Framing through relating or relating through framing? Exploring the connection between framing and relating dynamics in a collaborative governance process.

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ABSTRACT

In collaborative governance settings, framing and stakeholder relating dynamics both play a critical role in achieving collaborative success. In addition, many scholars posit that both dynamics are closely intertwined. However, this connection between both has been scarcely empirically studied nor theorized. In this qualitative, longitudinal case study, we empirically explore stakeholders' relating and framing dynamics and the connection(s) between both. Findings show that the way both dynamics are connected, differs throughout different phases of the collaborative governance process. Based on our case analysis, we illuminate five theoretical propositions about how framing and relating dynamics are connected throughout collaborative governance processes.

INTRODUCTION

Both academics and practitioners in public management are increasingly attracted to the idea of collaborative governance as an alternative strategy for policymaking (Termeer 2009; Vangen 2017a). Induced by the complexity of contemporary societal issues and the perceived gap between government and society, public professionals increasingly collaborate with non-state stakeholders to develop and implement public policies (Ansell and Gash 2008; Nowell 2009b; O'Leary and Vij 2012; Termeer 2009; van Oortmerssen et al. 2014). Central ideas in collaborative forms of governance are: stakeholder involvement; face-to-face deliberation and dialogue; and an orientation towards developing a 'shared sense of purpose' and 'a shared sense of action' among different players on a policy issue of common concern (Ansell and Gash 2008; Bouwen and Taillieu 2004; Emerson et al. 2012; Nowell 2010, Robertson and Choi 2012).

In practice, collaborative undertakings are challenging as they are 'marked by diversity […] among stakeholders' perspectives and views' (Robertson and Choi 2012: 84, see also Kokx 2011). At the start of collaborative governance projects, the stakeholders involved most likely bring different views of the policy issue - of "what is the case" and "what should be done" - to the table: they *frame* the issue differently (Dewulf et al. 2005; Gray 2004; Nowell 2009a; O'Leary and Vij 2012; Thomson and Perry 2006; van Hulst and Yanow 2016; Vink et al. 2012; Huxham et al. 2000). A significant challenge in collaborative governance projects then is to deal with these differences in framing and, through interaction, create a joint interpretation of the policy issue at stake, i.e. to realize frame alignment (Gray 1989; Gualini and Majoor, 2007; Nowell 2010; Thomson and Perry 2006; van Buuren 2009).

In turn, realizing frame alignment and succeeding in joint problem solving hinge on the (inter)relational processes within a collaborative governance system (see also Bouwen 2001; Bouwen and Taillieu 2004; Feldman and Khademian 2007; Healey 2003). Stakeholder relations, it is argued, form the solid foundation for working together: 'collaboration is ultimately about developing the social relationships needed to achieve desired goals' (Foster-Fishman et al. 2001, 251). In addition, framing dynamics may affect stakeholder relations. For example, persistent lack of alignment of frames may undermine stakeholder relations and instigate conflicts (Gray 2004). This implies that a collaborative's framing dynamics are interrelated with stakeholders' relating dynamics (Bouwen 2001; Bouwen and Taillieu 2004; Healey et al. 2003; Termeer 2009).

Yet, while many scholars highlight the role of framing and relating dynamics and their interplay in collaborative work, studies that specifically focus on the connection between both throughout collaborative governance processes are sparse. Studies most often attend

to the impact of one of both dynamics on collaborative success, without attending to their mutual interplay (Gray 2004; Oh and Bush 2012; van Oortmerssen et al. 2014). Given the importance of both dynamics for collaborative processes, and the assumed interplay between both, we believe it is critical to develop a better understanding of if and how these dynamics are interrelated. A study hereof can provide insights into the mechanisms at work and into the conditions or contexts in which specific patterns play out.

In this article, we explore the connection between framing dynamics and stakeholder relating dynamics throughout time in a concrete collaborative governance project. We approach stakeholder relations as phenomenological realities, focusing attention on the experiential dimension of relating. We rely on a dialectical approach to relating, which conceives relations as (intrinsically) revolving around contradictory, yet interrelated values, i.e. 'dialectical struggles' (Baxter 2004; 2011).

In the following sections, we start with presenting our theoretical perspective and analytical approach. For the empirical part of this article, we draw on an exploratory, longitudinal in-depth case study of the collaborative governance project on the urban restructuring of the 'garden village' of Vreewijk, located in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. After presenting the case and describing the research methods applied, we outline the *framing and relating dynamics* and *the connection between both* within this case. Drawing upon the insights of our case study, we then develop a set of theoretical propositions on how framing and relating dynamics (may) interplay throughout different phases in collaborative governance processes. In the final section, we discuss the implications of our findings for collaborative governance theory and practice.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Framing in collaborative governance processes

Collaborative governance projects can be conceived as interactive processes in which a struggle over ideas and frames takes place (Gray 2004; Hajer 2003). How stakeholders, involved in a collaborative governance project, *frame* issues and how their *frames* evolve, and align (or not) over time, is believed to be critical for collaborative success and failure (Gray 2004).

The concepts of *frames* and *framing* have become well established in a variety of fields, including public policy literature (Bouwen and Dewulf 2012; Dewulf et al. 2007; Hajer 2003; van Hulst and Yanow 2016). In the diverse uses of the concept, the common de-

nominator is that a particular issue, situation or event "can be understood in different ways, according to different frames, and that this holds different implications for what that something will be taken to mean" (Dewulf et al. 2007, w.p.). This study draws on an interactionist approach to framing, i.e. frames are considered to be constructed, reconstructed and deconstructed through interaction processes (van Hulst and Yanow 2016, 93). Fram*ing* – as a verb – denotes this dynamic, evolving character of frames: "the framing of a situation may develop and shift within even short stretches of interaction, as meaning and order are co-created" (Dewulf et al. 2009, 160). When actors engage in interaction, frames may change: as actors react to others' framings, they may 'unfreeze' their existing framing of a situation or issue and develop an updated vision (Bouwen and Dewulf, 2012; Dewulf et al. 2009; Putnam and Holmer, 1992). Following the interactionist approach, we understand *frames* as *temporary, internally coherent interpretations, which reflect the way actors perceive and conceive of specific situations, prioritize and highlight specific aspects of a problem, include or exclude certain aspects and favour particular kinds of solutions and/or actions* (Dewulf et al. 2004; Putnam and Holmer 1992). In this study, we focus specifically on the way stakeholders frame the substance of a policy *issue*, i.e. we focus on their *issue frame(s)* (Dewulf et al. 2009; van Hulst and Yanow 2016). In *issue frames*, stakeholders express how they give meaning to the policy situation and link their view on what is problematic hereabout to particular proposals for action (van Hulst and Yanow 2016; Vink et al. 2012). Issue frames thus both address (a) what is the problem and (b) what should be done to solve the problem, i.e. the course of action (see Dewulf et al. 2005, 122; see also Putnam and Holmer 1992; van Hulst and Yanow 2016). The totality of issue frames at a given moment concerning a given policy issue is referred to as a *frame configuration* (Dewulf et al. 2004). Frame configurations change over time. This may be because stakeholders' issue frames change over time, because new stakeholders become involved and, as a consequence new issue frames emerge, or because processes of frame alignment.

Ideally, a collaborative governance process results in a shared interpretation or at least partial accommodation of both problem definitions and solutions (Ansell and Gash 2008; De Roo and Porter 2007; Gualini and Majoor 2007; Nowell 2010; van Buuren 2009). This implies that differing and/or diverging issue frames need to be aligned into a common (acceptable) frame. This is commonly referred to as frame alignment. Frame alignment refers to *the processes by which differing frames are linked together in a common frame* (Snow et al. 1986; Vijay and Kulkarni 2012). Frames can become aligned in different ways: (1) two or more compatible but structurally unconnected frames are linked and coalesce in a common frame (*frame bridging*); (2) prevailing meanings and understandings of a policy situation in differing frames are replaced by *new* meanings in a new, common frame (*frame transformation*); (3) a specific individual frame is invigorated or strengthened in a

common frame (*frame amplification*) and; (4) boundaries of the original (differing) frames are extended to encompass other views in one common, comprehensive frame (*frame extension*)(Snow et al. 1986; Vijay and Kulkarni 2012). If stakeholders do not succeed in aligning frames, then there is *frame divergence*: there is a lack of agreement across frames. In collaborative governance projects, persistent frame divergence is considered to be problematic since it impedes the possibility of joint action towards an issue of common concern (Gray 2004).

As we have argued, literature suggests that framing dynamics are closely interrelated with stakeholder relating dynamics in collaborative governance processes. Next, we discuss our theoretical perspective on stakeholder relating dynamics in collaborative governance processes.

Relating in collaborative governance processes

In collaborative governance literature, stakeholder relations are most often conceptualized as structural and/or institutional phenomena (see for instance Oh and Bush 2012; Nowell 2009a, 2009b). Studies focus for instance on mapping the structural characteristics, such as network density or interaction frequency - or on revealing prevailing rules and norms, such as social capital, that exist within social relations and are considered to be advantageous for collaborative work (Healey et al. 2003; Oh & Bush 2012; Nowell 2009b). In this study, however, we provide a phenomenological take on stakeholder relations: we focus on the experiential dimension of relating, i.e. on how stakeholders live through and come to give meaning to their 'everyday relating'. Hence, we turn attention to stakeholders' lived relational experiences and to the way these experiences and changes herein impact on a collaborative's framing dynamics (and vice versa).

To conceptualize the experiential dimension of relating, we draw on relational dialectics theory, as developed by Baxter and Montgomery (1996), and Baxter (2004/2011) within the field of interpersonal communication theory. The core premise in relational dialectics theory is that relational experiences are characterized by dialectical struggles, i.e. the ongoing, dynamic interplay between opposing, yet interrelated values (Cools 2011). A fundamental dialectical struggle, considered to be inherent to all interpersonal and social relationships, is that between connection and autonomy: "Without connection, relationships have no identity and so cannot exist; but without autonomy, individuals have no identity and so cannot exist in a relationship" (Montgomery 1993, p. 207-208). Specifically for collaborative settings, collaborative governance scholars have found tensions within collaboratives between for instance maintaining individual control and sharing control (Thomson and

Perry 2006; Gray and Wood 1991); between organizational autonomy and commonality (Vandenbussche 2018), and between unity and diversity (Ospina and Saz-Carranza 2010).

Conceiving relational experiences as revolving around the ongoing, dynamic interplay between values, emphasizes how change is ever-present in relating, and how relations are always in motion (Baxter 2004, Cools 2011). Through ongoing interaction, relational parties constantly redefine and re-organize around these dialectical struggles: 'any particular dialectical [struggle] is open to multiple and different interpretations, depending on the particular circumstances contextualizing its occurrence' (Montgomery 1993, 210). Hence, relational dialectic theorists consider change to be the natural state of relating (Cools 2006; Montgomery 1993).

To come to grips with stakeholders' relational experiences, the values that occur (and dominate) at a given moment in time, and changes herein throughout time, we introduce the concepts of *relational narratives* and *relational turning points*. Through their ongoing interactions, stakeholders jointly share experiences, and construct intersubjective understandings of their mutual relations (Fuhse and Mützel 2011, 1078). As such, they develop a specific relational narrative that reveals the intersubjective, 'localized' meanings and values actors attribute to their relations, i.e. the 'relationship-as-presently-constituted' (Cools 2011). However, relational narratives simultaneously give access to the richness and nuances of relating, and accommodate 'ambiguity and dilemmas as central figures' (Carter 1993, 6). In our conception, relational narratives thus not only give access to the intersubjective, coherent meanings imposed to relational experiences, they also lay bare struggles and dilemmas inherent to relating. Conceiving relational narratives as such draws analytical attention to both elements of coherence and ambiguity in stakeholders' relational experiences and meaning making. The second concept to guide our analysis of stakeholders' relating dynamics is that of relational turning points. A relational turning point can be described as 'a series of related transformations in actor's definitions of […] their relations to others. A transformation is not simply an addition of an existing theme, but a reformulation, an employment of a new vocabulary, a shift from one perspective to another' (Bolton 1961, 236-237). Transformational changes imply shifts that move relations to a new place: the 'relationship-as-presently-constituted' is 'rejected' and parties transform their definitions of their relations.

Framing through relating, relating through framing?

In collaborative governance and adjacent literature, there seems to be general agreement about the interrelatedness of framing dynamics and stakeholders' relating dynamics (Bouwen and Taillieu 2004; Dewulf et al. 2009; Healey 2003). Yet, scholars put forth different views on how (exactly) both dynamics are connected.

A first view in collaborative governance literature is that the quality of stakeholder relations (often conceptualized as the presence/absence of trust or social capital) determines the collaborative process and, more specifically, a collaborative's framing processes – i.e. *framing processes are seen as largely a relational result* (Ansell and Gash 2008; Dewulf et al. 2005; Donohue 2001, 2003; Donohue and Hoobler 2002; Emerson et al. 2012; Huxham 2003; Oh and Bush, 2013; Thomson and Perry 2006). In this conception, stakeholder relations are considered to be 'the *medium* for collaborative work' (Foster-Fishman et al. 2001). Dewulf et al. (2005), for instance, argue that "a constructive relationship between stakeholders […] offers possibilities for re-structuring the issue and thus making connections between the different frames involved" (2005, 118). Similarly, Donohue argues that relational messages form "a relational logic, or framework that serves as a resource for framing the substantive issues in the interaction" (2003, 168). Following this reasoning, Donohue (2001) emphasizes how this mechanism places a great deal of stress on stakeholder relations.

Another view advanced in literature is that *framing dynamics are the most significant factor in collaborative processes*, influencing how the collaborative process evolves in general (see e.g. Gray 2004; van Buuren 2009). Gray (2004), for example, notes: "Failure to find satisfactory approaches to understanding each other's frames […] can derail collaborations." In this view, a persistent lack of frame alignment may undermine stakeholder relations – implying that framing dynamics, to some extent, determine stakeholder relations. This perspective on the interrelation between framing and relating dynamics also highlights the importance of strong stakeholder relations, but depicts these more as *a lever* for framing processes, than as a medium (Gray 2004; Nowell 2009b).

A third view in literature suggests that *framing and relating dynamics mutually affect each other in a cyclical fashion*: when stakeholders 'converge' relationally, so do their frames and vice versa (Bouwen and Taillieu 2004; Huxham et al. 2000). In this view, working on/developing commonality forms the basis for acknowledging and integrating different perspectives. In turn, negotiated outputs (as a form of integration of views) feed back into the relational sphere (see e.g. Bouwen and Taillieu 2004).

Although these ideas provide some first grip to develop our understanding of the connection between framing and relating dynamics, inductive analysis is needed to further explore the connection between both and the conditions that possibly shape this connection and to develop propositions hereabout.

RESEARCH SETTING AND METHODS

The case: The collaborative partnership on the urban restructuring of the 'garden village' Vreewijk

To explore framing and relating dynamics in collaborative governance, and the connection between both, we conducted an *instrumental* case study: our case selection is not based on an intrinsic interest in the case as such, but on the aim of developing our (theoretical and empirical) understanding of the phenomena under study (Stake 1995). To do so, we selected a running collaborative governance project dealing with the urban restructuring of the garden village Vreewijk, in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. We selected this specific case because (1) it was a clear case of collaborative governance, since a diversity of stakeholders meets face-to-face with the aim to jointly govern the restructuring process; (2) the project has a richly documented history: many secondary sources are available, making the process accessible and 'transparently observable' (Eisenhardt 1989); (3) at the time of case selection, the project still had some years ahead as a collaborative, enabling to examine not only in retrospect, but also 'in action' how frames and relations change(d) over time (Langley et al. 2013, 6).

The collaborative governance project in Vreewijk concerns the large-scale urban restructuring of the area. The first ideas on the urban restructuring emerged around 2005. At that time, the key housing association, owning a large part of the houses in Vreewijk, and the borough of Feijenoord, as the political and administrative actor responsible for physical developments in the area, are tentatively exploring possible approaches to restructure Vreewijk. Therefore, they set up trajectories to consult residents and the tenants' association and involve them in drafting plans. This approach is common in Dutch urban planning, which is characterized by housing associations (and/or private developers) that act as main investors, and a public sector taking up a facilitating and/or leading role in planning interventions and seeking to consult societal actors in the development of plans (Dekker and van Kempen 2004; Gerrits et al. 2012). Simultaneously, the resident's association BOV (Bewoners Organisatie Vreewijk – in English: Residents' Association Vreewijk) drafts her vision on the urban restructuring, and publishes it in 2006 (Bewonersvisie BOV 2006). In 2007, the housing association and the borough officially explicate their vision on the urban restructuring. These events – occurring between 2005-2007 – serve as the point of departure for our case study since the emergence and drafting of these first ideas and plans for the future of Vreewijk reveal the divergent views in terms of the preferred urban restructuring approach.

Data collection and analysis

This study relies on a qualitative-interpretive approach, and thus focuses on unearthing, in rich detail, participants' various experiences and viewpoints on the phenomenon under study (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012).

We collected data from multiple sources. First, we carried out *narrative interviews* with 23 key representatives, including representatives from the housing association (8), residents' association(s) (3), tenants' association (2) and representatives from both the municipality and the borough at the administrative (3) and political level (3). In addition, we interviewed two architects involved in the collaborative governance process as experts (2) and, two filmmakers who make a series of documentaries on the restructuring process (2). Each representative was interviewed twice. During the first interview, the primary aim was– as is common in narrative projects – to invite participants to simply tell their story about their experiences with the collaborative group, the project and substantive and relational developments herein (Connelly and Clandinin 1990; Pederson 2013). Following the first interview, we created a timeline, depicting each individual respondent's story about the collaboration on five dimensions: (1) events concerning their involvement in the collaborative process; (2) substantive developments concerning the urban restructuring; (3) experiences with stakeholder relations; (4) collaborative set-up; (5) contextual events. This timeline served as a 'girder' for the follow-up interview, which aimed to invite participants to add nuance and detail to their initial story.

Second, besides the narrative interviews, we *observed and participated in various project and working group meetings* of the collaborative between 2012 and 2015 (20+ meetings in total). Fieldwork enabled us to 'shadow' stakeholders' framing and relating dynamics in action (Czarniawska 2007). Following each meeting, we documented our observations and reflections in detailed field notes.

Third, we relied on *documents* pertaining to the focal period (2005-2016). These documents included newspaper articles, reports of the project and working group meetings, policy documents, websites and blog content, and 7h of footage developed by the two filmmakers mentioned earlier.

To analyse our qualitative data set, we applied ideas of the discourse tracing method (LeGreco and Tracy 2009). Discourse tracing is specifically well-suited for studies that seek to provide insight in transformation and change over time (ibid. 2009). The analysis of frames, relations and dynamics herein was conducted in a four-step process. First, we *chronologically ordered our data* into a timeline for each dynamic separately. Next, we

closely analysed the chronologically ordered data by posing a series of *structured questions* toward our data (see Table 6.1). These questions relate to our analytical concepts and are informed by the literature on both issue framing and relational dialectics. Structured questions enable to "systematically 'lift out' patterns and arguments from the qualitative data set" (LeGreco & Tracy, 2009, 1532). This step allowed us to refine the organization of our data and to construct a more specified and detailed timeline of framing and relating dynamics separately (see Langley 1999)(see excerpts in Appendix C, Appendix D). Within the timelines, we then tracked changes over time and identified key events that were, according to stakeholders, key to understand how stakeholders' frames and relations evolved. As a third step, we used *a visual mapping strategy* (Langley 1999). This entails the simultaneous visual representation of both dynamics on one meta-timeline (see Figure 6.1). Visual mapping allowed us to identify precedence and to reconstruct sequences of events and of changes in frames and/or relations and, subsequently, to generate 'local "causal" maps' of how both dynamics are interrelated (Langley 1999). Finally, as a fourth analytical step, we constructed a composite narrative.

Table 6.1. Structured questions.

Concepts	Structured questions
Framing dynamics	
Issue frames	What are the predominant issue frames on the urban restructuring? • Who is doing the framing? • How is the problem framed? • How is the solution framed?
Frame changes	Are there any changes in the issue framing (configuration) throughout time? • Do new issue frames appear / do certain issue frames disappear?
Frame alignment	Are there issue frames that get connected or disconnected throughout time?
Relating dynamics	
Relational narratives	How are relations described? What labels are used to characterize relations? What are the dominant (explicit or implicit) values in the (different) relational narrative(s)?
Relational turning points	Are there any changes in the way stakeholders describe their mutual relations throughout time?

FINDINGS OF THE CASE STUDY

To structure the description of the framing and relating dynamics in the Vreewijk case, we used a 'temporal bracketing strategy' (Langley 1999): we decomposed our composite narrative (see above) into successive, adjacent time phases. Each phase is distinctive in framing configuration or/and in stakeholder relational experiences. Note that these phases should

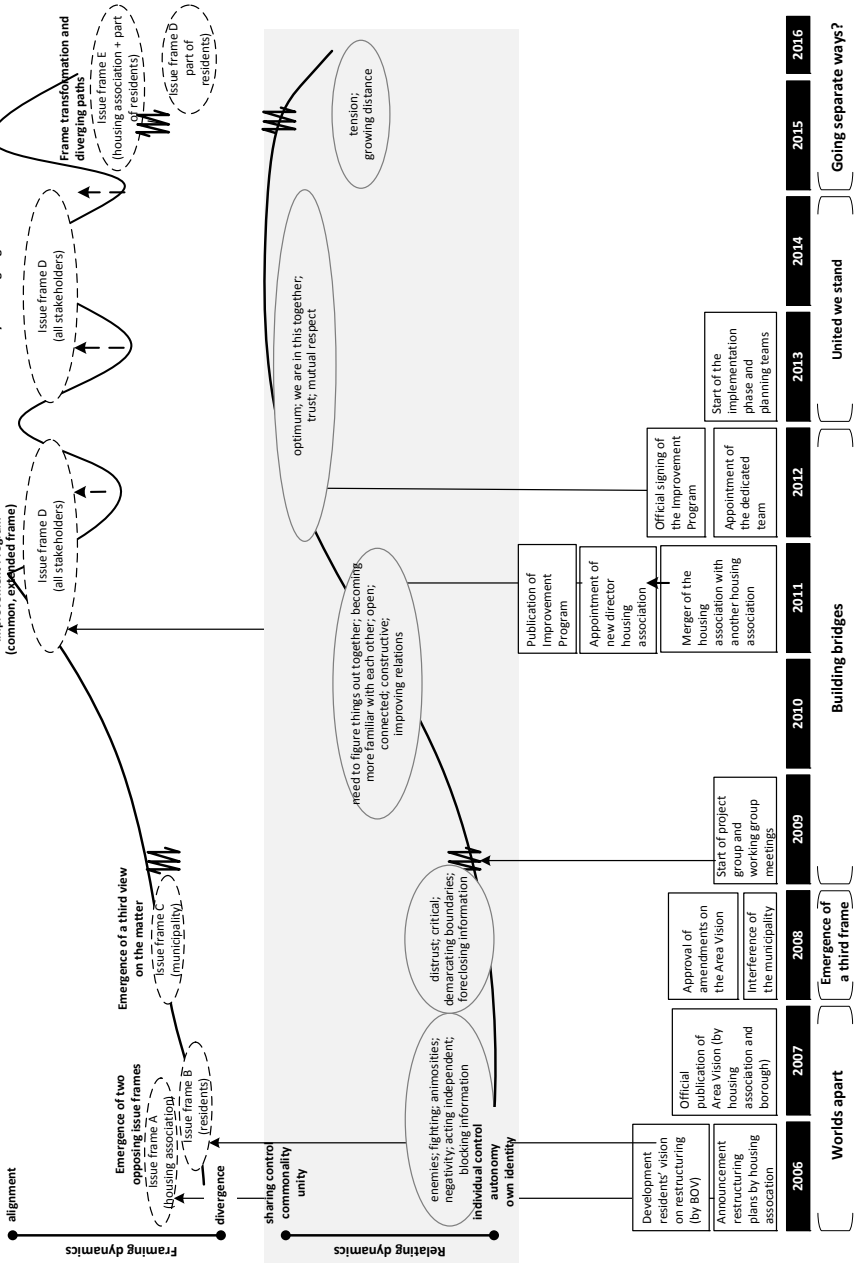

Figure 6.1. Visual map of stakeholders' relating and framing dynamics.

not be seen as "a predictable sequential process" but rather as "a way of structuring the description of events" (Langley 1999: 703).

Phase 1 (2006-2007): Worlds apart

In 2006, the housing association owning about 80% of the houses in the 'garden village' of Vreewijk, announces its first ideas concerning a large-scale urban restructuring of Vreewijk. Analysis of these first messages (in news reports and a newsletter of the housing association itself) reveals how the housing association deems a large-scale restructuring as necessary because of the 'bad state of the houses' in the area (framing of the problem). The housing association also states that 'demolition and new building' will play a prominent role in its approach to restructure the area (framing of the solution).

As a reaction to these first announcements, different residents, led by the residents' association BOV, develop an own vision on the development of the area, the Residents' Vision Vreewijk (BOV, 2006). Analysis of the vision and related documents reveal a problem definition that mentions different problems with the housing stock: the houses need maintenance (because of deferred maintenance by the housing association), the housing supply is not differentiated enough and there are no suitable houses for the elderly in the area (framing of the problem). Residents also state a preferred solution: renovation and restauration rather than demolition (framing of the solution). Also, the cultural-historical and urban value as well as the interests of the residents, should be taken into account. The Residents' Vision Vreewijk mentions:

> In each street, residents are unanimously against demolition. The state of the houses is good. Vreewijk needs to stay as it is. […]. Bad and moderate quality occurs and, according to residents, bad and moderate maintenance occurs very often. Residents want to see action in that respect, but do not believe demolition-new building is the only solution. (BOV, 2006, 27).

In 2007, the housing association, now in cooperation with the borough of Feijenoord, publishes its official vision on the further development of the area: the Area Vision Vreewijk (in Dutch: Wijkvisie Vreewijk). In this document, the housing association and borough hold on to the earlier announced viewpoints, and add elements to the problem definition that – in their view - further substantiate the need for a large-scale, comprehensive restructuring. The analysed documents illustrate how the housing association and the borough continue to refer to the bad state of the houses, but now also mention the lack of a differentiated housing stock and the fact that the housing has serious shortcomings that are, according to the modern constructive and technical standards, insolvable (framing of the problem).

Their solution remains the demolition of houses and new building (framing of the solution). This is, according to the housing association and the borough, the only option that is financially feasible.

The diverging views that emerge on the urban restructuring instigate conflicts. Hence, during this time period, relations are extremely conflictual. When describing their relational experiences, stakeholders use labels like 'fighting', 'enemies', 'animosities'. Feelings of friction especially live among the representatives of the housing association, and those of the residents' association(s). One of the filmmakers describes this time period as follows:

> This was at the height of negativity. Stakeholders did not speak to each other. There were many animosities between parties. […]. There were many accusations. […]. At some point, there was no contact at all between the director of the housing association and the chair of the residents' association. They just did not talk to each other. Their relation was manifestly sick.

Exemplifying for this period, is that residents try to find a new 'owner' for the area and, symbolically, put the area for sale. Meanwhile the housing association is unsympathetic to share information with residents. This illustrates how stakeholder relations in these years were characterized by a strong focus on own interests and autonomy, and on their differences rather than on collective goals, i.e. improving the area.

Phase 2 (2008): Emergence of a third view

The difficulties and conflicts concerning the urban restructuring plans receive a lot of media attention. This calls the municipality of Rotterdam to take position on the subject and, around 2008, a new frame concerning the urban restructuring emerges. Analysis of the texts and media reports indicate that the municipality – with the alderman of Urban Planning as frontman - endorses the view that a comprehensive restructuring approach is necessary (framing of the problem). The municipality, however, proposes as a solution "preservation, unless", rather than "demolition, unless" (framing of the solution). Although the proposed solution is in line with that of residents, it also leaves room for manoeuvre for the housing association: the decision whether to preserve depends on the technical and financial feasibility. The city sees this as a compromise proposal that might establish bridges between the housing association and borough on the one hand, and the residents on the other. The municipality also emphasizes the importance of a cultural-historical responsible approach. Furthermore, the municipality proposes that the further development of the area vision should be approached collaboratively. Ultimately, the municipality's view is included in the Area Vision which is then approved by the borough council. In the months

that follow, an independent project manager, appointed by the municipality, starts to set up a framework for collaboration.

While the municipality aimed to build bridges between the different stakeholders, this by no means meant that stakeholders readily accepted this view. Neither does the interference of the municipality has much immediate effect on stakeholder relations. The project manager of the municipality comments:

> That thing [the Area Vision] existed on paper. So they had met about it and other stuff, so there had been something like consultation but they did not meet anymore because they didn't want to talk to each other anymore. […]. So then we've built an organisational structure. That was a big deal. It took me months. This wasn't okay, that wasn't okay either. They were on top of it. This also applied to the residents' association(s), very distrusting, very critical […]. I've never discussed things as much in detail as I did here. It was incredible.

Overall, the most significant change in this period, is that the municipality introduces a new perspective on the issue. However, the different parties still show little willingness to engage into a real dialogue. They hold on to their views and protect their own interests.

Phase 3 (2009-2012): Building bridges

From the beginning of 2009 on, the key stakeholders – housing association, borough, municipality, residents, and tenants - come together in a project group and diverse working groups with the intention to collaboratively design a restructuring approach. The investiture of the project group ensures that stakeholders– at the very least - enter into a face-to-face dialogue. From now on, stakeholders are, as the director of the housing association puts it bluntly, 'stuck together'. Stakeholders note how, throughout these first months of collaborating, it begins to dawn on them that something needs to happen and they need to figure it out together. Hence, gradually, they develop some basic feelings of commonality.

Meanwhile, the collaborative starts with the exploration of the cultural-historical value of the area – since this is considered a relatively neutral issue element to deal with. Discussing this issue element, in turn, reinforces stakeholders' feelings of commonality:

> In any case, doing research about the cultural-historical value of the area, was for residents… well, they were immediately enthusiastic about this, because it acknowledged their view. And [the housing association] was like: 'Well, if that is a common line that gives us a title through which we can get the national government to offer financial sup-

> port, well, than we benefit from this too'. So, all parties were like: 'this cultural-historical aspect, this is something we can talk about with each other'. And working together on this aspect has, I think, … well, parties could become more familiar with each other, each other's' tone, each other's attitude. And slowly, step-by-step, relations got better [more connected].

Subsequently, these cumulating feelings of commonality, so stakeholders indicated, formed a breeding ground to further discuss a joint approach towards restructuring the area and to work on the development of a shared vision.

In 2011, the housing association merges with another housing association, and a new director is appointed. Stakeholders indicate how this director takes a different, more considerate, attitude towards the collaboration. This event shifts stakeholder relations towards more openness and more connectedness. A resident comments:

> [The new director] also said she would personally follow up on Vreewijk. […]. And if we had a problem, we could just send her an email and then we had a meeting. And then we cleared the air, and that creates such a good relation. Then you can put everything out in the open, no nonsense. And she also took action if something went wrong.

This intensification of feelings of commonality and unity between stakeholders, is the definitive push towards finalizing the Improvement Program. Analysis of the Improvement Program and related documents illustrate how the different issue frames are now incorporated into a common, extended, frame. This common frame, as written down in the Improvement Program, proposes three restructuring pilots: one focusing on maintenance, one on renovation, and one on new building. This shows how the framing in the Improvement Program aligns the different issue frames through frame extension. Problem definition and proposed solution are formulated as follows in the Improvement Program:

> The Improvement Program is meant to […] durable preserve Vreewijk for the future. The Improvement Program has the following important principles:
>
> – The current residents and social cohesion in the streets and areas;
> – The cultural-historical value of garden village Vreewijk.
>
> Herein the technical state of the houses plays a role and the realization of the Improvement Program depends on the financial feasibility (Project group Vreewijk, 2011, 29).

The approval and signing of the Improvement Program further reinforces the feelings of commonality between stakeholders. A filmmaker comments on this period:

> What I think is so nice, is that, in the meantime, the atmosphere is so good. And that's not just for window-dressing. That all parties can say: 'Well, you – as residents – did well!' And that they say this without having their face in a cramp. That is nice. That's really a sign of how relations improved and how collaboration improved.

The signing of the Improvement Program, together with the appointment of a new 'dedicated team' (composed of new individuals) at the housing association in 2012, consolidates the accumulated feelings of commonality. As a resident comments:

> I think that, throughout the development of the Improvement Program […] connectedness has grown. […].Because of the developments in the Improvement Program you saw how parties started to find common ground and felt more united. […]. And that means, once the Improvement Program is there, they reached a kind of reasonable optimum concerning openness.

Overall, throughout this period, stakeholder relations gradually shifted from rather volatile, over a growing recognition of mutual interdependence, towards well-established feelings of commonality.

Phase 4 (2013-2015): United we stand

In the previous phase, bridges were built both between the diverging issue frames and between stakeholders. Against this background, and with the Improvement Program approved, the urban restructuring moved into the implementation phase, which brought new challenges in terms of framing: the different stakeholders now also needed to agree upon details concerning the concrete elaboration of the pilots, i.e. on how, on street level and even house level, the renovation, maintenance or new buildings will look like. Throughout this phase, residents of the streets and houses concerned were involved through so-called planning teams. Reports of the planning teams and related documents show how this group of residents highlighted a new aspect concerning the way the houses should be improved: they emphasized the importance of maximally preserving the living area (in terms of space and surface) and comfort of the houses (framing of the solution). This perspective on how to improve the houses regularly was at odds with the cultural-historical value of the houses highlighted in the Improvement Program. A pamphlet stating 'Cultural heritage? No, thank you!' circulated in the area. This view regularly caused disalignments (or divergences) in terms of the course of action to follow. Views differed on issue elements such as the design and scale of the dormer windows and the colour of the window-frames. However, despite divergences in the way the houses should be improved, the different stakeholders succeeded in connecting the different aspects (cultural-historical value, finances, living

area and comfort) and in coming to an agreement. In other words, the issue framing, particularly how the solution is viewed, is, again, further extended (frame extension). Stakeholders indicated how the established feelings of commonality and unity offered the necessary buffer to deal with these disalignments. One of the architects explains:

> There were moments that, for instance, residents made a fuzz about how to deal with the dormer windows and opposed the agreed upon solution. […] But then you have this support that has grown… and eventually I can say that, apparently, throughout the years, trust and mutual respect has increased enough to harness such individual incidents.

Hence, despite the collaborative partnership was confronted with frame discordances/divergences in this period, and thanks to the accumulated and consolidated feelings of commonality, stakeholders repeatedly succeeded in combining efforts and bringing their views together.

Phase 5 (2015 onwards): Going separate ways?

During this time period, there is a transformation in the way the solution is framed. The agreed upon frame of combining renovation, maintenance and new building to improve the area is increasingly under threat. The renovation pilot shows to be much more costly than expected and consequently, the financial feasibility of the ideas in the Improvement Program are questioned. In addition, in 2015, it is still unclear whether the national government and municipality will deliver the promised financial support. This adds to the financial concerns. Consequently, the idea of large-scale renovation as most desirable approach is increasingly problematized. The housing association sees itself forced to trim down the expectations. First, the housing association starts to put forth, again, new building as the preferred solution arguing that new building is cheaper than grand-scale renovation. Later, from 2016 on, the housing association shifts its framing of the solution from renovation, maintenance and new building to the so-called 'Great Improvement Plus'. This improvement solely focuses on maintenance and envisions extending the lifespan of the houses in the area for 25 years.

These changes in framing caused tensions between stakeholders, and stakeholder relations significantly changed. The strong feelings of commonality and unity, as experienced by stakeholders in the previous period, disappear. In general, stakeholders indicate how relations are less close now. One of the architects testifies:

> In the fall of 2015 it became clear that the way the pilots were financed was no longer feasible. And then the housing association started to explore a different trajectory, and

> started to operate differently. […]. In [the previous] period, there were meetings with the interested parties, up to the public professionals, but also with residents, supervisors, everybody came together to brainstorm about how to collaborate best. […]. And they [the housing association] putted a lot of time and effort herein. Now this seems a sealed, other world. […]. I do not recognize anything of that in the follow-up. […]. As if they [the housing association] drew a line through it, and made a whole new start without putting it on the agenda.

This change in approach also causes a split within the residents' association(s). While some of the residents follow the new ideas and approach proposed by the housing association, other residents see this new approach as a violation of the agreements laid down in the Improvement Program. As a result, this group of residents starts to resist and its confidence in the housing association breaks down.

Overall, in this phase, following the changing approach of the housing association, stakeholders experience their relations as more difficult and the collaboration shows signs of erosion. Consequently, stakeholders are (again) more inclined to maintain their boundaries and act autonomously.

In concluding our findings, we note that both stakeholders' framings and relational experiences significantly changed throughout time. Moreover, we observed how both dynamics affected each other in different ways throughout the collaborative governance process. It is how, and under which conditions specific connections play out throughout the collaborative process that can help develop theoretical propositions, which we discuss in the following section.

DISCUSSION

Drawing upon our findings, in this section we infer a set of theoretical propositions about *how* stakeholders' framing and relating dynamics are connected *throughout* a collaborative process.

First of all, in phase 1 and 2 – which can be considered as the prenegotiation phases of the collaborative process (Susskind and Cruikshank 1987) - we observed how stakeholders' frames diverged substantially and, simultaneously, stakeholder relations were stressed. The introduction of a compromise proposal by the municipality in phase 2 –an attempt to connect the two diverging frames – had little immediate effect on both stakeholders' framing and relating. Rather, it was the investiture of the project group, engaging stakeholders into

a face-to-face dialogue and the subsequent development of feelings of commonality in phase 3, the negotiation phase of the collaborative process, that instigated processes of frame alignment. This leads to the following proposition that *when stakeholders' frames diverge substantially in the prenegotiation phase of a collaborative process, it is likely that stakeholders need to develop a sense of commonality to instigate processes of frame alignment* (P1). Collaborative governance and adjacent literature supports the logic behind this expectation, underscoring the relevance of forging feelings of commonality among stakeholders to engender collaborative success, in particular when stakeholders have a prehistory of antagonism (Ansell and Gash 2008; Bouwen and Taillieu 2004; Donohue 2003; Huxham 2003; Susskind 2009; Thomson and Perry 2006).

However, while the development of feelings of commonality was the engine of processes of frame alignment, once these processes were set in motion, small wins (in terms of frame alignment) reinforced feelings of commonality among stakeholders. Small wins here refer to the realization of alignment on non-emotive, neutral issue elements that are part of the larger issue framing. Subsequently the resulting intensification of feelings of commonality fed back into processes of frame alignment: these feelings became a breeding ground for further exploring a joint approach towards restructuring the area and to work on the development of the Improvement Program. Hence, our findings suggest that throughout the negotiation phase(s) of a collaborative process (phase 3 in this case), processes of framing alignment and the development of feelings of commonality were connected in a cyclical fashion. This raises a second proposition, which is that *during the negotiation phase of a collaborative process, it is likely that small wins on frame alignment will reinforce feelings of commonality, which in turn will accelerate processes of frame alignment* (P2). This relates to literatures which indicate that intermediate outcomes or small wins can feed back into the collaborative process and set a 'virtuous cycle' between outcomes and engagement/commitment in motion (Ansell and Gash 2008; Emerson et al. 2012; Vangen and Huxham 2003). Our findings suggest a similar dynamic between processes of frame alignment and the development of feelings of commonality.

However, our findings suggest that once a collaborative succeeds in aligning stakeholders' different and/or diverging views into a common frame and enters the implementation phase, this cyclical dynamic between processes of frame alignment and the development of feelings of commonality and unity is breached (see phase 4 and 5). Once a common frame was established (cf. the approval of the Improvement Program), relations reached an optimum and (more or less) stabilized in terms of commonality and unity. This raises the next proposition that *the establishment of a common frame in a collaborative process is likely to consolidate feelings of commonality and unity among stakeholders* (P3).

Subsequently, in the implementation phase of the collaborative process, we observed how these strong feelings of commonality and unity functioned as a buffer to deal with (non-fundamental) smaller frame divergences and to repeatedly restore frame alignment on how to proceed. Hence, in this phase (phase 4), the established feelings of commonality and unity helped to secure frame alignment and, consequently, the collaborative's capacity for joint action (cf. Emerson et al. 2012). This suggests a fourth proposition that *once a common frame is established and a collaborative process enters the implementation phase, strong feelings of commonality are likely to function as a buffer for eventual, smaller frame divergences* (P4). This connects well to the view advanced in literature that positive internal relationships (i.e. cohesive, connected) are the medium for collaborative work (Donohue 2003; Foster-Fishman et al. 2001). However, it also narrows down this expectation to specific circumstances: stakeholders have established a common frame, and the frame divergences (on a given issue element) that occurred did not challenge that common frame in a fundamental way. This insinuates that relations only function as a buffer under the condition that the air is cleared on a substantial level.

In line with this reasoning, we observed that, when stakeholders challenged the common frame on a more fundamental level (see phase 5), stakeholder relations got a hit. This observation shows that frame divergences that challenge the agreed upon common frame, i.e. *fundamental* frame divergences, may undermine even strong feelings of commonality and unity. This raises a fifth proposition that *challenging the common (agreed upon) frame is likely to undermine feelings of commonality and unity among stakeholders* (P5). This proposition is consistent with studies into the role of framing for collaborative outcomes (Gray 2004; Nowell 2009a, 2010). Gray (2004), for instance, found that the divergence of frames may prevent collaboration. Our findings suggests that this expectation can be extended even to situations in which a collaborative solution has been established, and in which stakeholders have buried the hatchet and established relations characterized by feelings of commonality and unity. Concerning the latter, in retrospect, the housing association indicated how they actually deemed stakeholder relations strong enough to dare to challenge the common frame. As our findings show, this turned out to be a miscalculation. This finding diverges from the idea advanced in literature that strong internal relations are the solid foundation to work together (Foster-Fishman et al. 2001). Furthermore, we found indications that the mechanism behind this pattern is that challenging the common frame raises suspicion about the intentions of the 'challenger'. This suggests that a collaborative may become hostage of the establishment of a common frame, specifically when a common frame is based on frame extension. Extended frames can be described as elastic frames, since they broaden the appeal of a given frame (Eddy 2010). Although convenient to make progress in a collaborative process, an extended frame does not deal

with 'differences', but rather irons them out. This raises questions about the durability of aligning frames through frame extensions.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we explored how stakeholders' frames and relations in collaborative governance processes evolve over time, and how these dynamics are connected. Based on the empirical findings of our case study, we inferred five theoretical propositions about how framing and relating dynamics may interplay throughout a collaborative governance process.

While we recognize the limits to the generalizability of this study, our case study contributes to the literature in several ways. First of all, findings of our study offer empirical support for the broad notion *that* stakeholders' framing and relating dynamics are connected. In addition, it confirms the different expectations advanced in literature about *how* both dynamics are connected. Each of the connections put forth in literature occurred in the collaborative governance process under study. This raises the question under which conditions specific connections may play out. This study provides preliminary insights herein and, by outlining theoretical propositions, refines prior theorizing on the connection(s) between framing and relating dynamics in collaborative processes.

Our research also contributes to the literature in a methodological way. Adopting a longitudinal perspective, our study provides an example of a methodological approach that embraces the dynamic nature of a collaborative governance endeavour. Our methodological approach allowed to make a start with empirically unpacking the dynamics of stakeholder frames and relations and the connections between both throughout time. Whereas many scholars in the field acknowledge the dynamic nature of collaborative processes, only few have actually studied and explicated how "different elements of collaborative processes change and evolve" (Heikkila and Gerlak 2016, 181). Hence, our study addresses an important methodological gap in collaborative governance literature and studies (Heikkila and Gerlak 2016; Kokx 2011; see Vandenbussche et al 2018; Vandenbussche et al 2019).

Our study offers several insights for public managers involved in collaborative governance projects. First of all, our study highlights that stakeholders' frames and relations are dynamic and thus will change throughout time. Our study shows that despite the collaborative was able to establish a common frame and create strong relationships, this was but a temporary situation. It is reasonable to assume that in collaborative governance processes (relational and/or frame) change is 'a steady future one can count on' (Cools 2006, 272).

This implies that public managers cannot rest on their laurels or rely on achievements of the past. Frame alignment and building relationships demand active, ongoing management.

Furthermore, our findings underline how both stakeholders' framing and relating dynamics are both important throughout the collaborative process, and that practitioners thus need to invest in both relational work and in substance-oriented work (Feldman and Khademian 2007). In practice however, relational work often goes unnoticed (Feldman and Khademian 2007). Moreover, besides highlighting the importance of both types of work and reaffirming the relevance of relational work, our findings suggest that, throughout the life cycle of a collaborative process, it may make sense to, depending on the phase the collaborative finds itself in, make considerate choices in terms of which type of work to prioritize.