Collaborative dynamics in street level work

Bartels, Koen PR

Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy

Published: 01/11/2018

Peer reviewed version

Cyswllt i'r cyhoeddiad / Link to publication

Collaborative Dynamics in Street Level Work: Working In and With Communities to Improve Relationships and Reduce Deprivation

Abstract

Joint service delivery is a well-established aspect of urban governance but does not necessarily improve interagency collaboration or reduce socio-spatial deprivation. What happens in interactions between street level workers has a large influence on collaborative processes and outcomes but is remarkably underexplored. This paper develops an understanding of the nature and impact of the relational practices enacted in street level collaboration. I argue that community-centred working can foster effective and authentic collaborative processes and, as a result, generate better societal outcomes. Based on a participatory evaluation conducted in Amsterdam, I critically appraise how working in and with communities moved collaborative dynamics in street level work away from habitual routines and power relations that sustained exclusion and inequality of local disadvantaged youngsters towards better internal relationships and less socio-spatial deprivation.

Keywords: collaborative governance, street level bureaucracy, community-centred working, participatory evaluation, interpretive research

Introduction

Collaboration between multiple public service agencies is a well-established ideal and practice in urban governance (Hastings, 1996; Healey, 2006; Laffin et al., 2014; Matthews, 2014; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002). The by now well-known argument goes that ongoing urbanization and decentralization have massively increased the scope and complexity of demands for local services, creating greater need for coordination of networks of disjointed agencies and specialised professionals. This argument builds on the ways in which collaboration has been deployed in many welfare systems for over half a century to counter working at cross-purposes, avoiding duplication, filling gaps, providing multiple interventions, and so on (Hasse and Austin, 1997; Peters, 2006; Pollitt, 2003; Rein, 1970, ch. 6; 1983, ch. 4). But despite its continuing popularity and abundant academic attention (Selsky and Parker, 2005; Bryson et al., 2006; Ansell and Gash, 2007; Emerson et al., 2012), collaboration proves "a perennial problem" (Vos and Wagenaar, 2014, 410). Countless reforms and models have not put an end to the "psychedelic mosaic" (Rein, 1970, page 104) of agencies providing partial and conflicting interventions that worsen rather than alleviate complex social problems, amount to an annual waste of billions of Euros[1], and can even have fatal consequences (Marinetto, 2011).

It is nevertheless remarkably underexplored how joint services and collaborative ambitions are implemented in interactions between street level workers and what effect their relational practices have on socio-spatial deprivation. As Lipsky (1971) already pointed out, it is at the street level that the complex needs and structural disadvantages of local people and places are addressed. Street level workers are supposed to coordinate their 'interventions' and 'solutions' in networks but often reproduce socio-spatial deprivation by, for example, upholding stigmatising professional categories, rubber stamping others' judgments, and providing endless referrals (Perri 6, 1997; Kruiter et al., 2008; Marinetto, 2011; Smale, 1995;

2

Vos and Wagenaar, 2014). This not only raises questions about how effective and authentic their collaborative processes are, but also about their outcomes in terms of 'territorial justice'—whether the provision of public services to neighbourhoods meets the (unequally distributed) needs of local people and places (Hastings, 2007). Therefore, the main research question I address is: *how can collaborative dynamics in street level work be conceptualised and improved*?

The main contribution of this paper is to theoretically and empirically examine the nature and impact of collaborative dynamics in street level work and clarify the link between the quality of internal processes and societal outcomes. While the burgeoning literatures on collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash, 2007; Bryson et al., 2006; Emerson et al., 2012) and street level bureaucracy (Brodkin, 2003; Durose, 2009; Lipsky, 2010) offer helpful insights and frameworks, there is little cross-fertilization or attention to these issues in urban studies and geography or even public administration (for an exception, see Vos and Wagenaar, 2014). I outline an emerging research agenda on street level collaboration to conceptualise how its relational practices are enacted in complex intra- and inter-organisational systems. In addition, I argue that community-centred working can improve interactions amongst street level workers, citizen-clients and other network actors as to reduce socio-spatial deprivation.

I base this argument on a participatory evaluation (Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Schwandt, 1997) of collaboration between youth work agencies and the local government in Amsterdam (the Netherlands) around the needs of youngsters in a deprived neighbourhood. My findings show that, after a messy and prolonged coordination and planning phase, a 'needs analysis' I co-conducted with a team of youth workers strongly improved collaborative dynamics and started to address the deprivation youngsters experienced. However, as hierarchical and competitive institutions inhibited systemic change

, I provide critical reflections on how working in and with communities can generate more fundamental transformations in territorial justice.

Collaborative dynamics in street level work

The inherently problematic nature of interagency coordination is well-documented by the collaborative governance literature. Working together does not always equal collaboration due to a range of factors that lead to collaborative advantage or inertia (Huxham, 2000; McGuire and Agranoff, 2011; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002) across a wide variety of networks types and coordination strategies and processes (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998; Mandell and Keast, 2007; Provan et al., 2007). This conceptual and empirical richness is captured in several comprehensive overviews of contextual conditions, drivers for collaboration, internal structures and activities, and outcomes and adaptation (Ansell and Gash, 2007; Bryson et al., 2006; 2015; Emerson et al., 2012).

Relationships have been identified as a key element of collaborative networks (Hastings, 1996; Healey, 2007; Huxham, 2000; Mandell and Keast, 2007; O'Leary et al., 2012; Romzek et al., 2012; Vandenbussche et al., 2015). Interdependence, informal interactions, face-to-face communication, mutual commitment, trust; all are crucial to "collaborative dynamics" (Emerson et al., 2012, 6). Increasingly, studies of interagency collaboration are looking "inside their operations" (Agranoff, 2006, page 56) to understand how relationships can be rendered more authentic and effective (e.g., Agranoff, 2008; Romzek et al., 2012). However, in contrast to the collaborative planning literature (Healey, 2006; Innes and Booher, 2010; Matthews, 2014; Sherlock et al., 2004; Westerink et al., 2017), the field of public administration tends to shy away from critically assessing the impact of collaborative dynamics on societal outcomes and from specifying normative criteria to evaluate the quality of collaborative processes and outcomes (Author et al., 2017).

Moreover, while there is widespread awareness that interagency interactions occur at all organisational levels (e.g., Sullivan et al., 2006), analyses of collaborative dynamics focus mostly on the managerial level.

Instead, in the street level bureaucracy literature it is widely observed that front line workers have significant discretion to implement policies and services (Brodkin, 2003; Lipsky, 2010; Rathgeb-Smith, 2003) and substantially influence societal inequality, injustice, and exclusion (Hastings, 2007; 2009; Lipsky, 1971; Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2012). Managers can influence but not control how street level workers balance conflicting incentives, values, roles, and socio-economic consequences. Several overviews lay bare the great variety of street level routines, practical judgments, and coping mechanisms as these take shape in the context of daily working conditions and structural dilemmas (Brodkin, 2012; Hupe and Buffat, 2014; Tummers et al., 2015).

Interaction with citizens and clients is a defining feature of street level work (Author, 2013), while relationships with colleagues, managers, and 'the system' also influence what street level workers do. Ever-more nuanced analyses capture their complex, situated and interactive practices of negotiating local knowledge, rules and procedures, beliefs, emotions, bodily dispositions, etc. (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003; Sandfort, 2000; Wagenaar, 2004). There is considerable disagreement, though, about whether these relational practices lead to better societal outcomes or aggravate inequities (cf. Durose, 2009; Hastings, 2009; Marinetto, 2011; Wagenaar, 2004). And although collaboration and networks have received some attention (e.g., Durose, 2007; Mole, 2002), studies usually focus on individual front line workers in intra-organisational settings.

Hence, collaborative dynamics in street level work seem to form an important and original research agenda. The literatures on collaborative governance and street level bureaucracy both strongly focus on interactions and relational practices, but limit their

attention to, respectively, managerial practice and intra-organisational relations. This leaves unclear how to assess and improve collaborative dynamics in street level work; that is, how the actualisation of collaboration in interactions between street level workers has the potential to bring about changes in their situated practices which can mitigate societal outcomes such as socio-spatial deprivation. Indeed, some studies have engaged in cross-fertilisation of both literatures to start addressing this significant lacuna (Eilers, 2002; Gil de Gibaja, 2001; Kruiter et al., 2008; Marinetto, 2011; Romzek et al., 2014; Sousa and Costa, 2010; Vos and Wagenaar, 2014). This paper contributes to these efforts at deepening understanding of the nature and impact of collaborative dynamics in street level work. Below I outline four main elements of this emerging research agenda, which will shape the focus and analysis of my empirical material.

A first characteristic is recognition that street level workers play a significant role in collaborative networks that is different to the role of public managers (Kruiter et al., 2008; Marinetto, 2011; Romzek et al., 2014; Thomas, 1997; Vos and Wagenaar, 2014). The daily reality of street level practices and dynamics is critical to the performance and outcomes of collaborative networks. This is not to merely single out street level workers as a type of network actor or emphasise the collaborative dimension of their work, but, rather, to develop a holistic understanding of how their routines and judgments influence what happens *in their relating with* other street level workers, citizens or clients, managers, and other actors. This can take the form of face-to-face encounters in meetings, across desks, and on the street; communication through phone calls, emails, and documents; and indirect interaction by anticipating, responding to, or neglecting others' conduct. In other words, the aim is to examine the "organizational and relational context" (Marinetto, 2011, page 1168) and associated territorial justice (Hastings, 2007) as enacted at the street level.

6

Next, formal structures and conducive antecedent conditions are understood as necessary but insufficient for fostering authentic and effective collaborative dynamics (Eilers, 2002; Hagedorn, 1996; Hastings, 1996; Marinetto, 2011; Romzek et al., 2014; Thomas, 1997; Vos and Wagenaar, 2014). Street level collaboration cannot be pre-structured but is an emergent process of interacting in unfolding situations. Therefore, the empirical and analytical starting point is the actual, informal day-to-day interactions between street level workers, not the collaborative agreement reached in principle by their agencies (Rein, 1983). Again, the aim is to learn how the dynamics and roles of multiple actors sustain and could improve the quality of relationships in the collaborative network (Eilers, 2002) as well as the quality of their societal outcomes (Hastings, 2007; 2009; Lipsky, 1971; Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2012).

Third, it is acknowledged that working together does not automatically lead to productive relationships and better outcomes (Author, 2016; Duiveman et al., 2010; Hastings, 1996; Kruiter et al., 2008; Vos and Wagenaar, 2014). In fact, several structural tensions and barriers make collaborative breakdown or undesirable consequences a common phenomenon (Marinetto, 2011). However, these are usually not known in advance but become manifest as street level workers interact in response to unforeseen developments. For example, confusion can arise about the (mis)alignment of personal and organisational commitments (Keyton et al., 2008) or a hegemonic narrative can emerge that excludes certain people or issues (Schmachtel, 2015). Such problematic collaborative dynamics can lead street level workers to reproduce rather than transform socio-spatial inequalities by systematically falling short when it comes to those who need their help the most: people with complex needs, groups suffering from sustained social stigma and inequities and places characterised by multiple deprivation.

A final element is exploration of how to improve collaborative dynamics in street level work. Several approaches have proven valuable, such as creating a collective identity

(Hardy et al., 2005), cultivating informal interactions (Romzek et al., 2014), and nurturing a shared practice and strategy (Duiveman et al., 2010; Vos and Wagenaar, 2014). Facilitating such relational practices is a prolonged process of building new communicative spaces, enabling joint learning and giving shape to practical changes. A key contribution of this paper is to argue that this should not be solely an internal process of joint reflection and mutual adaptation but, more fundamentally, an interactive process driven by the situational needs and socio-spatial deprivation of communities (Author, 2016). While this echoes arguments for more and better community involvement in government-decision making (Durose, 2009; Goodlad et al., 2005; Parker and Street, 2015), I propose that street level workers should engage in 'community-centred working': going out to participate in communities to adapt services to the needs and resources of local people and places (Adams and Nelson, 1997; Smale, 1995). As Morgan (1997) puts it, the "real challenge for those working toward collaboration is making sure that efforts to improve the community fit together, and that those efforts support the resources in place in the community" (286). andand

To recapitulate, collaborative dynamics in street level work have a large influence on joint service delivery processes and outcomes but are remarkably underexplored in the literature on collaborative governance and street level bureaucracy. I have identified an emerging research agenda focused on developing a holistic understanding of relational dynamics at the street level, taking daily practices as starting point, identifying emergent structural tensions and barriers, and exploring approaches to improving relational processes and societal outcomes. After an overview of the case study and research methods, I empirically examine collaborative dynamics in street level work along these lines and, in the discussion, critically appraise a community-centred approach for improving relationships and reducing socio-spatial deprivation.

A participatory evaluation in Amsterdam

The empirical data for this paper was obtained from September 2013-2014 in City District

Amsterdam-West (the Netherlands). Action research was conducted with street level workers

and other actors involved in an innovative and successful approach: Neighbourhood Practice

Teams (*Buurt Praktijk Teams* – BPTs). The BPT approach was developed in response to

failing collaborative dynamics in street level work in one specific neighbourhood. Over the

course of ten years, a gang of youngsters had developed from a loose group engaged in

incidental petty theft and aggression into a well-organised criminal network, despite the

collaborative efforts of fourteen street level workers. The first BPT had unprecedented

success in changing things around by "doing what's necessary". This seemingly elusive

principle comprises a set of flexible, iterative, situated practices: creating a sense of urgency

for doing things differently, being constantly present in the community, carefully listening to

residents, developing a shared focus and commitment with all stakeholders, organising many

small-scale activities to generate a wider transformation, and constantly reflecting on what

worked and what did not to learn about underlying patterns (Author, 2016; Stadsdeel West,

2013).

The BPT approach is an example of community-centred working. It is informed by

the *presence approach* (Baart, 2001), which prioritises long term exposure to life in the

community and cultivating relationships over immediate problem-solving and intervention.

Rather than being driven by a predetermined organisational focus, agenda or identity, street

level workers gradually gain an experiential understanding of what needs to be done by being

there, making themselves available (physically, mentally, emotionally) and engaging in

concrete tasks together (Author, 2016). Despite much praise and support for this approach

and the start of BPTs in other areas, it proved difficult to anchor this innovative approach in

the urban governance system as it was constantly misapprehended, contested, and resisted (Author, 2017).

I aimed to address this situation through action research: engaging in active participation and collaboration to generate social change and reliable knowledge (andGreenwood and Levin, 2007; Kindon et al., 2007; Reason and Bradbury, 2001). "Because learning is an important feature of successful collaborations …., they are natural sites for action research that has theory building and testing as its aim" (Bryson et al., 2015, page 658; see also Hagedorn, 1996; Karlsen and Larrea, 2016; Rigg and O'Mahony, 2013), especially when disadvantaged communities are involved (Beebeejaun et al., 2015). As part of the broader action research project, I conducted a participatory evaluation of how two youth work agencies (Stichting Streetcornerwork (SSCW) and IJdockzz) and the City District were addressing the needs of youngsters in the *Kolenkit*—which carried the stigma of the worst neighbourhood in the country. Extra budget had become available for targeting youngsters in this area, but ensuing collaborative dynamics were highly unproductive.

Participatory evaluation is a form of action researchand that goes beyond traditional evaluation focused on measuring performance, describing facts, or judging outcomes by "generating supplementary perspectives, enabling conversations, introducing new ideas about evaluation logic, [and] facilitating examination and critique" (Schwandt, 1997, page 80). This is an inevitably political and contested process in which action researchers cannot be rational, objective and neutral external evaluators but take an action-oriented stance in challenging power, stimulating involvement and promoting particular courses of action (Flyvbjerg, 2001). andRather than following Guba and Lincoln's (1989) fourth generation approach focused on facilitating joint deliberation, I took a more pragmatic, interventionist approach aimed at becoming part of the problematic situation by engaging in its daily practice to show how things could be done differently (Author, 2012; Greenwood and Levin, 2007).

More specifically, I used a range of qualitative and interpretive methods to experience local interactions and develop in-depth understandings of relationships, views and practices. A key source of information and support was SSCW West's team leader, with whom I built a strong relationship of mutual trust and understanding through our daily interactions and joint reflections. I became part of the youth work team by participating in six team meetings—in which I helped to make sense of the BPT approach and narrative interviewing and analysis methods (Wagenaar, 2011, pages 208-222; Weiss, 1994) and encouraged reflection and learning— and joining street level workers on five neighbourhood walks—during which we collaboratively reflected on findings and experiences. With regards to ethics, we approached youngsters informally on the street (some already knew the youth workers, others did not) by introducing ourselves and the organisations, explaining the purpose of our 'needs analysis', and asking for their oral consent to record their responses in writing and use these confidentially and anonymously. We did not record not their names, only their gender and (estimated) age, how many we met and where.

To gain a more holistic understanding of the situation, I read numerous policy documents, internal memos and emails provided to me by SSCW West's team leader and had several meetings with SSCW managers and other stakeholders (either individually or together with SSCW West's team leader). To add more depth to the team's findings, I conducted two unstructured qualitative interviews with youngsters about changes, growing up and street life in the neighbourhood (consent forms were signed). Together with the team, I co-organised a focus group with fifteen youngsters to get their feedback on the findings of our 'needs analysis'. I composed the team's final report based on reports of neighbourhood walks, interview data and feedback by using thematic and narrative analysis to identify recurring themes and underlying storylines.

During and after all of these activities, I made field notes of what we found and what happened, my interpretations of this and my own embodied experiences. These formed the basis for a reflective report in which I reconstructed the process in detail and identified underlying tensions and reasons for our success. Together with SSCW West's team leader and two other key collaborators on my research project I co-organised a reflective workshop for all stakeholders that stimulated joint commitment, reflection and learning. The outcomes of this workshop further informed the reflective report, which I turned into a practitioner booklet with the help of a professional designer. This report formed the basis for the overview of the case in the next section and its analysis in the subsequent discussion.

Collaboratively analysing the needs of youngsters

This section explains how the participatory evaluation unfolded during the two months in which I conducted a so-called 'needs analysis' with a team of youth workers. It also discusses the periods leading up to and following the needs analysis to put the changes generated in collaborative dynamics at the street level into context. I present my findings as narrative with field notes integrated in the story to give a sense of the messy and emergent nature of the practice of street level collaboration (Figure 1 provides a timeline).

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The snake pit

From March until November 2013, municipal policy makers and youth work managers were involved in a messy planning and coordination process that, upon reflection, one policy maker called a "snake pit" (field notes 5-6-2017). Plans were pre-determined, withdrawn, and endlessly negotiated; policy goals and organisational interests were prioritised over an

understanding of the actual needs of youngsters; and policy makers steered the process, made promises, and requested changes from a distance. The upshot was that it took eight months before anyone actually went to talk to youngsters, let alone doing something about the deprivation they were experiencing.

This process was triggered by city-wide statistical analyses that classified the *Kolenkit* as a "focus area" and the appointment of a 'process manager youth intervention Kolenkit' in March 2013. In emails to the SSCW team leader (sent on 2-4-2013 and 18-5-2013) she wrote she worked within a "city-wide framework" and did not know the area or had "any concrete ideas" about what to do in practice. She proposed a BPT approach but pre-determined three "focus areas" for separate team members and, while allowing "modifications", the Municipality was to be "strictly in control" and changes to the mandate were "not necessary" and she "also [couldn't] afford that". In May, she circulated a pre-determined plan ("Concept action plan Kolenkids") packed with assumptions, abstract concepts, and policy goals. For example, it discussed eight ambitions from the "strategic plan 'Learning and Growing Up in the Kolenkit neighbourhood" (p. 1) and already specified a ten-step solution, which were assumed to improve the lives of youngsters in the *Kolenkit*, even though a mere 113 out of 3,000 words were spent on discussing them.

The process manager withdrew her initial plan after a meeting with youth work managers in June. They went on to draft their own plans and compete for getting 'the lead' and funding. These plans replicated the three pre-determined focus areas and aimed to identify interventions based on a pre-structured questionnaire and process. When the agencies decided to develop a joint plan at the end of July, it took three months of negotiating, compromising, and redrafting to create a document that mostly legitimised existing policy, decisions, and organisational expertise. This was surprising given SSCW's foundational principle of working from a holistic understanding of "what in first instance are the concrete

difficulties and problems youngsters experience themselves" (Kelderman and Jezek, 2010, 10).

The youth workers in the needs analysis team did not question this pre-structured and instrumental approach but, after eight months of hearing about all kinds of plans, meetings, and negotiations, just wanted to get on with it. Moreover, their established roles and routines were not challenged since the questionnaires were similar to the intake forms and support plans they used and, secondly, they were used to having their client workload pre-determined by performance targets from the City District. During the first team meeting, it was decided to use a "peer-to-peer" method and "to start recruiting peers and/or youngsters as soon as possible to fill in the questionnaires" (internal memo 7-11-2013). They did not reflect on the risk of instrumentally using youngsters to legitimise the findings without really listening to what they have to say or need. An SSCW analyst, who proposed the peer-to-peer method, promised to use SPSS to translate the survey data into focus area interventions and related FTE and budget.

The needs analysis

From November 2013 until January 2014, a team of five youth workers, two team leaders and myself conducted the needs analysis based on the BPT approach. By walking around in the neighbourhood almost daily to listen to youngsters and collect their stories, a shared practice, view and commitment emerged. But this definitely did not come easy: street level workers were reluctant to let go of their established routines and expertise, while managers and other stakeholders did not engage in supportive behaviour.

The idea to use the BPT approach emerged during a conversation I had with SSCW-West's team leader across the desk. Hearing about the needs analysis, I suggested (and convinced him) that their pre-structured survey would not lead to any new insights or

fundamental changes in collaborative dynamics or youngsters' lives (field notes 11-11-2013). Our first step towards the latter was creating a sense of urgency for the BPT approach at the street level. However, at the next team meeting we were met with resistance and confusion: "we should keep up the pace", "won't we be overburdening the youngsters?", "youngsters need structure", "they won't trust us if we don't stick to our established roles", "what kind of stories?", "we're overcomplicating something that's very straightforward" and "we already know exactly what's going on" (field notes 14-11-2013). The street level workers, understandably, felt that their expertise and professionalism were implicitly being questioned. They reluctantly agreed to use the BPT approach but initially kept on asking for a clear framework, "otherwise you're quickly done talking" (field notes 28-11-2013). The team leader and I tried to accommodate their need for clarity and concrete steps but also to convince them of the value of the BPT approach and encourage them to experiment and learn by doing.

This proved to be an ongoing struggle. Meetings were initially characterised by unproductive dynamics that left everyone confused and frustrated and, moreover, distracted from talking about youngsters' needs. I got an uneasy gut feeling that the youth workers detested the BPT approach and me personally (field notes 14-11-2013). My emails were repeatedly ignored and the youth workers expected me to write reports of neighbourhood walks. The team leader felt he was not producing much effect besides complicating his position in the organisation. In line with the fifth element of the BPT approach, we regularly reflected on these challenges to our roles together as well as with the street level workers. For instance, after a meeting, the latter explained they required clarity because in the BPT approach they had to relate to youngsters in a completely different way, triggering joint reflection on who exactly was uncomfortable with different relationships (field notes 14-11-2013).

15

Creating a wider sense of urgency was also challenging. The SSCW analyst kept on insisting on using the peer-to-peer method and, at some point, casually remarked to the team leader: "That research of, what's his name, that researcher, that ain't nothing but bullshit" (field notes 27-11-2013). During a meeting in November, their line manager indicated that he was "not that open-minded about it" (field notes 18-11-2013). It appeared that he was afraid the need analysis would not identify additional work for SSCW, because he just hired a new youth worker based on extra subsidy promised by the City District. While he came around during a meeting in December ("I want us to do good research and if that conflicts with our [organisational] interests then so be it"; field notes 9-12-2013), our communication remained awkward. In addition, during a meeting early December, the SSCW executive said he took a "helicopter view" and did not think it was "sufficiently burning" for him to intervene (field notes 2-12-2013). Finally, a month after submission of the joint plan, a newly appointed process manager requested "a few small changes" (email sent on 25-11-2013), including adding a third "partner agency" and incorporating the results of a district-wide debate with youngsters in the findings of the needs analysis.

The second and third element of the BPT approach, being present and listening, were initially engaged in half-heartedly. During the first neighbourhood walks, the youth workers asked closed questions ("What do you think of the neighbourhood?", "What's missing?", "What do you need?"; field notes 22-11-2013) which triggered brief, summative answers that did not generate deeper insights. For various reasons, they claimed that it was impossible to talk openly to youngsters and have more than superficial conversations. As a result, they were only hearing "the standard issues" and "nothing new" (field notes 21-11-2013): under 15s want a youth centre and activities, over 15s want help with finding internships and work. As already outlined in the initial plan, the former could be addressed by services from IJDockzz, the latter falls within SSCW's area of expertise.

However, a gradual change occurred in collaborative dynamics at the street level. For example, during one neighbourhood walk two youngsters initially said they did not have any issues and just wanted a new youth centre, but, when asked what was going on with their friends, a conversation emerged about how many of them had difficulties finding work yet did not ask public services for help because they experienced them as too distant (field notes 22-11-2013). This appeared to be a pattern: youngsters constantly said they never had problems but their friends always did. On another walk, a youngster said his friends could not find internships but he claimed to have one himself. As his lie unravelled in the conversation, the youth worker did not confront him but offered his help and gave him his card. The next morning at nine o'clock he got a call from this youngster (field notes 4/5-12-2013). Thus, by being present and listening, the street level workers experienced first-hand what youngsters actually needed and what they could do to help improve their lives.

After their initial inclination to see their collaboration as a temporary exercise leading to separate service delivery, the street level workers started to engage in a shared practice and develop joint solutions. During the first weeks, meetings were dominated by negative experiences, forceful questioning of the BPT approach and brief reports lacking depth. But from early December, the mood in the team changed. The youth workers were managing to have longer conversations with youngsters and started to share positive experiences: "I have the feeling it's going better and better", "Youngsters are telling things they normally wouldn't", "It's nice and revealing to talk to youngsters in this way" (field notes 5-12-2013). The team reflected on effective practices and difficulties of being present and listening as well as on the contents of their increasingly long and deep reports. Despite differences in organisational cultures, the youth workers enjoyed going on neighbourhood walks together and used a Whatsapp group to exchange experiences. The two team leaders alternated in chairing the meetings and jointly set the agenda (containing the logos of both agencies). At

the final meeting in January, all youth workers expressed their desire to continue collaborating based on the BPT approach and the shared view they co-created (field notes 9-1-2014).

This shared view, the fourth element of the BPT approach, included the aforementioned story about distance to public services, but primarily focused on youngsters feeling that there was no place for them in the neighbourhood. While all of them almost instantly asked for a new youth centre when we met them, we uncovered a more complex underlying story of exclusion, segregation, and discrimination: all youth centres had been closed over the past years; benches on which they hung out were taken away as neighbours filed nuisance complaints; people looked badly at them in passing; and the Police constantly stopped them to ask for their ID. They did not know where to go, what to do, or who to ask for help. Police officers were the only street level workers they met. During an encounter in December, two police officers cycled by, triggering one youngster to say that if the youth workers would not have been there they would have been stopped and searched. "We're being treated like criminals" (field notes 10-12-2013). Thus, the shared view we developed on what youngsters needed was 'a place in the neighbourhood'—not so much physically (new youth centre) but more fundamentally socially (better image and transformed relationships).

Systemic change

From January 2014 onwards, all stakeholders embraced the approach and findings of the needs analysis and continued their collaboration. However, the hard-won collaborative dynamics were under constant pressure and failed to produce systemic change. The agencies' relationship remained fragile, the City District continued with hierarchical steering, involving

other stakeholders proved difficult, and further reflection and collaboration were shelved for months.

Responses to the needs analysis were overwhelmingly positive. The report was publicly praised by the City District Chair for its revealing view on the deprivation experienced by youngsters and even got some radio coverage. The SSCW line manager commended the team ("you've been very innovative", "I've never seen something like this", "the report is great"; field notes 9-1-2014) and the IJdockzz line manager said: "The approach is maybe not very earth-shattering, but it is the work that we should be doing. And that definitely does not always happen"; field notes 8-4-2014). Over the course of six months, a brainstorm meeting was organised to come up with next steps, a joint action plan was formulated, and a team of youth workers was formed to collaborate with youngsters in the *Kolenkit* to address their socio-spatial deprivation based on the findings of the needs analysis. Finally, the reflective workshop facilitated all stakeholders in reconstructing the entire chain of events in great detail, dissecting their roles and relationships, and formulating joint lessons. They all found it "a special experience" (field notes 5-6-2014) and were keen to effectuate systemic change in their collaborative dynamics.

Yet, policy makers kept on hierarchically steering the process. The City District only formally approved the agencies' joint plan when the needs analysis was almost finished and left unclear how they would follow up. When invited to a team meeting in January, the new process manager (the third in less than a year) did not seem to appreciate the newfound collaborative approach and shared view with her general-critical questions ("this is a familiar story, what is so special about the *Kolenkit*?") and quick solutions ("the need for help with internships and work is already solved as I've just mandated [a youth employment agency] to start working in the neighbourhood") (field notes 9-1-2014).

As a result, the danger was constantly lurking that the agencies would slide back into competition about organisational interests. When it suddenly appeared that the City District has extended the contract of a third youth work agency operating in the *Kolenkit* with four months, SSCW and IJdockzz decided to put their collaborative activities on hold. There was also more than one incident of mutual suspicion between the line managers of the two agencies about the other trying to take the lead behind their back.

It was also hard to extend the newfound collaborative dynamics to other street level agencies. A meeting with the team leader of the youth employment agency was concluded with the joint ambition to "collaborate in the interest of the youngsters" but followed up with a request to ask youngsters about their need for coaching because this is their "main point of interest" (email sent on 21-11-2013). The neighbourhood police officer was hardly available and cancelled a meeting at the last minute. The neighbourhood social worker did not consider youngsters as her "target group" (field notes 28-11-2013). And the neighbourhood manager agreed that "we should do something with youngsters" but had no time for neighbourhood walks (field notes 28-11-2013).

Finally, involving the executives of both agencies caused delays and frustration. The SSCW executive casually agreed to organising a reflective workshop in April but, when a few weeks beforehand it dawned on him that it is going ahead, he first wanted to discuss why this was necessary. This delayed the workshop to June but it did get him on-board. He enthusiastically participated and supported the publication of the reflective report as a booklet, even though he did not want to fund it and took two months to send his input and feedback. The executive of IJdockzz never responded to any of my emails, sent his line manager for the meeting in April, and showed up at the reflective workshop for only half an hour.

The team of youth workers operated for 1.5 years in the *Kolenkit* but constantly faced issues with the capacities of the youth workers for using the BPT approach, especially its fifth element of organizing small-scale activities in collaboration with the youngsters to generate structural changes in the deprivation they experienced. In the end, its mandate was not extended due to lack of results and collaborative dynamics in street level work were back to their habitual pattern.

Discussion: Community-centred working to improve relationships and reduce deprivation

The case substantiates the four elements of the emerging research agenda for conceptualising and improving collaborative dynamics in street level work. First of all, I demonstrated that street level workers are critical to the performance and outcomes of collaborative networks. Looking into this holistically revealed a great deal about the relational and organisational context as enacted *in their relating*. It was at the street level that collaborative dynamics changed and a shared practice, view and commitment emerged to reduce socio-spatial deprivation amongst youngsters. Second, by taking informal, day-to-day street level interactions as starting point, I illuminated what actually happens inside the 'black box' of collaborative networks beyond formal structures. Despite a joint plan and joint working, the street level workers initially worked towards separate service provision that sustained the status quo and did not address socio-spatial deprivation.

Third, I have identified how multiple structural tensions became manifest in the messy, unfolding practice of collaborative dynamics in street level work. Adopting the BPT approach triggered a range of unanticipated challenges to emerge in the relational dynamics of the youth workers, youngsters, team leaders, line managers, agency directors, civil servants, the researcher and other stakeholders. And even though productive dynamics

21

eventually emerged, innovative approaches like community-centred working prove difficult

to institutionalise (Eilers, 2002; Vos and Wagenaar, 2014, pages 424-425, 433-434).

Stakeholders who lack relational grounding in the community might verbally support

community-centred working but are unlikely to 'get' what it requires of them (Author, 2017).

As a result, collaborative dynamics can continue to be inhibited by a hierarchical orientation

to pre-determined plans and habitual routines or a competitive focus on organisational

interests whilst providing services out of touch with the lives of clients and needs of

communities (Davies, 2005; Fuller and Geddes, 2008; Hagedorn, 1996; Hastings, 1996;

Laffin et al., 2014; Matthews, 2014; Thomas, 1997).

Therefore, as argued in more detail elsewhere (Author, 2017; Author et al., 2017;

Stout and Love, 2015), we can evaluate the quality of collaborative processes in terms of

whether they are characterised by *hierarchy* (imposing decisions and hegemonic power to

dominate the process), *competition* (trying to keep disjointed interests and unstable

compromises together) or a move towards what Follett (1934; 2003) calls *integration*

(generating new shared ideas and activities which everyone consider better than what they

started out with). Indeed, the participatory evaluation fostered integration of street level

workers with the community but did not produce systemic change in hierarchical and

competitive institutions.

Further analysis of why this collaborative failure occurred is certainly interesting and

has been reported elsewhere (Author, 2017). Instead, here I focus on the final element of the

research agenda: how collaborative processes and outcomes can be improved. Particularly

providing evidence in support of community-centred working, I demonstrated that

relationships were strengthened and a start was made to reduce socio-spatial deprivation as

the BPT approach reoriented the team towards the community and put "their expertise in the

service of a shared, actionable exploration of the perceptions, needs, experiences, and

expertise of clients and colleagues and the constraints and possibilities that are contained within the situation at hand" (Vos and Wagenaar, 2014, page 427).

Such relational practices thrive on the "connective human capital" (Agranoff, 2008, page 320) of collaborative networks. Nurturing interactions and relationships among street level workers can enable them in jointly learning how to share knowledge, deal with mistakes and tensions, communicate productively and honour mutual commitment (Duiveman et al., 2010; Keyton et al., 2008; Mandell and Keast, 2007). Indeed, the participatory evaluation facilitated the team in developing a joint practice that produced a shared view of the needs of youngsters and commitment to collaborate on further addressing the exclusion, segregation and discrimination youngsters faced.

However, a joint practice characterised by high quality internal relationships does not guarantee beneficial societal outcomes (Heidelberg, 2015). The youth workers already regularly interacted with youngsters as part of their jobs and were planning to engage them through the pre-structured survey. This habitual mode of relating kept their routines intact in the face of high time pressure and vague policy guidelines (*hierarchy*) and mainly served the interests of the agencies (*competition*) rather than the dire needs of the youngsters—a typical occurrence in street level bureaucracy (Hagedorn, 1996; Lipsky, 2010; Marinetto, 2011). Instead, community-centred working fostered a qualitative change in their modes of relating through jointly orienting them toward solving a situational problem (*integration*)and.

In other words, collaborative dynamics fundamentally improved through the street level workers' joint orientation toward relationally engaging with youngsters. Working in and with the community generates more authentic and effective collaborative processes as it facilitates street level workers in jointly "harnessing the complexity" (Wagenaar, 2007) of neighbourhoods. Community-centred working opens up new channels of communication and

enhances the flow of experiential knowledge and the emergence of creative solutions (Baart, 2001). In fact, collaborative dynamics improved once the team started to relate to youngsters through open-ended conversation, experience the neighbourhood through their eyes, and articulate the underlying story of exclusion, segregation and discrimination.

andand

Conclusion

Collaborative dynamics in street level work are crucial to the reproduction or transformation of socio-spatial deprivation but, surprisingly enough, have hardly been studied. Therefore, this paper asks: *how can collaborative dynamics in street level work be conceptualised and improved*? A key empirical contribution is that my participatory evaluation gives a real sense of the muddle and emergence of collaboration in interactions between street level workers. It shows that despite the intention to collaborate in order to better address the needs of youngsters in a deprived neighbourhood in Amsterdam, a messy planning and coordination process unfolded over an eight month period characterised by hierarchical and competitive dynamics *about* rather than actual interactions *with* youngsters. Taking a community-centred approach—being in the neighbourhood, listening to youngsters, interpreting their stories and reflecting on experiences—was initially resisted by street level workers and not supported by other actors, but gradually generated a shared practice, view and commitment around the socio-spatial deprivation youngsters experienced. However, this hard-won new approach eventually failed to systemically change relationships between all stakeholders and the youngsters' situation.

Conceptually, I developed a novel understanding of the nature and impact of such collaborative dynamics in street level work. I have outlined an emerging research agenda that acknowledges the importance of the relational practices that street level workers enact in

complex intra- and inter-organisational systems, takes these as analytical starting point, identifies emergent structural tensions and barriers to collaboration, and explores how relational processes and societal outcomes can be improved. With regards to the latter, I have demonstrated how community-centred working offers a relational (or integrative) approach that reorients street level workers towards the community and embeds them in citizens' experiences of exclusion, inequality and injustice. This argument has direct practical implications: the design and management of collaborative networks in urban governance should be grounded in a thorough understanding of the everyday practices and emergent dynamics at the street level. Moreover, given the short-lived changes in the case, collaborative managers should invest significant resources in generating productive street level collaboration and commit to fundamental institutional reform.

andFuture research should examine collaborative dynamics in street level work in other contexts and different approaches to improving their processes and outcomes. As the focus here was more on a specific approach for generating immediate improvements rather than overcoming structural tensions, we would also benefit from studies that explain how to produce and evaluate fundamental transformations in urban governance institutions and territorial justice (Author et al., 2017; Hastings, 2007; Laffin et al., 2014; Sherlock et al., 2004). Action research and participatory evaluation offer especially useful methodological frameworks towards this purpose as they enable continued theory-building and analysis of collaborative dynamics that is "more theoretically precise while still offering practical and relevant guidance" (Selsky and Parker, 2005, page 866) towards better street level relationships and lower socio-spatial deprivation.

Notes

[1] This estimate is derived from tentative analyses of the situation in the Netherlands, the setting of the case study in this paper (Kruiter et al., 2008, 26-28; Trouw, 2012; Hilhorst and Van der Lans, 2013, 21-22).

References

Abma, T. (2004) Responsive evaluation: The meaning and special contribution to public administration. *Public Administration,* 82(4), 993-1012.

Adams, P. & Nelson, K. (1997) Reclaiming community an integrative approach to human services. *Administration in Social Work,* 21(3-4), 67-81.

Agranoff, R. (2006) Inside collaborative networks: Ten lessons for public managers. *Public Administration Review,* 66(s1), 56-65.

Agranoff, R. (2008) Enhancing performance through public sector networks: Mobilizing human capital in communities of practice. *Public Performance & Management Review,* 31(3), 320-347.

Ansell, C. & Gash, A. (2007) Collaborative governance in theory and practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 18(4), 543-571.

Author (2012) Anonymised for peer review.

Author (2013) Anonymised for peer review.

Author (2016) Anonymised for peer review.

Author (2017) Anonymised for peer review.

Author et al. (2017) Anonymised for peer review.

Baart, A. (2001) *Een theorie van de presentie [A theory of presence],* Utrecht, Lemma.

Beebeejaun, Y., Durose, C., Rees, J., Richardson, J. & Richardson, L. (2015) Public harm or public value? Towards coproduction in research with communities. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy,* 33(3), 552-565.

Brodkin, E.Z. (2003) Street-level research. Policy at the front lines. In Lennon, M.C. & Corbett, T. (Eds.) *Policy into action: Implementation research and welfare reform* (pp. 145-163). Washington D.C., The Urban Institute Press.

Brodkin, E.Z. (2012) Reflections on street-level bureaucracy: Past, present, and future. *Public Administration Review,* 72(6), 940-949.

Bryson, J.M., Crosby, B.C. & Middleton Stone, M. (2006) The design and implementation of cross-sector collaborations: Propositions from the literature. *Public Administration Review,* 66(S1), 44-55.

Bryson, J.M., Crosby, B.C. & Middleton Stone, M. (2015) Designing and implementing cross-sector collaborations: Needed and challenging. *Public Administration Review,* 75(5), 647–663.

Davies, J.S. (2005) Local governance and the dialectics of hierarchy, market and network. *Policy Studies,* 26(3-4), 311-335.

Duiveman, R., Wagenaar, H. & Kruiter, H. (2010) *Wijken in uitvoering. Onderzoek naar wijkgerichte praktijken in den haag [Neighbourhoods in progress. Study of area focused practices in The Hague],* Den Haag, University of Leiden.

Durose, C. (2007) Beyond 'street level bureaucrats': Re-interpreting the role of front line public sector workers. *Critical Policy Studies,* 1(2), 217-234.

Durose, C. (2009) Front-line workers and 'local knowledge': Neighborhood stories in contemporary UK local governance. *Public Administration,* 87(1), 35-49.

Eilers, A.M. (2002) School-linked collaborative services and systems change. Linking public agencies with public schools. *Administration & Society,* 34(3), 285-308.

Emerson, K., Nabatchi, T. & Balogh, S. (2012) An integrative framework for collaborative governance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 22(1), 1-29.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2001) *Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Follett, M.P. (1934) *The new state: Group organization the solution of popular government,* New York, Longmans, Green and Co.

Follett, M.P. (1942/2003) Constructive conflict. In Metalf, H.C. & Urwick, L. (Eds.) *Dynamic administration* (pp. 30-49). London, Harper & Brothers Publishers/Routledge.

Fuller, C. & Geddes, M. (2008) Urban governance under neoliberalism: New labour and the restructuring of state-space. *Antipode,* 40(2), 252-282.

Gil de Gibaja, M. (2001) An exploratory study of administrative practice in collaboratives. *Administration in Social Work,* 25(2), 39-59.

Goodlad, R., Burton, P. & Croft, J. (2005) Effectiveness at what? The processes and impact of community involvement in area-based initiatives. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy,* 23, 923-938.

Greenwood, D.J. & Levin, M. (1998) *Introduction to action research: Social research for social change,* Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. (1989) *Fourth generation evaluation,* London, Sage.

Hagedorn, J. (1996) *Forsaking our children: Bureaucracy and reform in the child welfare system,* Chicago, IL, Lake View Press.

Hardy, C., Lawrence, T.B. & Grant, D. (2005) Discourse and collaboration: The role of conversations and collective identity. *Academy of Management Review,* 30(1), 58-77.

Hasse, S. & Austin, M.J. (1997) Service integration. Something old and something new. *Administration in Social Work,* 21(3-4), 9-29.

Hastings, A. (1996) Unravelling the process of `partnership' in urban regeneration policy. *Urban Studies,* 33(2), 253-268.

Hastings, A. (2007) Territorial justice and neighbourhood environmental services: A comparison of provision to deprived and better-off neighbourhoods in the uk. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy,* 25, 896-917.

Hastings, A. (2009) Poor neighborhoods and poor services: Evidence on the 'rationing' of environmental service provision to deprived neighborhoods. *Urban Studies,* 46(13), 2907-2927.

Healey, P. (2006) *Collaborative planning: Shaping places in fragmented societies,* Houndmills, Macmillan Press.

Healey, P. (2007) *Urban complexity and spatial strategies. Towards a relational planning for our times,* New York, Routlegde.

Heidelberg, R.L. (2016) The power of knowing the rules. *American Review of Public Administration,* 46(6), 734 - 750.

Hilhorst, P. & Van der Lans, J. (2013) *Sociaal doe-het-zelven. De idealen en de politieke praktijk [Social DIY. Ideals and political practice],* Amsterdam, Atlas Contact.

Hupe, P. & Buffat, A. (2014) A public service gap: Capturing contexts in a comparative approach of street-level bureaucracy. *Public Management Review,* 16(4), 548-569.

Huxham, C. (2000) The challenge of collaborative governance. *Public Management: An International Journal of Research and Theory,* 2(3), 337-358.

Innes, J.E. & Booher, D.E. (2010) *Planning with complexity: An introduction to collaborative rationality for public policy,* London/New York, Routledge.

Karlsen, J. & Larrea, M. (2016) Moving context from the background to the forefront of policy learning: Reflections on a case in Gipuzkoa, Basque country. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy,* Available online in Early View.

Kelderman, I. & Jezek, R. (2010) *Sterk op straat. Methodische uitgangspunten van streetcornerwork [Strong on the street. Methodical principles of streetcornerwork],* Amsterdam, Stichting Streetcornerwork.

Keyton, J., Ford, D.J. & Smith, F.I. (2008) A mesolevel communicative model of collaboration. *Communication Theory,* 18, 376-406.

Kindon, S., Pain, R. & Kesby, M. (Eds.) (2007) *Participatory action research approaches and methods: Connecting people, participation and place,* Hoboken, Taylor & Francis.

Kruiter, A.-J., De Jong, J., Van Niel, J. & Hijzen, C. (2008) *De rotonde van hamed. Maatwerk voor mensen met meerdere problemen [Hamed's roundabout. Tailormade solutions for people with multiple problems],* The Hague, NICIS Institute.

Laffin, M., Mawson, J. & Ormston, C. (2014) Public services in a 'postdemocratic age': An alternative framework to network governance. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy,* 32, 762-776.

Lipsky, M. (1971) Street-level bureaucracy and the analysis of urban reform. *Urban Affairs Review,* 6(4), 391-409.

Lipsky, M. (2010) *Street-level bureaucracy. Dilemmas of the individual in public services,* New York, Russell Sage Foundation.

Lowndes, V. & Skelcher, C. (1998) The dynamics of multi-organizational partnerships: An analysis of changing modes of governance. *Public Administration,* 76(2), 313-333.

Mandell, M.P. & Keast, R.L. (2007) Evaluating network arrangements: Toward revised performance measures. *Public Performance & Management Review,* 30(4), 574-597.

Marinetto, M. (2011) A Lipskian analysis of child protection failures from victoria climbié to 'baby p': A street-level re-evalaution of joined-up governance. *Public Administration,* 89(3), 1164-1181.

Matthews, P. (2014) Being strategic in partnership – interpreting local knowledge of modern local government. *Local Government Studies,* 40(3), 451-472.

Maynard-Moody, S. & Musheno, M. (2003) *Cops, teachers, counselors. Stories from the front lines of public service,* Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press.

Maynard-Moody, S. & Musheno, M. (2012) Social equities and inequities in practice: Street-level workers as agents and pragmatists. *Public Administration Review,* 72(S1), S16-S23.

McGuire, M. & Agranoff, R. (2011) The limitations of public management networks. *Public Administration,* 89(2), 265-284.

Mole, K. (2002) Street-level technocracy in uk small business support: Business links, personal business advisers, and the small business service. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy,* 20, 179-194.

Morgan, G. (1997) Collaborative models of service integration. In Hershfield, B. & Selman, K. (Eds.) *Child day care* (pp. 283-299). Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, NJ.

O'Leary, R., Choi, Y. & Gerard, C.M. (2012) The skill set of the successful collaborator. *Public Administration Review,* 72(S1), S70-S83.

Parker, G. & Street, E. (2015) Planning at the neighbourhood scale: Localism, dialogic politics, and the modulation of community action. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy,* 33, 794–810.

Perri 6 (1997) Social exclusion: Time to be optimistic. In Demos (Ed.) *The wealth and poverty of networks* (pp. 1-24). London, Demos.

Peters, B.G. (2006) Concepts and theories of horizontal policy management. IN Peters, B.G. & Pierre, J. (Eds.) *Handbook of public policy* (pp. 115-138). Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

Pollitt, C. (2003) Joined-up government: A survey. *Political Studies Review,* 1(1), 34-49.

Provan, K.G., Fish, A. & Sydow, J. (2007) Interorganizational networks at the network level: A review of the empirical literature on whole networks. *Journal of Management,* 33(3), 479-516.

Rathgeb-Smith, S. (2003) Street-level bureaucracy and public policy. In Peters, B.G. & Pierre, J. (Eds.) *Handbook of public administration* (pp. 354-365). London, Sage.

Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (Eds.) (2001) *Handbook of action research. Participative inquiry and practice,* London, Sage.

Rein, M. (1970) *Social policy. Issues of choice and change,* New York, NY, Random House.

Rein, M. (1983) *From policy to practice,* Basingstoke, The MacMillan Press.

Rigg, C. & O'Mahony, N. (2013) Frustrations in collaborative working. *Public Management Review,* 15(1), 83-108.

Romzek, B., LeRoux, K., Johnston, J., Kempf, R.J. & Schede Piatak, J. (2014) Informal accountability in multisector service delivery collaborations. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 24, 813-842.

Romzek, B.S., LeRoux, K. & Blackmar, J.M. (2012) A preliminary theory of informal accountability among network organizational actors. *Public Administration Review,* 72(3), 442-453.

Sandfort, J.R. (2000) Moving beyond discretion and outcomes: Examining public management from the front lines of the welfare system. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 10(4), 729-756.

Schmachtel, S. (2015) Local partnerships as 'rationalized myths': A critical examination of the micro-discourse in educational partnership working. *Critical Policy Studies,* Available online in Early View, DOI: 10.1080/19460171.2015.1077719.

Schwandt, T.A. (1997) Evaluation as practical hermeneutics. *Evaluation,* 3(1), 69-83.

Selsky, J.W. & Parker, B. (2005) Cross-sector partnerships to address social issues: Challenges to theory and practice. *Journal of Management,* 31(6), 849-873.

Sherlock, K.L., Kirk, E.A. & Reeves, A.D. (2004) Just the usual suspects? Partnerships and environmental regulation. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy,* 22, 651-666.

Smale, G.G. (1995) Integrating community and individual practice: A new paradigm for practice. In Nelson, K. & Adams, P. (Eds.) *Reinventing human services: Community- and family- centered practice* (pp. 59-74). New Brunswick, NJ, Transaction Publishers.

Sousa, L. & Costa, T. (2010) The multi-professional approach: Front-line professionals' behaviours and interactions. *International Journal of Social Welfare,* 19, 444-454.

Stadsdeel West (2013) *Opvallend dichtbij. Verhalen van 't columbusplein [remarkably closeby. Stories from the columbusplein],* Amsterdam, Stadsdeel West.

Stout, M. & Love, J. (2015) *Integrating process. Follettian thinking from ontology to administration,* Claremont, CA, Process Century Press.

Sullivan, H., Barnes, M. & Matka, E. (2006) Collaborative capacity and strategies in area-based initiatives. *Public Administration,* 84(2), 289-310.

Sullivan, H. & Skelcher, C. (2002) *Working across boundaries collaboration in public services,* Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Thomas, C. (1997) *Bureaucratic landscapes: Interagency cooperation and the preservation of biodiversity,* Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.

Trouw (2012) 'Hulpverlening verspilt jaarlijks 2,5 miljard bij probleemgezinnen' ['Service delivery annually wastes 2.5 billion with problem families'].

Tummers, L.L.G., Bekkers, V., Vink, E. & Musheno, M. (2015) Coping during public service delivery: A conceptualization and systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* Available online in Early View.

Vandenbussche, L., Edelenbos, J. & Eshuis, J. (2015) Pathways of stakeholders' relations and frames in collaborative planning practices: A framework to analyse relating and framing dynamics. *Planning Theory,* Available online in Early View, 1-22.

Vos, J. & Wagenaar, H. (2014) The Münchhausen movement: Improving the coordination of social services through the creation of a social movement. *American Review of Public Administration,* 44(4), 409-439.

Wagenaar, H. (2004) "Knowing" the rules: Administrative work as practice. *Public Administration Review,* 64(6), 643-655.

Wagenaar, H. (2007) Governance, complexity and democratic participation: How citizens and public officials harness the complexities of neighborhood decline. *American Review of Public Administration,* 37(1), 17-50.

Westerink, J., Kempenaar, A., Van Lierop, M., et al. (2017) The participating government: Shifting boundaries in collaborative spatial planning of urban regions. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space,* 35(1), 147-168.