen science projects have become more common in recent years in fields outside of the natural sciences, such as the social sciences and humanities (Ciolfi et al., 2017; Tauginienė et al., 2020). Research in the humanities focuses on human culture and often uses qualitative research methods aimed at interpretation, critical thinking and analysis (Heinisch, Barbara et al., 2021). Given these aspects, which make what are often called 'citizen humanities' projects different from many other citizen science endeavours (Adamson, 2016), new research on engagement within such projects is needed.

However, research on motivation and engagement in citizen science not being geared towards the social sciences is not the only limitation of the current literature. Although some scientists have studied the role that motivation plays with regard to engagement (albeit usually limited to output measures), these studies are usually of a cross-sectional or a theoretical nature (Crowston & Fagnot, 2008; Land-Zandstra et al., 2016). Few therefore provide a view of how specific participants'

motivations and engagement change over time (Eveleigh et al., 2014; Heinisch, Barbara et al., 2021). And although a longitudinal research design is beyond the scope of this thesis, researching the motivations and engagement of a group of long-term participants in a retrospective manner is feasible. This has the potential to shed light on relevant motivations and patterns of engagement in citizen science projects in the humanities, as well as to provide ideas for recruitment and retention strategies for such projects.

1.4. Research objective and questions

Following from the gaps described above, this thesis aims to study the original motivation and engagement of long-term participants in a citizen science project related to the social sciences. In other words, the goal is to understand what participants' motivations were when they joined the project, as well as their engagement (as reflected in behaviour) in the first months – and to study this in a retrospective manner. Distinguishing combinations of these aspects (profiles) among the current group of participants then allows for recognising newcomers that might turn into long-term participants later. Therefore, this thesis will attempt to answer the following research question:

What profiles of initial motivation and initial engagement can be discerned among long-term participants in a citizen humanities project?

To answer this research question, the following sub-questions will be answered in turn:

1. What motivations did current long-term participants have as newcomers?
2. What behaviours did current long-term participants show as newcomers?

1.5. Motivation/relevance

As described in section 1.3, the body of scientific knowledge relevant to this thesis suffers from somewhat of a bias towards the natural sciences, due to the fact that those have been the most prolific in adopting citizen science approaches in their research. Considering the relatively recent rise of citizen science as an approach in the social sciences, studying motivation and engagement in that context can add to the available literature. By studying patterns of initial motivation and engagement of current long-term participants, this thesis can address another gap in the literature, since most of the literature focuses on current characteristics of groups of participants (Phillips et al., 2019). In fact, no research studying the original motivations and engagement of current participants retrospectively could be found in the literature search.

Apart from adding to the citizen science literature, this thesis can provide practical insights for developing or improving both recruitment and retention strategies for citizen science projects, especially those in the social sciences. Knowing what originally motivated current long-term participants may help gear recruitment efforts towards those potential participants who might be most likely to stay engaged over extended periods of time. Similarly, knowing about long-term participants' behaviour in the period following their joining the project might help to recognize high-potential participants among large groups of newcomers.

1.6. Main lines of approach

This chapter provides an introduction on the topic at hand, and explains the questions this thesis aims to answer. Chapter 2 describes the theoretical framework in more detail, followed by chapter 3, which presents the methodology used. Chapter 4 then shows the results of the research, after which chapter 5 finishes the thesis by discussing its main conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Research approach

To collect literature relevant to the topic of this thesis, and specifically relating to the context of and previous research relating to the research question, a literature search was performed as described by Saunders (2019). Literature was searched primarily using the Open University's (OU) library portal and Google Scholar. Acceptable sources were peer-reviewed journal articles, as well as books and, in rare cases, non-academic articles written by academics.

Multiple techniques were used to find appropriate literature via the search engines mentioned:

Building blocks method: some searches were done from scratch by combining relevant keywords and boolean operators. When using the OU library, keywords can be searched in specific parts of articles, such as the title and/or abstract, and results can be limited to specified date ranges. An example of a simple search string used is the following:

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TitleCombined:("citizen science" OR "crowd science") AND Abstract:engagement
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Snowball methods: in many instances, a specific paper or other source was used as a starting point. Then, a search was performed either by going through the sources cited in the starting document (backward snowballing), or by searching for sources that themselves cite the starting document (forward snowballing). For obvious reasons, backward snowballing can only be used to search for literature published before the starting document, whereas forward snowballing only searches more recent literature. Forward snowballing was only done using Google Scholar, as the OU library does not support this function.

An important starting point for applying these methods for this thesis was provided by the supervisor in the form of four relevant papers by Aristeidou et al. (2017), Jackson et al. (2016), Phillips et al. (2019), and Ponciano and Brasileiro (2014). Another important starting point was a paper by Kullenberg and Kasperowski (2016), which was known to the author beforehand.

Searching by author: the search engines mentioned above also support looking up publications by specific authors. This was mainly used to find recent papers by authors who had written seminal papers in the past.

2.2. Implementation

In all, 44 sources were found and selected from the three types of searches described in the previous section. Ten of these were found through the building blocks method; 30 were found through snowball methods, and four through searching by author. Around 30 other sources were found and considered but not used for the thesis, mostly due to lack of relevance. Note that some sources counted as found through snowballing did appear in building blocks searches, but after being discovered through snowballing. These counts do not include the articles provided by the supervisor and the paper known beforehand, or sources found through other means (e.g., guidelines on academic integrity from the OU website).

Once found, sources went through mostly the same process: reading the abstract, discussion and main findings, and oftentimes the problem statement. This provided relatively quick insights into what the source might offer in the context of this thesis, and its place in the literature. For sources found through backward snowballing, the specific section(s) relevant to the original reference were consulted as well. If a source was deemed relevant after these steps, it was read more comprehensively, focusing on sections relevant to its specific use for this thesis (for instance, the methodology). Then, it was added to a reference manager and tagged based on relevant aspects or themes.

2.3. Results and conclusions

In this section, the scope is defined in further detail. The other subsections describe the results of the literature review regarding the main concepts to be studied, motivation and engagement (specifically its behavioural dimension), focusing on literature related specifically to new participants where possible.

2.3.1. From crowdsourcing to citizen humanities

As described in the previous chapter, one difficulty in studying motivation and engagement in citizen science projects is the bias towards the natural sciences in the available literature (Franzoni & Sauermann, 2014). Further searches made clear, however, that both motivation and engagement have been extensively studied outside citizen science research. As a first step in discussing relevant theory, therefore, it is important to establish clear definitions of the relevant concepts – as far as not already discussed – as well as clear boundaries of the relevant scientific fields. This step can then guide later discussions of existing literature on motivation and engagement.

The broadest concept relevant here is crowdsourcing: “the use of a set of distributed production models that make an open call for contributions from a large, undefined network of people” (Wiggins & Crowston, 2011). The vagueness in this definition is common, as there is a wide variety of goals, methods and participants in crowdsourcing (Estellés-Arolas & González-Ladrón-de-Guevara, 2012). What is relevant for present purposes, is that this definition contains no notion of science. The term commonly used for that particular subsection of crowdsourcing is ‘crowd science’, a term which emphasises projects’ academic character as well as their “large and diverse base of contributors” (Franzoni & Sauermann, 2014, p. 1).

As is clear now, a sizable amount of the empirical citizen science research can also be – and often is – categorised as crowd science. These projects are able to reach such large numbers of participants by engaging them virtually, and often by being based on web platforms such as Zooniverse. This is in

line with research which shows that the enormous growth that citizen science has seen in recent years is in no insignificant part due to such platforms and the internet more broadly (Jones & Spiers, 2018; Kullenberg & Kasperowski, 2016).

Unsurprisingly, context matters. Some of the literature on motivation and engagement relates to the broader context of crowdsourcing, while some relates to crowd science, which again is different from studies on small-scale citizen science projects. Moreover, contexts can be different simply due to the scientific field being studied. Important in this regard is that qualitative citizen science projects in the humanities tend to differ from quantitative projects in other fields, such as the natural sciences, in terms of their goals and methods (Heinisch, Barbara et al., 2021). In judging the relevance of particular literature for the present study, therefore, these contexts need to be taken into account.

2.3.2. Engagement

The behavioural dimension of engagement comprises all the activities participants employ in the context of a citizen science project. The way this dimension is studied needs to be seen in the context of citizen science typologies. One such typology, proposed by Bonney et al. (2009), distinguishes between contributory, collaborative and co-created projects, based on the steps of the scientific process participants are involved in and the level of control they can exert over them. The type of project largely determines the types of tasks participants perform, and therefore the type of 'output' they create. Many projects, however, focus mainly on letting large numbers of participants contribute by collecting data, and project organisers are likely to measure their participants' output in some way. In part because of this, using output measures based on this type of participation has been a common way of studying the behavioural aspects of engagement (Phillips et al., 2018, 2019). Various studies have therefore attempted to group participants by levels of engagement, looking for instance at the number of contributions and the amount of time spent on a project (Eveleigh et al., 2014; Ponciano & Brasileiro, 2014). A common finding in this context is that much of the work is done by a relatively small number of participants (Causser & Wallace, 2012; De Moor et al., 2019; Holley, 2009; Sauer mann & Franzoni, 2015).

As is common in qualitative studies, however, this thesis aims to study a richer conceptualisation of the behavioural dimension of engagement. One way of doing this is going into more detail regarding the types of tasks participants perform (Heinisch, Barbara et al., 2021). But going beyond this is useful as well, as including non-task related aspects of the behavioural dimension can, for instance, show that even with decent contribution levels, online forums might show very little participation (Romeo & Blaser, 2011). A very thorough exploration of the behavioural dimension (among others) was performed by Phillips et al. (2019). They found that, among a host of activities reported, participants often mentioned not just data collection, but also communicating with others. This shows how engagement, even if restricted to behaviour, means more to participants than merely 'doing the work'.

Another aspect of behaviour in the context of engagement is that it changes over time. Since the present thesis aims to study engagement and motivation in the period after joining a project, literature that relates to the behaviour and motivations of newcomers is relevant here. Some studies have found that participants show a form of evolution throughout their time in a project, often related to their performing more tasks, different tasks or taking up new roles (Crowston & Fagnot, 2008; Dejean & Jullien, 2015; Preece & Shneiderman, 2009). Evidence is mixed on whether such a linear view of participants' behaviour is suitable, however, since newcomers can also be found to

switch between different behavioural patterns without any clear trajectory over time (Jackson et al., 2016). This thesis aims to capture such newcomer behaviour as reported by current long-term participants, which provides a different perspective than the studies mentioned.

2.3.3. Motivation

Like engagement, motivation is a multifaceted concept (Phillips et al., 2019; Raddick et al., 2009). Developing a framework for it is therefore not a straightforward exercise, leading to many different theoretical constructs. One prominent conceptualisation of motivation applied to citizen science – among other contexts – comes from Self-Determination Theory (R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000), which distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it has inherent value to the person (e.g., it might be interesting or enjoyable), whereas extrinsic motivation refers to situations where a person chooses to do something because it has a particular outcome outside of the activity itself.

Batson et al. (2002) provide a different conceptualisation, aimed at studying motivations in community involvement. They distinguish four types of motivation, based on an underlying ultimate goal: egoism, altruism, collectivism, and principlism. This model is not often used for studying motivations in citizen science, although a prominent exception are Rotman et al. (2012).

A framework that is also used for these purposes is the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998). This approach – based on the idea that actions are performed in the service of psychological ‘functions’ – describes six such functions: values, understanding, social, career, protective, and enhancement. Since participation in citizen science projects is nearly always voluntary, this model is considered suitable for studying motivations in that context (Land-Zandstra et al., 2021; Phillips et al., 2018).

There is a decent amount of research applying these varied models of motivation, and in some cases extensions or elaborations of them (Lotfian et al., 2020; Phillips et al., 2019). However, in part depending on the context and the model used, studies do not always show consistent results. Perhaps the most consistent finding is that intrinsic motivations are more likely to lead to sustained engagement than extrinsic motivations (Eveleigh et al., 2014; R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000). Interestingly, the importance of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivations depends on the type of project, with intrinsic motivations being most common in contributory citizen science projects, while extrinsic motivations are more common in co-created projects (Lotfian et al., 2020; Phillips et al., 2019). However, evidence on whether intrinsic motivations also lead to increased contributions is mixed (Aristeidou et al., 2017), although it is possible to stimulate it using a game context, even for tasks that might be relatively tedious (Prestopnik & Crowston, 2011).

Given the question this thesis aims to answer, it is important to consider existing research either on motivations of newcomers versus those of long-term participants or on the dynamics of motivation, as many authors state that, like engagement, motivations can change over time (Clary & Snyder, 1999; De Moor et al., 2019; Rotman et al., 2012, 2014; R. L. Ryan et al., 2001). An example of this is that newcomers are more likely to value learning than veterans (Alender, 2016). In general, studies note that initial motivations of citizen science participants tend to be based on personal interest and altruism, with collectivist and social motivations becoming more important over time (Larson et al., 2020). This is largely in line with theoretical models, such as the ‘motivational arc’ of Crowston and Fagnot (2008), which describes motivations changing from curiosity to ideology, intrinsic motivation and social obligations. As these studies show, the relevance of intrinsic motivations in particular is worthy of study. This is highlighted by Tiago et al. (2017) as well, who describe how encouraging

intrinsic motivations, for example by providing feedback, is vital in keeping participants engaged over extended periods of time.

2.4. Objective of the follow-up research

As noted in section 1.5, no literature was found that studies the engagement and motivation of newcomers retrospectively. However, the literature review described in this chapter has shown that engagement and motivation among citizen science participants has been studied, if rarely aimed specifically at newcomers. Research on engagement dynamics show how some have found changes in participants' behaviour over time, which raises the question whether similar (initial) behaviour as described in the literature can be found in the present study. For motivations, the argument is similar: studies have, for instance, repeatedly found intrinsic motivations to be relevant for long-term participation. The present study therefore aims to combine what is known about newcomers' motivations and behaviour, looking for profiles among project participants to see if those are in line with previous research. Additionally, it investigates whether the profiles found are in line with what is to be expected when looking primarily at participants who ended up making the transition from newcomer to long-term contributors.

3. Methodology

3.1. Conceptual design: select the research method(s)

The aim of this thesis is to discover profiles of motivations and engagement of participants in a citizen humanities project. The most appropriate research design is therefore one based on a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research uses non-numeric data, and allows one to study the meanings of words and images (Saunders et al., 2019). This fits the current study, since motivations in particular are not an easy concept to measure; this makes it important to thoroughly analyse answers given by participants, in order to distil the proper meanings from them. To collect these answers in a way that allows for a structure based on predefined themes and specific research questions while also enabling researchers to ask follow-up questions and thereby explore in depth topics that present themselves, the method used here is that of semi-structured interviews (Saunders et al., 2019). Given the scope of this thesis in terms of feasibility and the structure of the larger project it is a part of, it uses semi-structured interviews as its only research method, making this a mono method qualitative study (Saunders et al., 2019).

It is the scope of this study and its place in a larger research project that also dictate another aspect of its methodology. Since the goal is to study motivations and engagement within the context of a specific citizen humanities project, it is appropriate to consider this a case study, where the citizen science project in question is the 'case'. In addition, given the varied literature on motivations and engagement, which does not provide an established theory or model for measurement, it is considered useful here to discover relevant concepts and their relations based on the answers provided by the participants, making this a case study that uses a Grounded Theory approach (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.2. Technical design: elaboration of the method

To answer the research question, the ‘case’ for this case study needed to be a citizen humanities project that was still active after – ideally – at least a year, in order to provide a retrospective on the initial motivations and engagement of long-term participants. The project used meets these criteria: it is the ‘Historical Database Suriname Curaçao’ (HDSC; *Historische Database Suriname Curaçao*, n.d.). Originally started in 2016, the goal of this crowdsourcing project is to digitise and make available information on the lives of inhabitants of Suriname and Curaçao over the years 1830 to 1950. This is done in phases by transcribing handwritten documents from sources various, such as slave registers, emancipation registers and migration registers, and combining the resulting information. The project’s current iteration started in September 2021, and aims to transcribe all civil records of Suriname and Curaçao.

The project uses a crowdsourcing platform called *Het Volk* (*Het Volk*, n.d.), which also hosts other projects focused on transcribing handwritten information. As is common in citizen science, transcribing in the HDSC project is done by volunteers. To ensure a high level of quality, each document is independently transcribed by two participants, and then checked by an experienced third participant. Participants communicate with each other and with project leaders primarily through an online forum. This forum is used mainly by participants to ask for and provide help to each other, and to share interesting finds. In addition to the forum, online and offline meetings are organised by the project leaders. Lastly, as for other forms of communication, project leaders produce a weekly newsletter, post on social media and send out emails. Overall, the project has seen over 700 unique users, and sees an average of 680 completed tasks per day, adding up to over 314.000 completed tasks so far (T. van Oort, personal communication, 30 November 2022).

Since the currently active project is in essence a successor of earlier iterations, and since it has been active for nearly 1.5 years with no recent recruitment drives, most current participants are likely to be long-term participants. This makes HDSC a suitable project for the current study.

To collect a suitable amount of data, a project was set up involving five students. Each of these students, using the same interview guide (see Appendix 2), was to interview five participants one-on-one. However, due to unforeseen circumstances facing two of the students, only 18 of the 25 planned interviews could be held. Each of the 18 resulting recordings was transcribed and anonymised by the interviewing student. The anonymised transcripts were then shared with the other students, after which each student analysed the collected data individually.

3.3. Data analysis

After collecting the transcripts of all the interviews, the resulting data was analysed using the ATLAS.ti software, provided by the Open University. As mentioned in section 3.1, this study uses a Ground Theory approach, specifically that of Strauss and Corbin as described by Saunders (2019). This is a way of performing a thematic analysis, and uses three types of coding: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open coding is the first step, which disaggregates the data into conceptual units and labels it. Axial coding describes the process of determining relationships between the units resulting from open coding. Once established, these relationships allow for hierarchically rearranging the conceptual units, revealing appropriate subcategories. Last comes selective coding, in which one category is identified as the core category, after which the other categories are linked to it, leading to an integrated, grounded theory.

3.4. Reflection w.r.t. validity, reliability and ethical aspects

The concepts of validity and reliability are somewhat problematic when applied to qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2019). The approach taken here to address that issue is to apply the concepts in as appropriate a way as possible, rather than to use a different framework in judging the quality of the research design.

3.4.1. Internal validity

Internal validity in general concerns the question whether you measure what you intend to measure (Saunders et al., 2019). Given the methodology of this thesis, which uses interviews to collect data, the first important way of ensuring internal validity is making sure the interview guide covers what is needed for the research questions to be answered (content validity) and to measure the intended concepts (construct validity). These aspects are addressed by composing the final interview guide as a group, with the supervisor providing feedback as well. In addition, the richness of the data collected from 18 extensive interviews allows for careful matching of the answers given with their intended meanings, and from there with the concepts relevant to the study.

3.4.2. External validity

External validity relates to the degree in which the results of a study can be generalised to other relevant contexts (Saunders et al., 2019). Being a case study, generalisability is inherently relatively limited: the number of interviewees is not very high, and they are all from a very specific group – the group of participants in a specific citizen science project. Moreover, this citizen science project has characteristics that limit generalisability. For instance, it has a strong cultural component, which is liable to influence participant self-selection and thereby reduce the likelihood of the study's results being transferrable to contexts with different groups of participants.

3.4.3. Reliability

In this thesis, reliability is ensured – as much as possible – by carefully documenting the research process. Regarding the literature used in this study, a logbook was created (see Appendix 1), which shows the steps followed in searching for relevant sources. This can be used by others to retrace the steps of the author.

However, reliability not only implies being able to repeat a researcher's steps, but also thereby producing the same findings (Saunders et al., 2019). Due to the nature of this thesis' methodology, a case study using interviews for data collection, it is inherently impossible to produce the exact same results by repeating the research. Even if it were possible to interview the same people again, doing so at a (much) later date might well lead to different answers: since the experiences discussed are further into the past, recall would be more difficult, and new experiences that happened after the first interview might change interviewees' perceptions of the older experiences. However, following a scientifically sound methodology and describing it in detail should allow researchers to follow the same steps with, for instance, different interviewees, and likely produce at least somewhat similar results. In addition, the richness of the collected data should allow for transferability to similar contexts, since researchers can carefully consider answers and meanings.

However, there are some risks in this study concerning well-known biases related to data quality (Saunders et al., 2019). First, interviewer bias may occur if any of the interviewers asks questions in a way (e.g., through tone or non-verbal behaviour) that unintentionally influences the answer given by

an interviewee. This can happen if an interviewer is overly aware of answers they would like the interviewee to give. This is addressed by proper instruction to the interviewers beforehand, and partly by having multiple interviewers. Second, there may be interviewee bias: given that participation in the HDSC project can be done entirely online and without any personal contact, taking part in an interview can perhaps be somewhat intimidating, which can influence the answers given. Again, having multiple interviewers is important, but mostly interviewer training is key here, which can help to make an interviewee feel at ease. Third, and perhaps more importantly, participation bias is a potential issue here. Since the interviews are voluntary, the only participants in the study are those who actively signed up to be interviewed. This may lead to a biased sample, for instance since the selected participants will all be people with enough free time to be interviewed. In addition, although the aim of this thesis is to study long-term participants, there is no guarantee that all interviewees belong to that group. The first example has no easy solution here; the second can be addressed partially by setting a reasonable cut-off point in terms of contribution timeframe or, if necessary, by changing the overall scope of the thesis.

3.4.4. Ethical aspects

The author, as well as the other researchers involved, abide by the ethical rules laid down in the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Academic Practice (2018), as well as the guidelines described in the document 'Scientific Integrity. An overview for students within the discipline area Information Science' (2020). All interviewees are provided with an Information Letter for Participants as well as an Informed consent form, both of which are finetuned for this specific research project.

Personal contact with participants is primarily handled by the supervisor and the project leader; students only have contact with the participants they themselves interview, for which they are provided with a secure OU email address. The interviews are conducted online via an MS Teams environment provided and managed by the OU. Audio-visual recordings of the interviews were stored and managed in line with OU policy. Transcripts of the interviews were anonymised, so that each student only knows the names of the participants they themselves interviewed. The transcripts were saved in a protected Research drive, only accessible to the research team.

4. Results

As described, the data was collected through interviews with participants in the HDSC project. Each of these 18 interviewees was a long-term participant the project (>1 year). In a few cases, the anonymised interview transcripts were corrected based on feedback from the interviewee. Using Atlas.ti, the transcriptions were analysed, focusing on motivations, activities, and other noteworthy elements. Mentions of motivations and activities were – as much as possible – separated based on timeframe (either the period after joining the project, or later/currently). The resulting codebook is provided in Appendix 3, with example quotations in the original language (Dutch). This chapter describes the 'newcomer' motivations and activities distilled from the transcripts. These are listed in descending order based on the number of interviews they occurred in. Finally, it describes other noteworthy elements from the interviews, which are not limited to participants' first months after joining.

4.1. Newcomer motivations

Genealogical research of others

The most common motivation reported by the interviewees relates to the output of the project. For most, an important reason for joining was to help others research their family history, by making historical documents publicly available in a genealogical database. The underlying reasons for caring about this differed, however. Some interviewees – those with experience doing genealogical research themselves – simply wished for others to be able to do the same: *“I wish for others to have the possibility of researching their own family trees as well”* (Interview SW2). For other participants, especially those who had joined early on, the project’s topic was of particular importance: they too wished for people to be able to research their family history, but specifically those whose history has been affected by slavery. Some even referred to the role that the Dutch played in the system of slavery: *“(..) so that I can do something back for the Surinamese, who were so wronged by the Dutch”* (Interview TO4¹).

Personal interest

The second most common motivation is personal interest in the topic. As previously, the group of interviewees reporting this motivation is heterogeneous. Some are interested in the history of Surinam and Curaçao in relation to slavery, and specifically in relation to the Dutch: *“I’m curious about the backgrounds. The backgrounds of how we, the Dutch, misbehaved ourselves in Surinam, as you could say”* (Interview LS3). Others mention being interested in the personal histories of the people whose lives the documents ‘bring to life’: *“(..) you get to touch a small piece of someone’s life”* (Interview SW1). The last segment are people who did not report a specific interest, but rather regarding history in general: *“I’m just interested in history, so I enjoy looking at those things”* (Interview LS1).

Societal impact

Although many had the interest of other people’s family histories at heart, many also noted a more general consideration. Rather than focusing on specific people, they saw the project as something that benefits (Surinam & Curaçaoan) society as a whole: *“(..) this is important for the culture of our people, to record this [information] in clearly readable documents”* (Interview TO5). In other words, they realised they were helping to solidify the history of *a people*, in addition to the family histories of specific persons.

Own genealogical research

Some participants mentioned their own genealogical research as motivation to join the project. These are mostly people whose own family history is linked to the geographical areas in question: *“(..) I was just curious whether I could find my ancestors in the slave registers.”* (Interview SW1). Others did hope to benefit from the project’s output, but phrased their reasons more generally, as their genealogical research did not link to their own family: *“So if I use something, I should contribute to it as well, so to say.”* (Interview SW4).

¹ The interview transcripts are named using the interviewer’s initials, followed by a number.

Making oneself useful

The first motivation not linked to the project topic is wanting to do something useful: *“I wanted to do something, some volunteer work.”* (Interview TO1). As this quotation shows, many looked for a way to contribute to something, without expecting anything in return. It should be noted here that many of the interviewees joined the project when COVID-19 measures limited people’s opportunities for undertaking activities.

Educational value

Participating in a project like HDSC can be cognitively challenging, and exposes contributors to a wealth of information. These aspects are appreciated by the interviewees, as some mention the educational value of their participation. In most cases, this is reported in relation to staying active. However, for some, this aspect was relevant from the beginning: *“What did I hope to get out of it for myself? I knew very little about what life was like in slavery times.”* (Interview TO2). The group of participants reporting this motivation partly overlaps with the group reporting personal interest as a reason for joining.

Pleasant activity

For some of the interviewees, the enjoyment they expected to get out of transcribing was a reason for joining. They tended to have a relatively clear idea of what to expect, for example due to previous experience with similar tasks.

Freedom to choose place, time, and pace (autonomy)

This category can be considered mostly as a motivation for joining as opposed to choosing some other activity. Especially for those who started during the COVID-19 pandemic, being able to choose place, time, and pace (e.g., no imposed targets) was sometimes mentioned as an important factor.

Enjoy puzzles, researching

Linking to the motivations of ‘educational value’ and ‘pleasant activity’, some interviewees reported that they like solving puzzles or researching things. They expected to enjoy the cognitive challenge of figuring out the information in the documents, but also the story behind them, how they link together, etc.

Link with other activities

The last motivation mentioned was very specific: activities indirectly related to this project (e.g., other genealogical research). The idea here is, as one interviewee put it, “cross-pollination”.

4.2. Newcomer activities

Transcribing

The primary activity reported is the process of transcribing itself. For some, it is all they came for: *“I think there is only one activity, and that is to transfer what’s been written to digital form.”* (Interview TO5). Others mentioned multiple activities. However, interpreting these responses of participants hinges on the definition of ‘activity’. In this study, ‘activity’ is used in a broader sense than how interviewees did: for instance, they did not consider ‘reading the newsletter’ as an activity. Using the broader definition all participants engaged in multiple activities.

Meetings

Taking part in meetings organised by the project leaders is next. Mainly due to COVID-19, this includes both online and offline meetings. In addition, it includes both meetings that are mainly social in nature, as well as those aimed at instruction. This is partly due to the intended timeframe: as the focus here is on activities shortly after joining, and social meetings are not organised that often, separating those from other meetings might cause censoring. Regardless, participants clearly mentioned the ‘instructional’ meetings (“(..) *In the beginning I joined one online, in which we received instructions*” (Interview SW3)) and appreciated the social ones (“*That is good, because then you meet other people who contribute*” (Interview SW4).

Reading newsletters

Most of the participants report reading the regular newsletters from the start: “(..) *I read them all. I’ve saved them all, as well.*” (Interview SW4). Many explain how the newsletters contain not just updates on the project itself, but also background information on the places and people referred to in the documents. This suggests a link between the activity of reading newsletters and motivations such as ‘personal interest’. It should be noted that participants were notified of this study primarily through the newsletter, so risk of selection bias should be considered.

Forum use

Using the forum is the primary way for participants to interact with each other and with the project leaders outside of meetings. It allows users to ask questions: “*I visited the forum a number of times, (..) to solve problems I encountered while transcribing documents*” (Interview SW4). Answering questions posted by others is rare for newcomers. Quite a few interviewees note that they rarely used the forum after the initial period. Some had a look, and left it at that: “*I did that once or twice in the beginning, but it doesn’t interest me much*” (Interview LS3). Others, though, reported intensive and regular use of the forum.

Reading instructions

Of course, many newcomers report reading the project instructions. Although using the platform is straightforward, many appreciated the guidance provided, as well as specific knowledge (information on old handwriting, common names, places, occupations, etc.): “*het wordt heel goed ondersteund met allemaal, bijvoorbeeld lijsten van straatnamen in Suriname*” (Interview LS2).

Researching

Some of the interviewees reported that they regularly spent time researching, looking up information related to the documents they transcribed. This can improve transcriptions, for instance by looking up various ‘options’ for hard-to-read names. Sometimes, though, the reason was simply curiosity or a link to one’s own family history: “*The profession of midwife: there’s a link there with my own family tree. So then I started researching that profession*” (Interview SW2).

4.3. Other categories

Direct motivations

In distinguishing between initial and later motivations, the analysis of the interview transcripts revealed another category of motivations outside this study’s scope: those that drive participants to

contribute at a specific point in time. For example, multiple interviewees noted that reading about the progress in a newsletter persuaded them to start another transcription session. Likewise, being nudged by the platform to transcribe another document is quite effective for some: *“You can see how many records there are, (...) and what the current percentage is. So that motivates me: it makes me think, (...) just a little bit more, and then...”* (Interview SW1).

Organisational quality

Another interesting aspect mentioned in nearly all interviews was how well-organised the project is. Although not initially considered relevant for the research question of this thesis, the emphatic way in which the efforts by the project leaders were praised was so surprising, that it clearly plays an important role. Most participants greatly value the level of communication and organisation, as well as the attitude of the project leaders: *“the researchers have very warm personalities, and I’ve noticed that I find that important”* (Interview SW5). Surprisingly, this seems largely irrespective of the project activities interviewees engage in.

5. Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Discussion

5.1.1. Motivations

The primary distinction regarding motivations is that between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. As described, intrinsic motivation means valuing the activity itself; extrinsic motivation implies valuing an outcome of the activity (R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000). This research confirms a common finding that in citizen science, intrinsic motivation plays an important role in fostering long-term engagement (Eveleigh et al., 2014), as personal interest in the topic is shown to be one of the primary motivations for joining. Similarly, hoping to learn from the project is a common newcomer motivation, in line with previous findings (Alender, 2016). Additionally, enjoying the work itself, valuing autonomy (deciding place, time, and pace independently), and doing background research are all consistent with the role previous research ascribes to intrinsic motivation. Finally, the data suggests that intrinsic motivations can grow over time, increasing the likelihood of those participants staying with the project, which is in line with existing literature as well.

However, contrary to expectations, this study does not find a clear emphasis of intrinsic over extrinsic motivations. Rather, the latter feature prominently as well, as participants care greatly for the project’s goals, both practically (supporting genealogical research) and more generally (societal impact). As a sidenote, this aspect was confirmed as well by participants showing disappointment over delays in their work being made available to the public. Previous research has linked the prominence of extrinsic motivations to the type of citizen science project (Lotfian et al., 2020), and a similar explanation is suitable here. The studied project by its nature is closely connected to specific groups of people and their history. This makes its outcomes far more than ‘merely’ scientific knowledge: they carry great personal and ultimately societal relevance and meaning. It is not surprising, therefore, that participants are driven by extrinsic motivations related to those outcomes.

Nevertheless, the importance of intrinsic motivations is clear. This study therefore provides support for previous findings that such motivations are likely required for long-term participation in citizen science projects (Lotfian et al., 2020; Phillips et al., 2019). Extrinsic motivations may be present at the same time, but the literature nor the data provide a strong basis for linking these to long-term participation specifically.

Lastly, this research shows how participants can be motivated by being part of a well-run citizen science project. Whether they interact with others on the forum, whether they go to the meetings: these things appear less important than the fact that they *know* these activities are organised. They need not participate in the active project community to draw motivation from knowing that it exists. They appreciate the frequent communications, and the approachability of the project leaders. This is somewhat in contrast to existing literature showing the relevance of social aspects of citizen science but only focusing on those participating in them (Eveleigh et al., 2014; Phillips et al., 2019).

5.1.2. Behaviours

Groups of participants in citizen science projects tend to pursue different sets of activities (Phillips et al., 2019), and this finding is confirmed here. Although the range of potential activities is limited in the studied project, newcomers clearly differ in the activities they choose to engage in.

However, the most prominent finding in terms of activities is that participants consider the project's main task to be front and centre for themselves, regardless of which activities they engage in and how much time they spend on them. This holds not just in their first months, but seems to be a constant throughout their time with the project, independent of each participant's set of motivations. This is somewhat surprising, as the literature suggests that having a different set of motivations can lead to a very different set of activities (Phillips et al., 2019). For instance, a participant of a project might join due to an interest in the social aspects, and subsequently occupy themselves mostly with meetings, contact with other participants, etc. The explanation of this contrast between the literature and this research may lie in the nature of the studied project as described in the previous section. In short, if participants of a citizen science project consider the *output* of that project to be highly important, this may give them a strong reason to keep their focus on the activity that produces it: in this case, document transcription.

Another difference between previous research and this study's findings is that participants are known to transition through different roles during their time with a project (Jackson et al., 2015). This is rarely the case here: for any participant, their chosen set of activities tends to be quite consistent over time. The exception are those who, at some point, were invited to correct other participants' transcriptions. However, since that activity is not available to most, it does not affect the main finding. The likely explanation of the discrepancy here is twofold. First, the range of possible roles for participants in a largely contributory project is limited, compared to collaborative or cocreated projects. Second, the research design of this study was perhaps not suitable to distinguish the subtle role changes within contributory projects. For instance, a participant active on the forum might perform different activities as a newcomer than as an experienced member (e.g., posting questions vs. answering them).

The last result to be noted here is that long-term participants through their activities and the diligent way they engage in them show that they care about the project's goal and their role in it. The implications of this finding are explored further in the next section.

5.2. Conclusions and recommendations for practice

Although fewer interviews were held than originally planned, the collected data reveals clear sets of initial motivations shared by groups of interviewees, as well as shared sets of initial behaviours. This provides useful insights on how to identify project participants who might choose to stay involved long-term, and on how to increase the chances of them doing so.

The first conclusion to draw is that many long-term participants in a citizen humanities project like HDSC originally joined in large part because they care about the tangible outcomes of the project and the meaningful impact those outcomes have. These participants therefore did not join out of some undefined sense of civic duty or to increase scientific knowledge, but for the meaningful benefit the project's outcomes offer – mainly to others, sometimes to themselves. The consequence is that, to persuade these participants to stay with a project, its progress and impact should be prioritised and communicated well. The HDSC project shows how things like periodic newsletters to report on and stimulate progress indeed increase motivation. However, since many participants care greatly about the project's outcomes (transcribed records made available to the public), their motivation can be increased by communicating often and about the progress towards these outcomes. Participants tend to understand the difficulties involved in realising these outcomes, but struggle to stay motivated if they feel left in the dark.

Besides the outcomes, participants highly value the work itself. This motivates them also in a direct sense: they start or continue work sessions, because the work is interesting and enjoyable. Streamlining the work process is therefore key: a straightforward user interface, a suitable amount of autonomy and easily accessible guidance can help sustain such intrinsic motivations. Moreover, some participants (by their own admission) are susceptible to being 'nudged' to start or keep working (e.g., using progress bars, pop-up messages and such). Project leaders can likely increase engagement by surveying participants about any hindrances they experience, and by designing and testing various ways of influencing their behaviour through nudging.

In addition, these participants tend to derive a great deal of satisfaction from the meaning and background of the work's content. In the case of HDSC, the work itself touches on the lives of people from history, and participants truly enjoy the stories of those people being brought to life. This means that, to help motivate these participants, it is vital that project leaders strive to continually tell those stories, showing the backgrounds and historical places, which in the HDSC project they already do quite well.

As found in previous research, the group of long-term participants is quite heterogeneous in terms of activities. Subgroups can be identified based on sets of activities (e.g., those relating to the social aspects of the project), but these do not provide a basis to distinguish potential long-term participants from dropouts-to-be. Rather, long-term participants tend to share two relevant characteristics. First, regardless of which activities they perform, they consider their main task to be contributing to the project (in the case of HDSC, through transcribing documents). And second, they take the project and their contributory role seriously. They read the instructions carefully, go to workshops if that is expected of them, and do their work diligently. Both these aspects hold for nearly all long-term participants, regardless of how much time they spend contributing to the project. These characteristics, therefore, could be tell-tale signs of (potential) long-term participants in citizen humanities projects. By combining surveys among recent participants with, for instance, attendance registration at workshops, project leaders can potentially identify which newcomers are more likely than others to stay involved long-term.

Finally, what brings participants' motivations and project activities together is that most find their existing motivations stimulated by the project being well-organised and having an active community. Actively involved and helpful project leaders, regular and interesting updates, engaging meetings: such things are highly stimulating for participants. Surprisingly, this positive effect is independent of which activities participants themselves happen to be involved in: being part of the active community of a well-run project is enough. For project leaders, as those of HDSC have successfully done over the course of their project, this means spending time and effort on communicating with and being available to participants, as well as organising interesting meetings. The benefits of such investments over many participants likely outweigh the cost of making them.

5.3. Reflection on the process

The research process was planned and structured according to a framework set up by the supervisor, who collaborated with the HDSC project leaders. This predetermined part of the research design, mostly regarding the methodology and the selection of interviewees.

In hindsight, the number of interviews deserved more thorough consideration in the first phase of the research. Even if the data collection had gone according to plan, resulting in 25 interviews overall, identifying sizeable subgroups of participants with combinations of specific motivations *and* specific behaviours would have been very difficult, if not impossible. This suggests the research question was perhaps somewhat too ambitious, and that it may have been better to limit its scope.

Reviewing the literature posed its own challenges, as there is little literature specifically about citizen humanities projects, and citizen science projects tend to have a distinctly different nature. Moreover, the process of searching for relevant literature, including registering and organising sources was unstructured. This made it impossible when compiling the logbook to determine where exactly each source had been found, even though the search method used was known. Content-wise, the lack of organisation caused delays, for instance in determining how the distinction between citizen humanities and citizen science more broadly was treated in the literature. Clearly, therefore, properly maintaining the logbook and structuring the selected literature from the start would have been far better.

As noted in chapter 3, there was a risk of selection bias in the recruitment of interviewees. Looking at the research results, this worry seems justified, partly due to the project's newsletter being the primary channel for recruitment. Overrepresentation of more active and willing participants is a common issue in interview methodologies, and since all participants here confirmed being consistent newsletter readers, the presence of selection bias seems especially likely. In hindsight, it would have been better to request that the project leaders attempt additional avenues to approach participants (e.g., through forum messages or at meetings).

In the process of collecting data, two unexpected challenges cropped up. First, one interviewee withheld their approval for using the transcript unless it was edited extensively. Luckily, after consulting with the supervisor and some careful communication, this issue was solved effectively. Second, although the interviews were expected to reveal some factual information about the project unknown to the researcher, collecting such information from the project leaders at an earlier stage would have been preferred (e.g., requesting a timeline of the various sub-projects). This might have allowed for more in-depth interviews. In both cases, the lesson learned is clear: to think more carefully about each research step in advance, to better prepare for unexpected circumstances.

Analysing the interview transcripts was not entirely straightforward, as interviewees were not always clear on whether their words related to the present, to the time when they joined the project, or both. This issue was most apparent in analysing interviews held by other researchers. Since ascertaining past motivations and behaviours was always going to be a challenge, ideally, a fully individual approach would perhaps have been better here, resulting in an interview guide finetuned to the specific research questions and interviews all held by the researcher himself.

In all, however, the research process went well, aided by the provided structure and effective guidance where needed.

5.4. Recommendations for future research

As noted in the previous section, the limited amount of collected data made researching profiles of (combinations of) motivations and behaviours difficult. It would be worthwhile, if future research could replicate this study at a larger scale, including more participants, possibly from multiple similar citizen humanities projects.

The scope of this study was limited as well due to it being a thesis project. Ideally, future research would be set up around a longitudinal research design, to study the relation between newcomer engagement and attrition in citizen humanities projects more thoroughly. This would remove a source of bias created by asking present-day participants about their past motivations and behaviours. Moreover, as participants join at different moments in time, it would allow for more consistent data collection (e.g., through interviews one year after joining), as well as collection of additional data (e.g., through interviews with dropouts, where possible).

A different avenue for future research is provided by the main finding that even long-term participants can have strong extrinsic motivations tied to the project's outcomes. This is explained here by these outcomes being highly tangible and having a meaningful, direct impact, which is rare among citizen humanities, but especially citizen science projects in other fields: one does not help to count birds for some immediate effect on preservation, for instance. Other researchers therefore might seek out other projects whose outcomes have similar characteristics, to study whether these aspects affect the motivations of participants.

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Appendix 1: Literature search logbook

The following table lists all sources selected after having been discovered using the literature search methods described in section 2.1.

(Alender, 2016)	Snowballing
(Appleton et al., 2008)	Snowballing
(Azevedo, 2015)	Snowballing
(Batson et al., 2002)	Building Blocks
(Bonney et al., 2009)	Snowballing
(Causer & Wallace, 2012)	Snowballing
(Ciolfi et al., 2017)	Building Blocks
(Clary et al., 1998)	Snowballing
(Clary & Snyder, 1999)	Snowballing
(Cohn, 2008)	Snowballing
(Cooper & Lewenstein, 2016)	Snowballing
(Crain et al., 2014)	Snowballing
(Crowston & Fagnot, 2008)	Snowballing
(de Vreede et al., 2019)	by Author
(Dejean & Jullien, 2015)	Building Blocks
(Estellés-Arolas & González-Ladrón-de-Guevara, 2012)	Building Blocks
(Eveleigh et al., 2014)	Snowballing
(Franzoni & Sauermann, 2014)	Building Blocks
(Fredricks et al., 2004)	Snowballing
(Haklay et al., 2021)	Building Blocks
(Heinisch, Barbara et al., 2021)	Building Blocks
(Holley, 2009)	Snowballing
(Jones & Spiers, 2018)	Snowballing
(Land-Zandstra et al., 2016)	Snowballing
(Land-Zandstra et al., 2021)	Building Blocks
(Larson et al., 2020)	Snowballing
(Lotfian et al., 2020)	Building Blocks
(Martin et al., 2017)	by Author
(Nov et al., 2014)	Snowballing
(Phillips et al., 2018)	by Author
(Preece & Shneiderman, 2009)	Snowballing
(Prestopnik & Crowston, 2011)	Snowballing
(Raddick et al., 2009)	Snowballing
(Romeo & Blaser, 2011)	Snowballing
(Rotman et al., 2012)	by Author
(Rotman et al., 2014)	Snowballing
(R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000)	Snowballing
(R. L. Ryan et al., 2001)	Snowballing
(Sauermann & Franzoni, 2015)	Snowballing
(Silvertown, 2009)	Snowballing

(Strasser & Haklay, 2018)
(Tauginienė et al., 2020)
(Watson & Floridi, 2018)
(Wiggins & Crowston, 2011)

Snowballing
Building Blocks
Snowballing
Snowballing

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Geïnterviewde (ANONIEME CODE): _____

Interviewer: _____

Datum: _____ Starttijd: _____ Eindtijd: _____

Introductie:

Goedemorgen/middag/avond, ik ben _____. Bedankt dat u de tijd wilde nemen om met mij te praten over het project 'Historische database Suriname Curaçao'. Zoals ik in de e-mail zei, zal ik het gesprek opnemen. U kunt vragen overslaan als u dat wilt, en kunt u het interview op elk moment stoppen. Om uw privacy te beschermen, wordt de uitwerking van het interview geanonimiseerd, en worden uw antwoorden alleen voor ons onderzoek gebruikt.

Hoe heet u? Mag ik (voornaam) zeggen?

We hebben maximaal een uur gepland voor het interview. Heeft u ruimte voor uitloop, indien nodig?

Heeft u nog vragen voordat we beginnen? (nee) Mooi, dan gaan we beginnen en start ik de opname.

.....
Ik wil graag beginnen met enkele algemene vragen:

Project

1. Wanneer begon u deel te nemen aan het project?
2. Hoe bent u te weten gekomen over het project?

Dan wil ik u nu graag wat vragen gaan stellen over uw ervaringen met het project en uw redenen voor deelname. Vindt u dat goed?

Ervaringen

1. Waarom begon u deel te nemen aan het project?
 - a. **Probe:** Ben je altijd al geïnteresseerd geweest in X (bv. geschiedenis in het algemeen, geschiedenis van Suriname/Curaçao in het bijzonder)?
 - b. **Probe:** Waarom zorgde die reden ervoor dat je specifiek bij dit project kwam?
 - c. **Probe:** Wat zijn uw gedachten over het thema van dit project?
 - d. **Probe:** Bent u door een ander project terecht gekomen bij dit project?
 - e. Waren er nog meer redenen? (Indien ja, naar punt a)
2. Wat waren uw verwachtingen over het project, uw deelname en de activiteiten toen u besloot deel te nemen aan het project?
 - a. **Probe:** Wat hoopte je eruit te halen?

3. DEZE VRAAG ALLEEN STELLEN ALS DE DEELNEMER LANGER DAN TWEE MAANDEN OP HET PROJECT ACTIEF IS
 Wat waren uw ervaringen in de beginperiode (eerste twee maanden) van uw deelname?
 - a. **Probe:** Wat haalde u eruit?
 - b. **Probe:** Ervaringen waarmee: met het invoeren, het forum, contact met de projectleiding?
4. Wat zorgde ervoor dat u na de eerste periode langer bij het project bleef?
 - a. Zijn er nog andere redenen?
5. Welke ervaringen met het project zorgen ervoor dat u nog steeds betrokken en gemotiveerd blijft om activiteiten voor het project uit te voeren?
 - a. Welke recente gebeurtenissen en/of activiteiten kunt u bedenken die uw ervaring met het project hebben beïnvloed?
 - b. Zijn er dingen die uw deelname of betrokkenheid nog verder zouden kunnen vergroten?
6. Heeft u belemmeringen of uitdagingen ervaren bij uw deelname aan het project? Zo ja, welke?
 - a. **Probe:** Kunt u een voorbeeld geven van zo'n moment?
 - b. **Probe:** Is er bijvoorbeeld iets dat ertoe kan leiden dat u het project verlaat? Gelieve uit te leggen.
7. Heeft uw betrokkenheid bij het project ertoe geleid dat u deelnam aan gelijkaardige projecten? Beschrijf zo ja, of waarom niet?
 - a. (**Probe:** doen ze het voor sociale redenen, voor verbinding met de plaats, voor waarden rond de omgeving, etc.).

Dat was de laatste vraag over uw ervaringen en redenen voor deelname aan het project. De volgende vragen gaan over wat u zoal doet in het project, en daarbij zijn we geïnteresseerd in zowel de taken en activiteiten die u nu uitvoert, als de taken en activiteiten die u in de beginperiode van uw deelname aan het project uitvoerde. Sommige vragen zullen daarom twee keer gesteld worden: één keer voor de huidige situatie, en één keer voor hoe het in het begin was. Bij elke vraag zal duidelijk aangegeven worden over welke periode het gaat. Heeft u hier vragen over? Dan gaan we beginnen:

Projectwerk

1. Beschrijf voor mij hoe een typische dag van deelname aan dit project voor u eruitziet?
 - a. **Probe:** Hoe ziet een moment eruit waarop u aan het bijdragen bent?
 - b. **Probe:** Zijn er bepaalde patronen of regelmaat in uw bijdrage? (bijvoorbeeld dag/week/maand of seizoensgebonden patronen)
2. Als u terugdenkt aan de beginperiode van uw deelname, de eerste paar maanden. Kunt u zich nog herinneren of u in het begin ook zo werkte, of was het toen anders dan wat u nu doet?
 - a. Hoe is dat zo gekomen?
3. Kunt u omschrijven welke activiteiten u doet en heeft gedaan in het project?

Probe: (Als activiteiten onduidelijk is voor participant): Ik bedoel: wat is uw ervaring met activiteiten zoals bijvoorbeeld met het invoeren, met het forum, met de nieuwsberichten, en met bijeenkomsten?

 - a. Als iemand heeft ingevoerd: Heeft u weleens invoer gecontroleerd?
 - i. Duiding: als deelnemer niet weet dat controlemechanisme bestaat, kan je vertellen dat de aktes door twee deelnemers ingevoerd worden en dat deze

vervolgens gecontroleerd worden. Hierover kunnen ze meer in het forum vinden of Thunnis (de projectleider) vragen.

- b. Voor de activiteiten die u noemde:
 - i. Kunt u aangeven hoeveel tijd per week u besteedde aan X? Probe: Hoe verdeelt u uw tijd over de verschillende taken?
 - ii. Wat vindt u het leukste om te doen?
4. Als u weer terugdenkt aan de beginperiode van uw deelname, de eerste paar maanden. Kunt u zich nog herinneren of u toen dezelfde activiteiten deed, of is dat veranderd dan wat u nu doet? (aspecten genoemd bij vraag 3 navragen)
 - a. Hoe is dat zo gekomen?

Nu we over projectwerk hebben gesproken, wil ik graag nog een aantal zaken kort even polsen, zoals het gebruik van de gebruikersinterface op zowel de website en het forum en rond feedback op het project.

Interface, feedback en verbondenheid

1. Wat is uw ervaring met de project website?
 - a. **Probe:** Wat vindt u er goed aan en waarom?
 - b. **Probe:** Wat vindt u er minder goed aan en waarom?
2. Wat is uw ervaring met de interface van het invoerscherm van de akten?
 - a. **Probe:** Wat vindt u er goed aan en waarom?
 - b. **Probe:** Wat vindt u er minder goed aan en waarom?
3. Wat vindt u van de feedback die u krijgt?
 - a. **Probe:** Wat vindt u van de erkenning van uw bijdrage?
 - b. **Probe:** Wat doet u momenteel met verbeterpunten voor het project?
4. Hoe zou u uw gebruik van het sociale forum omschrijven?
 - a. **Probe:** Wat vindt u van de verbondenheid met andere deelnemers?

Ten slotte de laatste vragen, zodat ik uw ervaringen met het project volledig kan begrijpen. Kunt u mij vertellen wat dit project voor u heeft betekend sinds u begon?

- a. **Probe:** Wat heeft u al uit het project gehaald of geleerd?
- b. Eerder zei u dat u verwachtte dat uw ervaring met het project <vul verwachting in>. Voldeed het project aan uw verwachtingen? **Probe:** Leg uit. Waarom wel of waarom niet?

Ik heb geen verdere vragen. Heeft u nog vragen?

Heel erg bedankt voor uw tijd; we stellen uw deelname zeer op prijs!

Appendix 3: Codebook

Category	Code	Occurrences	Example citation
Motivations (initial)	Educational value	7	"En het is heel leerzaam om te zien wat daarin staat, wat je erin kan vinden en ook wat je er niet in kan vinden."
	Enjoy puzzles, researching	2	"Ik vind puzzelen leuk."
	Autonomy	4	"Ik vind het heerlijk dat je het thuis kan doen, in je eigen tijd, dat er geen verplichting is om een bepaalde target te halen, maar je doet wat je kan." "ik hoopte dat men veel beter zou kunnen zoeken als de aktes eenmaal verwerkt en gepubliceerd zouden zijn"
	Genealogical research of others	21	"Mijn verwachting was echt, vind ik een kruisbestuiving met het project wat ik met Suriname doe."
	Link with other activities	3	"ik wilde wel graag iets, wat vrijwilligerswerk doen"
	Making oneself useful	6	"De aanleiding ligt in het familieonderzoek waar ik mee bezig was en nog steeds ben."
	Own genealogical research	23	"Ook ben ik geïnteresseerd in die slaven geschiedenis."
	Personal interest	25	"Het is precies werk en je moet geconcentreerd werken. Dit vind ik ook wel leuk." "Dat motiveerde mij om iets te doen in het belang van de Surinaamse mensen en de Surinaamse samenleving."
	Pleasant activity	5	9
	Societal impact	9	"Ja ook ook vragen stellen natuurlijk aan het forum en zo"
Activities (initial)	Forum use	17	"regelmatig werden er instructiebijeenkomsten gehouden"
	Meetings	22	"En het is op zich wel leuk dat wekelijks een nieuwsbrief"
	Reading newsletters	11	"De handleiding lezen, het forum bijhouden en de aktes invoeren, dus dat zijn de activiteiten die ik doe"
	Reading instructions	10	"wel heb ik ook wel namen opgezocht natuurlijk, van al die slavenhouders"
Motivations (current)	Researching	5	"volgens mij is er maar één activiteit en dat is het geschrevene overzetten in het digitale"
	Transcribing	24	9
	Educational value	9	"ik vind het interessant om het te doen en om meer te leren over die maatschappij."
	Enjoy puzzles, researching	10	"Maar ik merkte op een gegeven moment dat ik het wel een sport vond om dan toch te traceren van, is dat die of die naam"

	Feedback / stimulation from organisers	13 "Dat is wel positief, je wordt wel gestimuleerd, dat vind ik goed." "op een gegeven moment is het ook gewoon ja, je wil gewoon dat het af is, zal ik
	Finishing the project	3 maar zeggen, dus je wil helpen" "Ik dacht, ja, als mij dit lukt, is er weer iemand die misschien zijn overgrootvader kan
	Genealogical research of others	9 vinden"
	Making oneself useful	5 "ik hou ervan om nuttig bezig te zijn"
	Own genealogical research	3 "Je hoopt ook steeds dat je je eigen voorfamilie, je eigen voormoeders tegenkomt." "En het blijft mijn interesse houden, want ik vind het elke keer weer spannend wat
	Personal interest	8 je ziet."
	Pleasant activity	14 "Maar ik vind dit werk al zo leuk en het geeft me zoveel voldoening"
	Recognition	6 "Ze geven wel het gevoel dat het enorm gewaardeerd wordt dat je, dat je dat doet"
	Societal impact	8 "Maar dit is dus gewoon voor de gemeenschap." "En ze wisselen af, dat is ook heel slim. Dus niet alleen maar overlijdensakten, maar
	Variety	5 maakt het smakelijk om aan deel te nemen dan."
	Correcting transcriptions	9 "Ik voer aktes in en dat wordt afgewisseld met controlewerk."
	Forum use	30 "Ik kijk wel op het forum, maar ik post niet veel."
Activities (current)	Meetings	32 "eentje in Amsterdam, en daar ben ik wel geweest en die was heel boeiend"
	Reading instructions	2 "Oh ja, het moet even nieuwe handleiding doorlezen"
	Reading newsletters	22 "Ik vind de nieuwsbrief ook leuk, om die te krijgen."
	Researching	8 "wat is er aan de hand? Om dat een beetje uit te zoeken vind ik echt enig."
	Transcribing	27 "de hoofdmoot voor mij is nu gewoon het invoeren" "Maar het feit dat het er is, en ik weet dat het er is, geeft wel aan hoe betrokken de
Other	Organisational quality	18 mensen zijn die dit project trekken."