

Lieselot Vandenbussche

# Relational Fluidity in Collaborative Governance

Unveiling stakeholders' relating dynamics  
and their connection to issue framing dynamics  
in collaborative governance processes.





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## **Relational Fluidity in Collaborative Governance**

*Unveiling stakeholders' relating dynamics and their connection to issue framing dynamics in collaborative governance processes*

## **Relationele veranderlijkheid in collaborative governance**

*Een verkenning van de relationele dynamiek tussen belanghebbenden en het samenspel daarvan met de issue framing dynamiek in collaborative governance processes*

### **Proefschrift**

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de  
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**Erasmus University Rotterdam**



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## **WIJ EN DE RIVIER**

we zouden de rivier oversteken

ik zou voorop gaan

(mijn voet rustte al op de eerste kei)

maar zij vond dat niet zo'n goed idee

hij en hij vonden dat we moesten wachten

de rivier was wild, de condities moesten eerst wat beter worden  
minder wind en zo

ik geloof dat een andere zij voorstelde toch maar gewoon de oversteek te wagen

ik sloot me daar bij aan

we spraken af: daar en daar geven we elkaar een hand,

of je leunt maar op mijn schouder

en daar, daar is het even ieder voor zich

het water was woelig, maar slokte ons niet op

we waren behoedzaam en zorgden voor elkaar

het kostte een eeuwigheid voor we de overkant bereikten



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Part I</b>	<b>Introduction to the study</b>	
Chapter 1	Relating and issue framing <i>dynamics</i> in collaborative governance	11
<b>Part II</b>	<b>Theoretical and analytical approach</b>	
Chapter 2	Pathways of stakeholders' relations and frames in collaborative planning practices: A framework to analyse relating and framing dynamics	29
<b>Part III</b>	<b>Methodological approach</b>	
Chapter 3	Coming to grips with life-as-experienced: Piecing together research to study stakeholders' lived relational experiences in collaborative planning processes	55
Chapter 4	Plunging into the process: Methodological reflections on a process-oriented study of stakeholders' relating dynamics	77
<b>Part IV</b>	<b>Empirical analysis of relating and issue framing dynamics in collaborative governance processes</b>	
Chapter 5	Mapping stakeholders' relating pathways in collaborative planning processes: A longitudinal case study of an urban regeneration partnership	103
Chapter 6	Framing through relating or relating through framing? Exploring the connection between framing and relating dynamics in a collaborative governance process.	133
<b>Part V</b>	<b>Conclusions &amp; discussion</b>	
Chapter 7	Conclusions & discussion	159
	<b>References</b>	187
	<b>Appendices</b>	209
	<b>Summary in Dutch</b>	225
	<b>Summary in English</b>	235
	<b>Dankwoord</b>	245



# **Part I**

## **Introduction to the study**



# 1

**Relating and issue framing  
*dynamics* in collaborative  
governance**



## INTRODUCTION

A major change has occurred in terms of how governments relate to other players for making policies and taking decisions. Developing solutions for societal problems, making and implementing public policies have increasingly become endeavours that governmental actors undertake collaboratively with other players, such as societal organizations, citizens or private actors (Bartels 2015; Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Edelenbos and Klijn 2005). The upsurge of labels like interactive policy making, co-governance, participatory and collaborative governance is illustrative for this trend towards more collaboration and interaction between governmental and other, non-state actors. These labels signpost new ways of governing that entail an 'opening up' of governance processes and a blurring of boundaries between public, private and societal actors (Bingham 2011; Bradford 2016). They also reflect a move away from the traditional, hierarchical-instrumental style of governing to more horizontal governance strategies to solve societal problems (Edelenbos and Klijn 2005; Termeer 2009).

This shift towards more collaborative modes of governance can be connected to many factors, but at least two trends in the contemporary societal landscape are particularly salient (see Emerson and Nabatchi 2015). First, traditional, hierarchical-instrumental ways of problem solving increasingly are considered to be no longer adequate to tackle complex contemporary issues: 'the dynamic complexity of many public problems defies the confines of the established "stove-piped" systems of problem definition, administration and resolution' (Weber and Khademian 2008: 336) (see also Ansell and Gash 2008). Most major societal challenges transcend the capacity of single organizations, requiring new ways to approach public problems (O'Leary and Vij 2012; Bingham 2011). Collaborative governance strategies then are seen as a key response for dealing with today's complex societal issues and the interdependencies these involve (Bradford 2016; Edelenbos and Klijn 2005; Sørensen and Torfing 2012; Termeer 2009). Idea is that the collaboration with a diversity of stakeholders helps policymakers to navigate complex policy contexts and 'craft more contextually appropriate policy solutions, harness expert knowledge, reduce the potential for policy-related conflict, increase policy receptivity, and facilitate shared understandings of policy problems and solutions' (Siddiki and Goel 2017: 254). Second, the growth and experimentation with collaborative forms of governance is also believed to be related to the increasing demands for a more responsive and inclusive government (Ansell and Gash 2008). Citizens and other societal actors increasingly seek 'additional avenues for engaging in governance' resulting in new forms of public involvement and engagement (Ansell and Gash 2008; O'Leary and Vij 2012). By including citizens and other societal actors in the policy process and by promoting dialogue between participants with various backgrounds and values, collaborative forms of governance are regarded as a way

to decrease the perceived gap between government and society (Gustafson and Hertting 2017; Termeer 2009).

In sum, the challenge of dealing with complex societal problems that transcend the capacity of a single governmental unit, along with the pressure for a more responsive government, has given rise to more collaborative forms of governance (O’Leary and Vij 2012). Throughout this thesis, collaborative governance is used as the umbrella term to refer to governance practices that build on stakeholder involvement, dialogue and consensus-seeking and are utilized to address a broad array of policy issues (Robertson and Choi 2012).

Empirically, this thesis concentrates on collaborative governance processes in the field of *urban planning and development*<sup>1</sup>, which we conceive as a governance activity (Healey 1997, 2003; Stoker 1998). The shift towards more collaborative forms of governance also affected the field of urban planning and development, both in the Netherlands and abroad (Booher 2004; Healey 1997; Innes and Booher 1999; Voogd and Woltjer 1999). In planning literature, the emergence of such collaboration-oriented planning methodologies – which contrast with the traditional, modernistic rational model of planning – is often referred to as the ‘communicative turn’ in planning, which started around the 1990s (Healey 1996). The ‘communicative turn’ signposts a shift towards a more interactive and communicative approach to planning (Healey 1996; Harris 2002). In planning literature, the specific body of work, research and theory development that has been done on this topic, is often referred to as collaborative planning theory and literature (Healey 1997; Harris 2002). Collaborative planning is advanced as a ‘form of practice’<sup>2</sup>, which emphasizes – as does collaborative governance – the inclusion of relevant stakeholders, dialogue and deliberation, and consensus seeking (Innes and Booher 1999, 2003, 2015; Healey 1997; Forester 1999).

During the last decades, throughout the Western World, collaborative governance has become commonplace, even ‘imperative’, in administrative life (Bingham and O’Leary 2006; Fung 2015; Thomson and Perry 2006). However, bringing together stakeholders that have different interests, missions and backgrounds, achieving ‘successful and en-

---

1 In this thesis, planning is seen as a governance activity (Healey 1997, 2003; Stoker 1998). Planning entails an interactive process to tackle problems or issues related to planning – here conceived as a future-oriented activity directed towards the imagination of the future city or area, both spatially and socially (Forester 1999; Hillier and Gunder 2005). Collaborative approaches to planning then can be considered as a specific form of the genus ‘collaborative governance’ (Ansell and Gash 2008).

2 Some authors in planning literature present collaborative planning or communicative planning as a ‘new paradigm’ in planning (Innes 1995). However, collaborative planning is, first and foremost, a ‘form’ of planning (Healey 1997). The term primarily suggests a practical orientation: it is about how communities can organize themselves to deal with a planning issue (Healey 1997).

lasting collaboration may be challenging' (Heikkilä and Gerlak 2016, 180-181; O'Leary and Vij 2012). Most scholars and practitioners recognize that, in practice, collaborative governance processes do not live up to their potential (Edelenbos 2005; Emerson and Nabatchi 2015; Huxham 2003; Termeer 2009). Collaborative inertia is often the outcome, despite the best efforts of participants (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015; Huxham 2003). While the main stream collaborative governance literature provides comprehensive overviews of the range of factors that lead to collaborative advantage or inertia, it pays far less attention to clarifying the dynamics in collaborative partnerships and its impact on governance outcomes. Only few scholars have actually attempted to empirically capture or theorize the dynamism inherent to collaborative governance (Bartels 2018; Healey 2007; Heikkilä and Gerlak 2016; Kokx 2011; Stout, Bartels and Love 2018). Hence, Heikkilä and Gerlak (2016, 516) comment: collaborative governance research should dig deeper into how and why collaborative processes and its constitutive elements actually evolve throughout their life cycle (see also O'Leary and Vij 2012). This study responds to this call. Insights in dynamics in collaborative governance processes can give us a more complete view of how a collaborative actually performs over time: from its inception to its culmination (O'Leary and Vij 2012).

### **The focus of this study: Stakeholders' relating *dynamics* and their connection to issue framing**

The emphasis in this study is on the dynamics in stakeholder relations and on how these are connected to the dynamics in stakeholders' issue framing in a collaborative process over time. The dominant focus is on the first. Both process dimensions are deemed of critical importance to the long-term success and durability of collaborative governance processes (Bouwen and Taillieu 2004; Dewulf et al. 2009; Healey 2003). Our aim is, however, not to assess or evaluate how these process dimensions contribute to the success of a given collaborative, rather it is to explore how these process dimensions *evolve* in a collaborative over time, and how they shape each other over time.

In the following two sections, we further elaborate on the critical role of stakeholders' relating dynamics and the issue framing dynamics within collaborative governance processes, i.e. the two process dimensions we focus upon in this study.

## **COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE AS A RELATIONAL ENDEAVOR**

According to the literature, much of the ability of a collaborative to solve public problems hinges on the quality of stakeholder relations. As Foster-Fishman et al. (2001, 251) comment:

Collaboration is ultimately about developing the social relationships needed to achieve collaborative work, and when they evolve in a positive manner, they facilitate access to needed resources [Lin, 1999], promote the stakeholder commitment, satisfaction, and involvement needed to successfully pursue collaborative endeavors [Butterfoss et al., 1996; Sheldon-Keller et al., 1995], foster coalition viability [Gottlieb et al., 1993] and increase the likelihood that coalition efforts will be sustained long-term [Chavis, 1995].'

The notion that stakeholder relations are crucial for collaborative work and its outcomes 'is common almost to the point of being axiomatic in the literature' (Nowell 2009b, 197). Healey et al. (2003, 66) for instance, refer to stakeholder relations as a 'reservoir of capacities for urban governance initiatives'. Similarly, Hillier (2000, 34) emphasizes how 'the process of planning reflects the quality of relationships'. Hence, collaborative governance processes can be considered as essentially relational endeavours: they build and depend on the way stakeholders communicate and relate with each other – on what emerges in the 'in-between' (Bartels 2013; see also Bouwen and Taillieu 2004). Hence, what can be achieved in collaborative settings, so Bartels (2013) argues, can thus be seen as a 'social product'.

Given the importance of stakeholder relations in collaborative governance, scholars have gained many insights in the relational qualities that are considered critical to engender collaborative success. For one thing, scholars emphasize *trust* as a key relational quality, even as a 'sine qua non', for collaboration (Ansell and Gash 2008; Bryson et al. 2006; Emerson et al. 2012; Healey et al. 2003; Healey 1997; Huxham 2003; Innes and Booher 2003; Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson, Perry and Miller 2007). Trust, here, is understood as the common belief among a group of stakeholders that all negotiate honestly – or have the intention to be fair, open and honest – and will not take undue advantage of each other (Cummings and Bromiley 1996; Thomson, Perry and Miller 2007). In collaborative governance literature, trusting relations are considered to be both 'the lubricant and the glue – that is, [trusting relations] facilitate the work of collaboration and they hold the collaboration together' (Bryson et al. 2006). Hence, trust is considered to be critical for the success of collaborative governance processes: 'success in establishing and nurturing trust [is] fundamental to their overall success' (Booher 2004, 34) (see also Healey 1997;

Oh & Bush 2016). Authors also point to the role of *mutual respect* among stakeholders (Ansell and Gash 2008; Emerson et al. 2012; Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson, Perry and Miller 2007). Stakeholders need to show respect vis-à-vis each other's opinions and positions and appreciate each other's input (Thomson, Perry and Miller 2007; Agger and Löfgren 2008). Hence, in collaborative governance processes, dialogues should be based on respect (Agger and Löfgren 2008; Innes and Booher 2003). Another relational quality that is often brought forward in literature is *reciprocity* (Agger and Löfgren 2008; Ansell and Gash 2008; Emerson et al. 2012, Innes and Booher 2003; Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson, Perry and Miller 2007). Reciprocity refers to the idea or perception that what a stakeholder 'gives' or 'invests' in the collaboration, will (in the end) be 'reciprocated' or returned, based on the norm or duty of 'reciprocity', i.e. the idea of reciprocal obligations. In this respect, Thomson, Perry and Miller (2007: 28), speak of 'an "I-will-if-you-will" mentality'. It is about the idea that (in the end) benefits and costs linked to the collaboration will be distributed equally among stakeholders. Innes and Booher (2003) argue how stakeholder relations characterized by reciprocity 'become the glue for [stakeholders'] continuing work' (2003: 42). Within collaborative governance and collaborative planning literature, reciprocity is, together with trust, also mentioned as an aspect of *social capital* – which is put forward as an important resource in collaborative undertakings (Ansell and Gash 2008; Agger and Löfgren 2008; Innes and Booher 2003; Healey 1997; Healey et al. 2003; Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson, Perry and Miller 2007). *Mutuality* is yet another relational quality that is often mentioned in collaborative governance literature (Ansell and Gash 2008; Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson, Perry and Miller 2007). Broadly defined, mutuality can be seen as the feeling among stakeholders that they need to deal with the present issue together. It is about recognizing mutual interdependence and about seeing the value of jointly tackling the given issue (Emerson et al. 2012). Finally, also *openness and transparency* are put forward as important relational qualities in collaborative settings (Ansell and Gash 2008; Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson, Perry and Miller 2007). This pertains to the idea that stakeholders need to communicate openly and share information with each other, i.e. that there are no hidden agendas or 'backroom private deals' (Ansell and Gash 2008: 557).

In summary, collaborative governance scholars clearly acknowledge the significance of stakeholder relations, and they have put considerable effort into identifying and getting insight in the relational qualities that engender collaborative success. However, much of the studies in collaborative governance mainly focus on the question on how to manage these relations, i.e., display an instrumental-strategic approach to relating, rather than on how relations are valuable in and of themselves, and lead a life on their own – and how that 'relational life', in turn, affects the collaborative process (Bartels and Turnbull 2019). In doing so, collaborative governance literature tends to shift attention away from

the 'actual' doing of a relationship, and, as such, masks the empirical dynamic, evolving nature of relations, which 'by means of interaction, [are] interwoven with and affected by [...] contingencies and, as such can be quite unpredictable' (Crossley 2010, 9). This thesis explicitly aims to turn attention to this 'doing' of a relationship and its dynamic, evolving nature. Relations are conceived as inherently 'dynamic phenomena', as continuously and inevitably evolving: 'their "nature" is ever open to modification, definition, construction and change (e.g. Crossley 2010; Fuhse 2009; Emirbayer 1997).

## **Stakeholders' relating dynamics in this thesis: A focus on interpersonal meaning making**

As argued above, the relational dimension of collaborative governance processes have received a fair amount of attention in the literature (Bartels and Turnbull 2019; Emerson and Nabatchi 2015). Mostly, scholars have focused on this relational dimension from a structural and/or institutional approach. The first – the structural approach – places emphasis on the structural features of relations, or, on a network's morphology (e.g. Healey et al. 2003; Holman 2008). Mapping the structural nature of relations consists of determining who is connected to who, and how strong relations are, i.e. of determining the patterns of interaction and connection (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015). In short, structural mapping is about observing 'either the absence/presence of a specified type of relationship [...] or a quantifiable variation within such relations (e.g. strength, frequency of meeting etc.)' (Crossley 2010, 7-8). An institutional approach, on the other hand, focuses more on less tangible, informal aspects of relations (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015). This approach turns attention to the common norms and rules that are established and developed by actors in a network and that structure relations (e.g. Healey et al. 2003; Oh and Bush 2016; Ostrom 2011). These norms and rules are considered to be important 'resources' for collective action. Research (whether explicitly or implicitly) adhering to this approach focuses for instance on determining the relational resources of networks – often conceptualized as social capital – inhering in a network (see for instance Healey 1998; Innes and Booher 2000; Oh and Bush 2016).

This thesis, however, advances an alternative take on stakeholder relations: it places emphasis on how stakeholders live through and come to give meaning to their relations in their everyday 'relating'. It envisions to understand both the coherent and ordered aspects of these experiences and meanings and the indeterminate, fluid and fragmentary aspects of everyday relating (Throop 2003). Relations are considered as 'phenomenological realities' or 'networks of meaning', composed of 'stories' that unfold and change over time (White 1992, in Fuhse 2009). It considers relations as, through interactions, interpersonally established forms of meanings (Duck 1990, 1994; Fuhse 2009; Crossley 2010). Relation-

ships continue to unfold and develop through these interactions. This thesis thus explicitly shifts attention to this unfolding ‘world of meanings’ interweaving interpersonal relations (Fuhse and Mützel 2011). By doing so, it seeks to contribute to insights in interpersonal relational meaning making - as opposed to structural or institutional characteristics. This interpersonal relational meaning making, so scholars argue, have an important bearing on collaborations, but are often left out of the equation in collaborative governance studies (O’Leary and Vij 2012; Stout 2012). Developing an understanding of the dynamism in stakeholders’ interpersonal relational meaning making is the first central theme of this study.

## **COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE AND PROCESSES OF FRAMING**

Besides being a relational endeavour, collaborative governance processes also encompass a substantive dimension: they are explicitly oriented at reaching mutually beneficial solutions or, at best, consensus between stakeholders on a policy issue of common concern (Ansell and Gash 2008; Emerson et al. 2012; Innes and Booher 2004). In recent years, policy actors (and policy analysts) have become increasingly aware that policy (group) dialogues are in fact complicated interactions ‘concerning the “correct” interpretation of the situation they are facing’ (van Hulst and Yanow 2016, 104). There is no neutral way of understanding a situation, it is always interpreted or “framed” in a particular way (Abolafia 2004). In addition, in a collaborative setting, in which the policy dialogue is broadened to include citizens, societal organizations and private actors, the “playing field” is crowded with even more framers, with different professional and educational backgrounds. In such a situation, it is more than likely that they will bring different understandings of the policy situation to the table (Putnam and Holmer 1992; Healey 2003, van Buuren 2009). Hence, collaborating on solving public problems can be seen as a struggle over ideas and meaning construction, between multiple interpretive communities, concerning the policy situation at hand (Abolafia 2004). This highlights the critical role of frames in collaborative governance processes (Nowell 2009b; van Buuren 2009). In general, the notion of a frame reflects an actor’s perspectival understanding of the situation, which serves as a guidepost to approach it in specific ways (Putnam and Holmer 1992; Rein and Schon 1993; van Hulst and Yanow 2016).

In this study, the focus is on the way stakeholders come to frame the substantive content of the policy issue, i.e., their issue framing. Issue frames refer to the way in which stakeholders conceptualize, define and understand the policy issue in their own specific ways, based on their own position, experiences and background (Dewulf et al. 2009; Gray 2004; Healey

1997, 2003; van Hulst and Yanow 2016). Scholars further argue how (a certain extent of) alignment or convergence of these different issue frames is a central task in collaborative governance processes: 'the core work has to do with working on some commonality in the lived and enacted diversity of ideas, interests, actions and purposes' (Bouwen and Taillieu 2004: 144) (see also De Roo and Porter 2007; Dewulf et al. 2009; Putnam and Holmer 1992; van Buuren 2009). Similarly van Buuren (2009, 212) argues: 'The legitimacy of governance processes depends in large measure on the extent to which this plurality of normative interpretations is recognized and consensus is reached [...]'. In sum, the extent to which frame convergence or alignment is achieved, it is held, is an important facilitator for collaborative success or failure (Ansell and Gash 2008; Innes and Booher 1999; Gray 2004; Nowell 2009b; van Buuren 2009). This study takes an interactionist approach to issue frames: issue frames are considered to be constructed, reconstructed and deconstructed through interaction processes. In other words, the analytical focus is on issue *framing* rather than on issue frames, i.e. on the 'interactive, intersubjective processes through which frames are constructed' (van Hulst and Yanow 2016, 93). Turning attention to issue framing draws attention to 'the constant sense-making work of multiple actors' involved in collaborative processes, i.e., it draws attention to the dynamic and processual character of stakeholders' understandings of the substantive content of the policy issue.

### **Issue framing dynamics in this thesis: Focus on their connection with stakeholders' relating dynamics**

Collaborative governance theorists argue that the way issue frames change and evolve and become aligned – or not – is related to the relational dimension in collaborative governance processes: if stakeholder relations evolve in a positive manner, it is more likely that stakeholders will succeed in aligning their frames (Foster-Fishman et al. 2001; Dewulf et al. 2005). At the same time, a lack of frame alignment/convergence can impede the development of positive stakeholder relations (Nowell 2009b). Hence, it is held that the relational and substantive dimension, i.e. stakeholders' relating and issue framing in a collaborative governance process are inextricably linked (Bouwen 2001; Bouwen and Taillieu 2004; Healey 2003; Nienhuis 2014). Yet, while this is often theoretically assumed, there is only limited empirical research on how relating dynamics connect with issue framing dynamics and vice versa in practice (Bingham, Nabatchi and O'Leary 2006; Bingham and O'Leary 2008). This thesis intends to address this lacuna by empirically analysing stakeholders' relating dynamics and their connection with issue framing dynamics. Hence, the second theme of this thesis is developing an understanding of the connection between stakeholder relating dynamics and framing dynamics.

## RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTION

As indicated above, this thesis, first and foremost, aims to develop a dynamic understanding of stakeholder relations in collaborative governance processes. In other words, it seeks to get insight in stakeholders' relating dynamics. In addition, this thesis aims to understand and explore the connection between stakeholders' relating dynamics and the issue framing dynamics (and vice versa) at play in collaborative governance processes. The main research question of this thesis is as follows:

*How and why do stakeholder relations evolve over time in collaborative governance processes, and how do relating dynamics interplay with the issue framing dynamics?*

To develop an answer to this research question, this study is broken down into a number of consecutive steps.

As a first step, this thesis considers *how stakeholders' relating dynamics and their connection with issue framing dynamics can be systematically analysed*. The major thrust of this analytical challenge is to develop theoretical and analytical grip necessary to study stakeholders' relating dynamics. Whereas there is agreement that collaborative governance processes, and stakeholders' relating herein are inherently dynamic, the current literature offers neither strong theoretical grip, nor analytical tools to systematically analyse the dynamism of stakeholder relations (or other process elements of collaborative governance for that matter)(see for an exception Heikkila and Gerlak 2016). Yet, relations are not static, they are 'not permanent stations or states, so much as temporary transitions or [...] continuous processes' (Duck 1990, 6) (see also Crossley 2010; Fuhse and Mützel 2011; Fuhse 2009). As Crossley (2010, 8) mentions: relationships 'are lived histories of iterated interactions which constantly evolve as a function of continued interaction between parties (or significant absences of interaction)'. Hence, a central challenge in this first step is to introduce and develop a theoretical perspective and analytical tools to study relating dynamics and link them to the analytical concepts drawn from framing literature to analyse framing dynamics (Chapter 2).

The second step in this thesis is *methodological in nature*. A central methodological concern is *how to capture stakeholders' relating and issue framing dynamics?* The overarching analytical and empirical focus of this thesis on understanding and explaining the dynamic and evolving nature of collaborative governance, and relations and issue frames herein, implies a research methodology that allows to gain insight in how and why stakeholder relations and issue frames evolve over time and how they are connected. This implies

developing a longitudinal view on these phenomena (Bizzi and Langley 2012; Demir and Lychnell 2015; Langley et al. 2013). Yet, although collaborative governance literature points to the dynamic nature of collaborative governance processes, it is largely devoid of longitudinal process studies (Heikkila and Gerlak 2016; O'Leary and Vij 2012). Hence, the methodological step to be taken is to develop and reflect on a methodological approach that is sensitive to change and motion in stakeholder relations and issue frames. This methodological approach can then be used to empirically 'track' stakeholders' relating dynamics and issue framing dynamics over time, in retrospect and in real time, and the connections between these two dynamics (Chapter 3, Chapter 4).

A third and final step in this thesis consists of the *empirical investigation* of stakeholder relating dynamics and framing dynamics, and the interplay between both, in two concrete collaborative governance processes. The previous steps feed this empirical investigation: the theoretical perspective and analytical framework developed in the first step, and the methodological approach developed in the second form the basis for conducting two empirical studies, each focusing on a different case. To our knowledge, few empirical studies have particularly paid attention to the dynamic nature of stakeholder relations and their interplay with framing dynamics over time. However, given the importance of both dynamics in collaborative governance and their assumed connection, it is critical to develop a better empirical understanding of these dynamics and of how they are connected over time. The first of these two empirical studies focuses on describing and explaining the relating dynamics of the collaborative dealing with the urban (re)development of Katendrecht, an area in the city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands (the Katendrecht case) (Chapter 5), as such addressing the first part of our research question. The second empirical study focuses on analysing the framing and relating dynamics and exploring the connection between both within the collaborative partnership dealing with the urban regeneration of Vreewijk, also located in the city of Rotterdam (Chapter 6), as such addressing the second part of our research question.

## OUTLINE OF THIS THESIS

This thesis consists of five parts.

Part I is this introductory chapter.

Part II focuses on the theoretical and analytical approach used in this thesis. It consists of one chapter, chapter 2, which presents the theoretical perspective towards stakeholder relations – more specifically relational dialectics theory (Baxter and Montgomery 1996; Baxter 2011) – a perspective that explicitly approaches relations as dynamic phenomena and places change, flux and fluidity of interpersonal relations on the foreground. Drawing on this theoretical perspective, chapter 2 further introduces analytical concepts to systematically analyse stakeholder relating dynamics. These concepts are then related to analytical concepts drawn from framing literature that enable to study issue framing dynamics.

Part III discusses the methodological approach developed and used in this thesis. Both chapter 3 and chapter 4 consider methodological issues that are related to studying relations as dynamic phenomena. Chapter 3 deals with questions of ‘design’: how to study stakeholders’ relating dynamics (i.e. evolving lived relational experiences)? This chapter first considers the challenges related hereto. It then presents and discusses a methodological approach that can be used for a systematic, longitudinal investigation of stakeholders’ relating dynamics. Chapter 4 can be considered as a spin-off of chapter 3: whereas chapter 3 explicates the research approach, chapter 4 explores and reflects upon the application of this approach in practice. Although not explicitly positioned as such in chapter 3, this research approach can be characterized as a process-oriented research approach. Process studies explicitly focus on the temporal evolution and dynamism of phenomena. Chapter 4 explores the ontological groundings of process-oriented approaches more in general and, related to this, of focusing on and thinking in terms of change, dynamism, etc. and lays bare the potentials and difficulties related to ‘doing’ such a process study.

Part IV presents the empirical findings of this thesis. Chapter 5 presents the findings of a longitudinal, in-depth case study on the relating dynamics between stakeholders in the collaborative partnership dealing with the urban development of Katendrecht, an area in the city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The central question in this chapter is how stakeholder relations evolve and why they do as they do. This chapter presents a description and explanation of stakeholders’ relating dynamics. Chapter 6, focusing on another case, the urban regeneration of Vreewijk, deals with the question of how relating dynamics playing in a collaborative partnership are connected with the issue framing dynamics. This chapter

outlines both the issue framing and relating dynamics of the collaborative partnership and explores the connection between both.

Part V consists of chapter 7, the concluding chapter of this thesis. In this chapter, we discuss and reflect upon the value of the analytical and methodological approach advanced in this study. We also discuss our empirical findings and provide conclusions on the way stakeholder relations evolve and on how relating dynamics are connected to framing dynamics in collaborative governance processes. Finally, in this chapter, we also set out an agenda for future research and formulate some insights that can aid practitioners involved in collaborative partnerships. Figure 1.1 visualizes the outline of this thesis.

RESEARCH STEPS	OUTLINE OF THIS STUDY	
<p><b>(1) ANALYTICAL STEP</b> Introduce and develop a theoretical perspective and analytical tools to study stakeholder relating dynamics and framing dynamics.</p>	<p><b>PART I</b> Introduction to the study</p>	<p><b>Chapter 1</b>   Relating and issue framing dynamics in collaborative governance.</p>
<p><b>(2) METHODOLOGICAL STEP</b> Develop and reflect on a methodological approach that is sensitive to change and motion in stakeholder relations and frames.</p>	<p><b>Part II</b> Theoretical and analytical approach</p>	<p><b>Chapter 2</b>   Pathways of stakeholders' relations and frames in collaborative planning practices: A framework to analyse relating and framing dynamics.</p>
<p><b>(3) EMPIRICAL STEP</b> Describing and explaining relating dynamics of a collaborative partnership (case Katendrecht); Describing relating and framing dynamics and exploration of connection between both in a collaborative partnership (case Vreewijk).</p>	<p><b>PART III</b> Methodological approach</p>	<p><b>Chapter 3</b>   Coming to grips with life-as-experienced: Piecing together research to study stakeholders' lived relational experiences in collaborative planning processes.</p> <p><b>Chapter 4</b>   Plunging into the process: methodological reflections on a process-oriented study of stakeholders' relating dynamics.</p>
	<p><b>PART IV</b> Empirical analysis of relating and issue framing dynamics in collaborative governance processes</p>	<p><b>Chapter 5</b>   Mapping stakeholders' relating pathways in collaborative planning processes: A longitudinal case study of an urban regeneration partnership.</p> <p><b>Chapter 6</b>   Framing through relating or relating through framing? Exploring the connection between framing and relating dynamics in a collaborative governance process.</p>
	<p><b>PART V</b> Conclusions &amp; discussion</p>	<p><b>Chapter 7</b>   Conclusions &amp; discussion</p>

Figure 1.1. Outline of this study.





# **Part II**

## **Theoretical and analytical approach**



# 2

## **Pathways of stakeholders' relations and frames in collaborative planning practices: A framework to analyse relating and framing dynamics**

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## **ABSTRACT**

It is widely acknowledged that stakeholders' relations are critical in collaborative planning. Hence, literature in this field has elaborated on the communicative and relational conditions that facilitate collaborative planning processes. Less attention has been paid to the dynamics of stakeholders' relations and to how these influence planning processes. Analytical tools to systematically study stakeholders' relating dynamics in collaborative planning processes are underdeveloped. Drawing on Baxter and Montgomery's relational dialectics approach, we introduce an analytical framework to study stakeholders' relating dynamics in collaborative planning and the way these interact with framing dynamics. We exemplify the core concepts of our framework with illustrations based on running case study research.

## INTRODUCTION

Collaborative approaches to planning – here conceived as a future-oriented activity directed towards the imagination of the future city or area (see Forester, 1999; Hillier and Gunder, 2005) – are increasingly popular, in planning theory and planning practice (Booher, 2004; Harris, 2002; Healey, 1997; Innes and Booher, 1999).<sup>1</sup> Central in such approaches is the recognition that planning activities affect a diversity of stakeholders, each having different and often competing claims on the planning issue at stake. Collaborative approaches emphasise the importance of developing consensus among these different views, and creating common visions of the future through dialogue (Boelens, 2010; Edelenbos, 2005; Fainstein, 2000; Healey, 2003). Partnership, stakeholder involvement, collaboration and consensus-oriented decision-making are core principles in collaborative planning theory and practice (Healey, 1998; Innes and Booher, 1999; Walker and Hurley, 2004). Planning is approached as an interactive and relational endeavour, involving 'social processes through which ways of thinkings, ways of valuing and ways of acting are actively constructed by participants' (Healey, 1997: 29).

It is not surprising then, that both planning theorists and practitioners point to the pivotal role of stakeholders' relations in collaborative planning systems (Booher, 2004; Forester, 1999). These relations are said to be 'the medium for collaborative work' (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001: 251): it is through these relationships that consensus and mutual learning can occur. Hence, scholars repeatedly emphasise the essential role of relationship building in collaborative endeavours (Boelens, 2010; Booher, 2004; Forester, 1999; Healey, 1997; Innes and Booher, 2003, 2004, 2015).

Drawing on Habermas' communicative rationality, collaborative planning theorists explicate preferred forms of planning and desirable communicative or relational conditions, or settings, for successful collaborative planning.<sup>2</sup> Healey (1997, 1998) accentuates reflexive

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1 There are different conceptions of 'what planning is' (see Adams, 1994). Some authors approach planning as a policy-driven governance activity (Healey, 1997) or, even narrower, as the spatial policies and practices which shape the urban environment under the auspices of the modern state (see Lefebvre in Yiftachel and Huxley, 2000). Still others have a broader conception of planning and see planning as including more than policy or state-related activities. Planning in this view comprises of all kind of activities concerned with the imagination of the future city (Forester, 1999; Throgmorton, 2003). Although we associate planning with the latter, reality is – at least in the Netherlands – that most planning is a governmental preoccupation (see Van Eeten and Roe, 2000). This also applies to the running cases we will present later on in this article.

2 Collaborative approaches to planning draw on Habermas' ideas on communicative rationality and communicative action. Communicative rationality forms the normative background for critically questioning and evaluating the qualities of interactive practices (Healey, 2003). For discussion of Habermas' core ideas on communicative rationality/action in the context of planning, see, for instance, Forester (1999), Healey (1997), Innes and Booher (2003).

dialogue as the basis for collaborative planning and emphasises the importance of building relational resources such as trust, social capital and mutual understanding. Innes and Booher (2000, 2003) formulate similar ideas and point to the importance of establishing empathic understanding, reciprocal relations (as ‘the glue for their continuing work’; Innes and Booher, 2000: 10) and trust. This illustrates the focus on process aspects of and conditions for planning typical of collaborative planning literature. However, the theoretical and empirical focus of collaborative planning scholars on conditions, on preferred settings and on normative principles for successful collaborative planning, shifts attention away from the ever-changing character of stakeholders’ relations and the ways these relating dynamics interact with the planning process.<sup>3</sup> Yet, relationships are continuously changing and, in accordance with Harvey (1996), it is this changing process that needs to be understood and explained. Although collaborative planning scholars do attend to relating dynamics in collaborative planning (e.g. Forester, 1999; Healey, 1997; Healey et al., 2003), few have systematically studied – on the basis of a theoretically underpinned analytical framework – the role and impact of relating dynamics in collaborative planning processes.<sup>4</sup>

This article presents an analytical framework that intends to capture stakeholders’ relating dynamics, that is, relational change processes – and its interplay with framing dynamics inherent to collaborative planning practices. The framework takes a dynamic perspective on stakeholders’ relations – based upon the relational dialectics approach towards relating (see Baxter and Montgomery, 1996; see also Baxter, 2004a, 2011). Rather than focusing on how relations should be, and which conditions are desirable, the framework places focus on how relations evolve and change over time, and on how these changing relational settings affect framing processes in collaborative planning. As such, it recognises the evolutionary character of collaboration (Gray, 1989). The framework offers conceptual tools for systematic and detailed analyses of relational pathways in collaborative planning practices and its interplay with framing. The development of such a framework responds to Yiftachel and Huxley’s (2000) call to turn attention away from how things should be, and instead explain how things are, and ask questions about the genealogy of planning practice. To make the framework more vivid, we exemplify the core concepts of our framework

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3 Empirical studies from a collaborative planning perspective tend to focus on interpreting and evaluating the characteristics of planning processes against a set of process and outcome criteria rooted in Habermas’ communicative rationality. Habermas’ ideal speech situation is used as an abstract benchmark or reference point to analyse empirical practices against.

4 One exception is Healey et al.’s (2003) framework that focuses on the development of institutional capacities. However, Healey et al. (2003) focus specifically on ‘the scale and nature of change in local institutional capacity produced by a particular innovation, and the extent to which it has promoted more attention to place quality, in a more open-minded and inclusive mode of governance’ (p. 64). In that sense, their focus was more on how transformations in governance, and more specifically a shift towards a more inclusive mode of governance, had its effects on the development of institutional capacity rather than on how institutional capacity develops and evolves throughout time, as a dynamic feature of collaborative planning.

with illustrations based on running case study research on two collaboratively approached urban planning projects in the city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Hence, our examples are drawn from current research on two cases in which we use the presented analytical framework as the basis for our data collection and analysis.<sup>5</sup>

The structure of the article is as follows. We begin with exploring some core ideas of collaborative planning regarding the role of stakeholders' relations in collaborative planning processes and their interaction with framing processes. In the subsequent section, we discuss our theoretical approach to relating, more specifically the relational dialectics approach as developed by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) (see also Baxter, 2004a, 2011) which places strong emphasis on the dynamic, changing nature of relations. The third section introduces a framework to analyse relating dynamics, framing dynamics and their interaction in collaborative processes. The framework offers key concepts that guide the researcher towards an empirical understanding of the aforementioned phenomena. Throughout our conceptual discussion, we exemplify the core concepts with illustrations based on running case study research. We close the article with a reflection on the value of the developed framework for both planning theory and practice.

## RELATING AND FRAMING IN COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

### Collaborative planning as a relational endeavour

At the core of collaborative planning is the idea that collaborative planning processes should be set up as an 'authentic' (Innes and Booher, 2003, 2004) or 'reflexive' dialogue (Healey, 1997). Authentic dialogue or reflexive dialogue, approximating Habermas' ideal speech situation, ultimately creates social capital and relational values such as reciprocity,

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<sup>5</sup> Currently, we are collecting and analysing data from two urban planning cases, in the context of the PhD research of the first author. The first case under study, case Katendrecht, focuses on the collaborative process concerning the comprehensive redevelopment and transformation of the old deteriorated harbour zone Katendrecht, into an attractive residential area. This collaborative process started around the new millennium. The second case, case Vreewijk, focuses on the intensive collaboration between stakeholders concerning the physical improvement of the housing stock and public space in the residential area and so-called 'garden village' of Vreewijk. This collaborative process started around 2008. Both areas are located in the city of Rotterdam. Data collection and analysis in these cases is based upon the core concepts of our framework. In both cases, we collect material through in-depth narrative interviews with more than 20 stakeholders, both stakeholders that are currently involved and stakeholders that have been involved in the past. We complement our interview material with field notes from participant observation and key documents related to the case, such as policy or vision documents. We intend to publish on the findings of these case studies in the near future.

stronger personal relationships and trust (Healey et al., 2003; Innes and Booher, 2004).<sup>6</sup> These relational qualities are deemed precursors to arrive at successful collaborative planning outcomes (Mandarano, 2009; Rydin and Pennington, 2000). In other words, the quality of relations is an important asset in collaborative planning (Healey et al., 2003; Wagenaar and Specht, 2010). Hence, to be successful in collaborative work, stakeholders should invest in their mutual relations, 'build' (new) and 'develop' (existing) relationships (cf. Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Innes and Booher, 2004) and 'strengthen ties' (Holman, 2008). Collaborative planning scholars thus emphasise that the quality of working relations within a collaborative planning system makes a difference (Healey, 1996). Hillier (2000) argues, 'the process of planning reflects the quality of such relationships' (p. 34). Planning thus depends on the inter-relational capacity or quality of the social arena of a specific planning system (Healey, 1998; Hillier, 2000).

The above discussed ideas about the 'ideal' planning process, highlighting consensus, have, however, been subject to criticism. Most notably, scholars argue that the normative rhetoric of collaborative planning theory does not reflect the reality of planning practice (Abu-Orf, 2005; Boelens, 2010; Harris, 2002; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998). In practice, the premises of collaborative planning theory are unachievable and 'real' collaborative planning efforts encounter obstacles and difficulties (Abram, 2000; Fainstein, 2000; Hillier, 2003; Margerum, 2002). Critics argue that collaborative planning theory is too optimistic or even 'utopian', rather than realistic, and thus disregards the mores of reality (see Gunder, 2003; Hillier, 2003; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998). For one thing, its focus on conditions and normative principles as abstract reference points to evaluate empirical practices, somewhat shifts attention away from the empirical dynamic, evolving nature of stakeholders' relations. Yet, relationships are processes, lived histories, continuously changing: they constantly evolve as a function of the continuing interactions between relational parties, in this case the stakeholders involved in the collaborative planning system (Crossley, 2010). By focusing on conditions, on a desirable state for collaborative planning, collaborative planning scholars thus somewhat mask the ever-changing reality of relating or the 'doing' of a relationship which 'by means of interaction, is interwoven with and affected by [...] contingencies and, as such, can be quite unpredictable' (Crossley, 2010: 9). Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger (1998) touch upon this issue in their discussion of communicative rationality:

The debating arena might well produce new relations and forms of practice that all stakeholders concur with; this would be successful for that particular day, but there is

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<sup>6</sup> Putnam (2000) defines social capital as the 'connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' (p. 19).

no guarantee that successive meetings would witness the same degree of mutual mind-changing. Similarly, a 'successful' practice might exist only for one particular issue within a discourse arena – individuals come together as a temporary aberration but drift apart again into retrenched positions for the remainder of the exercise. (p. 1982)

This illustrates how the social arena in collaborative planning systems changes over time or even per issue. Crossley (2010) makes a similar point:

even within a 'stable relationship' interactions are highly variable, moved as they are in different instances by different purposes, events and both the 'domains' of practice [Mische and White 1998; White 2008] and the spaces (real and virtual) in which they take place. (p. 9)

Both quotes point to the dynamic and evolving nature of relations, and stress the importance of (systematically) studying this empirically on the basis of a sound conceptual framework.

## **Relating–framing interplay in collaborative planning**

Collaborative planning brings together different actors, each having their own perspectives, specific experiences and positions, which makes them look at issues from different points of view (Bouwen, 2001; Bouwen and Taillieu, 2004; Dewulf et al., 2004; Gray, 2004; Healey, 1997, 2003). Central in collaborative planning is the aim to align these different views or 'frames' and to formulate a 'common perception' or common frame to the issue at stake, such as the design of an urban plan or policy (De Roo and Porter, 2007; Dewulf et al., 2005; Putnam and Holmer, 1992). Collaborative planning thus demands tuning different frames of various stakeholders.

Different scholars argue how relating dynamics influence framing processes, that is, how issues are framed, how frames evolve and become aligned or not (see Bouwen, 2001; Bouwen and Taillieu, 2004). In other words, relating dynamics in collaborative systems are linked to framing processes – the 'struggles of frames' – taking place in collaborative planning processes (Hajer, 2003; Healey et al., 2003). Following these ideas on the interplay between relating and framing, scholars accentuate how both practitioners and researchers should take both dimensions into account when dealing with or studying planning practices. Healey (2003), for instance, mentions that 'the challenge for researchers and practitioners is to keep the interplay between both dimensions in mind as instances of practice unfold' (p. 111).

In sum, relating and framing dynamics are not separate spheres, but are intertwined. The main thrust is that relating dynamics will influence and shape the framing dynamics in collaborative planning practices and vice versa.

## **Analysing relating and framing dynamics**

Collaborative planning literature widely acknowledges the importance of stakeholders' relations in collaborative planning practices and their interplay with framing processes. Moreover, some scholars pay attention to the dynamic nature of these relations (e.g. Forester, 1999; Healey et al., 2003). However, the relational change process itself and the mechanisms underlying it have received less attention in collaborative planning literature. Until now, theoretical grip and analytical tools for systematic analyses of relating and framing pathways are underdeveloped. Yet, relations are characterized by complex dynamics, and this is something both planners and other stakeholders need to deal with. Therefore, we posit that there is merit in exploring and explaining relating dynamics and its effects upon framing processes.

In the remainder of this article, we present an analytical framework to empirically explore and explain relating dynamics, that is, relational pathways, and their interplay with framing dynamics inherent to collaborative planning practices. The framework draws on ideas of communication theory, more specifically on the relational dialectics approach (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996; see also Baxter, 2004a, 2011) which we introduce in the following section – and on framing literature.

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON RELATING: RELATIONAL DIALECTICS**

Relational dialectics has been developed and applied within communication theory and social psychology (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996; Baxter 2004a, 2011). Relational dialectics' main argument is that relations are continuously in flux, acknowledging change as a central aspect of relating – as will become obvious further on in this paragraph. It builds on ideas of the early-twentieth century Russian philosopher Bakhtin who viewed social life as a fragmented, disorderly and messy interweave of opposing discourses. Bakhtin (1981) introduced a theory of 'dialogism', which he developed as 'a critique of theories and practices that reduced the unfinalizable, open and varied nature of social life in determinate, closed, totalizing ways' (Baxter, 2004a: 181). In Bakhtin's view two opposing forces characterize all social interactions: centripetal (unifying) and centrifugal (diversifying) forces. Elaborating on these ideas, relational dialectics 'represents an approach where the basic "messiness"

of social life is not ignored or downplayed but instead embraced as a critical process in how individuals make sense of everyday experience' (Erbert et al., 2005: 24). The theory 'presupposes that the business of relating is as much about differences as similarities' (Baxter, 2004b: 5). Baxter (2011: 6–7) presents relational dialectics theory as a sensitizing, analytical scheme or heuristic device to render relating dynamics more intelligible.

Following Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, relational dialectics builds on the ontological idea of relations as social constructions jointly constituted by actors in interaction (Baxter, 2004a; see also Hosking, 2006). Relations are seen as 'dialogic': as naturally revolving around the dynamic interplay between contradictory, competing values or 'dialectical tensions' (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996; see also Baxter, 2004a, 2011; Seo and Creed, 2002). Relations are continuously hovering between these 'opposing', yet inter-related values, in a tug of war kind of way (Cools, 2006). These dialectical tensions and how relational partners deal with them are the central dynamics that underlie relational meaning-making and change over time (Baxter, 2011; Cools, 2011; Johnson and Long, 2002).

According to relational dialectics theory, a classic example of a dialectical tension typical for interpersonal relationships is that between autonomy and connectedness (Baxter, 2004a; Baxter and Simon, 1993). This tension refers to the simultaneously present need for independence and dependence in interpersonal relationships. Too much autonomy is simply destructive for the joint development of a relational identity and connection with the other. On the other hand, without a notion of autonomy, individuals have no identity and so cannot exist in a relation. Both values in this dialectical tension are inextricably related through 'inseparable connection' (Conforth, 1971: 69) that suggests each value gains its significance from the other in an inherent, on-going interplay or 'dialogue' (Johnson and Long, 2002). This implies that relational partners continuously need to accommodate both 'being together' (connectedness) and 'being apart' (autonomy) in their relation. This struggle of dialectical tensions is inherent to relating: they cannot be eliminated; they can only be adapted to, managed or transformed.

Relational dialectic theorists argue that this continuous interplay between dialectical tensions and the way relational partners give meaning to them and cope with them is what constitutes relating. Relations evolve because partners constantly define and redefine the tensions inherent to their interactions and relating. For example, in some periods, relational partners appreciate to be more connected, more in tune, but, in other periods, they may appreciate it more to have some more personal space. Such struggles, relational dialectics argues, lay at the basis of the on-going fluidity and variability of relationships (Cools, 2011).

This dialectical character of relating also seems to be present in stakeholders' relations in collaborative planning processes. Different authors implicitly touch upon the presence of such dialectical tensions – or opposing values – in planning processes. Hillier (2003), for instance, argues for 'incorporating both collaboration and competition, both striving to understand and engage with consensus-formation while at the same time respecting differences of values and areas of disagreements' in planning decision-making (p. 54). Wagenaar (2007) refers to another tension, 'for participatory arrangements to function at all, they need to hover between order and chaos' (p. 43). Each of these remarks implies that competing values, that is, dialectical tensions, also characterize collaborative planning practices.

It is important to note here that these dialectical tensions should not be understood as necessarily conflictual or problematic. Neither one of both values, of, for example, the autonomy-connectedness tension, is seen as more desirable than the other. Emphasis on one of both poles, at the expense of the other, can potentially have both positive and negative implications for the mutual relationships (Montgomery, 1993). This contrasts with the prevailing teleological idea that relations should ideally evolve to more connectedness – which Baxter and Montgomery (1996) refer to as 'unidirectional moreness' – whereby lack of 'more' is seen as relational regression (Cools, 2011). Rather relational dialectics sees relating as an indeterminate process, 'with no clear end-states and no necessary paths of change' (Cools, 2011). These ideas of relating challenge the idea of a preferred endstate, as formulated in some collaborative planning literature. Such a teleological view of relating disregards the ever-changing, dynamic nature of relations, whereas relational dialectics emphasises change as the natural state of relations. From a relational dialectics perspective, it makes less sense to focus all too much on a preferred end-state since this will only be a momentary equilibrium, or 'a momentary transition in a stream of continuous change' (Cools, 2011). Furthermore, such a teleological view also overlooks the value and meaning of different relational states or 'momentary transitions' in their own right. Hence, relational dialectics argue that focus should be on the movement of a relation over time and what that movement or flow means for the given relation.

When relations are conceived as 'dialogic', revolving around the dynamic interplay of competing values, it is accepted that change is ever-present and relations are continuously in 'flux' (Baxter, 2004a; Cools, 2011; Graham, 1997; Johnson et al., 2003). Stability is nothing more than a 'between' or a momentary transition in a continuously changing process (Baxter, 2004a; Cools, 2006). Relational change implies re-interpretation of interplaying values, a 'movement' – for instance, towards more autonomy – that redefines the relation and brings about new relational experiences and meanings.

The dynamic interplay between values is continuously created and re-created through the on-going interactive behaviour of relational parties. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) refer to these behaviours as praxis: the communicative choices (varying in intention and mindfulness) actors make on how to deal with the competing values inherent to their relation (Cools, 2011; Johnson and Long, 2002).

Dialectical theory further emphasises that relations cannot be understood in isolation, but must be viewed in their context or 'chronotope' (Bakhtin, 1981: 84). This refers to a relation's location in time and space and highlights the importance of taking temporal, spatial, and socio-historical contextual factors into consideration to fully understand the dialectical experience (Cools, 2011). The 'chronotope' of interaction is crucial in how actors interpret and respond to dialectical exigencies (Johnson and Long, 2002).

In this section, we discussed some of the basic tenets of the relational dialectics approach (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996). In short, relational dialectics' core ideas are that (1) relating revolves around the dynamic interplay of dialectical tensions, (2) change is inherent to relationships and (3) to understand a given relation, we need to consider context. In the following section, we further refine these theoretical core ideas into concepts that offer analytical grip to study relations as dynamic change processes.

## **ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: CORE CONCEPTS**

Based on the arguments developed in the previous sections about relating dynamics and their interactions with framing dynamics in collaborative planning, this section establishes an analytical framework to empirically study these phenomena. We draw on the ontological view and concepts from the relational dialectics approach (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996), and on framing literature (e.g. Rein and Schön, 1993). Our aim with this framework is to offer analytical concepts that give guidance to systematically studying empirical instances of collaborative planning practices (cf. Blumer, 1954: 7).

The presented framework falls into two tracks. The first track contains concepts to study relating dynamics in collaborative planning practices, the second offers concepts for studying framing dynamics. Both dynamics are analytically distinguished but – following our arguments in the earlier section on the relating-framing interplay in collaborative planning – should not be seen as two separate spheres: they are simultaneously present and intertwined with each other in collaborative work, as two sides of one coin (Forester, 1999; Gualini, 2001; Healey et al., 2003).

Below, we first introduce the key concepts within each track. We then discuss how to analytically relate both tracks to each other in order to get insight in how both dynamics are linked in collaborative planning processes. The key concepts are illustrated with examples based on current running case study research in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. At the end of this section, we visualize our analytical framework in a conceptual figure.

## **Analysing relating dynamics (track 1)**

This section presents three core concepts that are important for understanding relating dynamics: (1) relational narratives, (2) relational turning points and (3) critical relation events. We explain each concept and exemplify it with an illustration. This track of the framework builds on a narrative approach to studying relating dynamics. Through stories, human actors give expression to meaning – what a relation means to them – and, in these stories, they give accounts of the relational pathway as they experienced it. This focus on stories and storytelling is considered crucial for understanding the emergent relating dynamics (Sandercock, 2003). Stories are qualitative accounts of pathways and can provide insights about the generative mechanisms that fuel relational change processes (see Uprichard and Byrne, 2006).

### **Relational narratives**

To capture how planners and stakeholders experience their mutual relations in a given collaborative planning system and the underlying dialectical tensions that fuel these experiences, we introduce the concept *relational narratives*. Relational narratives refer to the stories actors tell about their relations, both in everyday, naturally occurring talk, and in written texts and interviews (Baxter, 2011; Johnson and Long, 2002; Sandercock, 2003). When narrating about their relations, actors use a set of *specific labels, words, concepts and metaphors that have a certain coherence* to characterize their relations at a given moment in time (Baxter, 2011; Gergen and Gergen, 1983; Polkinghorne, 1988). Relational narratives reveal what relations mean to actors (i.e. relational identity), how they feel about the relation and see themselves within the relation (i.e. identity of the self) (Cools, 2011).

Part of these relational narratives is socio-cultural: meanings are rooted in cultural discourses on a specific relation. It is coloured by the 'Zeitgeist' and cultural context in which it is embedded (Baxter, 2011). On the other hand, the narrative is interpersonal: it reveals the 'localized' meaning and value actors give to their relations at a given time.

Relational narratives also embody a sense of evaluative appreciation (Gergen, 1994; Gergen and Gergen, 1983; Van de Ven and Poole, 2005), in respect to past relational identity/

identities. Gergen (1994) distinguishes three rudimentary forms of relational narratives: (1) a stability narrative, (2) a progressive narrative (incremental) and (3) a regressive narrative (decremental). The first refers to relational narratives that, in respect to other or prior narratives in the relation under study, remain unchanged in terms of moral evaluation. The narrative is different; the relation has changed, but not in terms of appreciation. Progressive narratives are narratives that suggest increments or upturns in relational experience, whereas regressive narratives refer to decrements or downturns. Box 1 provides an empirical illustration of a relational narrative manifesting in one of our running case studies, case Katendrecht (see also footnote 7).

**Box 1:** Example of a relational narrative.<sup>7</sup>

Relational narratives come to the fore in stakeholders' stories about the collaborative process. In these stories – when asked for – stakeholders describe how they experienced their mutual relations. We collected such stories in our case studies. Case Katendrecht concerns the comprehensive area development and transformation of an old, deteriorated former harbour area into an attractive residential area (see also footnote 5). A project team was appointed to jointly develop and implement a future vision of the area. One of the stakeholders in case Katendrecht told us the following about the stakeholders' relations: initially, in the first years of the collaboration, he felt as if the collaboration was comparable to how a 'family company' works. In a family company, he described, 'there is respect for each other's interest and position'. At this point, he experienced the mutual relations as open and honest. He adds, 'although we had some fierce discussions, in the end we got along'. Stakeholders also openly exchanged information. In this story, there is a sense of positivity and this stakeholder emphasises how he values the openness of the relation. The episode of his story reflects how this stakeholder experienced the relations as positive. This is an example of what Gergen (1994) would call a 'progressive narrative'.

Relational narratives uncover prevailing meanings in a given local condition, at a specific point in time. These narratives are to a certain extent set and stable: they remain valid for some time. This does not mean a specific narrative is 'fixed', narratives are continuously shaped and reshaped (Gergen, 2009). Reshaping of narratives may be reflected in the addition or disappearance of specific labels or words in the prevailing narrative without the narrative undergoing profound change: the coherence and form of the narrative remains. When a relation is fundamentally reformulated and dialectical tensions redefined, a narrative's coherence and form is impaired. In that case, a 'new' narrative or story line emerges. This means a stakeholder may refer to different relational narratives in his or her account about the mutual relations, each narrative prevailing at different moments in time. Reference to multiple narratives suggests the relational experience has changed during his or her involvement. We elaborate on such 'change' moments in the next paragraph on relational turning points.

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<sup>7</sup> Note that this is a reflection of one particular stakeholder's story. In our research, we analyse all stories and compare them with each other to find similarities, differences or patterns across stories and stakeholders. We aim to construct the 'narrative union' across these stories with attention to striking or specific perspectival fluctuations.

## Relational turning points

Relational narratives are continuously crafted and re-crafted, they will 'undergo continuous alteration as interaction progresses' (Gergen and Gergen, 1983: 256). Relations are never 'done deals', they continually unfold (Duck, 1994). Valuable and subjective meanings about relations thus change over time. This involves both incremental changes that do not lead to redefinitions or new understandings, and transformational changes. *Transformational change implies a reformulation of a relation, a rebalancing of a dialectical tension*: 'transformation is not simply an addition or unfolding of an existing theme, but a reformulation, an employing of a new vocabulary, a shift from one perspective to another' (Bolton, 1961: 236–237). The relational experience has changed and passes a certain 'threshold' (see Conville, 1998; Duck, 1994). Such a transformation brings about a new narrative to characterize mutual relations. These transformation moments are interesting since they mark a 'turning point' or 'breaking point' in the relating experience of actors. They are markers of how a relation develops (Graham, 1997). Box 2 offers an empirical illustration of a relational turning point occurring in a stakeholder's experience of the mutual relations in case Katendrecht.

### Box 2: Example of a relational turning point.

By focusing on change in the way stakeholders describe their mutual relations, relational turning points come to the surface. In the story of the stakeholder quoted above, there is positivity towards the mutual relations, at least in his description of the initial years of collaboration. However, later on, he contrasts this story with the current collaboration in the planning process. He describes it as closed, and explains, 'everybody follows his own path, with no regard for that of the others'. He talks about a 'stock market listed company' as the metaphor for a business-like, detached way of collaborating in contrast to his metaphor of the 'family company', which he experienced as more positive.

This changed description of the mutual relations, which has the character of a 'regressive narrative', marks a relational turning point: relations are redefined and a new vocabulary is used to characterize this new understanding. It shows how relations were rebalanced to more closeness at the expense of openness. In this particular episode, this was experienced as negative for the mutual relations.

Understanding relating dynamics implies analysing both relational narratives and 'turning points' herein. Both concepts are equally significant. Narratives are to compare with 'images' at specific points in time, whereas adding a focus on change and transition to the analysis also captures the 'turning points' herein. Combining these concepts reveals the 'movie' of a relation.

## Critical relation events

The above concepts can yield a rich description of relating dynamics. They give insight in *how* relations evolve over time. However, it is also important to gain understanding of the reasons that fuel these dynamics. That is where the third key concept of our framework, *critical relation events*, comes in. These are *critical, meaningful incidents that have a decisive impact on the mutual relations, prompt transition and thus lead to the emergence of a new relational narrative*. Critical relation events are incidents that relational parties perceive as having altered their relations in profound ways (Baxter, 2004a). That can be happenings, acts, actions or even feelings that are perceived as meaningful for a specific relation (Langley, 1999).

Critical relation events are the 'antecedents' of relational turning points, and thus of the emergence of new relational narratives, which are then its 'consequence' (Smeyers and Levering, 1999). Roughly, there are two types of critical relation events: internal events that originate from the collaborative system itself, and external events 'from the outside'. Concerning the first, the trigger of a relational turning point lies *within* the collaborative planning system: the collaborative system itself is the generator of change (Halinen et al., 1999). The concept of internal events also includes transformative interactive behaviours of relational parties oriented at managing the relation. Thus, a transformative event might also be an intervention (varying in mindfulness and intention) of one or more relational parties. External events, on the other hand, originate outside the collaborative system: transition is triggered by external events or interventions from outside (Baxter and Erbert, 1999; Druckman, 2009). Box 3 provides an empirical illustration of a number of critical relation events that triggered a relational turning point in case Katendrecht.

### Box 3: Example of critical relation events.

Relations change, as we described and illustrated in the paragraphs above. Stakeholders also explain these changes and which events they found significant herein. The stakeholder quoted above listed several events that, in his view, added up to the turning point in his relational experience. One example of a critical event was the broadening of the development plans to a new piece of land (or plot) in the area. This plot became available later on in the project. Due to the broadening of the development, new stakeholders that had not been involved till then, now became relevant as partners. Collaboration and information concerning the development of the plot became fragmented and, as a result, there was information asymmetry between the stakeholders. Another example of a critical event in his story was the personnel changes in two stakeholders' organizations. These changes were experienced as disruptive for the mutual relations.

After having discussed the analytical concepts that give guidance to empirically researching relating dynamics in collaborative planning, we turn to the analytical concepts in the second track: the framing dynamics. The presented concepts and associated conceptualizations are drawn from framing literature.

## Analysing framing dynamics (track 2)

Collaborative planning processes can be seen as interactive processes in which a struggle of frames or discourses takes place (Hajer, 2003). Different actors or stakeholders are brought together, and it is likely that they bring different views on the issue to the table: they define the situation in their own way, using different languages and rationalities to conceptualize the situation (Bouwen, 2001; Bouwen and Taillieu, 2004; Rein and Schön, 1993; Termeer, 1993).

In literature, different concepts are used to refer to the fact that multiple viewpoints to issues or problems exist. Relying on framing literature, we refer to this as ‘frames’ or ‘frames of reference’ (Schön, 1993). In this paragraph, we discuss this concept, together with the related concepts of discourse coalitions and frame configurations. In a sense, collaborative planning aims to tune the prevailing frames of different stakeholders in such a way that they are connected in a common perception of the issue (De Roo and Porter, 2007). In framing literature, this process of connecting different frames is referred to as frame alignment. Frames and discourse coalitions, frame configurations and frame alignment are central concepts in understanding framing dynamics. Below, we further conceptualize these concepts.

### Frames, discourse coalitions and frame configurations

A first step in analysing framing dynamics is identifying the different frames of involved actors to the issue at stake, at a given point in time. Frames can be seen as *interpretive schemes by which actors conceive of specific situations, prioritize specific problems, include or exclude aspects and favour particular kinds of solutions* (Dewulf et al., 2004; Putnam and Holmer, 1992). Actors tend to have typical frames of issues, emphasizing certain aspects and ignoring others (Drake and Donahue, 1996). A frame includes at least three elements: an interpretation of the cause of a situation (a diagnostic message: what is this issue about?), a vision on the future or solution (a prognostic message) and an action perspective (what should I do?) (see Colville et al., 2013; Hajer, 1989). Frames thus shape preferred policy or planning choices and solutions. Frames are reflected in stakeholders’ planning discourses: these are oral and written storylines in which stakeholders describe and define the planning issue as they interpret it.

Actors tend to seek support for their specific frames and discourses and try to organize around a set of comparable and overlapping storylines. If actors *reach consensus on a frame and the associated discourse or succeed in connecting or aligning their frames*, they form a so-called *discourse coalition* (Hajer, 1989).

Frame configuration then denotes the diversity and heterogeneity of frames in a given network as well as the degree to which some or more frames are aligned in discourse coalitions at a given point in time in collaborative planning processes (Dewulf et al., 2004). Frame configurations change over time: discourse coalitions may change, actors' frames may undergo change, new actors and thus new frames may be brought in or actors may even step out or over to other coalitions because of processes of alignment. We discuss this more in detail in the following paragraph on frame configuration change and frame alignment. In box 4, we present an empirical illustration of frames, discourse coalitions and frame configurations prevailing in one of our running case studies, case Vreewijk.

**Box 4:** Example of frames, discourse coalitions and frame configurations.

To reconstruct frames and discourse coalitions, documents are an appropriate entry point. In the key documents related to case Vreewijk, the different prevailing frames are clearly traceable. Case Vreewijk concerns the large-scale redevelopment and physical improvement of the housing stock in Vreewijk (see also Endnote 5). Stakeholders developed a vision of how the area has to be improved in the future. A project group, involving all important stakeholders, is appointed to implement this vision. The vision document reflects two frames on how to redevelop the area. Residents and tenants are in favour of conservation and renovation. They emphasise the cultural-historical value of the area. They are supported by different cultural-historical organizations from Rotterdam and abroad (discourse coalition A). In contrast, the developer and the city district of Feijenoord (part of Rotterdam), which the area is part of, are in favour of demolition and a newly built housing stock (discourse coalition B). Financially and technically, they argue, that is the most desirable solution. They frame this in terms of the importance of creating a life-proof and durable housing stock. Both frames are at odds and in the collaborative process stakeholders search for ways to reconcile both frames. The frame configuration at this point in the project thus entails two discourse coalitions.

### Frame configuration change and frame alignment

Frame configurations are not stable, but change over time, bringing about *new constellations of frames and discourse coalitions* (Dewulf et al., 2004; Putnam and Holmer, 1992). We refer to this as *frame configuration change*.

Frame configuration changes result from changing discourse coalitions. Discourse coalitions may extend, break down or even disappear. Changes in discourse coalitions follow from processes of alignment (or disconnection) between stakeholders' frames. *Frame alignment refers to the processes by which different frames are linked together in a common frame* (Snow et al., 1986). Over time, stakeholders may establish new connections between frames, or, on the other hand, may break down existing ones, thereby changing the constellation of discourse coalitions in the collaborative system. This process of alignment or disconnection may be facilitated or impeded by frame updates or processes of reframing on actor level. Frame updates entail a reformulation of the issue: actors 'unfreeze' past definitions and reformulate new ones. They now emphasise other elements and develop

a new and different vision to the situation (Weick, 1995). As a result, actors may connect their frames to other actors than they did before, as such forming new discourse coalitions, or disconnect their frames from discourse coalitions which they were part of.

Configuration changes can also result from changing actor constellations. The inclusion of new actors brings in new frames; the exclusion of actors entails the disappearance of specific frames to the issue, thereby changing the constellation of frames and discourse coalitions. Box 5 provides an empirical example of a frame configuration change and frame alignment in case Vreewijk.

**Box 5:** Example of frame configuration change and frame alignment.

In case Vreewijk, stakeholders succeeded in converging both frames. They jointly agreed upon an improvement program. At the basis of this alignment lays the compromise proposal of the alderman of Spatial Planning. He connects both frames in proposing 'preservation, unless...' as the starting point for redevelopment. This compromise proposal gives residents and tenants the necessary trust to move forward and, at the same time, gives the developer an opt-out: when there are financial and technical arguments to demolish and rebuild, then there is room to discuss this.

Analysis by means of the above concepts can give insight in framing dynamics and more in particular in configuration changes and processes of alignment in collaborative planning. As we have argued, this process of framing is intertwined with the relating dynamics in collaborative planning processes. If we want to understand how both dimensions are linked, we will have to analytically relate both tracks to each other. We elaborate on this in the next paragraph.

## Connecting the tracks

The tracks presented above are relevant to research dynamic phenomena: they both enable the researcher to see development in collaborative planning practices throughout time. The first track, which focuses on relational narratives, turning points and events, provides insight in how relations evolve over time, that is, insight in the relating pathway. The second track yields a description of framing dynamics: it gives insight in changing frame configurations, and in processes of alignment and disconnection between different frames, that is, insight in the framing pathway. The concepts discussed in each track enable to collect fine-grained data on two parallel dimensions at work in collaborative processes. They yield process data and deal with dynamics on two dimensions of analysis that are temporally embedded.

In order to study the link between these two dimensions, we propose a visual mapping strategy which comprises of simultaneous presentation of the process data of both dimensions on a timeline (see Langley, 1999).

Figure 2.1 illustrates an imaginary relating and framing pathway and indicates how the concepts discussed help to describe and explain these pathways. The sloping lines indicate how relating and framing evolve and where there are change moments, that is, transitions, herein (see the zigzag line). As for the relating pathway, we also aim to understand what provoked change, so we also pay attention to the events that triggered change or a turning point.

The combined analysis and visual mapping of relating and framing pathways can give indications about how both dimensions are linked. For instance, the figure shows how – concerning these imaginary pathways – frame alignment does not occur as long as relations are experienced as negative (relational narrative A: regressive narrative). We also see that, after reaching a common frame (frame configuration B), frames diverge, but also quickly converge again (see the waving line following frame configuration B). This happens against the background of positive experiences with stakeholders' relations (relational narrative C: progressive narrative). In case Vreewijk, for example, we observed such a pattern. Stakeholders reconciled their frames in a joint improvement programme (see also Box 5). However, throughout the implementation of this programme, there were still disagreements on different aspects, such as the extent to which specific historical details could be modified in favour of living comfort of the houses. Yet, because stakeholders had confidence in their mutual relations, and labelled them, at that time, as 'open' and 'respectful', they easily found ways to reconcile their views. Here, stakeholders' positive relational experiences formed a firm basis to deal with the recurring frame divergences and

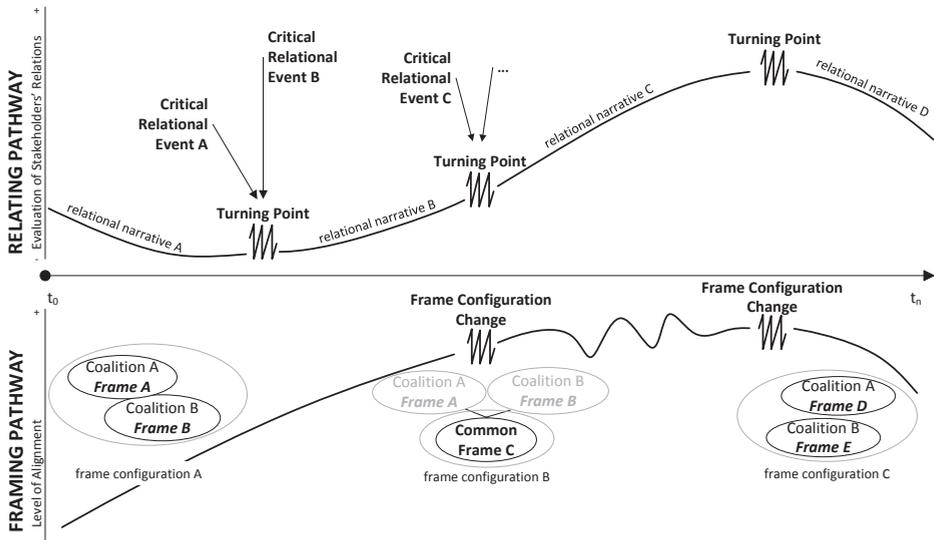


Figure 2.1. Visual map of relating and framing pathways.

to forge convergence. The figure further shows how, at some point, frame divergence is apparently too fundamental to be easily resolved and frame alignment is under pressure. This co-occurs with the prevalence of a regressive narrative (relational narrative D). In case Katendrecht, we saw an example of such a pattern. Although stakeholders agreed on the overall approach to the redevelopment of the area, they disagreed about the redevelopment of one specific plot. Residents opposed the city's proposal. Stakeholders did not manage to resolve these disagreements for several reasons. However, because of this continuing disagreement, relations quickly deteriorated.

The common expectation about the interplay of relating and framing pathways would be that positive relational turning points, bringing about a progressive narrative, will stimulate processes of alignment. However, we also expect that other patterns may become visible. This is similar to what Watzlawick and Beavin (1967) argue about the interplay between 'understanding', that is, closure on relational level, and 'agreement', that is, closure on substantive level:

It is possible for two communicants to disagree about an objective issue but understand each other as human beings, to agree but fail to understand each other as human beings, or, to agree and to understand each other; by the same token, of course, two communicants may fail at both levels and, thus, both disagree with and misunderstand one another.  
(p. 6)

What is empirically interesting, then, is under which conditions specific patterns become visible. In other words, what kind of relational narratives, that is, relational settings at some point in time, generate alignment or frustrate alignment, and vice versa. This needs further investigation for which the proposed and discussed analytical framework might be used.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Stakeholders' relations are key in collaborative planning. They are the medium through which collaborative efforts are realized and shape planning processes and outcomes. In collaborative planning literature, theoretical and empirical focus has been mainly on exposing communicative and relational conditions for collaborative planning processes to be successful. Less attention has been paid to the dynamic nature of stakeholders' relations and the way this relational change process, or relational pathway, impacts on framing dynamics. Authors, who do attend to relating dynamics in collaborative planning (e.g. Forester, 1999; Healey et al., 2003), neither provide strong theoretical grip to study and explain relating dynamics, nor present analytical tools to unravel relating dynamics

and their interplay with framing dynamics in a systematic way. Yet, relating dynamics are pivotal for the collaborative planning process and shape framing dynamics. In this article, we therefore developed a framework to systematically analyse both dynamics and the way they interplay. This framework offers several valuable alternative insights in collaborative planning practices.

First and foremost, the framework allows to study relating dynamics in stakeholders' relations in a systematic way. There is still much to learn about this and about how these relational change processes impact on the planning process. Focusing on relating dynamics takes the researcher beneath the surface of the more visible and manifest processes in collaborative planning: it gives insight in how stakeholders experience, give meaning and value to their relations within collaborative systems and how they explain and make sense of what relationally happens. This is relevant since the way stakeholders understand and appreciate their relations informs the way they act in a given collaborative system (Duck, 1994; Uprichard and Byrne, 2006).

Using the relating dynamics framework also gives insight in relational pathways. First, by focusing attention on change and transition, the framework enables to capture the dynamic nature of relations. The framework draws attention to moments in which relations change (turning points) and as such, enables to describe *how* relations develop over time. Second, the framework enables to track down critical events that precede these 'turning points' and thus fosters understanding of *why* relations develop as they do. Insights in critical events offer explanations or 'reasons' for relational pathways (Haverland and Yanow, 2012). Furthermore, analysing the type of critical events and valence of specific events within and across planning practices may point to possible leverage points for intervention. Knowledge of these events can make policymakers and planners more aware about an event's impact on the relating dynamics playing in collaborative settings and make them more alert for possible effects. Third, mapping sequences between critical events, turning points and the emergence of new narratives can give insight in possible developmental pathways. Byrne and Callaghan (2014) refer to this as 'trending': the framework helps to map relational pathways of collaborative networks, describing and explaining evolution herein (p. 54).

Further, analysing relating dynamics together with the framing dynamics playing in planning practice offers some additional insights. Mapping both dynamics chronologically in a visual map enables the researcher to explicate how relating dynamics are linked with framing dynamics in collaborative processes. Tracking down temporal co-occurrence of turning points and frame configuration changes (towards or away from frame alignment) provides insight in relating–framing patterns. More specifically, analysing both dynamics

and comparing both pathways provides insight in what kind of relational narratives facilitate or hamper frame alignment. It also gives information about how framing dynamics shape the relating dynamics in their turn. Within and across case comparison provides the opportunity to reveal what kinds of patterns prevail in collaborative planning practices.

Each of these insights can help practitioners in collaborative planning practices to deal with the reality of planning and the messy, fluid nature of stakeholders' relations in different ways. First, focusing on dynamics makes planners more receptive to the fact that relational settings change over time and that it is change that is constant, rather than stability (Hochas as discussed in Forester, 1999: 89). However, the dynamic character of relations also requires planners to be relational flexible and capable to work and find ways to move forward within different relational settings. Learning about these different settings and what influences them, helps planners to prepare for dealing with a variety of planning practices. Second, learning about critical relational events that possibly mark relational turning points can – as they emerge – alert planners for possible transitions in the collaborative planning process. These signals then provide the opportunity for early responsive planning behaviour in making use of these turning points and in fostering productive long-lasting relationships. Finally, the framework provides insights in the way specific relational settings interplay with framing dynamics. This provides the opportunity for planning practitioners to see which relational settings and critical events hamper or facilitate frame alignment in planning processes. In this way, planners get ideas on how to develop and sustain common ground and frames to substantiate collaborative action.





# **Part III**

## **Methodological approach**



# 3

## **Coming to grips with life-as-experienced: Piecing together research to study stakeholders' lived relational experiences in collaborative planning processes**

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## ABSTRACT

Lived experience remains a key concept in qualitative social science research. The study of life-as-experienced is, however, a project that is methodologically problematic due to the fact that researchers can only come to grips with people's lived experiences through their (re)constructed representations of it. Yet, during this process of (re)constructing, some of the complexity of life-as-experienced is inevitably lost. The methodological challenge is to find an approach that embraces, rather than reduces the complexity of life-as experienced. In qualitative research literature, methodological bricolage has been proposed as such an approach. In this article, we present a concrete example of a bricolaged research approach, provide insights into its potential value and reflect on the challenges we encountered. We discuss how our approach enabled a multi-layered exploration of lived experiences. By creatively blending methods, we were able to tap into different kinds of understanding. Our bricolaged research approach generated: 1. knowledge "from within" and "in-between" research subjects, 2. a kaleidoscopic view of lived experiences, and 3. a processual understanding that embraces the temporal dimension of life-as-experienced. Researchers can benefit from our discussion on this bricolaged approach as there are as of yet few concrete examples of how bricolage can be implemented in practice.

## INTRODUCTION

In contemporary qualitative social science research, “lived experience” remains a central methodological notion that aims to provide understandings of how people experience, interpret, and feel about certain phenomena in their everyday lives (Davies & Davies, 2007; van Manen, 2004). Lived experience/life-as experienced as a concept refers to both the experience of “living through” everyday, ordinary events and the meanings (reflectively) attached to that experience (Throop, 2003). A research interest in lived experiences embraces the idea that “in order to understand a phenomenon [...], it is not possible to ignore the experience of the person who lives the phenomenon” (Daher, Carre, Jaramillo, Olivares & Tomicic, 2017, §19).

While the importance and centrality of lived experience is evident throughout the social science disciplines, the actual methodology needed to study lived experience has received less critical attention (Daher et al., 2017; Throop, 2003). Researching lived experiences is, however, a fundamentally problematic project. Researchers face specific methodological challenges due to the fact that people’s lived experiences and meanings cannot be grasped directly. Making an account of life-as-experienced always entails a transformation and reconstruction in which “both the researcher and research participant [...] are made captive to the story line, the expression, the images, the metaphors, the emotions that rise up in the telling, in the writing, and in the listening” (Davies & Davies, 2007, p.1141; see also Bruner, 1986, Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Greene & Hill, 2005; Josselson, 2004). This transformative and reconstructive act of expressing, so scholars argue, inevitably reduces some of the complexity of life-as-experienced (Bagnoli, 2009; Bruner, 1986; Eastmond, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2007; Throop, 2003; van Manen, 1990).

A main methodological challenge then for researchers studying life-as-experienced is “to match up social science research methods to this complexity of multidimensional experience” (Mason, 2006, p.12). Most qualitative social science research, however, continues to rely on interviews as the standard—often only—method to do so (Bagnoli, 2009; Davies & Davies, 2007). Interviews, however, tap into only one type of data, i.e., linguistic/verbal descriptions, leaving other dimensions of experience out of the equation. Consequently, researchers’ understandings of life-as-experienced are impoverished (Mason, 2006). In qualitative research literature, bricolage has been proposed as an approach that makes it possible to embrace the complexity of the lived world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Kincheloe, 2004; Rogers, 2012). Generally speaking, bricolage can be understood as a methodological practice based on “notions of eclecticism, emergent design, flexibility and plurality” (Rogers, 2012, p.1). Bricoleurs “recognize the limitations of a single method, the discursive strictures of one disciplinary approach” (Kincheloe, 2001, p.681). Rather than sticking

to methodological guidelines, they amalgamate different tools, methods and disciplines adapted to the specific demands of the inquiry at hand (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

In this article, we present a concrete bricolaged research approach and discuss its potential to increase understanding and appreciation of the complexity of life-as-experienced, in particular the multidimensional and dynamic nature of lived experiences. Whereas qualitative research literature has paid considerable attention to the conceptualization of bricolage, there are few examples of how it has been concretely implemented in research contexts (Rogers, 2012; Wibberley, 2012). Yet, sharing concrete examples of actual research practices, of “how the job is done,” is an important aspect of assessing or demonstrating the adequacy (and validity) of a specific approach (Mishler, 1990). Hence, based on our concrete research experiences with using a bricolaged approach to study lived experiences of stakeholder relations, i.e., stakeholders’ lived relational experiences in collaborative planning projects, we provide insights into its value for exploring lived experiences in all its complexity. We do so in three steps: first, we elaborate on the concept of lived experience and the methodological issues inherent to this object of inquiry. Here, we also discuss bricolage as a methodological approach that allows researchers to add “breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.5). In the second step, we introduce a concrete research project examining stakeholders’ relating dynamics in collaborative planning processes. Here we discuss how we pieced together research to enable a rich and comprehensive exploration of stakeholders’ lived experiences with their mutual relations that does justice to their complexity. In the third step, we show how the different methods we used made it possible to uncover different aspects or layers of life-as-experienced.

## **STUDYING LIVED EXPERIENCES: METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES**

Lived experience remains a key concept in social science theorizing, drawing attention to how people experience and make sense of everyday situations/life (Berglund, 2007; Daher et al., 2017). An emphasis on lived experiences has its roots in phenomenology, a philosophical movement that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000). Phenomenology, being critical of natural science for its objectification of the empirical world, drew attention back to the concrete, everyday lifeworld and the meaningful ways in which things are experienced, made sense of and enacted in everyday life (Berglund, 2007).

Lived experience—life-as-experienced—is not merely about the immediate and pre-reflective experience of events, but about an experience, that which has been “lived through.”

Lived experiences are “not passive, sensuous expressions, but perceptions which [are] as a rule already furnished with interpretation in the shape of objectives, values, meanings and the like” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000, p.36). Hence, lived experience pertains to how a person perceives and attaches meaning to what has happened, informed by past experiences and cultural repertoires (Eastmond, 2007; Throop, 2003). Following Throop (2003), we adhere to a complementary model of lived experience, which holds that lived experiences can be articulated in a variety of forms across a spectrum ranging from coherent and unified experiences to fragmentary and disjunctive experiences. Thus, lived experiences are not always characterized by ordered coherence; they may also have a fragmentary structure (ibid.).

Life-as-experienced is complex by nature (Bagnoli, 2009; Davies & Davies, 2007; Mason, 2006; Polkinghorne, 2007). For one thing, lived experiences are multidimensional: experiences and the meanings attached to them are “not a surface phenomenon, it permeates through body and psyche of participants” (Polkinghorne, 2007, p.481). People experience life on many “dimensions”: bodily, sensory, emotional, aesthetically and they make sense of these experiences not only in words, but also in feelings and images (Bruner, 1986; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Mason, 2006). Adding to the complexity, lived experiences also have a temporal structure as there is a flux and fluidity to lived experience. As Josselson (2004, p.2) puts it: “Meanings of past events change over the lifespan as the beginnings of the story are reshaped and lead to endings that are mutable and in process.” Josselson here touches upon the “in-process,” ever-changing nature of the lived world and the dynamism of life-as-experienced.

Despite the centrality of lived experiences throughout the social science disciplines, there has been little critical engagement with what it methodologically involves to study lived experiences (Daher et al., 2017). Yet, the study of lived experience is fundamentally problematic due to the fact that actual life-as-experienced and its meanings cannot be grasped directly (Josselson, 2004; Polkinghorne, 2007). Researchers can only come to know something about lived experiences through “people’s articulations, formulations, and representations of their own experiences” (Bruner, 1986, p.7). Consequently, our possibilities to explore lived experience are limited. As Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p.39) point out: “Experience [...] is always more than we can know and represent in a single statement, paragraph, or book. Every representation of it, therefore, no matter how faithful to that what it tries to depict, involves selective emphasis.” This elusiveness of people’s experiences, so Greene and Hill (2005) argue, should be a fundamental premise for researchers taking lived experiences as their object of inquiry.

There are at least two aspects to this methodological challenge. First, each expression inevitably entails a transformation and (re)construction of the actual lived experience (Gemignani, 2014; van Manen, 1990). In telling about their experiences, people establish limits and frame experiences in a specific way, thereby constructing a possible and provisional interpretation of a certain human experience (Bruner, 1986; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). As Davies and Davies (2007, p.1139) point out: "There are multiple possible trajectories in the tales that we, and our research participants, tell in the process of 'generating data'." Another part of the dilemma is the involvement of the researcher in this (re)constructive process. Many social scientists now accept that the objective researcher is a myth and have become alert towards their own involvement in the creation of data (Greene & Hill, 2005). As Eastmond (2007, p.249) argues: "What is remembered and told is also situational, shaped not least through the contingencies of the encounter between narrator and listener and the power relationship between them." This indicates how researchers are active co-constructors rather than simple collectors of data (Gemignani, 2014).

Together these insights demonstrate that the study of lived experiences is a continuous process of construction and reconstruction by both researcher and research participant (*ibid.*). Different scholars however, argue how some of the complexity, i.e., multidimensionality and dynamism, of life-as-experienced is inevitably reduced in the (re)constructive act of recounting an experience. The methodological challenge is to actively cultivate a methodology and methods that enable the exploration of lived experience in a way that appreciates its complexity; i.e., its multidimensional and dynamic nature (Berglund, 2007; Ellingson, 2012; Mason, 2006). Currently, interviews remain the standard method for generating accounts of experience (Atkinson, 2005; Bagnoli, 2009). Interviews, however, generally focus on verbalizations at the expense of other modes of expression (Bruner, 1986). As Bagnoli (2009, p.547) describes:

The use of interviews relies on language as the privileged medium for the creation and communication of knowledge. However, our daily experience is made of a multiplicity of dimensions, which include the visual and the sensory, and which are worthy of investigation but cannot always be easily expressed in words, since not all knowledge is reducible to language [Eisner, 2008]. The inclusion of non-linguistic dimensions in research, which rely on other expressive possibilities, may allow us to access and represent different levels of experience.

Bagnoli subsequently suggests that to enable a more comprehensive exploration of lived experiences, one that appreciates their complexity, researchers need to go "beyond the standard interview and expand the domain of investigation by adopting a variety of methods" (*ibid.*). This idea of employing and blending multiple methods across disciplinary

boundaries is congruent with the concept of “bricolage” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 2-3; Kincheloe, 2001, p.680).

In qualitative research literature, bricolage is put forward as an approach to research that appreciates the complexity of the lived world (Berry, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Kincheloe, 2004; Rogers, 2012). The concept of methodological bricolage was first introduced in a qualitative methodological context by Denzin and Lincoln (1994, pp.2-3) to describe the emergence of “eclectic multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approaches to meaning-making in research” (Rogers, 2012, p.3). At the core of the bricolage concept lies the idea of interdisciplinarity. By not confining research to a monological method/path or to prescribed formats within a given “disciplinary drawer” but instead actively seeking new ways of seeing and constructing research methods from the tools at hand across disciplinary boundaries, the researcher-as-bricoleur avoids reductionism and envisions addressing the complexity of the lived world (Berry, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Kincheloe, 2001, 2004). The core principles of methodological bricolage can be summarized as follows:

- creatively combining and creating multiple data-gathering and analytical techniques and methods, crossing disciplinary boundaries if necessary (Kincheloe, 2001);
- using the tools and means “at hand” to accomplish knowledge work (Kincheloe, 2004);
- contextual/situational contingencies guide method (Rogers, 2012; Kincheloe, 2004);
- adopting a flexible/emergent construction and readjustment of research design: “if new tools or techniques have to be invented or pieced together, then the researcher will do this” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.4).

In general, methodological bricolage thus signifies approaches that actively use, construct and modify methods: research then involves an ongoing tinkering “with our research methods in field-based and interpretive contexts” rather than following pre-defined methodological guidelines (Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg 2011, p.168). In this article, we present and discuss an example of methodological bricolage and provide insights into the potential value of this approach in the study of lived experiences in all their complexity.

## **PIECING TOGETHER RESEARCH TO STUDY LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS IN COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PROCESSES**

### **The research project**

In this article, we draw on our research experiences with a research project set up to develop understandings of stakeholders’ lived relational experiences, i.e., of how stakeholders

involved in collaborative planning projects “live through” and make sense of their mutual relations, and of how (and why) these lived relational experiences and meanings change over time. Stakeholder relations are a crucial factor in collaborative processes and key to the success of collaborative efforts (Innes & Booher, 2004; Nowell, 2009). Our research focus on stakeholders’ lived relational experiences entails a longitudinal perspective since it involves capturing how these experiences change and evolve over time (Vandenbussche, 2018; Vandenbussche, Edelenbos & Eshuis, 2018).

The research project features two case studies involving ongoing collaboratively approached urban regeneration projects: one in Vreewijk, the other in Katendrecht, both areas in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. While the substantive approach differs in each project, they both have a similar collaborative set-up. In both projects, the following stakeholders (organizations, agencies or groups with a stake in the issue of concern) were actively involved: the municipality of Rotterdam, the borough, the main housing corporation in the area, and the residents and/or tenants. A private developer was also actively involved in Katendrecht. In both projects, the stakeholders interacted face-to-face on a regular basis, with the aim of jointly developing spatial and social policies to bring about urban regeneration in the area. Furthermore, both projects involved longterm collaborations over a period of at least ten years. Case study research on stakeholders’ relating dynamics was conducted between 2010 and 2016. Our research focus on stakeholders’ lived relational experiences and developments therein throughout the collaborative planning process contained both a retrospective element, i.e., gathering data on past experiences, and a real time element, i.e., gathering data on experiences as they emerged.

To study how stakeholders live through their mutual relations in collaborative planning processes and how these lived relational experiences evolve over time, we employed a bricolaged research approach. In the following section, we discuss the design as it “emerged” throughout our research.

### **Piecing together research: Multiple routes and multiple tellings**

In our study, we combined multiple, cross-disciplinary methodological practices as we needed them in the “unfolding context of the research situation” (Kincheloe et al, 2011, p.168). Due to the complex nature of our object of inquiry (lived relational experiences), the idea of researching it as a (re)constructive process and the specificities of our study (longitudinal perspective), we adhered to the idea of facilitating multiple routes x multiple tellings to design our research. The first refers to a search to provide different routes, i.e., expressive modes, in order to appreciate the multidimensional nature of stakeholders’ lived relational experiences, whereas the latter refers to appreciating the dynamic nature of

stakeholders' lived relational experiences. Although the methods and tools in our research emerged in a rather fragmented way throughout our study, for the purpose of description, we will present them as three separate and coherent routes, each involving a specific set of methods, tools and techniques, drawing on different methodological principles.

### Route I: Ethnographic fieldwork

We started our inquiry into stakeholders' lived relational experiences with an ethnographic approach. Ethnographic research indicates a general research orientation that aims to obtain a rich and holistic understanding of social actors in their natural setting, their emic views and the meanings of their actions (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011; Gobo, 2011). A crucial methodological principle in ethnographic approaches is that "being there"/"having been there" is required if one is to describe and understand social life<sup>1</sup> (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Kramer & Adams, 2017; Lewis & Russell, 2011). By immersing oneself in a chosen field setting, ethnographic research "holds the possibility of a way of knowing that is more valid to the [...] contingent flow of lived experience than reductionistic forms of knowing" (Kleinman & Kleinman, 1991, p.278). Advantages of doing fieldwork include: "deeper levels of understanding [...]; closer and more regular contact with the field; more detailed consideration of social actors at the centre of the [...] phenomenon making access to; [...]; quicker establishment of rapport and trust between researcher and participants" (Taylor, 2011, p.6).

On the methodological side, ethnographic research relies heavily on participant observation (as well as informal talks and archival documents) of people's actions and accounts in everyday contexts (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Emerson et al., 2011; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Data are accumulatively collected in field notes that document in descriptive terms the researcher's observations, experiences and reflections with the social group that is being studied (Emerson et al.; 2011; Kramer & Adams, 2017).

We implemented ethnographic fieldwork by attending and participating in a large share of the meetings and events organized by the collaboratives under study between 2010 and 2016. Furthermore, as part of our fieldwork, we also engaged in various commitment acts. Commitment acts entail a particularized investment of time and energy in activities

<sup>1</sup> In its traditional conception, this meant: "spending a lengthy period in the field; long enough, ideally, to observe a full cycle of activity" (Lewis & Russell, 2011, p.400). However, contemporary ethnographic approaches no longer consider the amount of time spent at a research site as the core indicator of thorough ethnographic work. Rather the constant of ethnographic practice lies, as Lewis and Russell indicate, in "an attitude toward 'being there' sufficient to experience the mundane and sacred, brash and nuanced aspects of socio-cultural life and, through observations, encounters and conversations, to come to an understanding of it" (ibid.).

with research participants with an unpredictable pay-off to the study. They are primarily a way of “showing the commitment to learning the culture and people one is studying” (Feldman, Bell & Berger, 2003, p.36). In our research project, this included activities such as joining someone for lunch, biking home together after meetings and visiting participants in their homes or offices.

## **Route II: Narrative interviewing and graphic elicitation/diagram**

We also adopted a narrative approach with the aim of opening up additional routes to gain insight into stakeholders’ lived relational experiences. The central tenet in narrative inquiry is that “humans experience their lives in emplotted forms resembling stories or at least communicate about their experiences in this way” (Josselson, 2010, p.870). Hence, in narrative research, stories are considered “one, if not the fundamental unit that accounts for human experience” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p.4). Stories, so narrative inquirers argue, potentially provide for deeper, more complex and valuable understandings of experience (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Stories embody the storyteller’s interpretations of phenomena and, as such, give access to subjectivity, as stories are perspective-ridden and rooted in time, place and personal experience (Bevir, 2006). Hence, they provide a window into how people experience and make sense of their lives. An essential element of stories is that they “structure events in such a way that they demonstrate, first, a connectedness or coherence, and second, a sense of movement or direction through time” (Gergen & Gergen, 1986, p.25). In other words, when telling a story, people create a plausible, coherent version of events (Wagenaar, 2011).

Methodologically, most narrative projects depend on oral accounts gathered through narrative interviews (Josselson, 2010; Kohler Riessmann, 2008). Typically, narrative interviews are unstructured *qua* form, in order to follow “participants’ trails, as they work through their stories” (Pederson, 2013, p.415).

Narrative interviewing offers a valuable approach to exploring lived relational experiences; however, as argued above, it tends to favor verbalizations/linguistic descriptions as the main source of data. To “allow access to different levels of experience” (Bagnoli, 2009, p.547), we also wanted to go “beyond the standard interview” (Bagnoli, 2009). Hence, we used a graphic elicitation tool, more specifically a diagram, to extend the data generated through narrative interviewing. Graphic elicitation is a form of visual research that considers visualizations and images, such as drawings, timelines, photographs, paintings, etc. as an important source of knowledge (Prosser & Loxley, 2008). The evocative/imaginative power of visualizations is considered to have the potential to enrich social inquiry and representation. Graphic elicitation tools make it possible to conduct a diversified and

multidimensional exploration and may provide a richer and more nuanced picture of the phenomenon under study (Crilly, Blackwell & Clarkson, 2006; Prosser & Loxley, 2008).

In our study, we conducted narrative interviews with the key stakeholders in both collaborative planning projects. During the first half of the interview, we focused on encouraging participants “to tell their story” in their own way about how they had experienced stakeholder relations throughout their involvement in the collaborative planning project. We avoided imposing too much structure on the interview (Pederson, 2013). In the second half of the interview, we introduced a diagram in which the X-axis plotted time and the Y-axis represented a dimension ranging from negative to positive experiences with stakeholder relations (see Figure 3.1). We then invited participants to visualize/draw how they had experienced stakeholder relations throughout their involvement.

### **Route III: Graphic elicitation/timelines and follow-up interviews**

As a next step, we depicted the information obtained in the narrative interviews on a timeline. Timelines offer the possibility of visually organizing rich, narrative data in a clear way (Patterson, Markey & Somers, 2012). Timelines are a type of graphic elicitation that visualize important experiences and events in a person’s life in chronological order (Kolar, Ahmad, Chan & Erickson, 2015). As such, timelines provide “a means to lay out for a participant a comprehensive, multi-textual (re)presentation of her life. [...] It is a particularly effective means of highlighting turning points and epiphanies in people’s lives” (Sheridan, Chamberlain & Dupuis, 2011, p.565). Timelines draw explicit attention to the temporal dimension of life, reflecting the dynamic nature of experiences and making it possible to explore change and continuity in a participant’s experiences (Sheridan et al., 2011). These researcher-produced timelines were used as a graphic elicitation tool during a follow-up interview.

Whereas narrative approaches most often rely on one-time interviews, we organized follow-up interviews about 1 to 1.5 years after the initial interview. In qualitative research literature, the main rationale for conducting multiple interviews is that initial accounts can be spun out and details and nuances can be added. Also, during follow-up interviews, participants may feel more confident to discuss and reflect upon their feelings and understanding, thereby generating more profound accounts (Polkinghorne, 2007). Furthermore, “going back” gives participants the opportunity to “edit and alter earlier versions of personal experience” (Miller, 2015, p.300). As McLeod (2000, p.49) argues, follow-up interviews:

can illuminate, confirm or unsettle initial and tentative interpretations, alert us to [...] shifts and changes [in participants' narratives], suggest continuities or disruptions in emotional investments [...] and provide a strong sense of how particular [experiences] are taking shape or developing.

Hence, conducting multiple interviews allows participants to continue to unfold their stories throughout the research. Weaving together old and new accounts can provide for more richly layered and textured accounts of people's lived experiences (Miller, 2015).

We used the timeline as a "girder" for the follow-up interview. About one week prior to the interview, we sent the timeline to the participant. This allowed her/him to evaluate and reflect upon our representation of her/his initial account. A follow-up interview was then organized to discuss the timeline.

## **A MULTI-LAYERED EXPLORATION OF LIVED EXPERIENCES**

To provide concrete insights into the value of our bricolaged approach, in this section, we reflect upon how each of the practices used contributed to the development of a multidimensional and dynamic understanding of stakeholders' lived experiences. We draw on empirical material from our research on the collaborative planning process in Vreewijk. The selected materials cover data generated between mid-2010 and 2014.

### **Knowledge from "within" and "in-between"**

Ethnographic fieldwork, i.e., observing and participating in the activities of both collaboratives, such as the project group meetings, enabled us to become familiar with the research context: its protagonists, the collaborative set-up and atmosphere, and the issues and sensitivities in the collaborative process. Our prolonged engagement also enabled us to track how these aspects evolved throughout time.

Below are two excerpts from our field journal, which report<sup>2</sup> on observations, experiences and reflections on two project group meetings. Both excerpts reflect discussions about working on joint/co-authored documents.

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<sup>2</sup> Field notes are written in first person singular since observations were conducted by the principal researcher—first author of the article—in this research project

**Excerpt from field notes on project group meeting, September 2010**

At previous project group meetings, there had been discussions about the publication of the first jointly-authored newsletter. At this particular project group meeting, which was chaired by Elmo (project manager of the municipality), the newsletter was once more on the agenda. There was a discussion about both the title and the sort of content the newsletter should include. At some point, the conversation moved towards discussing the content of the *Vreewijker*, the community newspaper published by the residents' association. The following exchange arose:

- Monique (borough) I've read the *Vreewijker* a few times now. I mean, we all work together in this project group, but I found the mood of some of the articles about the *Groene Vlieger* (part of the area), and about what will happen with the million (Euros) from Plasterk (minister), to be rather biased.
- Sam (housing corporation) It's not really the article about the *Groene Vlieger*, we agree about that, but the tone that we take towards each other. I think: this is not how we (should) sit around the table. And I just feel that this is a boot in the patoot.
- Carl (resident) If we, as residents of *Vreewijk*, cannot express our opinions, if that is the case, then we're no longer in.
- Monique (borough) That's not the point.
- Carl (resident) There will always be bad examples in the *Vreewijker* since it's written by different people. I am one of them. Sometimes it's rather blunt, I know that, but I mean, we hold back, and we have to agree with each other that we try to have a common line, but then it needs to be clear for everyone that there is a common line and up until now, it has been difficult to find it.
- Elmo (project manager municipality) If someone feels that way, like, well, what an article, then I think we should be able to say this, and that people can react. Maybe people should just discuss it face-to-face, you could say, for example: "I wrote that piece, just tell me what you didn't like." I think that it is very important that we can express these things, and sometimes I think or I feel that there is something in the way ... but you should realize [turning to the residents], that I and the others, the housing corporation and the city, do not always notice that there are tensions, or certain feelings, or dissatisfaction.

**Excerpt from field notes on project group meeting, September 2014**

This meeting was chaired by Esther (project manager of the municipality and Elmo's successor). That day's agenda mainly revolved around giving feedback on information discussed within the various working groups. When discussing feedback on information

from the working group for “housing,” there was a short exchange about the social plan (the social plan is part of the agreements between the different parties on the conditions for urban regeneration and stipulates the conditions for rehousing, rent increases, etc.). The following conversation took place:

- Helen (housing corporation) I’ve adjusted the social plan, I will send it to all of you. I’ve followed the formal requirements of the tenants’ association. Concerning the renovation-in-one approach [one of the approaches in the urban regeneration project]: we have done property surveys. There’s still five houses to go. We want to start with the renovation activities at the end of October. We will develop a questionnaire to get more information from the people where we have done property surveys.
- Tom (resident) That’s smart.
- Ruth (housing corporation) And we also want to develop a satisfaction survey, in which residents can share their opinions about the renovation afterwards.
- Tom (resident) What about the KiB?<sup>3</sup> You have put a lot of energy in this, but in practice it seems to be failing.
- Helen (housing corporation) We just started to use it for the property surveys. We haven’t used it before.
- Carl (resident) Four or five years ago, this would have been the kind of stuff we would have disagreed about.

This project group meeting was finished in about 45 minutes. After Esther completed the “any other business” round, Tom said: “well, we managed to do all this in less than an hour. You see, this is how it works when you’re well prepared.” Helen added: “and we see each other a lot lately, so that makes it easier.”

Being embedded in the research setting and placing ourselves in-between research participants enabled us to develop knowledge from “within” (see Bergson in Tsoukas & Chia, 2002, p.571). First and foremost, as the excerpts illustrate, fieldwork allowed us to gain information on and develop an understanding of the collaborative context, its people and its concerns and how this had changed over time. It enabled us to become “empirically literate” (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, being there, “in-between” field participants and the repeated interaction and sharing of experiences that this entailed, allowed us to truly get to know the people involved in the process. This, in turn, helped us to identify and intuitively sympathize with each of them (Lewis & Russell, 2011). This knowledge from “within” and “in-between” facilitated a more profound understanding of the context and

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3 KiB (*Kvaliteit in Balans*, in English: quality in balance) refers to a method used to translate quality criteria for building(s) into functional demands concerning energy efficiency, safety, health, etc

background against which stakeholders' lived relational experiences are shaped. Finally, prolonged engagement and sustained contact with field participants enabled us to establish empathic relationships. These field relationships proved to be important assets (on all routes) in the research project: they allowed us to create a setting in which participants felt safe and confident enough to tell us about their experiences in detail (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong, 2007). As Spradley (1979, p.78) points out: "a basic sense of trust [...] allows for the free flow of information." In other words: ethnographic fieldwork enabled us to develop empathic field relationships, which made it possible to gain access to rich and detailed accounts of stakeholders' lived relational experiences (Feldman et al., 2003).

### **A kaleidoscopic view of lived relational experiences**

Narrative interviewing aims at generating detailed and vivid stories of experience (Kohler Riessmann, 2006). In our study, the first part of the narrative interview focused on inviting participants to simply tell their story about how they experienced stakeholder relations within the collaborative. To do so, we used a "grand tour" approach (Spradley, 1979, p.86), simply asking participants: could you describe how you experienced stakeholder relations throughout your involvement in the collaborative? This encouraged participants to open up and talk at length about their experiences. Thanks to this approach, we were able to elicit descriptive accounts of participants' "experiential" trajectories concerning stakeholder relations. Below is an example – provided by Helen – of an account elicited through this grand tour approach.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about the mutual relations throughout your involvement?  
How you experienced them?

Helen: Well, I started in July 2012. Of course I already knew that I would become involved in this project. Rob (the incumbent project manager) introduced me to a few individuals as a first introduction to the key players in the project, but also to the more complicated issues. [...] I knew there was some baggage, but, as I feel it, I started off fresh. I remember my first project group meeting, it was at the Witte Paard [a restaurant and meeting location in the area], it was also the moment we said goodbye to Rob. There was a meeting table and behind it there was the audience. It all felt very heavy and very business-like to me. It was distant, people were not really together around the table. Everyone spoke out, but I didn't have the feeling that this was a collaboration. I thought that Elmo was doing his best to build bridges and keep things light. But still there was this distance. That was my experience with the first project group meeting: words being thrown around here and there, no trust. [...]. Now that has completely disappeared and there is a huge difference. Now I generally go home with a good feeling after meetings. In the beginning [of my involvement], meetings sometimes left me unsettled and I sometimes went home with a troubled feeling.

When we felt that participants had finished their “grand tour,” we introduced a graphic elicitation tool. We presented the participants with a diagram (see above) and asked them to visualize their experiences. As such, we encouraged participants to make contributions that are more difficult to put into words (also see Bagnoli, 2009; Crilly et al., 2006). Below is Helen’s diagram (see Figure 3.1.), together with explanatory comments she made while drawing it.

Interviewer: I want to introduce a tool now, which is actually a diagram. And I want to ask you to draw how you’ve experienced stakeholder relations throughout your involvement. If you look back to the moment you got involved, up until now, how would you visualize your experiences, just following your intuition?

Helen: I do not think that relations were ever below zero, there was also some connectedness back then, but it has grown much stronger now. It has never been negative. The question is if it developed in a straight line [towards more], or whether it goes like this [draws the diagram]. What I do know is that moving to the Vreewijkhuis has meant a lot to me. That was in January 2013. I intuitively feel that the distance has decreased. What also helped was the meeting about the Improvement Program in June 2013. So, relations improved a lot in 2013, but there are still ups and downs.

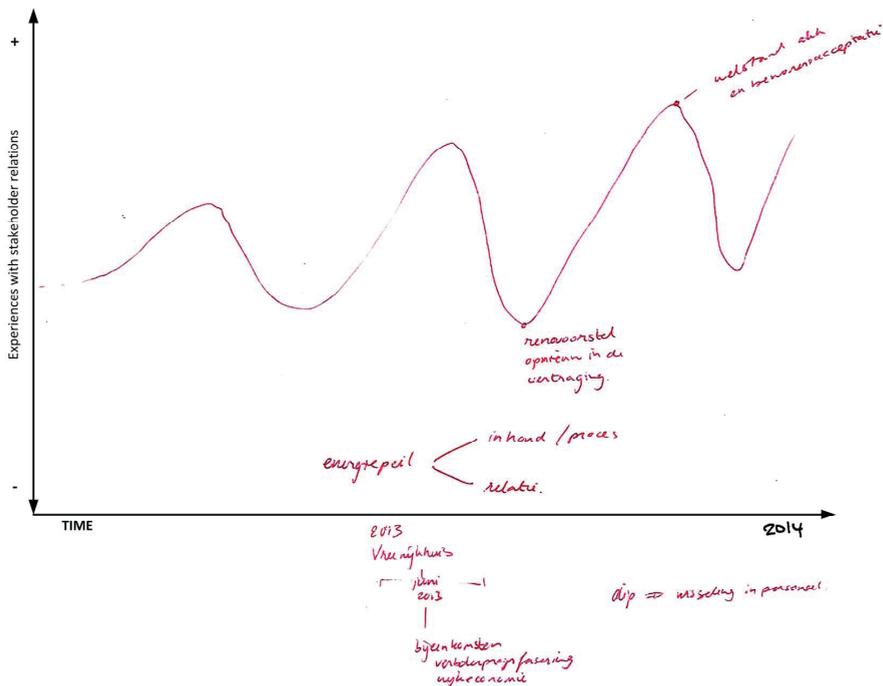


Figure 3.1. Graphic elicitation: Diagram

Interviewer: Where there any other important moments?

Helen: An up is the approval of the Planning Authority [of the first proposals] and that residents accepted our proposal. What is a down? Sometimes Tom [representative of the tenants' association] can make negative remarks, mean remarks about us. That feels personal. We also make mistakes, and we can learn from them. But the way he makes remarks does something to our relations, to how I experience the relational atmosphere. So, not only the substance of the project is turbulent, but also our relations.

Whereas Helen's initial narration depicted her experiences more as a coherent sequence of relational experiences leading to more connectedness and trust without giving much consideration to the struggles throughout that period, the diagram shows a more fragmented and diffuse picture of her experiences, one that disrupts the linearity suggested in her initial account. The diagram thus served as an opener in the interview: it facilitated a more profound and multidimensional exploration of lived relational experiences, reflecting its complex nature in greater detail. Both methodological practices thus tapped into different dimensions of experiencing: the first part of the narrative interview elicited a constructed story about experiences, characterized by coherence and direction, whereas drawing the diagram was more intuitive and invited participants to reflect on the (experienced) specificities of the relational trajectory. Hence, combining, in sequence, a narrative interview approach with graphic elicitation as an alternative way to express experiences gave a more diversified and kaleidoscopic view of lived experiences.

### **Processual understanding of lived experiences**

Timelines can be used for accumulating and organizing rich narrative data (Patterson et al., 2012). We organized participants' initial accounts into a timeline, chronologically ordering the information obtained during the narrative interviews across five themes: 1. events and occurrences concerning their (professional) role and involvement in the planning process; 2. urban planning developments (substantive); 3. experiences with stakeholder relations; 4. collaborative set-up (in terms of stakeholders involved) throughout involvement; 5. contextual events.

Using the timelines in tandem with the follow-up interview allowed participants to go into more detail and add nuance, and in so doing, to deepen and enrich their accounts (Sheridan et al., 2011). However, discussing the researcher-produced timeline with participants also prompted them to reflect upon their previous story and to expand and modify their version on the basis of their new insights (Crilly et al., 2006). As such, it elicited the dynamic and ongoing nature of lived experiences. Discussing the timeline also contributed to

reflexivity, both for us as researchers and for the participants. We, as researchers, provided insight into how participants' stories were processed, allowing participants to compare this representation of their story with their own ideas. If necessary, they were able to expand, modify or refute the researcher's interpretations (ibid.). The timeline prompted the participants to question and reflect upon some aspects of their initial account. In Appendix A, we present Helen's timeline. Below we present her reflections and reactions to it during the follow-up interview.

Helen: I didn't mention anything about the role of the district. In July 2014, there were some personnel changes. I experienced it as if we were stuck in a kind of vacuum. The city and district were far away—and expertise and history, also a sparring partner, kind of disappeared. We lost some of the history, and also the organization changed [...]. Now that we have changed direction in terms of our urban regeneration approach, I can see that we lost something back then. Previously, we could discuss these matters in a regular meeting, now it needs to be scaled up and we need to get to know these people, and it's important to find out what they think... So, it is a kind of lack of transmission.

During her follow-up interview, Helen introduced a new element to her story—an event (personnel changes at the district) that had happened previous to the first interview. Whereas she had not discussed this event and the importance of sharing history with each other in detail in her initial account, she now revised her story and added this event as an important one that had impacted her relational experiences. More specifically: it became an important event in light of the current developments in the project. This example illustrates how discussing the timeline during the follow-up interview invited participants to continue, edit and/or revise their account of their lived experiences, thereby highlighting the “in-process,” unfolding character of lived experiences (Kincheloe, 2004; Thomson & Holland, 2003). The follow-up interview, together with the timeline, showed how experiences develop and enabled us to account for the temporal dimension of lived experiences.

## Challenges

Whereas the bricolaged research approach described above and the blending of methods it entailed allowed us to develop a multi-layered understanding of lived experiences, we also encountered challenges both in terms of using specific methods/tools, and in terms of employing specific combinations of methods.

First, in most cases the diagrams were valuable tools for uncovering different aspects than are usually uncovered by interviews alone. However, not all participants were willing to draw a diagram. Some participants asked the researcher to do the drawing, and one

participant said that the diagram was too open-ended for her and it was not clear exactly what was expected from her. Thus, some participants were reluctant to draw. In such cases, the diagram as a graphic elicitation tool did not serve its purpose, which was to provide a deeper, multidimensional exploration of lived experience. Instead, it stood in the way of it. It is therefore advisable to provide clear guidelines or “‘scaffolding’ instructions to give respondents confidence yet avoiding being overly prescriptive” (Prosser & Loxley, 2008, n.p.). Providing different graphic elicitation tools in addition to the diagram may be a potential solution to this challenge (Crilly et al., 2006; Patterson et al., 2012).

Second, whilst ethnographic fieldwork during group meetings enabled us to develop empathic relationships with participants-as-group members, the one-on-one narrative interviews allowed us to further deepen our relationships with participants on an individual level. During these interviews, the focus was on grasping individual experiences with stakeholder relations. The combination of establishing and maintaining relationships with participants on both a group and an individual level, however, proved to be challenging. During group meetings, participants sometimes expected us to express explicit support or to side with one particular party, especially in more conflictual situations. However, we aimed to refrain from allying with a specific vantage point as we wanted to give each perspective due consideration. We tried to tackle this issue by trying to adhere to the principle of multilateral directed partiality. This principle has its roots in contextual therapy and refers to a therapist’s attitude within the therapeutic context (Birch & Miller, 2000; Boszormenyi-Nagy, 2000). Central to the idea of multilateral directed partiality is that a therapist/researcher does not act as a neutral observer (Birch & Miller, 2000). Rather, the principle of multilateral directed partiality refers to an attitude in which the researcher sides with each participant’s story or voice, while being prepared to point out a participant’s personal accountability and responsibility in that story (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 2000). This implies that a researcher treats each participant as someone important, someone whose story and experiences matter and who the researcher is trying to understand, while at the same time letting each participant know that the stories and experiences of all the other participants also matter.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Researching lived experiences confronts researchers with methodological challenges pertaining to the fact that researchers can only come to understand people’s lived experiences through their constructed expressions of how they lived through a specific situation. The researcher’s involvement in creating this construction adds an extra layer to this methodological challenge. Scholars argue that, in this (re)constructive process, some of the complexity, the “quiver” (van Manen, 1990, p.54) of life-as-experienced, is inevitably

diminished. The methodological challenge then is to gear research so that it is possible to appreciate and embrace the complexity of life-as-experienced. In qualitative research literature, a bricolaged research approach is considered to have that potential.

In this article, we presented and discussed a concrete bricolaged research approach as applied in a research project focused on developing understandings of stakeholders' lived experiences with mutual relations within a collaborative planning process. In so doing, we have contributed to the methodological literature/debate in two ways. First, whilst the literature on bricolage has paid considerable attention to its conceptualization, there are few concrete examples of how bricolage has been implemented in practice (Rogers, 2012; Wibberley, 2012). In this article, we have addressed this lacuna by providing and reflecting upon a concrete exemplar of a bricolaged research approach. In turn, by providing a concrete exemplar, we are contributing to the academic task "of articulating and clarifying the features and methods of our studies, of showing how the work is done and what problems become accessible to study" (Mishler, 1990, p.423).

Second, whilst lived experiences are a central notion in social science research, careful analyses of what it methodologically involves to study them are few and far between (Daher et al., 2017). Hence, by explicitly discussing the methodological challenges inherent to the study of lived experiences and subsequently presenting and carefully analyzing how (from a methodological perspective) a bricolaged approach may enable a rich exploration of these experiences, we have expanded the methodological horizon of the study of lived experiences and advanced a way in which to increase our understanding of life-as-experienced. Concretely, we provide insights into how a bricolaged research approach enables a multi-layered exploration of lived experiences that does justice to their complex nature. First of all, ethnographic fieldwork, i.e., immersing ourselves in the collaborative process and the web of stakeholder relations, allowed us to develop knowledge "from within" and "in-between." Ethnographic fieldwork also enabled us to establish empathic relationships with field participants. These relationships proved to be crucial assets for generating data as they affected the kind of access we achieved (see also Mason, 2002). Next, conducting narrative interviews, combined with a graphic elicitation tool (drawing a diagram) gave a kaleidoscopic view of stakeholders' lived relational experiences. Whereas the narrative interview uncovered a coherent picture of stakeholders' experiential trajectories, drawing the diagram brought out a richer and more complex picture. Finally, the timelines and the follow-up interviews enabled us to come to grips with the dynamic nature of lived experiences and thus to develop a processual understanding of them.

We conclude our article with three final reflections. First, for some bricoleurs, the bricolaged research approach presented in this article might be considered as a naïve implementation

of the concept. Indeed, authors such as Kincheloe (2001, 2004), Berry (2006) and Rogers (2012) emphasize how a bricoleur not only breaks down methodological barriers (as we did), but also addresses the political dimensions of knowledge work and, in so doing, aims to disrupt social structures, discourses and institutions—or as Kincheloe (2004, p.12) puts it: “the criticality of bricolage is dedicated to engaging political action.” In this article, we have not paid attention to this dimension of bricolage. Yet, adopting a more critical stance to research (towards power, oppression) and conceiving of bricolage as a “critical research praxis” (Rogers, 2012, p.8) could have added another layer of reflexivity to our methodology, problematizing how knowledge is produced and by whom. On the other hand, the infusion of “doing politics” in bricolage projects also carries risks that may stand in the way of scholarly commitments. As Patai (1994, p.68) argues: “Putting scholarship at the explicit service of politics carries many (and rather obvious) risks and should not be greeted with the facile assumption that of course it is what ‘we’ should do.” In our view, the relationship between scholarly and political commitments in bricolage projects is one that deserves critical attention—reflecting on this relation could be an interesting avenue for future academic discussion.

Second, fundamental to a bricolaged research approach is to take research as an open-ended, creative craft that is guided by the specificities of the object of inquiry and/or contextual/situational exigencies, rather than by methodological guidelines. Bricoleurs enter the research act as “methodological negotiators” who start off with the question: “who said research has to be done this way?” (Kincheloe, 2004, p.4). Throughout our research project, we have come to consider the concept of bricolage not only as a specific way of approaching research, but also as an attitude towards doing research: one that avoids any unheeding adherence to the well-trodden methodological paths, whether they concern gathering or analyzing data. Developing and learning such an attitude is, as Kincheloe argues, a “lifelong process” (p.32).

Finally, this article discusses how a bricolaged research approach enables a multi-layered exploration of lived experiences. It focuses attention on generating data, rather than on analytical aspects. The challenge ahead in our research project is to preserve this multi-layered understanding throughout the analytical phases of our research. But danger lurks around the corner, as Clandinin and Connelly (1994, p.416) observe: “One of the common laments of those who focus on [lived] experiences in all its messy complexity is that they lose track of the forest for the trees and find it hard to draw closure on a study.” Hence, for future discussion, we believe there is still much to gain in terms of thinking about how to retain/do justice to a multi-layered understanding of lived experiences throughout the analytical and reporting phases in research.



# 4

## **Plunging into the process: Methodological reflections on a process-oriented study of stakeholders' relating dynamics**

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## ABSTRACT

Process-oriented approaches increasingly gain attention within policy and administrative studies. A process orientation emphasizes the ongoing, dynamic character of policy phenomena, i.e. their becoming. This article reflects upon the methodological particularities and challenges that come with doing process-oriented research. To do so, it draws on experiences with a concrete process study on stakeholders' relating dynamics within a collaborative policymaking process. This article identifies three methodological particularities: (1) the ongoing amplification of realities, (2) the shifting of positionalities of both researchers and participants, through time and across contexts, and (3) the emergence of historical-aware reflexivity. While each of these are common issues in qualitative-interpretive research, we argue how the longitudinal and poly-contextual orientation of a process study amplifies their impact on the research process and poses specific challenges. We conclude that to effectively deal with these particularities and challenges a process researcher benefits from developing and establishing good field relations, as well as from the courage to come to 'temporary' closure(s), against the background of the continuously becoming of the phenomenon under study.

## INTRODUCTION

Process-oriented approaches increasingly gain foothold within the social sciences, including policy and administrative studies (Bartels 2012; Stout and Staton 2011). A process orientation entails a focus on and explicit appreciation of the ongoing, dynamic and evolving nature of social phenomena – an interest in their becoming (Chia 1999; McMurray 2010; Stout 2012). It centers attention on how and why phenomena emerge, evolve and change throughout time (Chia 1999; Demir and Lychnell 2015; Langley et al. 2013; Pettigrew 1990; Rescher 1996).

Studies of policy and administrative phenomena increasingly highlight their processual nature (Bartels 2012; McMurray 2010). Staniševski, for instance, suggests to ‘conceive of public policymaking not as a set of definite measures to permanently reconcile policy issues, but as an incessant process of exploration of different possibilities of becoming’ (Staniševski 2011, 300). Since recently, scholars have also started to set out the ontological and epistemological groundings of process orientations toward policy and administrative phenomena (Cook and Wagenaar 2012; Stout 2012; Stout and Love 2015; Wagenaar 2011) and, to a lesser extent, to develop process-oriented methodologies (Bartels 2012; Spekkink 2016).

However, till now there has been little critical engagement with the methodological particularities and challenges presented by a process-oriented approach.<sup>1</sup> Yet, as Bartels (2012, 434) argues: ‘our ability to analyse and make sense of process is intimately bound with the methodological practices we employ’. Hence, in this article, we critically reflect on the consequences of applying a process-oriented methodology: what are the particularities of a process study and what are the methodological challenges researchers are confronted with when ‘plunging into a process’? We do so by reference to a process study of stakeholders’ relating dynamics playing within a collaborative policymaking process concerning the urban regeneration of an area in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. We discuss how plunging in and drifting with the current of this process confronted us with specific methodological challenges. We also consider strategies to deal with these challenges and (normative)

1 Other authors have drawn attention to methodological implications of a process-oriented approach to policy and administrative phenomena. Bartels (2012), for instance, takes up the question how to cultivate a (qualitative) process-oriented methodology. Bartels argues for a methodology that ‘draws on participatory action research, public policy mediation and facilitation, collaborative governance, and communication studies’ (2012, 434). Another example comes from Spekkink (2016) who, departing from a process perspective on the development of industrial symbiosis, suggests to use ‘event sequence analysis’ (ESA). ESA is a type of qualitative, longitudinal case study research. Both authors focus on explicating or developing a process-oriented methodology. In this article, however, we turn attention to the methodological particularities and challenges related to carrying out a process study.

dilemmas associated herewith. Our discussion attempts to 'codify and organize learning from experience in the hope that such experience may be of value to other scholars seeking to conduct [...] studies of [...] processes' (Pettigrew 1990, 267). Before taking up this discussion however, we delineate the basic ideas of a process orientation and its value for policy and administrative studies.

## **DELINEATING THE BASIC IDEAS OF A PROCESS ORIENTATION**

Process, dynamics and change have long been concerns within policy and administrative theory, for instance in work of Kingdon (1984), Baumgartner and Jones (1993), or Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993). Yet, different scholars argue that current/traditional theories of policy and administrative process(es), dynamics and change herein, are not sufficiently 'process-based' for interpreting policy and administrative phenomena in a deeply processual way, and for doing justice to the 'process, transformation and heterogeneous becoming of things' (Chia 1999, 218; see also McMurray 2010; Stout 2012). Much of us, Connolly (2011, 10) argues, resist this idea of a world of becoming and seek to commune to a mode of 'being beyond time', a mode of being that elevates stability and permanence. Indeed, predominant approaches in policy and public administration literature are informed by conceptions of process and change that draw on an ontology that claims the existence of a static (external) and ordered reality consisting of fixed and enduring entities (Bartels 2012; Cook and Wagenaar 2012; McMurray 2010; Stout 2012; Stout and Love 2015).

A growing body of literature now calls for developing a deeper 'processual sensitivity' toward policy and administrative reality, in which 'the basic ontological premise is that processes are distinctive forces constitutive of [...] substantive entities' (Bartels 2012, 437; see also Connolly 2011; McMurray 2010; Stout and Love 2015). The growing appreciation for a more processual perspective on policy and administrative phenomena increasingly becomes evident in the variety of conceptualizations and theories that emphasize their ongoing, becoming, and dynamic character. Bartels, for instance, urges us to see administrative practices as hinging on 'ongoing, interactive, and emergent processes' (2012, 438). Stout and Love, then, argue how a collaborative approach to governance highlights the dynamic and emergent character of governing, since it replaces political authority with 'dynamic, situation-specific decisions and actions' (2015, 21). Similarly, Catlaw and Jordan (2009) refer to the 'creativity of collaboration'. These conceptions of collaboration suggest 'a world of becoming', a dynamic understanding of being (or reality) that supports ongoing change (Connolly 2011; Stout 2012).

A process-oriented approach, then, commits to a notion of policy and administrative reality as ongoing processes of becoming (Bartels 2012; McMurray 2010; Stout 2012). Recently, authors in the field of policy studies and public administration have begun to unravel the ontological and epistemological footings of a process-oriented approach toward policy and administrative phenomena (Cook and Brown 1999; Cook and Wagenaar 2012; McMurray 2010; Stout 2012; Stout and Love 2015; Stout and Staton 2011; Wagenaar 2011). Scholars have also invested in exploring its methodological groundings and in developing appropriate methodologies (Bartels 2012; Spekkink 2016). Together these ideas start to open up a process-oriented approach as a distinct analytical approach to policy and administrative phenomena that builds upon a set of ontological ideas, which inform the epistemological possibilities and shape the methodological principles and choices that undergird process studies (see Hay 2011).

*Ontologically*, a process orientation sees the (social) world as a process, continuously in flux and change (Chia 1999; Demir and Lychnell 2015; Langley et al. 2013; Stout 2012). This view of reality draws on process metaphysics which ‘as a general line of approach holds that physical existence is at bottom processual; that processes rather than things best represent the phenomena that we encounter in the natural world around us’ (Rescher 1996, 2). This idea of a world in a perpetual state of becoming is foundational to process ontology (Langley et al. 2013). Hence, process ontology is often referred to as an ontology of becoming (Bartels 2012; Connolly 2011; McMurray 2010; Stout 2012).

Considering the world as fundamentally processual implies a commitment to ongoing change and evolution (Stout 2012). This foregrounds the temporal embeddedness of processes: they spread out across time (Langley et al. 2013; Pettigrew 1992). Furthermore, ‘processists’ see processes as spatially or contextually embedded/nested (Bartels 2012). Processes are always interlinked with other processes: ‘they run up against each other’ (Rescher 1996, 231). Processes spread out across space: they are embedded in multiple sites or contexts. Hence, processes are conceived as being polycontextual (Demir and Lychnell 2015).

*The epistemological* consequence of this processual perspective on reality, is that knowledge too is considered as fundamentally processual. Rather than seeing knowledge as universal and objective and as a valid and reliable representation of a static, external reality (cf. Cartesian epistemology), processists see knowledge as continuously evolving: knowing is an ongoing process (Bartels 2012; Cook and Brown 1999; Rescher 1996). Furthermore, knowing is embedded both in experience and context: ‘what we can know [...] are products of ongoing concrete interaction between “myself” (or “ourselves”) and the specifics of the social and physical “context” or “circumstances” we are in at any

given time' (Cook and Brown 1999, 389). Approaching knowledge as a dynamic process also implies knowledge is – to some extent – transient, ongoing and open-ended. An implication of seeing knowledge as such, is that what we come to understand is always incomplete and/or provisional (Rescher 1996; Wagenaar 2011). Hence, Wagenaar (2011) argues it is better to reframe knowing or understanding as 'coming-to-an-understanding'.

*Methodologically*, the question at stake in process studies is how one comes to understand the continuously changing flux of reality? First of all, processists highlight the pivotal role of *experience* to capture reality in flight (Rescher 1996; Stout and Staton 2011). Direct experience of reality, knowledge *from within* is an important aspect for apprehending the flux of reality (Bergson 1946 in Tsoukas and Chia 2002). Hence, Dawson urges process researchers to 'get their hands dirty' and to 'experience and discover new [...] understanding by [...] drawing close to the subject of their study' (1997, 6–7). Close involvement is considered to be an important methodological principle in process research (Bartels 2012; Dawson 1997; Langley et al. 2013). Furthermore, given the focus on how phenomena change and unfold throughout time, process studies also imply an appreciation of the 'passage' of a phenomenon. This presupposes a *longitudinal perspective* on the process under study (Langley et al. 2013; Pettigrew, Woodman, and Cameron 2001; Spekkink 2016). Pettigrew refers to this focus on temporality as the horizontal dimension of process research: researchers aim to capture 'the sequential interconnectedness among phenomena in historical, present and future time' (1990, 269). Next to this horizontal dimension, Pettigrew (1990) points to the vertical dimension of process studies. Since processes are embedded in multiple contexts (and interconnected with other processes), process research is bound to take different process contexts/sites into account (Demir and Lychnell 2015 2015). As Pettigrew, Woodman, and Cameron argue: 'If the [...] process is the stream of analysis, the terrain around the stream that shapes the field of events, and is in turn shaped by them, is a necessary part of the investigation' (2001, 398). So, process research also implies engagement in *different contextual levels*: it entails a poly-contextual approach.

Figure 4.1 below sets out – albeit in a schematic and simplified way – the above discussed principles of a process orientation as an analytical approach (lay-out and structure of the figure draw on Hay's (2011) presentation of the analytical trinity of interpretivism).

In the next section, we discuss how we translated these analytical principles in a concrete process-oriented research approach.

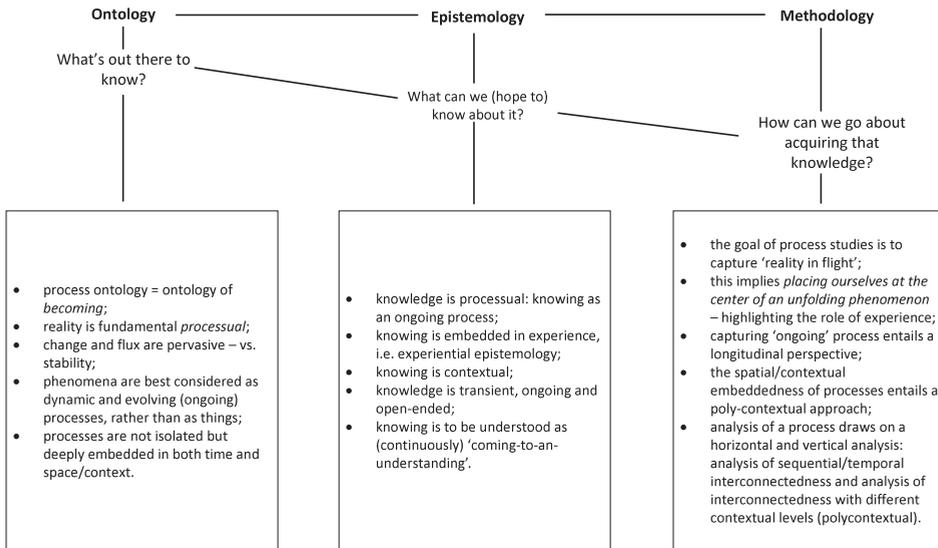


Figure 4.1. Basic ideas of a process orientation

## DOING PROCESS RESEARCH: PLUNGING INTO STAKEHOLDERS' RELATING DYNAMICS WITHIN THE COLLABORATIVE POLICYMAKING PROCESS ON THE URBAN REGENERATION OF VREEWIJK

### Urban regeneration of Vreewijk: Case study background

In this article, we draw on our research experiences from a process-oriented case study on the collaborative policymaking process concerning the urban regeneration of Vreewijk, an area located in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Of central concern in this process is to jointly develop and implement spatial and social policies directed toward the area's regeneration. The key stakeholders are: the housing corporation Havensteder, which owns the greater part of dwellings in the area; the city of Rotterdam; the borough of Feijenoord; the tenants' association and residents' association. Different collaborative arrangements have been set up to facilitate collaboration among these stakeholders: the most important ones being the steering group (including representatives of the housing corporation, the city and the borough), the project group and working groups (both including all key stakeholders). This collaborative policymaking process started around 2008 and is currently still running. Case study research was conducted between 2014 and 2016.

The broader aim of our study is to gain insight into how stakeholders' relating dynamics interact with framing dynamics. As part of this study, we aimed to develop understandings

of stakeholders' relating dynamics, and more specifically, of how and why stakeholders' relational experiences and meanings evolve throughout time. Empirical focus was on what happens on a relational level and on how stakeholders experience their mutual relations in collaborative policymaking processes, rather than on the substantive policy process. In our study, we approach stakeholders' relational experiences and meanings as inherently dynamic and processual, continuously evolving (Duck 1994).

## **A process-oriented research approach**

So, how to capture stakeholders' relating dynamics? To begin with, our focus on relational *experiences and meanings* locates our study in the qualitative-interpretive research tradition. Central aim in qualitative-interpretive research is to find out how people understand, interpret and feel about their lives. We also intend to understand *changes and dynamics* in stakeholders' relational experiences. Hence, our study also implies a process-oriented approach: it centers attention on an evolving phenomenon. Below, we elaborate on how we designed our research to accommodate for the methodological principles of a process-oriented approach, as discussed above: (1) to get close to the process under study, i.e. stakeholders' relating dynamics; (2) to develop a longitudinal understanding hereof, and; (3) to 'move' across different sites/ contexts in which stakeholders' relating dynamics are embedded.

### **Getting close to the process under study: Participant-observer research**

The crucial idea behind participant-observer research is that 'being on location' is a requirement for understanding social life (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012; van Maanen 2011; Yanow 2007). Participant-observer research emphasizes direct personal involvement, i.e. first-hand contact and sharing with 'the environment, problems, backgrounds, language, rituals, and social relations of a more-or-less bounded and specified group of people' (van Maanen 2011, 3).

Our participant-observer fieldwork entailed attending the project group meetings and the working group meetings (21 meetings in total). Furthermore, we had, what Pinsky calls, several 'incidental ethnographic encounters' with individual participants (2015, 281). Such encounters refer to the many personal and chance interactions researchers have with participants in the field that are not specifically part of intentional data gathering, but still offer valuable insights. Such interactions included going out for lunch, making walks, or visiting participants in their offices.

During fieldwork, we positioned ourselves as ‘interactive observers’ as described by Fenno: ‘it is not like looking through a one-way glass at someone on the other side. You watch, you accompany, and you talk with the people you are studying. [...]’ (1986, 3).

### **Developing a longitudinal understanding: Retrospective narrative interviews and follow-up in real time**

To develop a longitudinal understanding of stakeholders’ relating dynamics, our study combined a retrospective and prospective approach.

A retrospective approach involves tracing stakeholders’ relating dynamics into the past (Bizzi and Langley 2012). This part of our study mainly builds upon narrative one-to-one interviews. Narrative interviews are well-suited to come to grips with dynamics and processes (Uprichard and Byrne 2006). We interviewed 20 key individuals that were actively involved now or/and in the past in the collaborative policymaking process on the urban regeneration of Vreewijk. Each individual was interviewed two or more times. During the entry interview, the aim was to simply evoke participants’ stories about their individual relational experiences and changes herein (throughout time), in their own words (Pederson 2013). This allowed participants to bring in their perspective and share details and information they find important. During the entry interview, we also asked participants to draw up the evolution of their relational experiences on a diagram, of which the Y-axis represented a scale from positive to negative experiences with stakeholder relations and the X-axis represented a timeline. Doing so, we wanted to facilitate participants to express experiences that may be less easily put in words (Bagnoli 2009). Following the entry interviews, each stakeholder’s account was visualized in a researcher-produced timeline. These timelines visualized participants’ individual relational (hi)stories, and summarized key events and turning points herein. The timeline served as a basis for the follow-up interviews, which aimed at further enriching individual (hi)stories.

Additionally, we relied on archival documents to reconstruct stakeholders’ relating dynamics within the collaborative. These included policy documents, newspaper articles, meeting reports and 20+ short documentaries on the urban regeneration process made by Het Portaal<sup>2</sup>. When closely reading (and watching) these archival documents, we specifically focused on statements about stakeholder relations.

<sup>2</sup> Since 2008, Het Portaal – a group of communication professionals – follows the collaborative policymaking process on the urban regeneration of Vreewijk. Every two to three months, they make a short documentary on the dilemmas and problems stakeholders face as well as on the progress they make.

The narrative interviews, combined with the diagrams and timelines and the close studying of archival documents, allowed us to develop a longitudinal understanding of stakeholders' relating dynamics in retrospect.

Next to a retrospective approach, we 'followed' stakeholders' relating dynamics as they unfolded in real time for over 2.5 years (2014–2016). To do so, we relied on participant-observer research (see above). Participant-observer research offers 'valuable means of exploring the dynamics of social processes prospectively, for they enable researchers to "walk alongside" their respondents and capture the flow of their daily life' (Neale and Flowerdew 2003, 194).

The combination of multiple one-to-one narrative interviews with each participant and our attendance as an 'interactive observer' during several meetings, meant that we had multiple encounters over time with all research participants. Our field relationships thus extended over time and enabled us to develop a longitudinal understanding of the evolving relational experiences both on individual and group level.

### **Accounting for the poly-contextual nature of the process: Moving across process contexts**

Developing an understanding of an evolving process also implies accounting for its poly-contextual embeddedness, i.e. for how the process under study is interlinked with other processes (Demir and Lychnell 2015; Pettigrew 1992; Rescher 1996). Stakeholders' relating dynamics do not only depend on individual stakeholders' experiences and meanings, or on what happens relationally between stakeholders within the collaborative group, they also depend on intra-organizational and broader political and socioeconomic processes in which they are embedded. In our study, the different methods and tools each contributed to getting insight in specific context levels. First, the one-to-one interviews enabled us to get an understanding of how individual stakeholders experience and make sense of their relations and changes herein, i.e. of what 'relating' entails on *an individual, personal level*. In other words, the one-to-one interviews gave insight in the evolution of *subjective* experiences and meanings of stakeholders with their mutual relations within the collaborative (cf. Fuhse and Mützel 2011). Second, we also studied the *collaborative group* as a whole. During fieldwork, we observed the actual communication processes and looked at how stakeholders interacted. This gave us a sense and feel of how stakeholders, through their ongoing interactions, jointly construct and (re)produce *shared experiences* of their mutual relations (Fuhse and Mützel 2011, 1078). Next to our observations of the group meetings, we also encountered individuals in their organizational 'homes'. Occasionally, we attended meetings concerning the urban restructuring of Vreewijk within stakeholders' respective

organizations. This enabled insight in how stakeholders' relating dynamics are interlinked with *intra-organizational processes*.

Besides moving 'physically' across contexts, we further developed our poly-contextual understanding of stakeholders' relating dynamics through studying policy documents, reports, and minutes of meetings that had been produced by the collaborative itself, or by the organizations involved. These documents gave insight in the broader policy, political and socioeconomic contexts in which the collaborative policymaking on the urban regeneration, and stakeholders' relating dynamics herein, were embedded.

All together, we explored stakeholders' relating dynamics and their embeddedness at five different process levels:

- *individual, personal level*: the *subjective experiences and meanings* of stakeholders with the mutual relations within the collaborative;
- *collaborative group level*: stakeholders' jointly constructed and (re)produced *shared experiences* of their relations;
- *intra-organizational level*: *intra-organizational processes* throughout time (and interlinkages with stakeholders' relating dynamics);
- *policy level*: the *policy process on the urban regeneration* (and interlinkages with stakeholders' relating dynamics);
- *broader contextual level*: broader policy, political (both local and national) and socioeconomic contexts (and interlinkages with stakeholders' relating dynamics).

Above, we have described how we concretely designed and conducted our research to 'capture reality in flux' (Pettigrew, Woodman, and Cameron 2001). The next section discusses the particularities and challenges we were confronted with while applying this research approach.

## **PARTICULARITIES AND CHALLENGES OF PLUNGING INTO THE PROCESS**

As will become obvious in the following discussion, the particularities and challenges we encountered while 'plunging into the process' are, to a large extent, familiar to researchers committed to qualitative-interpretive research. However, it is our contention that these particularities and challenges become even more challenging in process-oriented studies. Process-oriented research adds a new dimension to them, related to the sensitivity – typical of a process approach – to change, motion and transiency. Hence, process researchers are simultaneously confronted with 'known' and 'new' particularities and challenges.

## The ongoing amplification of realities

Qualitative-interpretive researchers are well aware of the multiplicity of realities. Participants' experiences of reality are considered to be perspectival: views on the matter will vary because 'the world looks different from different vantage points' (Hay 2011, 169; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Each participant has his own way of seeing and so researchers are confronted with a multiplicity of accounts of 'what is the case'.

However, process research adds an 'amplifying' factor to the mix, related to its longitudinal perspective. Developing a processual understanding, so Pettigrew (1990) argues, is complicated by the very fact that time goes on and so do people's experiences of phenomena (see also Langley and Tsoukas 2017). Pettigrew (1990) opens his discussion on the difficulties hereof under the heading 'Truth is the Daughter of Time'. Here, he lays bare how process researchers run into the challenge of having to deal not only with perspectival understandings, but also with temporary understandings of phenomena: judgments about what is happening are conditioned by the time point. Realities accumulate because of time: 'truth' is always in the making (Thomson and Holland 2003).

Due to this amplifying factor participants' accounts of relational experiences may change, and even turn over time. Each encounter with a participant may bring new versions to the fore, challenging previous interpretations (Thomson and Holland 2003). Each telling participants may add detail to their experiences. Or participants may reinterpret and revise experiences and events within an altered context or frame of experiences: issues that seemed important at one time-point, may become less salient at another (Lewis 2007). In our study, I<sup>3</sup> witnessed how one participant gave two contradictory accounts of the same events in subsequent interviews. Read along how his experiences with stakeholder relations during a specific period 'turned' in my follow-up interview with him:

### Entry interview (October 2014)

P: At a certain point in time, we really made a step forward. From a conflictual situation, our relations shifted toward being completely open. Really open, that was amazing! [...]. Openness increased, and so did mutual trust. That is how I feel it. And because of that openness you also get mutual respect. That is also part of it. Openness and respect are, I think, the most important aspects of our relations at this point in time.

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3 Throughout this section, we sometimes use singular, sometimes plural pronouns. The process study we discuss in this article was taken up by a research team, consisting of three researchers (the authors of this article). When we use singular pronouns, it involves concrete research experiences of the principal researcher (first author of the article), who conducted most of the fieldwork. When we use plural nouns, we refer to the reflections, thoughts etc. that were products of dialogue, discussion and reflection within the research team.

**Follow-up interview (July 2015)**

P: I realized, that sweet face, those nice words that were spoken, it's nothing else than what it had always been. [...]. I was totally deceived. They said: we are going to do it like this and like that, and all seemed okay. But when push comes to shove... (P whistles)... Bam.

R: You say you were...

P: Deceived.

R: Last time, we talked about how the collaborative made a step forward. That didn't really happen, you mean?

P: I thought it did, but it didn't.

R: You thought it changed, but it didn't?

P: Hoped it had happened. [...]. That was wishful thinking. Totally wishful thinking.

Whatever the reasons are for this participant to revise his perspective, both accounts are part of his experiences with stakeholder relations. Realities accumulate here: new insights make this participant decide that 'what happened' was different than he first felt. This poses the researcher with challenges pertaining to making sense of the multiplicities and inconsistencies in the data obtained: What version(s) to take into account? Which version of events carries authenticity? (Warin, Solomon, and Lewis 2007). Hence, the amplification of realities makes the reading of data more complex and challenging (Lewis 2007; Pettigrew 1990).

In our study, focus was on developing understandings of stakeholders' relating dynamics within the collaborative. We aimed to map the relational (hi)story of the group (as the relational unit of analysis), rather than that of individual stakeholders. To construct the (hi) story of the collaborative's relating dynamics, we first collected stakeholders' individual accounts on their relational experiences and changes herein throughout time (see above). This enabled us to explore the evolution of relational experiences of the individuals involved. This, however, also brought to the fore complexities and inconsistencies both across and within individual relational experiences and meanings.

Two options are possible to deal with these complexities: one is 'to present a relativist set of competing interpretations and leaving it up to the research audience to choose between these' (Warin, Solomon, and Lewis 2007, 215; see also Josselson 2007); the other is synthesizing and weaving together competing interpretations of events into an 'aggregate construction' (Josselson 2007; van Eeten 2007). The tradeoff here is between getting into the specifics, versus, if the text is a highly aggregate construction, allowing for a wider generalizability of the conclusions (van Eeten 2007). In our study, we chose to construct an 'aggregate' – since we aimed to understand relating dynamics within the collaborative,

rather than relating dynamics as experienced by individual stakeholders. In other words, we aimed to reflect the 'shared experience' or the 'jointly constructed versions' of the collaborative's relating dynamics.

Creating an aggregate out of an amalgam of competing and conflicting stories however implies that, when analyzing data and reporting about them, the researcher takes control of the data: it places him/her in a position of power (Josselson 2007; Smith 2012). This points to the interpretive authority/power of a researcher: s/he (sometimes consciously, other times unconsciously) decides upon what stories to tell about and what stories to leave out (Etherington 2004; Josselson 2007; Smith 2012). This presents the researcher – as the 'coordinator of voices' (Gergen and Gergen 2000) – with the dilemma of, on one side, acknowledging and honoring all participants' voices, avoiding to over-represent voices s/he empathizes with or to stifle certain voices and, on the other side, creating an aggregate construction which inevitably flattens out (some) participants' manifest meanings – and by doing so, running the risk participants will no longer recognize what is written about them (Josselson 2007). Having the power to make these decisions is an aspect that should be acknowledged and ethically managed when reporting. This is not an easy exercise, as Smith and Deemer remind us:

we [...] must learn to accept that anything we write must always and inevitably leave silences, that to speak at all must always and inevitably be to speak for the someone else, and that we cannot make judgments and at the same time have a 'constantly moving speaking position that fixes neither subject nor object' [Lather 1993, 684]. (2000, 891)

Whilst this dilemma is a challenge for all narrative analysts (cf. van Eeten 2007), we found that it became even edgier in process research. The researcher's interpretive power, and thus responsibility, is further intensified when s/he not only needs to accommodate for conflicting or competing stories across individuals (cf. the perspectival differences), but also needs to find ways to develop an 'aggregate' view on competing accounts over time of one and the same individual (cf. the temporal differences). This implies a researcher not only needs to decide upon whose stories are included or emphasized, but also on where to 'freeze' his/her interpretation of the participant's evolving perspectives on stakeholder relations (Gergen and Gergen 2000). Hence, the question how to do justice to the multiplicity of voices and alternative readings gets an extra dimension here.

### **Shifting positionalities through time and across contexts**

The issue of positionality refers to how researchers' and participants' 'positioning' in the research setting and research relationships affect the research process: from the data that

is generated to the knowledge claims that are made (Ohja 2013; Yanow 2009). There are at least two aspects to the concept: one pertains to the literal ‘positioning’ in the research setting, i.e. the locational positioning in the research field and within the network of research relationships. Another entails the impact of researchers’ and participants’ identities on the tenor and outcomes of the research process (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012; Yanow 2009).

While the issue of positionality is central to qualitative-interpretive research, it is further complicated when carrying out a process study. As argued above, process studies require researchers to engage in longitudinal fieldwork and, simultaneously, to be poly-contextually ‘mobile’: to move across different process contexts. Concerning the first, qualitative-interpretive researchers emphasize how the issue of positionality becomes more complex when research relationships extend over time (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012; Thomson and Holland 2003). Other than, for instance, one-off interviews with participants, engaging in longitudinal fieldwork implies that a researcher has multiple encounters with participants over time. Positionalities may shift over time: ‘A researcher’s “presentation of self” is neither simple nor static, but an ongoing process [...]. Other’s constructions of the researcher’s identity may also shift over time, as the researcher becomes better known in the field setting’ (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 63). However, in process research, a researcher not only encounters participants multiple times, but also in different process contexts varying from the individual micro-level to more meso- or macro-level settings. This allows for positionalities to shift not only on a horizontal dimension – across time, but also on a vertical dimension – across process contexts. In each of these process contexts, researcher and researched may ‘position’ themselves in different ways (Mesman 2007).

The complexity we hint at, can be epitomized by my experiences with N., one of the involved residents. I had multiple one-to-one interviews with N. and encountered her regularly during project group meetings. During the one-to-one interviews, I positioned myself as a ‘supplicant’:

seeking reciprocal relationships based on empathy and mutual respect, and [...] sharing [...] knowledge with those they research. [...]. Thus the researcher explicitly acknowledges her/his reliance on the research subject to provide insight in the subtle nuances of meaning that structure and shape everyday lives. (England 1994, 243)

During group meetings, however, I took a different position toward participants that can be described as that of an ‘interactive observer’ (see earlier). Throughout the one-to-one interviews with N., perhaps because of the mixture of generational difference (I have the

age of N.'s son), our personalities, because my positioning as a 'supplicant', or...,<sup>4</sup> we came to have familiar and enjoyable interactions. During interview sessions, I came to know N. as a creative and especially gentle and pacificatory character. However, I came to see another facet of N. during one of the project group meetings. Below is an excerpt of my field notes on that meeting:

We watched one of the documentaries of Het Portaal today. While the documentary played, I heard N. and another resident whispering and giving negative comments on the documentary. In one shot, one of the professionals of the housing corporation remarks: 'we think as professionals'. I saw N. making gestures to her companion, and rolling with her eyes, stating with a contemptuous tone – just a bit louder than necessary: 'tss, professionals'. While the documentary played, she continued, both verbally and non-verbally, to react negatively on what she saw – clearly she wanted to express her displeasure in some way. I found it difficult to reconcile this behaviour with how I knew N. from our interviews. When the meeting was finished more or less – everybody was still in the room – I asked N. about her feelings about the documentary. Again, she sneered at the word 'professionals'. And again, she made sure others could hear her remark. In some way, I felt as if she wanted me, even expected me to support her in her criticism. I didn't know how to respond to her, since I was afraid that an answer out of interest in her feelings would be perceived as one of support by the others and would jeopardize my position in the group. I decided to refrain from saying anything on the matter (not empathizing with her view), keeping a position as 'bystander'. (excerpt field note, project group meeting June 2014)

The above illustrates how both researchers and participants may adapt different positionalities across different process contexts: both our positionalities shifted across the individual and the collaborative group level. Moreover, because positionalities shift across contexts, and researchers act differently toward the same persons depending on the interactional contexts they engage in, positionalities risk to become embroiled. N. may have expected me to behave as a supplicant as I did during the interviews, however, she came to see another facet of me. Shifting positionalities may be confusing and may generate false expectations, as such disappointing participants (Mesman 2007). Furthermore, it may lay bare conflicting loyalties as was the case in the incident described: my loyalty to N. conflicted with my loyalty to the others. Dealing with and accommodating shifting positionalities may be a real relational challenge in process research since a researcher needs to link up/relate and remain linked up/related with different participants both *throughout time* and *across contexts*.

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4 Here I hint at all the aspects of my identity that may have shaped my research encounters. These are numerous and I do not think I can account for every aspect that played a role in how we developed our research relationship. Whatever the reasons, our research relationship developed toward a familiar and enjoyable one – and this outcome was shaped by both our personalities.

Confronted with this relational challenge, we decided to adhere to the principle of multidirected partiality to further shape our positioning in the research setting. Multidirected partiality, which has its roots in contextual family therapy, is a method therapists apply when engaging with a group of family members in therapy (Boszormenyi-Nagy 2000). The core idea underlying multidirected partiality is that a therapist *sides and empathizes with each person* – also referred to as multilateral advocacy, based on the idea ‘that every person has a justifiable reason for actions, roles and beliefs’ (Hargrave and Anderson 1997, 64). We considered this principle as an ethically responsible choice for shaping our research relationships with individual participants, since it assumes obtaining data based on respect and on being compassionate toward individual participants (Berger 2015). Based on the principle of multidirected partiality, I continued to position myself as supplicant during one-to-one interviews and as interactive observer during group meetings. However, whenever I felt positionalities became embroiled, I communicated to participants that my main concern was to hear and understand all sides of the story and emphasized how I aimed at giving each perspective due consideration rather than allying with the vantage point of one particular party (Grunebaum 1987; Hargrave and Anderson 1997). This worked well in practice since it gave insight into the rationale behind my shifting positionalities toward participants.

However, once fieldwork was finished, an uncomfortable feeling remained. Yes, we, as researchers, were able to consider and empathize with each participant’s perspective, but we did little to make them, as a group, consider each other’s perspectives and direct concern toward other stakeholders’ needs and values – at least not deliberately. In family therapy, however, multidirected partiality is more than an attitude, it is also a way of intervening: ‘interventions elicit, focus, explore and catalyse issues of reciprocity and introduce new options for consideration of relationships’ (Grunebaum 1987, 649). Yet, we did not use our insights to open up reflexive processes between the different stakeholders involved: we did not intervene deliberately. However, throughout our involvement, we often felt how stakeholders looked at us – those researchers that had listened to all of them so carefully – when struggling with the question: and now? As a consequence, we sometimes did feel the invitation and urge to deliberately change or intervene anyways – although it was not our intention to do so, as is the case in action research. Indeed, a deliberate intervention might have helped the collaborative to develop more informed decisions (Westling et al. 2014). Still, we refrained from deliberately intervening.<sup>5</sup> Time and again,

<sup>5</sup> Two comments are in place here. First, although we refrained from deliberate interventions in this process study, this by no means implies we think we did not affect the case anyways: we believe that simply carrying out the research is in itself an intervention (Gergen and Gergen 2000; Smith 2012). This dispels the myth of ‘hygienic research’ which assumes ‘that the researcher has no influence on the research process’ (Smith 2012, 489). Second, our choice not to deliberately intervene does not as much reflect a specific stance towards interventionist research, as it reflects a situation-specific and reflexive choice we made in relation to this specific case.

we faced an ‘intervention dilemma’: should we make deliberate interventions to facilitate change? This felt as a matter of ethics with no easy way out (as befits an ethical issue): how to reconcile our non-judgmental and empathizing attitude toward each individual participant as assumed in the principle of multidirected partiality, with the inevitable valuational and potentially partisan investment a deliberate intervention entails (Gergen and Gergen 2000)? And to further complicate the matter: what would have been the right timing seen the ongoing evolution of stakeholders’ perspectives on their mutual relations? Issues in stakeholder relations that seem to need consideration and possible intervention one day, may turn out to be irrelevant the other.

### **Historical-aware reflexivity**

Increasingly, the issue of reflexivity is a central theme in social research methodology (Alvesson 2003; Ohja 2013; Riach 2009). Reflexivity here commonly refers to taking into account the central role of the researcher in the collection, selection and interpretation of data and thus the production of knowledge (Finlay 2002). The practice of reflexivity involves checking one’s own sense-making: ‘the self-conscious testing of the researcher’s own “seeing” and “hearing” in relation to knowledge claims’ (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 101). This involves an introspective and skeptical attitude toward one’s own interpretations, and calling into question what at first sight might seem an unproblematic representation of reality (Ohja 2013). Moreover, as Alvesson (2003) argues, reflexivity pertains to the conscious and consistent effort to approach an issue from multiple angles without giving priority to one particular viewpoint.

As reflexivity is an essential element in qualitative-interpretive research, we included different reflexive techniques in our research approach to encourage the ‘self-conscious “testing” of [...] emerging explanations’ (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 101). Besides enhancing reflexivity through personal self-examination of assumptions and interpretations – through taking reflective notes – we also engaged in (research) team reflexivity (most often through group discussions) (Russell and Kelly 2002). Team reflexivity here denotes the conscious efforts of the research team to challenge and clarify different perspectives, understandings and interpretations of the data. We also enhanced reflexivity by way of the researcher-produced timeline (see above). The timeline makes explicit and transparent toward participants how we, as researchers, made sense of their stories. By using the timeline as a guide during follow-up interviews, we invited participants to comment on or call into question our interpretations of their experiences. Hence, we engaged in a reflective dialogue with participants about how their story was represented (Finlay 2002; Ohja 2013). During interviews, however, it became clear that the timeline not only functioned as a structure or guide to discuss *our* representation of relational experiences

with participants, but also elicited reflections of participants themselves. Participants did not only call into question *our* interpretations – which we aimed for, they also called into question their *own* experiences with stakeholders' relating dynamics as they had shared it with us before. We witnessed several times how discussing the timeline created so-called 'sticky moments' (Riach 2009). Sticky moments are 'understood as *participant-induced reflexivity* to represent the temporary suspension of conventional dialogues that affect the structure and subsequent production of data' (Riach 2009, 10). The timeline elicited an 'interrogation of oneself, one's own assumptions, one's own attributions of motives to others, one's own way of thinking and doing' (Yanow 2009, 581). As such, discussing the timeline instilled a sense of reflexivity into the daily practice of the stakeholders involved (Bartels and Wittmayer 2014; Russell and Kelly 2002).

The abovementioned techniques enabled both researchers and participants to cultivate a reflexive attitude toward research practice and representations – an attitude considered important for all qualitative-interpretive researchers. Yet, we also experienced how our process-oriented approach toward stakeholder relations, and our intention to understand and depict relations as dynamic in the timeline further enriched this reflexive attitude. Not only did the timeline invite participants to think through their own typical perspective on stakeholder relations, it also invited them to analyze their relational experiences from a *historical perspective*. As such, it enabled participants to reflect upon their own position and role in the continuous 'becoming' of stakeholder relations within the collaborative. The timeline thus created a sense of 'historical awareness': participants became aware of the historical background of their own actions and thinking, and that of others. Hence, process research, because of its sensitivity to ongoing evolution, added an extra layer to our reflexive attitude and that of participants: it triggered a specific type of reflexivity which we labeled 'historical-aware reflexivity'.

An example of this 'historical-aware reflexivity' comes from our follow-up interview with H. Before we even started off the interview, she commented on the timeline and how running through it helped her to reflect on stakeholder relations and to illuminate how she had made decisions based on, now it seemed, wrong assumptions. During the interview, she continued to question her assumptions and expectations about how stakeholder relations evolve:

You think that relations will become better and better. Off course, you expect that there will be some ups and downs, but in general, you expect relations to gradually improve. But that is not how it goes. That is what I see now. [...]. The things that initially connected us are questioned over time and earlier views are no longer maintainable [because of changing circumstances]. So there is a new kind of tension now within the relations that needs to be addressed. (paraphrase of H.'s reflections)

While we perceived the emergence of historical-aware reflexivity as an asset, it also presented us with a challenge. During our dialogues with participants about the timeline, we became aware that the timeline potentially had ‘intervening’ capacities. We came to realize that it had the potential to create ‘a space for opening up questions, debate, assumptions and for discussing difference’ (Westling et al. 2014, 430). However, we did not aim for making explicit and deliberate interventions during the research process (see above). Rather we used the timeline to put our own interpretations into perspective, and as an invitation toward participants to reflect on their own perspectives, assumptions and on their role and that of their organization in the ‘becoming’ of stakeholder relations in the collaborative process – so, we did not aim to use the timeline as a tool to intervene. Yet, we realized how discussing the timeline already implied a certain level of intervention: simply by engaging with the timeline and discussing it with us, participants possibly open up new understandings of stakeholder relations (Russell and Kelly 2002). The challenge here is, again, if and when a researcher should decide to deliberately affect and intervene in the practice s/he studies (Mesman 2007). In this research, we refrained from deliberate intervention. Maybe we missed an opportunity here?

## CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we aimed to offer an understanding of the particularities and challenges linked to doing process research. What are the methodological particularities of conducting a process study? What intricacies and challenges emerge when a researcher plunges into a process?

Our reflections bring out how process research confronts researchers with challenges and dilemmas related to (1) the amplification of realities; (2) shifting positionalities; and (3) the emergence of ‘historical-aware’ reflexivity. While all of these are common to qualitative-interpretive research, we explicated how the longitudinal and poly-contextual dimension of process research adds a new dimension to them and amplifies their impact on the research process. We also discussed how we dealt with these challenges in our study. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the particularities, associated challenges and applied strategies.

Now, what is there to be gained from this reflexive exercise for process researchers? Based on our experiences, we suggest two key pointers we believe worthy to emphasize.

First, our experiences endorse the value and importance of developing good field relationships (see Pettigrew 1990; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012; Westling et al. 2014). There are at least two reasons to underline the importance hereof in process research. Besides

**Table 4.1.** Overview of particularities and challenges of process-oriented research.

Particularities	Challenge	Strategy applied
Amplification of realities	Making sense of the multiplicities and inconsistencies <i>across</i> and <i>within</i> the data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What version(s) to take into account?</li> <li>• Which version of events carries authenticity?</li> </ul>	Weaving together competing interpretations of events in an ‘aggregate construction’: reflecting stakeholders’ ‘shared experience’. Dilemma: how to develop an ‘aggregate’ of conflicting accounts on the same event, by the same person?
Shifting positionalities throughout time and across contexts	Shifting positionalities risk to become embroiled –may create confusion, generate false expectations. Shifting positionalities may lay bare conflicting loyalties. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to accommodate different positionalities?</li> <li>• How to link up and remain linked up with all stakeholders despite conflicting loyalties?</li> </ul>	Multidirected partiality as an attitude: siding and empathizing with each person; giving each perspective due consideration. Dilemma – ‘intervention dilemma’: seizing opportunities to intervene or not?
Historical-aware reflexivity	Historical-aware reflexivity based on the timeline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focusing on reflection or intervening: historical-aware reflexivity and the timeline as a tool to deliberately intervene?</li> </ul>	Timeline as a tool to check and reflect upon both researchers’ and participants’ sense-making. Dilemma: ‘intervention dilemma’ – seizing opportunities to intervene or not?

being an important asset to get ‘access’ to participants’ stories, we noticed how good field relationships offered a firm base to deal with researchers’ shifting positionalities. The developed rapport gave us the necessary credit to openly discuss and explain to participants how our positions shifted throughout time and across process contexts and how we chose to adopt the idea of ‘multidirected partiality’ to engage in the research setting. This helped to avoid problems of loyalties – or at least: we could explain our conflicting loyalties. Good field relationships also helped us to make sense of the amplification of realities in process research, in particular to interpret the complexities and contradictions within one and the same participant’s stories. Getting to know participants and meeting them regularly and in different process contexts gave insight in their individual (hi)stories and personalities, which helped to contextualize these complexities and contradictions.

Second, this process study also taught us the value of ‘closing down’ (Voss and Kemp 2005). As we argued in our discussion, reflexivity enacts an important methodological value. It makes researchers aware of the way they shape the research process and associated knowledge claims. By not taking own interpretations for granted, checking one’s own sense making, and confronting it with other ways of seeing, a researcher temporarily suspends judgment, keeps the door open to consider alternative possibilities and, as such, avoids a ‘rush to closure’ (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012; Yanow 2009). Hence, reflexivity

highlights the importance of 'opening up debate' about assumptions and values and how these impact on the interpretation of data (Westling et al. 2014). In our experience, a process study easily triggers this reflexive attitude. Inevitably, it makes a researcher fully aware of the provisionality and contingency of her interpretations. What one comes to know at one time-point, may differ quite strongly of what one comes to know half a year later. However, while fully appreciating the continuous evolving character of the phenomenon under study, a researcher also needs to be able to 'temporarily' close down interpretations: to select aspects s/he deems important, to weigh conflicting interpretations and take decisions on how to display these – i.e. to commit herself at some point in time to a course of action (see Voss and Kemp 2005; Yanow 2009).

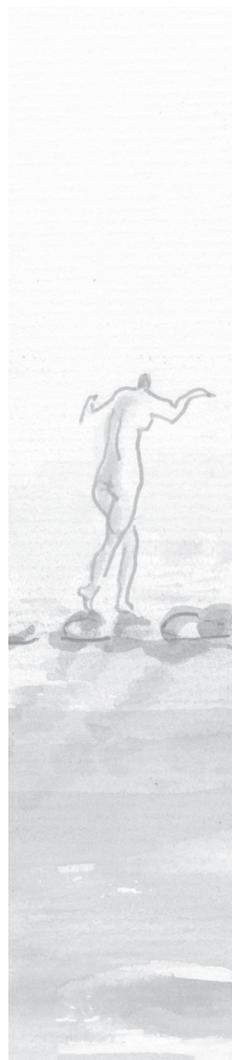
On final reflection, the tension between an orientation and sensitivity – typical of process research – toward the evolving character of phenomena and the need to 'temporarily' close down at some point, especially culminates when a researcher turns to the task of writing down what s/he learned. Researchers however easily fall back on familiar, linear and ordered structures to represent their findings – as such creating a false impression of order, linearity and neatness (Etherington 2004, see also Langley 1999). The difficulties experienced to abandon these familiar, 'tried and tested' structures has to do with the unease and unfamiliarity with new forms of representing findings – which also run the risk of 'being marginalized by the dominant institutions of academia' (Etherington 2004, 84). We believe the field would benefit from challenging these traditional modes of (linear) representation in writing and from exploring innovative ways of reporting that allow for the messy, complex and not so neat nature of processes (Langley 1999).





# **Part IV**

**Empirical analysis of relating  
and issue framing dynamics  
in collaborative governance  
processes**



# 5

## **Mapping stakeholders' relating pathways in collaborative planning processes: A longitudinal case study of an urban regeneration partnership**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article reports on a longitudinal case study of stakeholders' relating dynamics in the collaborative planning process concerning the urban regeneration of Katendrecht, an area located in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Findings challenge the focus – typical for collaborative planning literature – on an 'ideal' relational setting, characterized by consensus and joint-ness, as a necessary precursor for collaborative success. Analysis reveals the relevance of a 'hybrid' relational setting and the potential functionality of relational settings, which emphasize organizational autonomy. Also, analysis shows that relations change through the accumulation of different events, i.e. scaffolding, rather than by single, specific events. Finally, findings point out how in particular group composition/dynamics events impact on stakeholder relations.

## INTRODUCTION

Collaborative approaches to planning – here conceived as the imagination of “what the future city should be like, both physically and socially” (Hillier & Gunder, 2005, p. 1049) are increasingly popular in most Western countries (Healey, 1998; Innes & Booher, 1999; Kokx, 2011). Collaborative approaches to planning emphasize partnership and collaboration between urban planners or planning agencies and a diversity of stakeholders representing different interests, and an orientation towards the development of a shared vision on planning issues of central concern (Healey, 1998; Innes & Booher, 1999). Collaborative planning theorists argue that the success of such approaches heavily depends on the quality of working relations within a collaborative partnership (Forester, 1999; Hillier, 2000; Innes & Booher, 2004). Collaborative forms of planning thus are, in essence, relational endeavours (Healey, 1998; Hillier, 2000).

Hence, it comes as no surprise that collaborative planning theorists have devoted considerable attention to stakeholder relations and their implications for planning processes. Much of the literature on the topic has been concerned with identifying and discussing the relational setting(s) desirable to engender collaborative success (Healey, 1997, 1998; Innes & Booher, 2003; Kokx, 2011). Herein relational qualities as consensus, trust, social capital and mutual understanding are deemed precursors to arrive at successful collaboration on planning issues (Healey, De Magalhaes, Madanipour, & Pendlebury, 2003; Innes & Booher, 2004). It goes without saying that this line of research has deepened and broadened our understanding about the relational qualities that contribute to the success of planning efforts. However, critics argue that the normative rhetoric and the focus on ‘ideals’ of collaboration in collaborative planning theory disregard the mores of reality (Alexander, 2001; Hillier, 2003; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998). The predominant focus on preferred settings and on desirable relational qualities shifts attention away from the empirical dynamic and evolving nature of stakeholder relations (see also Kokx, 2011). Yet, stakeholder relations are lived histories, ‘worlds of meanings’ that constantly and inevitably evolve in an unpredictable and non-linear way as a result of the ongoing interactions between parties (Crossley, 2010, p. 9). By focusing on ideals and desirable relational qualities, collaborative planning literature thus somewhat masks the ever-changing reality of relating, i.e. the ‘doing’ of a relationship. Although collaborative planning theorists do attend to relating dynamics in planning processes (e.g. Forester, 1999; Healey et al., 2003), few have paid explicit attention to or have systematically analysed stakeholder relations from a dynamic perspective (Heikkilä & Gerlak, 2016; Kokx, 2011).

In this article, I take up this challenge and question how stakeholder relations evolve throughout time (describing relating dynamics) and why they evolve as they do (explain-

ing relating dynamics). In other words, I focus on the evolutionary character of stakeholder relations and on the features and circumstances that bring about transformational change(s). The article has two aims. First, it aims to introduce an analytical framework that allows us to empirically capture stakeholders' relating dynamics and explicitly turns attention to how and why stakeholder relations evolve and change over time – i.e. focuses on their genealogy, rather than on how stakeholder relations should be (Yiftachel & Huxley, 2000). The second aim of this article is to offer empirical insights into stakeholders' relating dynamics based on a longitudinal, in-depth case study of the collaborative dealing with the urban regeneration of Katendrecht, an area located in the city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

## **A DYNAMIC APPROACH TO RELATING: ANALYTICAL CONCEPTS TO MAP STAKEHOLDERS' RELATING PATHWAYS**

This section presents an analytical framework to empirically explore and explain stakeholders' relating pathways, i.e. to analyse how and why stakeholder relations within a planning collaborative evolve throughout time. Although collaborative planning scholars widely acknowledge the role of stakeholder relations and dynamics for collaborative success, research has mainly focused on identifying the 'ideal' relational setting for successful collaboration – highlighting consensus as the desirable relational (end-)state, at the neglect of attention to the up-and down movements in relations and to how change occurs and what triggers it. Till now, little effort has been made to develop an understanding of stakeholders' relating dynamics, and theoretical grip and analytical tools to systematically study these are rather underdeveloped.

This article introduces an analytical framework that draws explicit attention to the dynamic and changing nature of relations. To develop this framework, I rely on relational dialectics theory, an approach to relating developed and applied within interpersonal communication theory (Baxter, 2004a, 2011; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Relational dialectics sees relating as an indeterminate process 'with no clear end-states and no necessary paths of change' (Cools, 2011). The core premise of dialectical informed approaches to relating is that relating revolves around the dynamic interplay between contradictory, opposing forces, referred to as dialectical tensions. These tensions are seen as the 'deep structure' of relating (Cools, 2011). An example of such a tension and one that is, so dialectical theorists argue, fundamental to all interpersonal relations, is the dialectical tension between autonomy and relational connection (Baxter, 2011; Montgomery, 1993). It is these types of tension and the way they are dealt with that define the life of a relationship at a given moment in time.

Within dialectically based research, two broad approaches can be distinguished in terms of how such tensions are further conceptualized. The first, most dominant approach conceives of these tensions as existing between competing (universal) innate and intrapersonal psychological needs (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Individuals, it is argued, have an inherent drive to satisfy these needs (Liu et al., 2005). These needs are further considered to “pre-exist outside of and [...] independent of communication” (Baxter, Laske, & Scharp., 2016, p. 1). The second approach conceptualizes dialectical tensions as a struggle between “competing systems of meaning that are constituted in and through communication” (Baxter et al., 2016, pp. 1–2). A system of meaning is seen as “a set of propositions [understood as value-judgments] that cohere around a given object of meaning” (Baxter, 2011, p. 2). The meaning of a relationship thus emerges ‘in-between’ relational parties. Hence, rather than approaching autonomy and connectedness as needs<sup>1</sup>, in this approach they are conceived of as competing (socially and culturally endorsed) values that are part of a system of meaning. This second approach thus explicitly shifts attention away from individual needs as the engine of relating to relating as a joint/social process of creating and constituting meaning (Baxter, 2011). Hence, it provides an alternative framing of relating, and enables to direct attention to different aspects. Studying relating as a process of meaning-making is considered to be of relevance since “social relationships are very much shaped by the [...] meanings of the people involved”: how relational parties make sense of and give value to their relations defines how these evolve and undergirds their actions and strategies (Fuhse & Mützel, 2011, p. 1078). Yet, little attention has been paid to this meaning dimension in collaborative planning literature.

Relational dialectics theory engages with this latter approach. It sees relations as ‘systems of meaning(s)’ emerging from the ongoing, dynamic interplay between opposing, yet interrelated values (Baxter, 2011). Relational parties construct specific meaning(s) around this dynamic interplay of values – reflecting the ‘relationship-as-presently-constituted’. Relational parties can, for instance, privilege one specific value over another for some time, or segment, by relational situation, which value is central and which one will be marginalized.

Relational meanings can be located both at the subjective/individual level and at the inter-subjective/ social level (Fuhse & Mützel, 2011). Relations are partially shaped at the subjective level: individuals attribute certain qualities to the relations they have, and have certain expectations of the others and of how they will act. These subjective meanings/thoughts (located in actors’ heads), in part, determine how individuals will act in a given relation.

1 This second approach should not be considered as a reaction against the first, as if scholars that adopt the latter reject the idea of the existence of innate psychological needs. Rather the second approach explicitly turns attention away from the individual needs as the object of analysis to an analytical focus on ‘relating’ as socially and culturally mediated.

However, relational meanings are also intersubjectively realized and negotiated through the ongoing (group) interaction processes between relational parties. Relational meanings are thus socially produced and reproduced (Fuhse, 2009; White, Fuhse, Thiemann, & Buchholz, 2007). These socially, intersubjectively produced meanings come to the surface in the stories actors tell and share about their relations and interactions (Fuhse, 2009).

What is more, relations, and how they are made sense of, are contextually embedded: they are shaped by broader contextual processes and coloured by the 'zeitgeist' in which they are embedded. Relational dialectic theorists refer – in this respect – to the 'chronotope' of relations: they are located in a specific time and space (Baxter, 2011).

Conceiving relations as systems of meaning implies that change is ever-present in relations and that relations are continuously in flux. Through their ongoing interactions, 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, p. 210).

Based on the above explained theoretical ideas, I developed three analytical concepts that guide the analysis of stakeholders' relating pathways: relational narratives, relational turning points and critical relation events. I explain each of these concepts below.

## **Relational Narratives**

Through narratives and stories, human actors give expression to (inter)personal experiences and meanings and to their interpretation of phenomena. Relational narratives then give access to what (a) relation(s) means to stakeholders: they reveal the jointly constructed relational 'reality' or the 'dominant meaning-for-the-moment'- the system of meaning that defines what relations are about at a given moment in time (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2010; Cools, 2011).

A relational narrative is characterized by a certain 'union' in the way stakeholders talk about their relations: they use a coherent set of concepts, words, labels, themes and metaphors (Baxter, 2011; Wood, 1982). Relational narratives also embody an evaluative appreciation: they express what stakeholders value and/or bemoan in their relations (Gergen, 1994). As such, it reveals which value(s) is/are privileged at a certain point in time. Relational narratives come to the surface in the stories that are told about stakeholder relations in everyday talk, written texts and interviews (Baxter, 2011).

## Relational Turning Points

Relational narratives evolve over time, during the course of interaction: they “undergo continuous alterations as interaction progresses” (Gergen & Gergen, 1983, p. 256). As explained earlier, relational meanings are continuously under construction – however, not all adaptations are fundamental in nature, nor do they all subvert or overturn the dominant meaning-for-the-moment. Yet, at some point, the dominant system of meaning is challenged in a more profound way, resulting in a relational turning point – bringing about transformational change. Relational turning points refer to “major points of transition or upheaval” in a relation’s evolution (Baxter, 2011, p. 94). They can be described as occasions or episodes during which the struggle of different, competing values can be identified in bold relief – the struggle is prominently present in stakeholders’ narratives (Baxter, 2004a). Stakeholders’ narratives become more ambiguous and contradictory: ‘old’, once privileged values are questioned and struggle with alternative, opposing values to occupy the dominant meaning-for-the-moment. This marks how relational meaning is in transition and how a new relational narrative is constructed.

## Critical Relation Events

As explained above, turning points are seen as the transition phase in a relation in which a shift in relational understanding becomes visible. Critical relation events are approached as triggers of such a turning point. They involve the features and circumstances that cause fundamental change in how relational parties define their relations and result in the emergence of a new relational narrative. Critical relation events concern incidents, acts, actions, happenings, etc. which relational parties perceive as critical and as having a decisive impact on the way their relations evolve (Baxter, 2004a).

Critical relation events challenge the dominant meaning-for-the-moment and trigger alternative understandings of what the relation is/should be about, eventually leading to a turning point.

Table 5.1 summarizes how each concept contributes to insights in stakeholders’ relational meanings, changes herein and in the reasons for that change. Taken together, these concepts enable the mapping of stakeholders’ relating pathways.

In the following sections, I present and discuss the findings of a longitudinal, in-depth case study of the relating pathway of the stakeholders involved in the collaborative(s) dealing with the urban regeneration of Katendrecht. Using the above explained concepts as heuristics – i.e. sensitizing concepts – this study analyzes how the stakeholders involved

made sense of their mutual relations and how and why their relational meanings evolved throughout time.

**Table 5.1.** Analytical concepts as heuristics.

Analytical concept	Heuristic to:
Relational narrative(s) <i>Which values are dominant in a specific period in time?</i>	Identify the dominant meaning-for-the-moment, i.e. the dominant relational narrative by tracing descriptions that characterize and evaluate the nature and meaning of (a part of) stakeholder relations: a) in a <i>coherent</i> way by reference to similar values, labels, words, metaphors, etc. (coherence and union); b) at a specific moment/period in <i>time</i> (time-bound).
Turning point <i>When, and which alternative values emerge and challenge the dominant-meaning-for-the-moment?</i>	Identify moments/periods during which the dominant meaning-for-the-moment is challenged or questioned. Stakeholders' narratives are characterized by counterpoints which become visible in the emergence of alternative or contradictory values with respect to the dominant meaning-for-the-moment.
Critical relation event <i>What event(s) challenge the dominant-meaning-for-the-moment and trigger turning point(s)?</i>	Identify those events* that stakeholders find critical for changes in the nature and meaning of (a part of) stakeholder relations – more in general: critical for evolution herein.  *An event can be an act, activity, action, intervention, happening, etc.

## MAPPING THE RELATING PATHWAY OF A COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

### Introduction to the Case: Urban Regeneration of Katendrecht, Rotterdam

Before moving into the specifics of the Katendrecht case, I shortly discuss the general practice of Dutch planning. For decades, the planning system in the Netherlands was a governmental preoccupation: governmental planning agencies and planners – at all levels of administration – had a leading role in planning and implementing spatial interventions (Gerrits, Rauws, & De Roo, 2012; Van Eeten & Roe, 2000). Traditionally, Dutch planning was characterized by public sector driven, hierarchically coordinated spatial development, and a technical-instrumental approach to planning (Gerrits et al., 2012). Coordination took place through consultation of and cooperation with different institutionalized private and societal actors – as this was ingrained in the corporatist mode of governance typical of the Netherlands. This implies that the Netherlands traditionally already had a consensus-oriented planning culture.

In the past decades however, this style of planning has increasingly transitioned into more communicative and collaborative forms of planning that emphasize the importance of open communication, deliberation and dialogue with a wider array of stakeholders, and in which governmental urban planners play a facilitating role rather than a leading one. Also planning focus has shifted from an emphasis on comprehensive national visions, to integrative and area-based developments. As a consequence, a collaborative planning approach based on dialogue and deliberation with local stakeholders, 'shared responsibilities' and 'area-specific policies' now increasingly characterizes Dutch planning (Gerrits et al., 2012).

The urban regeneration of Katendrecht, an area located in the city of Rotterdam, can be seen as an instance of this changed, more collaborative orientation in spatial planning in the Netherlands. For that reason, it has been epitomized in local and national planning discourse as an example of 'area development 2.0'<sup>2</sup>, in which dialogue with local stakeholders and planning 'without blueprints' plays a central role.

Katendrecht is one of Rotterdam's former port areas, located on the south bank of the river Meuse (see Figure 5.1). During the second half of the 20th century, Rotterdam's harbour activities gradually moved westwards – towards the Meuse estuary and, as a consequence, the once lively neighbourhood Katendrecht began to decline and became a problem area. Around 2000, Katendrecht had become infamous and known as an impoverished and deteriorated area, a reason for the city to initiate an integral, grand-scale urban regeneration process, aiming to transform the old harbour zone into an attractive residential area.

Although initiated by the city, from the outset, Katendrecht's urban regeneration has been approached as a collaborative effort: municipal and sub-municipal urban planners collaborate with diverse key stakeholders in the area. Not only do they collaborate with the more 'traditional' partners in planning, i.e. a private developer and housing association (owning the majority of houses in the area), they also collaborate with local entrepreneurs, local citizens and the residents' association KBO (Katendrechtse BewonersOrganisatie). To facilitate collaboration with these stakeholders a number of collaboratives – composed of different subsets of stakeholders – have been set up.

Within the urban regeneration of Katendrecht, different planning interventions have been employed and invested in by the (sub)municipal urban planners and the key stakeholders involved, ranging from building new houses, renovation and redevelopment of existing

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<sup>2</sup> As opposed to 'area development 1.0' which reflects the traditional mode of planning: top-down planning in which governmental agencies play a chief coordinating role in spatial development and act as investors and initiators.

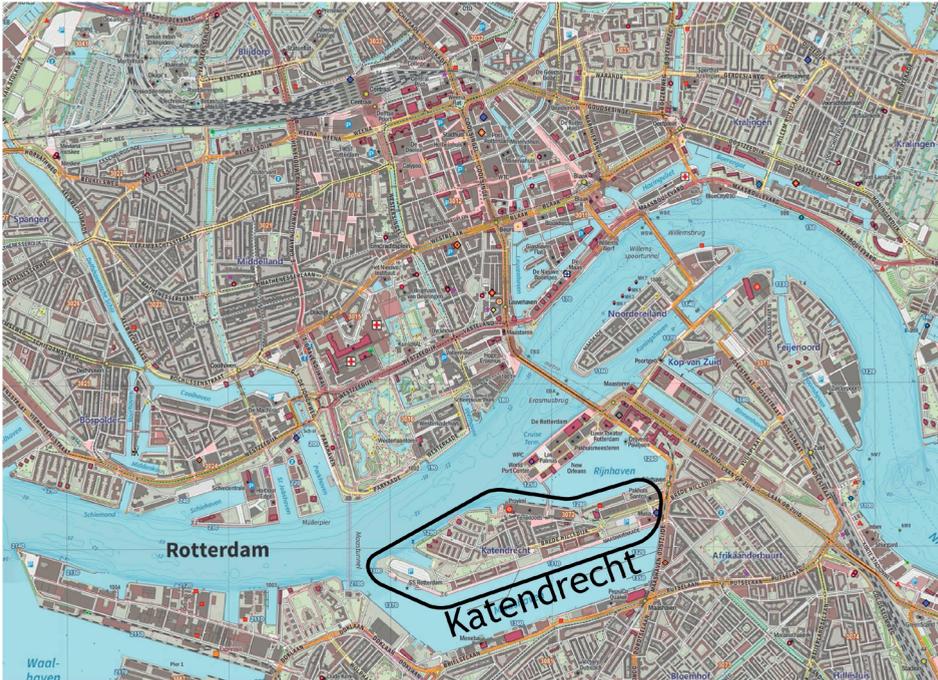


Figure 5.1. Location of Katendrecht in Rotterdam.

plots and taking on public space. Table 5.2 gives an overview hereof, of the concrete building activities<sup>3</sup> that this entailed and, of the different stakeholders involved in these activities.

## A Longitudinal, In-Depth Study of Stakeholders' Relating Dynamics

To develop an empirical understanding of stakeholders' relating dynamics, I conducted a longitudinal, in-depth case study of the relating process between stakeholders involved in the collaborative dealing with Katendrecht's urban regeneration (further referred to as the Katendrecht collaborative). The selection of the Katendrecht case is 'instrumental': the case plays a supportive role in developing an understanding of a particular phenomenon of interest and in refining theory (Stake, 1995).

3 The list of concrete development activities is not exhaustive, there have been other, smaller developments. However, the list does give an overview of the most important and comprehensive development activities that took place on Katendrecht and, as such, gives an idea of the amount and concentration of developments over the past 15 years.

**Table 5.2.** Overview of planning interventions deployed on Katendrecht.

<b>Planning interventions</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Concrete development activities</b>	<b>Key stakeholders *leading role in development</b>
Acquisition, buyouts and expropriation by city's planning agencies of houses and development plots	1999	Acquisition of part of the south quays (previously owned by transit company Hanno).	City's planning agencies*
	2004–2005	Buyouts and expropriations of houses & businesses on Delisquare, central square of Katendrecht	City's planning agencies*
	2006–2009	Acquisition of Fenix storehouses I and II (north quays)(previously owned by company Steinweg Handelsveem).	City's planning agencies*
Renovation and redevelopment of houses, squares, facilities	2002–2009	Renovation and redevelopment of Delisquare	City's planning agencies* + housing association*
	2007	Redevelopment DIY-houses, 'Driehoek'	City's planning agencies* + individual citizens
	2012–....	Redevelopment of Fenix storehouse I	City's planning agencies* + private developer*
Development of new housing (especially for social middleclass)	2000	Building of apartment blocks 'Tweede Katendrechtse Haven'	City's planning agencies + private developer*
	2002–2004	Development free plots	City's planning agencies + individual citizens* + private developer*
	2006–2009	Development of Parkkwartier: building of 122 houses, 32 apartments, school, Chinese church	City's planning agencies + private developer*
	2007–2010	Development of Laankwartier: building of 219 houses	City's planning agencies + housing association*
	2012–2015	Development of Kaap Belvédère, building of 29 houses	City's planning agencies + housing association*
	2014-	Development of Pols-area	City's planning agencies + private developer*
Development and public investment in facilities and public spaces	2002–2009	Redevelopment of Delisquare (see above)	City's planning agencies + housing association* + local entrepreneurs
	2004–2008	Development of public park 'Kaappark'	City's planning agencies*
	2009	Building and development of primary school De Globetrotter	City's planning agencies + private developer*
	2009	Building and development of Chinese church	City's planning agencies + private developer*
	2012	Development/building of playground 'Kaapschip'	Individual citizens* + city's planning agencies
Marketing/branding campaign	2004	Launching of branding campaign 'Can you handle the Cape?'	City's planning agencies* + housing association + private developer + individual citizens + local entrepreneurs

**Table 5.2.** Overview of planning interventions deployed on Katendrecht (*continued*)

<b>Planning interventions</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Concrete development activities</b>	<b>Key stakeholders *leading role in development</b>
Boosting local economy based on CCC-profile (Cultural, Creative, Culinary)	2008	Opening of theatre Walhalla	Local entrepreneur* + city's planning agencies + private developer
	2009/2010	Opening Verhalenhuis ('house of stories') Belvédère	Individual citizens*
	2012	Fenix Food Factory: temporary use of Fenix storehouse II	City's planning agencies + local entrepreneurs*

Data were mainly collected through *narrative interviews* with 21 key representatives that are or were actively involved in the Katendrecht collaborative between 2000 and 2015. 2000 was chosen as the starting point for reconstructing stakeholders' relating dynamics because it can be seen as a 'rupture point' (LeGreco & Tracy, 2009): in 2000 the city initiated the integral, grand-scale urban regeneration of Katendrecht and in doing so, set up a collaboration with other key stakeholders in the area. Narrative research approaches, located in a qualitative-interpretive research tradition, start from the assumption that the meanings people attribute to phenomena undergird the way they act. The basic idea of narrative interviewing then is to enter the lived, experienced world of participants and to develop an understanding of how participants make sense of the phenomenon of interest (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Hence, in this study, interviews focus on getting insight into participants' experiences with, and meanings about, stakeholder relations within the collaborative, as well as changes herein and critical events impacting on these experiences during their involvement. As is common in narrative research, 'storied evidence' is gathered, not to determine if events actually happened, but to find the meaning experienced by people as to whether or not the events are accurately described. The "truths" sought by narrative researchers are "narrative truths", not "historical truths" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 479).

Interview respondents were first selected by using a purposeful sampling method (Patton, 2002). This entailed identifying and selecting representatives of the key stakeholder organizations that were currently involved and could be considered as knowledgeable about or experienced with what was happening on a relational level within the collaborative. Next, relying on a snowball sampling method by referral (Patton, 2002), I asked each of the selected key representatives to refer me to individuals whom they considered to be crucial now or/and in the past within the collaborative. Combining these methods resulted in a sample of 21 key representatives composed as follows: 11 (municipal or submunicipal)

urban planners,<sup>4</sup> 2 project managers (responsible for the area Katendrecht) of the key housing association, 2 project managers of the key private developer, 4 local citizens, 1 local entrepreneur, 1 representative of the residents' association KBO.

Each respondent was interviewed twice. The entry interview aimed to evoke individuals' stories about stakeholder relations, told in their own words. Following the entry interview, I made a preliminary analysis of each participant's interview using the sensitizing concepts and questions as formulated in Table 5.1. Next, each selected fragment was time-stamped. Subsequently, the coded material was visualized in a timeline which depicted a participant's subjective/perspectival understanding of the collaborative's relating pathway and critical events herein. This timeline then served as a guide for the follow-up interview, which aimed at further enriching the stories. Based on the data gathered during follow-up interviews, the timelines were further 'thickened' and 'completed'. Returning to participants also enabled clarification on details or ambiguities that arose during the initial interpretation of the data and to validate the generated text, i.e. the timeline (Polkinghorne, 2007).

The individual timelines – being a form of process mapping – served as the basis for data analysis (Langley, 1999). First, they were processed into a meta-timeline in which the different stakeholders' stories were represented as parallel processes. The meta-timeline enabled a comparison of the coded material to group stories that expressed similar relational experiences. By so doing, the metatimeline served as a process map to create a meta-narrative, i.e. an aggregate construction that reflects stakeholders' 'shared' experiences with the collaborative's relating pathway.

To further make sense of and organize the constructed meta-narrative, I used a temporal bracketing strategy. This entails transforming the obtained data into a "series of more discrete but connected blocks" (Langley, 1999). Hence, I deconstructed the meta-narrative into 5 successive, adjacent episodes.<sup>5</sup> The construction of an episode within the relating pathway is based on the presence of a certain continuity and coherence within the meta-narrative throughout a certain period, and discontinuities at its frontiers (Langley, 1999: p. 703). Within an episode, specific relational meanings dominate stakeholders' accounts – the episode ends or comes to an end when new, alternative – often opposing – relational meanings emerge.

4 Note that this high number of selected urban planners has to do with (1) the multiple administrative levels within the city's governance structure that are involved in spatial planning initiatives and, (2) the high turnover of personnel within the city – as compared to that of local residents or the private developer.

5 To be clear, the identified episodes serve as a way to structure the description of stakeholders' relating pathway. As Langley emphasizes: 'They are not "phases" in the sense of a predictable sequential process but, simply, a way of structuring the description of events' (Langley, 1999, p. 703).

To contextualize data collected through interviewing, I also observed a large share of meetings (21 meetings in total) of the collaborative(s) between 2012 and 2015. These observations gave a sense and feel of the actual communication processes between the currently involved stakeholders. As such, they helped me to get a better understanding of the actual context and conditions in which stakeholders collaborate. Also, observational fieldwork gave me the opportunity to become more personally involved in the case and build rapport with research participants – both important elements when aiming to get access to experiential data (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003). As such, it facilitated valid data collection.

Furthermore, I subjected relevant archival documents, such as policy documents, newspaper articles, websites and blogs about the urban regeneration, to detailed study. These documents served as a way to provide “data on the context within which participants operate (...). Bearing witness of past events, documents provide background information as well as historical insight” (Bowen, 2009, p. 29). The selected documents enabled me to cross-check events, dates and other contextual data gathered through the narrative interviews.

In the following section I present an account of the relating pathway of the Katendrecht collaborative – as it unfolded between 2000 and 2015.

## **FINDINGS: RELATING PATHWAY OF THE KATENDRECHT COLLABORATIVE**

### **Early Collaborative Efforts (2000)**

Against the backdrop of Katendrecht's increasing safety problems and ongoing decay, which instigates a political sense of urgency, the city appoints a (dedicated) urban planner who is given a clear mandate and resources to initiate an integral approach to the area's urban regeneration. A starting point within this approach is that the city sees the urban regeneration as a collaborative effort with other key stakeholders in the area (see above). At the start of the collaborative approach, stakeholder relations can be described as distant and reticent – there is in fact little collaboration and if there is, stakeholder relations are characterized as difficult and challenging:

When I first came there [on Katendrecht], the image was more diffuse. (...). The first meetings with them [housing association] were reticent. (...) I experienced troubles with them. Some staff members were so convinced of their own right that they showed little

flexibility to adapt their plans or perspectives. Our relation towards them was not open either. Everybody kept his cards close to the chest. (...). This was challenging. We really needed, I think at least 5 meetings to understand what was going on, on our side and on theirs. So, it was really a closed system. (...). Being a voluntary organization, the resident's association was insufficient as a professional soundboard. Roaring and shouting and unconstructive cooperation (...) that didn't help us. (...). There was little connectedness, a lot of distrust and negativity at that time.

First, I started dialogues with the other stakeholders [about the idea of an integral approach]. So I had bilateral meetings and some of them said: yeah, "you're right"; and others said: "no, you should approach it like this or that (...), it hasn't priority, so let's take it easy" (...). So, first you do the minimal and then you realize it is important to have a common story. It took a while to make people acknowledge that we needed to do this together instead of bilaterally.

These quotes illustrate how, back in 2000, stakeholder relations are characterized by stakeholders staying on their own islands, sticking to their guns, and being, to some extent, averse to dialogue and openly sharing information. To break this relational setting, the appointed urban planner undertakes different activities oriented towards bringing stakeholders together, such as the Theme tables, the establishment of a joint communications team and the development of area agreements (see Appendix B for a complete overview). Meanwhile, the first building activities in the area and the city's efforts to tackle some smaller problems, such as problems with waste collection, propel stakeholders' beliefs in a joint approach towards urban regeneration. Individual stakeholders gradually show more willingness to make genuine (and sometimes risky) efforts in favor of the collaborative. Together these events trigger the emergence of a new relational narrative.

### **Establishment of an Open and Well-Connected Partnership (Around 2004)**

After three years of investment, Katendrecht has made its first steps towards transforming into a residential area. The first large building project (i.e. Tweede Katendrechtse Haven, see Appendix B) is completed and, around this time, the city and private developer initiate the development of free plots in the area. Stakeholder relations have gradually become more open and connected. The prevailing relational narrative is now characterized by values like openness, togetherness and professionalism. The following statement describes stakeholder relations at that time:

It was really like we did a lot of things together, moving to the same spot on the horizon. (...). Everybody was in the right position, everything went well, and we really could move forward together, so to speak. (...). Collaboration was really good, it was an open atmosphere... Things just went smooth (...). Sharing confidential information was business as usual. (...). Also, and this has to do with moving towards each other, each of us did things, if you think it through from your own organizational perspective, that are not the smartest things to do. But you did it, because you wanted to move forward.

Different events amplify this prevailing narrative. Stakeholders especially refer to the launching of the joint branding campaign 'Can you handle the Cape?' and to the entry of a new private developer.

Simultaneously, other events challenge this predominant relational narrative revolving around values such as togetherness and openness. Most importantly, the group composition of the partnership thoroughly changes and new individuals enter the collaborative. Within the time span of one year (2006/2007), two new urban planners (one at municipal and one at submunicipal level), and a new project manager of the housing association enter the partnership. This newly composed team experiences a unique dynamic – as this stakeholder describes:

It starts with the realization that you need each other (...), let me express it like this: if you do not have team players, you will not get this. This is the minimal characteristic people you work with, should have. But it is also about trustworthiness and that kind of stuff. (...). And you need serendipity (...). Because serendipity is the capacity to convert coincidence in your advantage. (...). Serendipity with the people you meet, and the initiatives that come along. This was unique, also that it coincided with this place that had so much history and potential.

This unique dynamic is further fuelled by the fact that developing activities reach a climax around that time. The coincidence of both events precipitates the emergence of a new relational narrative. Alternative values emerge in stakeholders' stories that seem contradictory to those prevailing: there is a clear appreciation of autonomy, of doing your own thing based on your own organizational identity, the acknowledgment of being different and having different interests. At first sight, this suggests a retreat of the open and well-connected partnership. However, the incorporation of these values heralds a thriving episode for Katendrecht's collaborative.

## Chemistry in the Collaborative (2008–2010)

Around 2007/2008, Katendrecht's urban regeneration accelerates and the collaborative experiences its heyday. Labels such as 'chemistry' and 'synergy' are used to describe stakeholder relations. Stakeholders paint a picture in which values such as one's own identity (autonomy) as well as togetherness, business-like/formal and caring/informal professionalism simultaneously characterize their relations:

We found each other, each from his/her own responsibilities. Simply everybody taking his own responsibility. No strange things that the city or the housing association does things that do not fit the nature of the organization, but everybody does his/her own thing in such a way that it fits together.

There was a vibe (...) and the meetings were incredibly good. We knew each other well, saw each other a lot. We had a connection. It wasn't that we were just making small talk, not at all. We also had substantive discussions about where we were heading at. So it was also very professional and not too cosy. (...) It is about giving and taking and showing that you have qualities but also that you are capable of taking other's interests into account (...). Also, each of us had quite some mandate to make decisions. So, it was not all too bureaucratic: you could act quickly, together with the other parties at the table.

These quotes illustrate how, within the prevailing narrative, multiple, competing values cooccur but are not framed as conflicting.

Different events reinforce this narrative. First, two important development projects are finalized in this period: theatre Walhalla and the renovation of the central square. The finalization of both symbolizes how the collaborative is able to undertake pioneering work. Second, the collaborative wins several design contests with its achievements. Together these events create opportunities for the collaborative to celebrate its successes and reinforce its 'unique dynamic'.

Other events, however, start to challenge the prevailing relational narrative. The most pressing one being the outbreak of the economic and financial crises around 2009. As a consequence, some key stakeholders need to reorganize and slacken resources for the urban regeneration and, in many cases, room for manoeuvre of the representatives involved in the collaborative is restricted. Meanwhile, Katendrecht has made a name, which, on one side, makes it less of a priority for some of the stakeholders involved, and, on the other, results in new parties becoming interested in undertaking initiatives in the area. The collaborative, however, experiences difficulties in dealing with these developments, as this respondent testifies:

So, when others came in that hadn't experienced that commonality, it became different. Connectedness and other things were increasingly challenged (...). You also noticed how openness decreased and you suddenly get that you are looking more to your own interests again. (...) Everybody retreats a bit to his own things and there is nobody to fix that. (...). Also, there was now less leeway (...). And well, if your organization does not give you that room for manoeuvre anymore, well, than that's the end of it.

Furthermore, a new planning issue comes to the table: the redevelopment of the Fenix storehouses. The negotiations around this between urban planners, private developers and local citizens are difficult, and the redevelopment of the plot soon becomes a contested issue. These events together turn up the pressure on the collaborative and trigger the emergence of a new relational narrative.

### **Shift Towards a Business-Like Partnership**

Around 2010, the many developments and revitalizing efforts on Katendrecht start to bear fruit: Katendrecht has successfully transformed into a residential area. Meanwhile, within the collaborative, stakeholder relations have evolved towards more distant/formal, business-like relations. Stakeholders' stories reveal a loss of the 'chemistry' they experienced before:

... it changed to an atmosphere of 'we are talking to each other, but are not willing to cooperate'. [...]. You could describe it [the collaborative] as a company that suddenly crosses over from a family company to a stock-market listed concern, so that it is no longer a family company. [...]. Towards a distant attitude like 'this is our profession and that's nobody's business'.

Different events reinforce these distant and business-like relations. First, the composition of the collaborative changes again. This time this puts pressure on the common vision previously shared: the vision is no longer considered to be self-evident by the new individuals involved. The following quotes illustrate how the new group composition impacted on the collaborative:

[A new (leading) urban planner] came, [the previous one] was gone... So it became different (...). I have to admit, we hadn't written down all we agreed upon while [the previous one] was still around. And then [the new one] came and we ended up in a situation that he started to question our agreements like: 'are you really sure you agreed upon that?' Before, it wouldn't even have been possible to ask that question. You knew, you just knew. You would never have posed the question to the other if it was really so.

Then [the new (leading) urban planner] came and that was a totally different kind of person and then things started to clash again. (...). And that doesn't mean he didn't do a good job but simply that his style was so different that it didn't match with the accepted or supported style in the collaborative.

Moreover, in 2012, the political decision is made to award the complete development of the Fenix storehouses to the private developer – in contrast to the initial plan of a joint development involving both city and private developer. This new approach turns the relations between city and private developer upside down: the city now acts as a controller of the development, not as a developer. This positions both parties at different ends of the negotiation table, and negotiations increasingly become 'a fight to the finish'. Finally, in this period, a lot of the building activities and other developmental activities are completed. Each of these events amplify the prevailing relational narrative characterized by distant and business-like relations.

In 2012, however, two new urban planners enter the collaborative. Both of these individuals adopt a more relaxed attitude than their predecessors, according to stakeholders. Furthermore, around the end of 2013, the negotiations on the Fenix storehouses come to an end. Together these events trigger new understandings of stakeholder relations.

### **Transition to an Open Partnership? (2014 and Further)**

Around 2014, the face of the collaborative changes again. For this timeframe, it is, however, difficult to clearly pin down a clear relational narrative – perhaps because stakeholders are living it when interviews are conducted. The prevailing narrative is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, stakeholders characterize relations as strategic and calculated. Also, meetings between stakeholders are organized more bilaterally, suggesting that the urban regeneration is now experienced less as a joint undertaking. On the other hand, however, stakeholder relations become more relaxed and open (again) in this period. This suggests a transition towards more openness and transparency. As an example, this is what one stakeholder states about stakeholder relations:

Well, now you can be a bit more open again, and just give your opinion. I can be opener about issues without the others digging in their heels, or shutting down. In any case, information is becoming more available again. Not everything, but we know more than before. Which makes it easier to collaborate...

A similar image comes to the fore in the following quote:

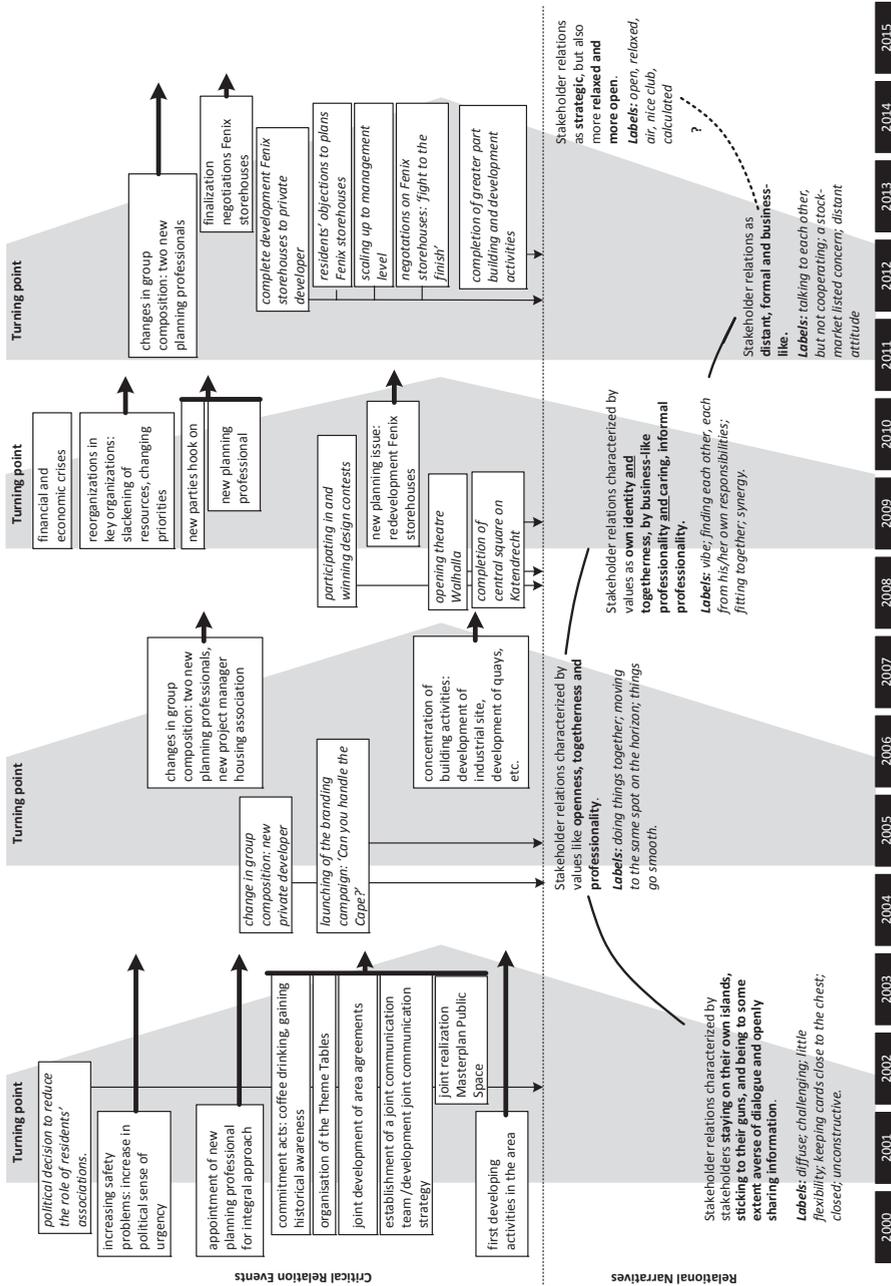


Figure 5.2. Visual overview of relating pathway of Katendrecht collaborative.

I think all parties know to find each other now, and consider each other as serious partners (...). Everybody informs each other. The collaboration is nice, I think.

Although stakeholder relations are still characterized as strategic and calculated, these statements suggest that the collaborative is evolving towards a new relational narrative, one which emphasizes openness and transparency.

Figure 5.2 gives a visual overview of stakeholders' relating pathway, albeit in a summarized way. The lower half of the figure visualizes the different relational narratives that prevail throughout the relating pathway. The upper half of the map presents the most relevant critical relation events. The arrows in the map illustrate the way events impact on the relating pathway. Events amplifying the prevailing relational narrative are connected with that narrative through a down-ward arrow and displayed in italics. Events challenging the prevailing relational narrative have an arrow pointing forward in time, illustrating how they 'push' stakeholder relations towards new meanings and thus trigger change. The grey arrows visualize the transition phases within the relating process.

## DISCUSSION

The previous section drew up the relating pathway of the collaborative dealing with Ka-tendrecht's urban regeneration and explained, by reference to the critical relation events occurring on that path, why it evolved as it did. Here, I discuss the themes that emerge herein.

### Dynamics and Dialectics of Stakeholders' Relating Pathway

An analysis of stakeholders' relating pathway shows how stakeholder relations are dynamic and characterized by up-and-down movements throughout time: the relating pathway is an illustration of how relational meanings never settle. Analysis also reveals how stakeholders' relating dynamics are organized around dialectical struggles between values such as togetherness vs own identities, openness and transparency (sharing information) vs privacy (keeping cards close to the chest), formal/business-like professionalism vs informal/caring professionalism, and, connectedness vs distance. Furthermore, these values tend to cluster together in similar sets within the collaborative's relational narratives. On the one hand, togetherness clusters together with openness, informal/caring and connectedness. On the other, an emphasis on own identities co-occurs with values such as privacy, formal/business-like and distance. Hence, two overarching discourses can be identified in

stakeholders' relating pathway: one clustering around values associated with commonality and sharing, the other clustering around autonomy and organizational individualism.

In addition, for most of the relating pathway, the dynamic between these discourses can best be described as one of 'cyclic alternation' which "is characterized by a back and forth pattern over time in the dominance of first one discourse and then another" (Baxter, 2011, p. 127). While one discourse prevails and takes centre stage in stakeholders' narratives, the other discourse is marginalized. As an example: in episode 1 the 'autonomy'-discourse prevails, reflected in a one-sided emphasis on own identities and privacy. In episode 2, meanwhile, the emphasis shifts towards values such as togetherness and openness at the expense of own identities and privacy, illustrating the predominance of the 'commonality' discourse.

Episode 3, however, shows a different pattern. Here, both values of the identified dialectic struggles are simultaneously present. Relational dialectic theorists refer to this kind of meaning system as 'hybrids'. Baxter describes hybrids as follows:

[Hybrids] involve a mixing of discourses that moves beyond a zero-sum dynamic. Hybridization [...] is a process of mixing two or more distinct discourses to create a new meaning. [...] The discourses are distinct, yet they are no longer framed as oppositional. (2011, 139).

So, next to the two overarching discourses discussed above, a third discourse can be identified in stakeholders' relating pathway. This discourse revolves around the combination and mixing of values of the aforementioned struggles: it is characterized by references to both togetherness and own identity, both openness and privacy. Stakeholders labelled this episode as 'unique' and 'synergetic'. This is in line with ideas brought forward by relational dialectics theorists: hybrids, so they argue, are often experienced as moments of being in sync, as peak experiences (Baxter, 2011). Figure 5.3 visualizes which discourses prevail in the different relational narratives.

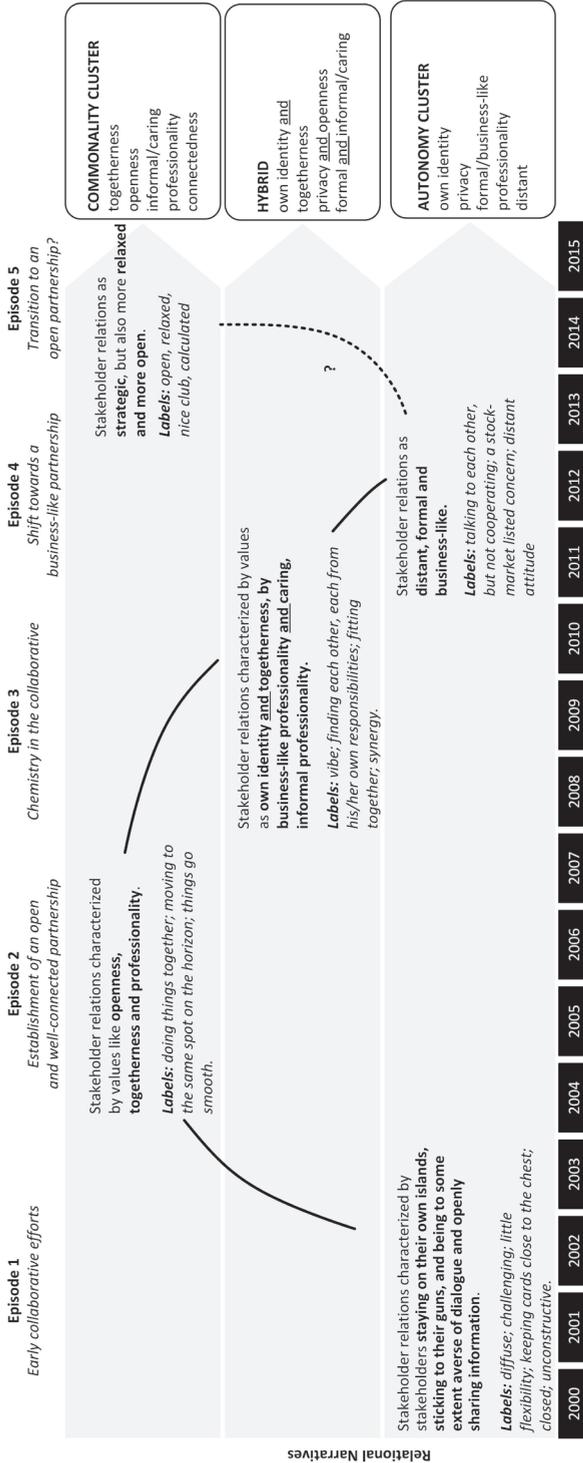


Figure 5.3. Overview of discourses/value clusters of relating pathway of Katendrecht collaborative.

## For Better and For Worse

When reading the collaborative's relational narratives, one cannot fail to notice that they contain a sense of how stakeholders value a given relational narrative. Not surprisingly, stakeholders value episode 2 and 3 the most: they prefer the warmth and cosiness of jointly undertaking the urban regeneration, above the episodes characterized by distance and formality. At first sight, this seems to confirm that some relational settings work better within a collaborative process. However, it is clear from analysis that stakeholders think differently. Indeed, they value these episodes more, but also indicate that this doesn't mean that other episodes were experienced as undesirable or unproductive. When relations were redefined and emphasis shifted towards values such as formal professionalism and own identities, characterized by a withdrawal of stakeholders to their own islands, stakeholders experienced this change (albeit in retrospect) as an inevitable and necessary one in the relating pathway. It forced them – so they argue – to get back to their core business and to reset the boundaries. One stakeholder describes this change as follows:

I remember it made [relations] clearer, less ambiguous. I remember a professor (...) that said: it is the diabolic effect of reductionist connection. Whatever we did, we got closer and closer to each other and actually it only made [relations] more complicated.

Another stakeholder indicates how, in retrospect, he believes it was a good thing to be left to his own devices:

First, we intended to jointly develop the theatre [city together with local entrepreneur]. But then the city withdrew, because of the financial crisis and other things, and we were forced to do the development by ourselves. I have to admit, back then, we shed tears about that. We were devastated. Didn't know what to do. But in retrospect, this has been a good thing. Now we are masters of our own house. We are independent. Because, and I may sound a bit unfriendly now, at times the city was actually unreliable as a partner.

These quotes illustrate that, although stakeholders regret that relations changed, they also conceived this shift as somehow inevitable, and sometimes even as positive – at least in retrospect.

## Sign Posts Along the Pathway

Why did the relating pathway evolve as it did? Why does a given discourse predominate during a specific episode – and another in the next? To find out, I traced the events stakeholders considered to be critical for the way relations evolved.

A variety of critical relation events, 38 discrete events in total, were brought up by stakeholders as critical for the relating pathway (see Appendix B for an extended list of all 38 events). Based on their nature and characteristics, these events can be categorized into 5 types: (1) Collaboration-Oriented Management Practices (COMP): these concern deliberate management efforts to bring stakeholders together; (2) Developmental Events (DE): tangible activities 'on the ground'; (3) Issue-Related Events (IRE): this relates to the emergence or change of issues the collaborative needs to deal with; (4) Group Composition/Dynamic Events (GC/DE): these concern changes in the group composition of the collaborative in terms of the individuals involved and/or changes in group members' attitudes or actions; (5) Contextual Events (CE): events that play in the margin and do not directly relate to the collaborative but have an impact anyway (Appendix B gives an overview of the categorization of each discrete event.)

I further analysed how each of these 38 events are linked to the occurrence or emergence of one of the identified discourses: which (type of) events amplify or precipitate which type of discourse? Based on the chronological occurrence of events and the impact stakeholders assign to events, events can be labelled as (a) a trigger or amplifier of a commonality discourse – further referred to as 'tying events'; (b) a trigger or amplifier of an autonomy discourse – referred to as 'isolating events'; or (c) a trigger or amplifier of a hybrid discourse. Analysis of the events within these groups reveals the following aspects.

First, analysis shows that – against the backdrop of a context in which the urgency to deal with Katendrecht became clear – an interplay between the increase of (re)development activities 'on the ground' and the deliberate investment in collaboration-oriented management practices by the appointed urban planners – which gradually changed stakeholders' attitudes towards urban regeneration – were most decisive to 'pull' the collaborative towards a commonality discourse. These events functioned as 'tying events'. On the other hand, the lack of or a decrease in activities 'on the ground', the emergence of a contested urban planning issue and unfortunate group composition/dynamics – such as a lesser 'fit' between the individuals involved (a social match that was less favourable) and the restriction of room for manoeuvre of representatives – together functioned as 'isolating events'. These isolating events were further strengthened by a series of contextual events that put into perspective the importance and priority of Katendrecht's urban regeneration both on a political level and within the key organisations involved. Considering the events that triggered or amplified a hybrid discourse, analysis shows how the concentration of developmental activities 'on the ground' together with synergistic group composition/dynamics – such as the 'synergy' between individuals, the considerable room for manoeuvre for representatives and the genuine efforts of individual representatives to collaboratively

move forward – and the absence of contextual pressures on the collaborative set the stage for a hybrid relational understanding.

Second, it became clear that no single event, or no specific type of event in itself triggered or amplified changes in relational meaning. Rather a set of events interplayed and, working as a cumulative chain, together pulled the relational system towards a new understanding. For instance, in episode 1 an autonomy discourse prevailed. The occurrence of different events eventually led to a revision of this discourse. Each of these events challenged the dominant meaning-for-the-moment and the associated prevailing values. Event after event ramped up the pressure on the prevailing relational narrative and, at some point, pressure was high enough to revise what was taken-for-granted and to construct a new meaning system. Events thus ‘became’ critical in a cumulative way (scaffolding). This implies that it is difficult to pin down specific events as unilaterally critical.

Finally, overlooking all events and their occurrence throughout the episodes, it is eye-catching how group composition/dynamics events recurred as critical in nearly each episode of stakeholders’ relating pathway. The recurrence hereof suggests that a collaborative’s relational narrative hinges a great deal on group composition and dynamics, in particular on the amount of leeway or manoeuvre representatives get and on the ‘fit’ between the individuals involved. Concerning the latter, it is important to note here that stakeholders did not attribute the impact hereof to the personality of individuals as such, but to the exit or entry of a specific individual in a specific interpersonal setting. Stakeholders often mentioned there was ‘nothing wrong’ with this or that individual, but that the interaction effect of this or that individual with the incumbent group, had its effect on stakeholder relations. This implies that the impact of group composition/dynamic events on stakeholder relations may have as much to do with how a ‘new’ individual fits in with the incumbent group, as with the personality and competencies of an individual as such.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In this article, I have sought to develop an empirical understanding of stakeholders’ relating dynamics in a collaborative planning process. Applying an analytical framework, drawing on relational dialectics theory (Baxter, 2011; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), I analysed the relating pathway of the collaborative dealing with Katendrecht’s urban regeneration. While I acknowledge that the findings on stakeholders’ relating dynamics may be particular to Katendrecht, I believe the case study affords valuable insights for both developing empirical understandings of stakeholders’ relating dynamics and for refining collaborative planning theory.

First, the study offers valuable insights into how and why stakeholder relations change over time. Concerning how, analysis reveals that stakeholders' relating pathway mainly follows a pattern of 'cyclic alternation'. Opposing discourses or 'value clusters' alternate throughout time, similar to an ebb and flow movement. In terms of why stakeholder relations evolve as they do, findings show that there are no specific or single events that are so powerful that they 'turn' stakeholder relations in a snap. Rather, tying or isolating events accumulate over time, which I termed 'scaffolding', and eventually lead to the emergence of a new relational narrative. This finding gives us some first insights into how specific relational settings actually emerge and how they are affected by situational exigencies (see also Laurian, 2009).

Next, findings of this study challenge the idea, predominant in collaborative planning theory that collaboratives are at their best when they reach an 'ideal' state in which values such as consensus, openness, mutual understanding and reciprocity characterize the relational setting (Healey et al., 2003; Innes & Booher, 2003, 2004) – and this in at least two ways. To begin with, current analysis reveals that the pinnacle of the collaborative partnership – the episode which stakeholders valued the most and described as the 'heyday' of the collaborative – was characterized by the simultaneous accommodation of opposing values: both togetherness/joint-ness and own identity/difference; both openness and privacy, etc. rather than a one dimensional emphasis on consensus, joint-ness and open communication as is suggested by many collaborative planning theorists. Findings show that when stakeholders succeed in reconciling these opposing values in a so-called hybrid system of meaning, they experience this as being 'in sync'. Indeed, it seems that when stakeholders succeed in creating such a 'hybrid' meaning, the collaborative partnership thrives. This shows how collaborative planning efforts require more than simply seeking consensus and are more than 'a quest for unity' (Baxter, 2011). It illustrates how collaboration equally depends on the acknowledgment and valuing of the (inevitability of) different interests. This connects well to what Bakhtin (1990) sees as 'aesthetic wholeness', which is about a momentary sense of wholeness 'through a profound respect for the disparate voices in dialogue' (Baxter, 2004b). The essence of dialogue, then, is the simultaneous fusion and differentiation of voices: "To engage in dialogue, participants must fuse their perspectives to some extent while sustaining the uniqueness of their individual perspectives. Participants thus form a unity in conversation but only through two clearly differentiated voices, or perspectives" (Baxter, 2004b, p. 7). These ideas support hybrid approaches to planning in which both consensus-formation/agreement – a focus typical for the consensus-seeking collaborative planner, and conflict/difference are integrated and embraced as necessary elements of 'good' planning processes (Alexander, 2001; Hillier, 2003). Furthermore, the findings of this study point to the relevance of 'less ideal' relational settings for collaborative success. The case of Katendrecht reveals that, in the long run, an episode in which

a relational narrative prevails that emphasizes values such as own identities/difference and distance can prove to be functional and even productive in a collaborative planning process. Hence, while stakeholders value the episodes characterized by commonality and openness the most, this doesn't mean other episodes have no value for the process. Rather it seems that – sometimes – a retreat to own identities and interests, and highlighting difference, may dissolve some of the unproductive entanglements within a partnership. This again relates to conceptions of planning in which “both collaboration and competition, both striving to understand and engage with consensus-formation while at the same time respecting differences of values and areas of disagreement” are incorporated (Hillier, 2003, p. 54).

Finally, it is clear from analysis that group composition/dynamics and events play an important role in the relating process. This is particularly so for changes in group composition: the entry or exit of specific individuals to the incumbent group. However, the impact in this case was not attributed to the personality of individuals as such, but to the mutual interaction between specific individuals with a specific interpersonal setting. This finding sheds a different light on our understanding of the planners' role in multi-stakeholder partnerships. Collaborative planning literature places strong emphasis on the planner's skills and sensitivities to ensure collaborative success: planners need to be astute bridge builders and have the necessary mediation skills (Doehler, 2002; Forester, 1999). Yet, analysis here suggests that the successes of an individual planner does not only depend on his/her skills or competencies, but also on his/her fit with the individuals and dynamics within the incumbent group, i.e. within the 'web of relations'.

This study examined how and why stakeholder relations in a collaborative planning process evolved throughout time. To do so, it utilized an alternative framework, based on relational dialectics theory, and applied a bottom-up approach focusing on understanding stakeholders' relational experiences, rather than on testing how specific relational qualities such as trust or social capital evolved throughout time. As explained above, this approach provides some valuable insights into the complexities of stakeholders' relating dynamics, such as the value of 'less ideal' relational settings in which trust between stakeholders is put under pressure. Future studies can substantiate these insights by exploring how they relate to insights and key ideas in literature that focuses on trust.





# 6

## **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). *Framing* – 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	
<i>Issue frames</i>	What are the predominant issue frames on the urban restructuring? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is doing the framing?</li> <li>• How is the problem framed?</li> <li>• How is the solution framed?</li> </ul>
<i>Frame changes</i>	Are there any changes in the issue framing (configuration) throughout time? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do new issue frames appear / do certain issue frames disappear?</li> </ul>
<i>Frame alignment</i>	Are there issue frames that get connected or disconnected throughout time?
Relating dynamics	
<i>Relational narratives</i>	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)?
<i>Relational turning points</i>	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



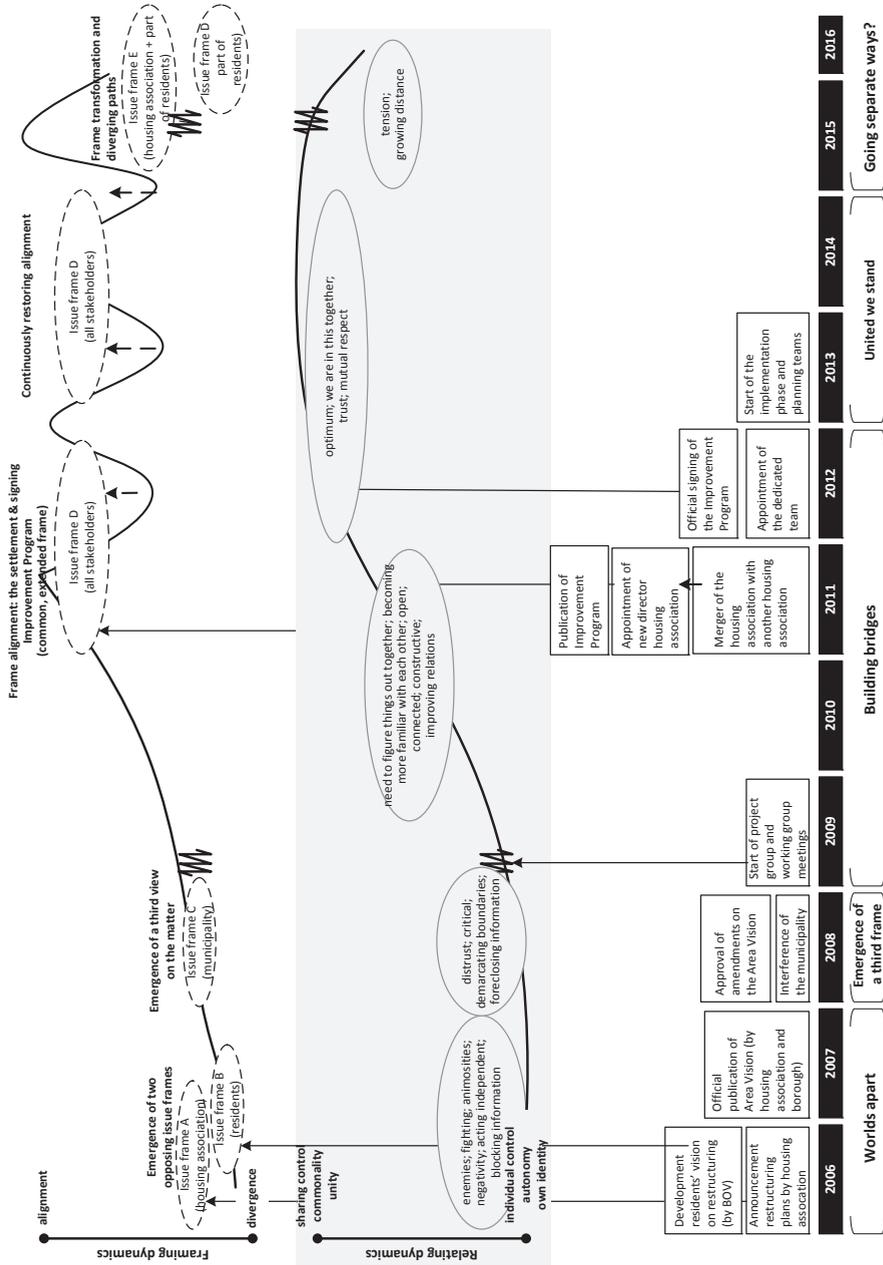


Figure 6.1. Visual map of stakeholders' relating and framing dynamics.

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 fuss 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.



# **Part V**

## **Conclusions & discussion**



# 7

## Conclusions & discussion



## RECAPITULATION

Collaborative governance has become a prominent, alternative strategy for policy making throughout the Western world (Termeer 2009; Fung 2015). In general, the term collaborative governance denotes those *processes* in which a diversity of stakeholders (across organizational and/or group boundaries) work together with the aim to develop a joint approach to address a public issue of common concern (Nowell 2009b; Robertson and Choi 2012). The ‘process’ element is notable here, since it implies that collaborative governance is a dynamic, evolving phenomenon (cf. Heikkila and Gerlak 2016). Yet, although scholars acknowledge the processual and dynamic nature of collaboration, only few have actually engaged in process studies, i.e. in systematically exploring how and why collaboratives change over time. In this study, we focused on two ‘process’ dimensions in collaborative governance which are both considered critical for achieving collaborative success: stakeholders’ relating dynamics and issue framing dynamics. As Bouwen and Taillieu (2004) argue: multi-party collaborations hinge on both “a meaningful space of acknowledging different *understandings* and a *social space* acknowledging each others presence and identity” (p. 150). Yet, they also comment hereon:

Although creative work has been done by several authors, there is a general observation that the[se] *critical processes are not fully understood yet*. The large part of multi-party projects do not deliver the expected results. There is a need for further development of conceptual vocabularies to guide research and practice. (emphasis added)

This quote recapitulates the focus and motivation of this study: the need for developing an understanding of stakeholders’ *relating* and *issue framing dynamics* in collaborative governance processes, with a predominant focus on the first. In addition, literature not only suggests that stakeholders’ relating and framing dynamics are critical processes in itself, it also posits that both dynamics are connected (Bouwen and Taillieu 2004; Dewulf et al. 2009; Healey 2003). However, also the connection between these dynamics remains an understudied topic in collaborative governance research.

Following on these gaps in collaborative governance research, this study set out to improve our understanding of stakeholders’ relating dynamics and of the way(s) in which these are connected to the issue framing dynamics in a collaborative governance process. The research question that guided this inquiry was the following:

*How and why do stakeholder relations evolve over time in collaborative governance processes, and how do relating dynamics interplay with the issue framing dynamics?*

To answer this question, we worked through a number of consecutive steps. First, we established an analytical framework to analyse stakeholders' relating and issue framing dynamics and the connection between both throughout a collaborative governance process (Chapter 2). Next, seen the focus on *dynamism* in this study, we developed a methodological approach that enables to come to grips with the processual and dynamic nature of stakeholder relations (Chapter 3 and 4). As a final step, we applied the developed analytical and methodological process-oriented approach to two empirical cases of collaborative governance processes concerning urban planning issues. The first empirical study, the Katendrecht case, focused particularly on stakeholders' relating dynamics: on how stakeholder relations evolve throughout time and why they evolve as they do (Chapter 5). The second empirical study, the Vreewijk case, turned attention to the connection between stakeholders' relating and issue framing dynamics (Chapter 6).

In this final chapter, we first discuss how the analytical and methodological approach advanced in this study, contributed to developing a dynamic, processual understanding of stakeholder relations and frames. Next, we present and discuss the findings and main conclusions drawn from our empirical studies. This chapter closes with discussing avenues for future research and formulating some cues about how our findings can inform practice.

## **THE VALUE OF A PROCESS STUDY TO INVESTIGATE STAKEHOLDERS' RELATING DYNAMICS IN COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE PROCESSES**

A large part of this study has been dedicated to developing an analytical and methodological approach that would allow us to capture stakeholder relations and issue framing as dynamic, evolving phenomena (see Chapter 2, 3 and 4). This analytical and methodological approach made several instrumental contributions to this study, which we will discuss and reflect upon in this section.

### **The value of a *process orientation* to study stakeholder relations**

The focus on (temporally) evolving phenomena in this study implies a *process orientation*, which turns attention to questions of change, motion and flux (Langley et al. 2013; Demir

and Lychnell 2015; van de Ven 1992; van de Ven and Poole 2005). A process orientation is grounded in a process ontology, which, in a nutshell, conceives of the world as inherently processual and ever-changing, and prioritizes “activity over substance; process over product; change over persistence” (Rescher 1996, 31) (see Chapter 4). A process orientation thus distinguishes itself through the aim to come to grips with phenomena in “a process of becoming (as opposed to being)” (Demir and Lychnell 2015, 87).

Studies, adhering to a process orientation, empirically focus on the temporal evolution of phenomena and “draw[s] on theorizing that explicitly incorporates temporal progressions of activities as elements of explanation and understanding” (Langley et al. 2013, 4). Process studies enable to establish a particular, ‘narrative’, form of knowing about phenomena: they provide temporally-arranged and contextualized understandings of phenomena (Langley and Tsoukas 2010; Van de Ven and Poole 2005; Worth 2008). Such knowledge is not available from most variance-based generalizations: “this is because the latter tend to ignore time, reduce it to a lag effect, compress it into variables (e.g., describing decision making as fast or slow, or environments as dynamic or stable), or reduce its role to [...] ‘comparative statics’ (reevaluating variance-based relationships at successive times)” (Langley et al. 2013, 4).

As a general and essential contribution then, the adoption of a process orientation to study stakeholder relations shaped our ‘frame of mind’ and, by doing so, opened up an alternative perception of this phenomenon: rather than focusing on how relations ‘are’ or ‘should be’ (relations as a ‘state’), it turned full attention to the temporal flow of relations, i.e. to their ‘becoming’ (relations as ‘processual’) (Demir and Lychnell 2015; Langley et al. 2013). Empirically, this explicit focus on dynamism and change in relations, rather than on relational ‘states’, has made it possible to observe how relational meanings *shift over time* and to gain insight into the (temporal accumulation of) critical events that triggered change (see Chapter 5). It also made it possible to reveal that the way in which stakeholders’ relating and issue framing are connected *changes over time*, depending on the phase the collaborative process finds itself in (see Chapter 6). These findings would have been difficult to achieve without an explicit focus on understanding the temporal structure of and change in stakeholders’ relations and frames.

Adopting a process orientation, i.e. seeking answers for process questions, requires analytical concepts and methodological tools that explicitly draw attention to motion, change, and temporal evolution (Demir and Lychnell 2015; Langley et al. 2013; Langley and Tsoukas 2010). To allow for this in this study, we developed a ‘process-sensitive’ analytical framework and methodology that can be used to systematically study stakeholders’ relating dynamics (see Chapter 2, 3 and 4). In the following paragraphs, we discuss the ways in

which this analytical and methodological approach helped to develop alternative insights that would otherwise have been difficult to achieve (Demir and Lychnell 2015; Van de Ven and Poole 2005).

### **Relational dialectics theory as a theoretical anchor to come to grips with the dynamic nature of stakeholder relations.**

Since we wanted to develop a dynamic understanding of stakeholder relations, we needed to anchor our empirical study and analysis in a theory of process that consists of statements about how and why interpersonal relations unfold over time (Van de Ven 1992). In this study, we grounded our analytical framework in relational dialectics theory (Baxter 2004/2011; Baxter and Montgomery 1996) (see Chapter 2). Ontologically, relational dialectics theory conceives of relations as social constructions that are jointly constituted by actors in interaction (Baxter 2004). A core premise in relational dialectics is that interpersonal relational meanings – i.e. the relationship-as-presently-constructed - emerge from the dynamic interplay between opposing, yet interrelated values, i.e. dialectical tensions (Baxter 2004, 2011; Baxter and Montgomery 1993). Another central assumption is that relating is considered as an indeterminate, ever-changing process ‘with no clear end-states and no necessary paths of change’ (Cools 2011). Relations are always in flux because meanings are continuously (re)negotiated through the ongoing interaction processes between relational parties, and between parties and their sociocultural environment (see Chapter 2, Chapter 4 and 5).

As a general contribution, relational dialectics theory offers a sensitizing/descriptive scheme to place analytical focus on ‘the micro-level relational processes of face-to-face contact between public professionals and community members’, e.g. public encounters, and more specifically on the interpersonal relating dynamics between those involved (cf. Bartels 2013, 469). These micro-level encounters have, it is argued, meaningful effects on the output and outcomes of collaborative governance processes (Bartels 2013; Stout et al. 2018). Yet, while others have delved into the role of stakeholders’ interpersonal relating dynamics in collaborative governance (e.g. Bartels 2018; Healey 2007; Stout et al. 2018), using relational dialectics theory as a theoretical anchor to study these dynamics affords to develop alternative and novel insights hereabout. First of all, relational dialectics theory clearly turns attention to the dynamic and evolving character of interpersonal relating (Mumby 2005). Hence, it advances a process-oriented perspective on stakeholders’ interpersonal relating: its focus on indeterminacy highlights how interpersonal relations never ‘settle’: ‘there is always more relating that needs to be done’ (Duck 1990, 9). Second, and probably the most compelling aspect of relational dialectics theory, is that it foregrounds

ongoing struggle, tensions and conflict as natural to relating. Relating revolves around dealing with dialectical tensions, i.e. the interplay between competing values, that do not have a final or desirable resolution. This emphasis on tensions and struggle in relating shifts attention away from conceptions that treat relating as an order seeking development – seeking to suppress tensions and struggle (Deetz 2001). In other words, relational dialectics theory does away with teleological views of relating, which see relating as a path of linear progression or unidirectional movement towards more interdependence, more connectedness, more harmony etc. (Baxter and Montgomery 1996; Baxter 2011). Relational dialectics theory thus highlights how it is in the nature of relating that it does not stay in a stable state of, for example, connectedness. As such, it explicitly departs from the idea that any particular understanding of stakeholders' interpersonal relations is more desirable than another. This implies a nonnormative view of relating: different relating styles are considered appropriate for different times and places (Montgomery 1993). In addition, relational dialectics theory clearly 'eschews the individual as the 'centerpiece' of relating' and moves relating right into the social realm: relational meaning making emerges from the 'in-between' (Baxter 2011, 12). At the same time, relating is considered to be a deeply sociocultural process. As such, relational dialectics theory transcends the traditional dualistic approaches between agency and structure, individualism and holism, in social theory, and turns attention to how interpersonal relating is an emergent property of interaction – and thus an inherently processual phenomena (cf. Bartels and Turnbull 2019).

In sum, relational dialectics theory offers a theoretical starting point to come to grips with the emergence and evolution of interpersonal relating (styles) and their implications for collaborative governance outputs and outcomes. In so doing, it connects and contributes to a lineage of public administration scholarship that advances a relational approach to public administration, which places interactions and relations, and its emergent properties at the heart of governing, and focuses on 'unpacking dynamic, emergent and contingent performances of relational processes' and (Bartels and Turnbull 2019, 4).

### **Timelining as a powerful tool in process-oriented research**

In this study, we introduced and discussed a process-oriented methodology to systematically study the temporal flow and fluidity of stakeholders' relating and issue framing in empirical reality. Concretely, our research approach involved the following methods and tools (cf. Chapter 3, Chapter 4):

**Table 7.1.** Overview methods and tools.

Data type	Data set
Participant-observer research (ethnographic fieldwork)	Meetings and events organized by the collaboratives between 2010-2016 (20+ in total for each case) Informal conversations, commitment acts and/or incidental ethnographic interactions during meetings, during visits to participants' (organizational) homes
Narrative interviews, in combination with graphic elicitation tool (diagram <sup>1</sup> )	Interviews with key stakeholders involved in the collaborative governance process between start of the collaboration and time of research (20+ interviews in each case)
Follow-up interviews (1 to 1.5 year after initial narrative interview), in combination with graphic elicitation tool (timeline <sup>2</sup> )	Follow-up interviews with key stakeholders (see above)
Formal documents & (social) media sources	Policy documents, reports, minutes, etc. produced by the collaborative or by one of the organizations involved in the collaborative Newspaper articles on the urban restructuring Websites and blogs on the urban restructuring

Together these methods and tools helped to develop a dynamic and contextualized understanding of stakeholders' relating and framing dynamics (see Chapter 3). For example, observing the collaborative process in 'real time' yielded us insight in the ongoing evolution of stakeholder relations and in the context in which they get shape. Furthermore, conducting multiple narrative interviews, in combination with graphic elicitation, offered a valuable means to develop a processual understanding of stakeholders' relating and framing in retrospect (Bizzi and Langley 2012; Langley and Tsoukas 2010) (cf. Chapter 3). As a general contribution then, the methodology presented in this study provides an adequate example of a longitudinal research approach (Heikkila and Gerlak 2016; O'Leary and Vij 2012).

An important tool for developing a processual understanding was the timeline. Timelines, by definition, incorporate temporal flow, time and sequencing. Hence, a major advantage of timelining (i.e. the process of constructing a timeline) in a process study is that it, by nature, enables to account for the central importance of time (Sheridan et al. 2011). One of the primary purposes of the timeline was to promote and enrich participants' narratives (cf. Sheridan et al. 2011) (see Chapter 3). Following the initial interview, we developed a timeline that, in a summarized way, chronologically documented each participant's story along five dimensions: (1) events concerning their involvement in the collaborative process;

1 The (researcher-produced) timeline visually and textually summarized the information obtained during the initial (narrative) interview along different dimensions and functioned as a 'girder' for the follow-up interview (see Chapter 3).

2 The diagram was used during the initial (narrative) interview as a tool to invite participants to visualize their experiences and evolution herein, rather than solely verbally expressing their experiences (see Chapter 3).

(2) substantive developments concerning the urban restructuring; (3) experiences with stakeholder relations; (4) collaborative set-up; (5) contextual events. The timeline as such presented a stakeholder's experiences in a processual way, on multiple dimensions (cf. Chapter 3). During follow-up interviews, this researcher-produced timeline was then used "as a vehicle through which further data was produced" (Sheridan et al. 2011, 554), and as a tool for 'member-checking' (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 106).

Besides these anticipated purposes, however, the timeline also contributed to our study in other, unexpected ways. First of all, discussing the timeline often resulted in a reflective dialogue with participants about how their story was represented (Finlay 2002; Ohja 2013). As a reaction to the timeline, many participants nuanced and/or revised parts of their initial story, thereby enriching already rich narratives (see Chapter 4). Hence, the timeline "offered us, as researchers, greater leverage for interpretation and insight" (Sheridan et al. 2011, 554).

In addition, timelining also offered advantages during the analytical stages of this study. By chronologically structuring the 'shapeless data spaghetti' (Langley 1999), timelining helped to get a comprehensible overview of the collaborative governance process – without completely flattening out the ambiguity of process data - that would otherwise have been difficult to achieve. Such an overview also facilitated to trace connections between different dimensions, both within and across accounts of individual participants, and to generate local 'causal maps' (Langley 1999; LeGreco and Tracy 2009).

Finally, the timeline also proved to be a powerful tool to instil a sense of reflexivity both at the part of researchers and participants. In particular, timelining invited both participants and us, researchers, to reflect upon the 'genealogy' of stakeholder relations, and on a participant's role in the 'becoming' of stakeholder relations over time. Hence, timelining contributed to create a specific form of reflexivity, which we labelled 'historical-aware reflexivity' (see Chapter 4). This connects to other researchers' experiences with using timelines (Kuitenbrouwer 2018; Sheridan et al. 2011). As Sheridan et al. (2011, 565-566) comment:

the systematic agglomeration of data onto the timeline allows participants to contemplate the life (re)presented, to gain insight into their experiences, to explore dimensions of continuity and change in their lives and often to see things from new perspectives. In so doing, participants can effectively become researchers of their own lives.

Hence, timelining not only allowed for getting an overview of stakeholders' relating dynamics, it also allowed for contemplating and reflecting hereon together with participants (cf.

Sheridan et al. 2011). By doing so, it helped both researchers and participants to develop a deeper ‘processual sensitivity’ towards stakeholder relations in collaborative work (see Chapter 3 and 4). In addition, based on these reflexivity-inducing features of timelining, it is reasonable to conclude that the use of timelining in a (action) research process, has the potential to facilitate collaborative work, or even to unstuck collaborative processes, i.e. to help collaborative processes that have run ashore to move on (see Kuitenbrouwer 2018). In action research, reflexivity, i.e. raising awareness about one’s own assumptions and about how these shape roles and actions, is a key means to ‘provoke collective awareness and disarrange beliefs and values among participants’ and, in doing so, to deal with value conflicts in collaborative governance (Westling et al. 2014).

## **THE EMPIRICAL REALITY OF STAKEHOLDERS’ RELATING AND FRAMING DYNAMICS, AND THE CONNECTION BETWEEN BOTH**

The research question guiding this study comprised of two research themes: (1) developing an understanding of stakeholders’ relating dynamics, and (2) exploring the connection of stakeholders’ relating dynamics with the issue framing dynamics. These themes were empirically investigated through two in-depth, longitudinal cases studies, which both applied the analytical and methodological approach developed in this research project. The cases studied involved the collaborative governance process concerning the urban restructuring of Katendrecht, and that concerning the urban restructuring of Vreewijk. Both Katendrecht and Vreewijk are areas located in the city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands. In this section, we discuss the main empirical findings and the conclusions drawn from these two studies.

### **The prevalence of a “relating paradox”: The value of both an autonomy-individualism discourse and a commonality-sharing discourse**

This study exposed the dynamism, change and motion in stakeholder relations and, as such, gave insight in *how* stakeholder relations changed over time. In chapter 5 and 6, we mapped stakeholders’ relating dynamics of respectively the Katendrecht collaborative and the Vreewijk collaborative. We found that, in both collaboratives, stakeholders’ relating dynamics revolved around the dialectical tension between two value-clusters, i.e. discourses: a relational discourse of autonomy and individualism, privileging values like own identity, privacy, formal/business-like professionalism and distance and; a relational

discourse of commonality and sharing, emphasizing values like togetherness, openness, informal/caring professionalism and connectedness (cf. Chapter 5).

In the Katendrecht case we found how, for most of the time, stakeholders responded to this dialectical tension through a (praxis) pattern of '*cyclic alternation*', which refers to a 'back and forth pattern over time in the dominance of first one discourse and then another' (Baxter 2011, 271). This means the Katendrecht collaborative most often gave one-sided attention to one of both relational discourses –thereby temporarily subordinating the other discourse (Baxter 2011; Baxter and Montgomery 1996; Schad et al. 2016) (see Chapter 5).

A notable finding in the Katendrecht case is that – in contrast of what is often theoretically assumed (cf. Ansell and Gash 2008; Emerson et al. 2012) – the temporary dominance of a relational discourse of autonomy-individualism not necessarily implied 'collaborative inertia' (Huxham and Vangen 2004; Huxham 2003). While stakeholders (emotionally) valued the time periods in which a relational discourse of commonality-sharing dominated the most, they also described how, in a given period, the dominance of a relational discourse of autonomy-individualism was experienced as functional and even beneficial to the collaborative process. The temporary emphasis on autonomy and individualism during this time period helped, they said, to dissolve some of the unproductive entanglements within the collaborative: it enabled stakeholders to reset their boundaries and rediscover their own focus (see Chapter 5).

These findings lead us to conclude that, while these discourses embody two competing, seemingly oppositional value-clusters, they both can be valid relating styles in collaborative work (see also Wood and Gray 1991). This can be labelled a 'relating paradox' in collaborative work. A paradox can be defined a "persistent contradiction(s) between interdependent elements" (Schad et al. 2016, 6). The aspect contradiction hereby refers to the presence of two oppositional value-clusters in relating, which (most often) foster a tug-of-war experience. The interdependency aspect means to denote that these opposing value-clusters presuppose each other or define one another: they exist on one continuum (Schad et al. 2016, 10). The concept of paradox also presumes that although it is possible to separate elements – which often is experienced more logical- it is their simultaneity that enables creativity and synergy. The 'relating paradox' then illustrates how both a discourse of commonality/sharing on the one hand, and a discourse of autonomy/individualism are associated with benefits and points of friction within collaborative work. To put it in another way, a relational discourse of commonality, and a relational discourse of autonomy can both be sources of advantage (+) or sources of inertia (-) (Vangen 2017a), as illustrated in Figure 7.1. Note that Figure 7.1. is a tentative construction of the 'relating paradox' based on observations in our empirical studies (but not systematically analysed as such).

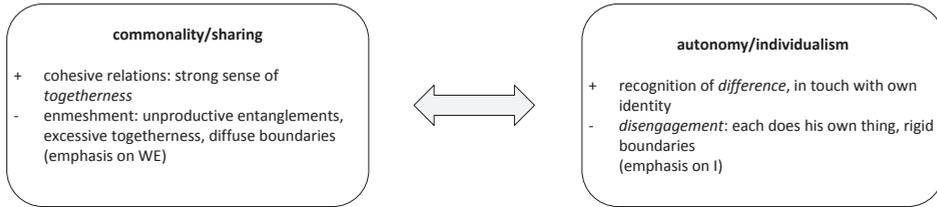


Figure 7.1. Tentative construction of the relating paradox.

The relevance of capturing such paradoxes and the ways they are dealt with, derives from the growing body of literature that emphasizes the importance of explicitly recognizing the tension-ridden, paradoxical nature of collaborative governance and management (O’Leary and Vij 2012; Ospina and Saz-Carranza 2010; Vangen 2017a; Vangen and Winchester 2014). Examining and better understanding the paradoxes inherent to collaborative work and the ways they are dealt with is currently considered to be an important issue to knowledge advancement in collaborative governance literature (O’Leary and Vij 2012; Ospina and Saz-Carranza 2010; Vangen 2017a). By providing insight in and elaborating on the kind of tensions that arise in stakeholder relations in collaborative governance processes, this empirical study thus contributes to this line of research (Vangen 2017a, 268).

### The synergistic power of a hybrid pattern of interplay between competing discourses

An important finding of this study concerns the synergistic power of a hybrid (praxis) pattern (a hybrid relating style) of ‘responding’ to the dynamic interplay between the two abovementioned discourses, i.e. to the ‘relating paradox’. A ‘*hybrid*’ involves the “mixing of [competing] discourses in a way that moves beyond a zero-sum dynamic” (Baxter 2011, 139): two discourses co-occur (in time) in relational parties’ sense making. In the Katendrecht case, at some point in time (cf. episode 3, see Chapter 5), stakeholders were able to temporally dissolve the dialectical tension(s) between the two relational discourses and to transform or combine them into an integrated discourse: both discourses were still part of stakeholders’ relational meaning making, but they were no longer framed as oppositional (Baxter 2011). Stakeholders involved experienced this time period as the heyday of the collaborative, experiencing the collaboration as ‘synergistic’. This leads us to conclude that a hybrid (praxis) pattern, i.e. the explicit embracing of the prevalence of opposing (relational) discourses, has synergistic power: when stakeholders are able to recognize and combine opposing relational values in their sense-making in a given moment in time, this contributes to create synergy between collaborating partners.

The conclusion that a *hybrid pattern of dealing with the 'relating'-paradox is likely to facilitate synergy* both supports and challenges current theorizing in collaborative governance. It supports and advances the growing body of literature that calls for recognizing the paradoxical nature of collaboration and the need for embracing, rather than downplaying, the tensions inherent to collaboration (Ospina and Saz-Carranza 2010; Vangen 2017a). However, it challenges the predominant and one-sided emphasis in most of the literature on the relevance of relational values such as trust, shared commitment and mutual understanding for collaborative success; an emphasis that implicitly puts forward a relational discourse of commonality and sharing as most desirable in collaborative work (Ansell and Gash 2008; Foster-Fishman et al. 2001; Emerson et al. 2012). Catlaw and Jordan (2009, 305) refer to this implicit bias in literature as the "humanistic 'let's all get along' sentiment that is [...] imparted on collaboration". However, this implies the literature tends to overlook the potential value of relational discourse(s) or relating styles that highlight values like autonomy, difference and dissensus for collaborative work (cf. Gunder 2003; Hillier 2003).

### **Transformational change in stakeholder relations through the accumulation of events over time.**

In the Katendrecht case, besides exploring how relations changed, we also explored *why* they changed, i.e. we investigated which events changed stakeholders' relational understandings/definitions (see Chapter 5). We identified five types of critical events: (1) *collaboration-oriented management practices*: these concern deliberate management efforts to bring stakeholders together; (2) *urban developmental events*: tangible activities 'on the ground'; (3) *issue-related events*: these involve the emergence or change of issues the collaborative needs to deal with; (4) *group composition/dynamic events*: these concern changes in the group composition of the collaborative in terms of the individuals involved and/or changes in group members' attitudes or actions; (5) *contextual events*: events that play in the margin and do not directly relate to the collaborative but have an impact anyway.

In the Katendrecht case, we observed that – whatever the type of event - no single event in itself (in isolation) had a transformative impact on stakeholder relations. Rather it was *the accumulation of different type of events over time that led stakeholder relations to change*. While each event cumulatively 'leads' the collaborative away from the dominant discourse, i.e. challenges the dominant discourse, it only 'became' transformative in its combination with other previous or later events. To put it in another way, a single event's effect was not immediately realized, nor had single events an isolated effect, rather its transformative effect was 'underway' and became realized in its conjuncture with other events. We labelled this mechanism as 'scaffolding' to denote how it is the accumulation and combination of

events over time (i.e. the temporal conjuncture) that defines their transformative power, rather than the event in itself (see Chapter 5). An important note here is that our findings do not give any indication that the (exact) sequence of these events matters, but only their accumulation and combination. The conclusion that events cumulatively transform relations implies that relational change is emergent and ongoing, i.e. a process, rather than a 'transitory moment' (McMurray 2010).

Together these findings give insight in the potential 'reasons' for relational change. Where we, in the previous section, stated that our empirical understanding of *how* stakeholders' relations evolve in collaborative governance processes is underdeveloped (cf. Heikkila and Gerlak 2016), this statement is even truer for our understanding of the reasons *why* change occurs (Howlett 2009). Our study addresses this blind spot in collaborative governance literature (and policy literature in general). Furthermore, our insights in the cumulative way events transform relations – i.e. a cumulative pattern of change - challenge the 'rather blunt binary "paradigmatic" or "incremental" characterizations [of change] that permeate much of the [policy] literature' (Howlett and Cashore 2009, 38). This also applies to the interpersonal communication literature, which's account of change is also one of either transformative or incremental change. Our study, however, provides empirical support for the existence of an alternative and additional pattern of (relational) change that is elided in the current accounts of change in both policy and interpersonal communication literature (Howlett and Cashore 2009; Baxter 2011). Different than incremental change, that is non-innovative, routine, and marginal (cf. referred to as amplifiers in Chapter 5), and from paradigmatic change, that represents a sharp break with the dominant way of acting/developing, cumulative change signals cracks in the dominant way of acting/developing, which eventually leads it to burst.

### **The importance of a 'social match' among individuals within a collaborative partnership**

A key finding in the Katendrecht case was that *group composition/dynamic events* – proportionally to the other type of events – were recurrently part of the conjuncture of events that led to relational change. This particularly applied to the group composition/dynamic events related to the accession (and often related departure) of individuals to the collaborative group and the social match (or lack of social match) of these new individuals with the incumbent group. This finding implies that when a specific 'entering' individual does not play well with the incumbent collaborative group which s/he joins, this is likely to put great pressure on stakeholder relations and, in turn, on collaborative work. Furthermore, our observations indicate that this 'fit' or 'social match' not simply depends on an individual's interpersonal skills or personal characteristics but at least equally on socio-psychological

aspects like social nearness (cf. Kramer and Carnevale 2001) and on the situational context in which the collaborative is embedded. For example, in the Katendrecht case, stakeholders indicated that, in its most productive phase (see Chapter 5, episode 3), the collaborative group was composed by individuals who perceived themselves in similar stages of career and life, which, so they argued, created a ‘social match’. However, they also mentioned how the emergence of this ‘social match’ was also ‘afforded’ by situational exigencies: it was a period of economic/financial prosperity, and those involved in the collaborative experienced considerable leeway to act as they saw fit in the collaborative.

The conclusion that an individual’s social match is important in collaborative work both corroborates and nuances the literature that stresses the importance of the individual in collaborative partnerships (O’Leary and Vij 2012). Indeed, the difficulties and challenges among the individuals who represent the organizations that collaborate have a profound effect on ‘getting things done’ (Huxham et al. 2000). People can make or break collaborations. However, nuancing the predominant conception that this effect is dominantly connected to an individual’s skills and capacities (the isolated individual) (e.g. Feldman and Khademian 2007; O’Leary and Vij 2012), this study highlights that also an individual’s fit or ‘social match’ with the collaborative group – apart from his/her skills, capacities and knowledge or personal characteristics – shapes stakeholder relations, and, in turn, the collaborative process. This finding thus suggests that the effect of a given individual is ‘relational’ and ‘situational’, rather than ‘isolated’. To put it in another way, an individual’s potential impact, by using his/her skills or capacities – by acting altogether - on the collaborative partnership and process, depends on the relations and the context which s/he is embedded in (Bartels 2013; Follett 1977 in Fox and Urwick, Stout and Staton 2011; Stout 2012). This ‘relational’ view of the individual (rather than as an isolated being) connects to the growing body of literature that explicitly shifts attention to the importance of what happens in the ‘in-between’ in collaborative encounters (Bartels 2013; Stout and Love 2017). This implies, Bartels (2013, 476) argues, “seeing what public professionals and citizens are able to do and achieve in participatory [or collaborative] settings as a social product of the ongoing, dynamic, evolving process through which they interact”. Furthermore, this ‘in-between’ in collaborative encounters, so Stout and Love (2017) argue, is most productive and fruitful if it is characterized by ‘a cooperative style of relating’ and ‘a collaborative mode of association’. While Stout and Love (2017) give insight in *what* fruitful collaborative encounters may entail, it still remains unclear how, i.e. under which conditions, such fruitful encounters may emerge. Our study suggests that a ‘social match’ between individuals, emerging from a complex interplay between (amongst others) socio-psychological aspects and situational exigencies (contextual affordances or constraints), may play a role herein.

## **The relative importance of stakeholders' relating and issue framing dynamics in collaborative governance processes.**

As can be concluded from the Vreewijk case neither relating nor issue framing dynamics determined the collaborative governance process in an absolute way. Rather, the decisive role of stakeholders' relating and issue framing dynamics for shaping collaborative work varied throughout the collaborative governance process (see Chapter 6). Findings showed how both dynamics interplayed in different ways throughout the different phases of a collaborative governance process, i.e. in the prenegotiation, negotiation and implementation phase (Susskind and Cruikshank 1987). Drawing upon the insights of the Vreewijk case, we advanced five theoretical propositions on the connection between relating and issue framing dynamics throughout the collaborative process:

- P1. If, in the prenegotiation phase(s) of a collaborative governance process, stakeholders' frames diverge substantially, it is likely that stakeholders need to develop a sense of commonality to instigate processes of frame alignment.
- P2. During the negotiation phase of a collaborative governance process, it is likely that small wins on frame alignment will reinforce feelings of commonality, which, in turn, will accelerate processes of frame alignment.
- P3. The establishment of a common frame in a collaborative governance process is likely to consolidate feelings of commonality and unity among stakeholders.
- P4. 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.
- P5. Challenging the common (agreed upon) frame is likely to undermine feelings of commonality and unity among stakeholders.

These propositions reaffirm the prevailing insights on the connection between issue framing and relating in collaborative governance literature: at times stakeholders' relating dynamics were more decisive to the progress of the collaborative governance process (in terms of its ability to achieve joint action) than the issue framing dynamics, while at other times the process depended more on the issue framing dynamics or both dynamics equally shaped the collaborative process in a cyclical fashion (Ansell and Gash 2008; Bouwen and Taillieu 2004; Dewulf et al. 2005; Emerson et al. 2012; Foster-Fishman et al. 2001; Huxham 2003; Gray 2004; van Buuren 2009). However, these findings also narrow down current expectations by explicating how the connection between both dynamics may differ depending on the phase the collaborative process is in. Hence, more in general, this study highlights that the extent to which stakeholders' relating dynamics or issue framing dynamics determine the collaborative process may vary over time. The propositions advanced in this study

make a start with unpacking the mechanism underlying this variation, however, they need further testing in other collaborative contexts.

### **The double-edgedness of a common frame (or frame alignment)**

As shown in the Vreewijk case, a crux in stakeholders' issue framing dynamics was the establishment of a common frame. Findings of the Vreewijk case showed that this facilitated collaborative action. Both the effort of seeking agreement – the process of visioning - and subsequently finding it – the establishment of a vision - helped to build or consolidate relationships and allowed the collaborative to book progress. Being a futuristic outlook throughout the negotiation phase of the collaboration, the process of visioning and the establishment of a common frame thus acted as an important catalyst in the collaborative process (Loorbach 2010; Spekkink 2016). This finding corresponds with insights in collaborative governance literature on the critical role of coming to an agreement and finding an acceptable action plan. An agreed upon action plan is believed to serve as the foundation for collective action to occur (in the implementation phase) (Bouwen and Taillieu 2004; Robertson and Choi 2012; van Buuren 2009).

However, this study also pointed out how a common frame may potentially create barriers to the collaborative process. In the Vreewijk case, once stakeholders had established the common frame, it became a fixed point of reference for some of the stakeholders involved – one against which all further substantive discussions needed to be evaluated. Approached as such, a common frame may, however, become a straitjacket for the collaborative, which bans substantive dynamism out of the process. For instance, when, in the Vreewijk case, one of the stakeholders could no longer identify with the common frame, due to situational exigencies, this troubled the collaborative process. A possible explanation for this observation may be that the common frame in the Vreewijk case was forged through a process of frame *extension*. Frame extension entails the development of a common frame that encompasses and accommodates the different views in one common frame (Snow et al. 1986; Vijay and Kulkarni 2012). This implies stakeholders do not need to transform their frames in a fundamental way. However, a potential risk in this way of aligning frames is that stakeholders do not actually address the difference, but rather iron it out (Dewulf and Bouwen 2012). As a consequence, it is reasonable to expect that these differences, in the end, will manifest themselves again and will need to be addressed anyways. Yet another possible explanation is that the search for a common frame is a form of 'visionary framing', which 'focuses on creating a sense of possibilities as opposed to concentrating on current realities' (Eddy 2010). Yet, by the time these possibilities need to be turned into real actions, the circumstances may have already changed. In such cases,

a common frame, i.e. an agreed upon plan of action, if applied rigidly, may hamper the collaborative process, rather than facilitate it.

No matter what the explanation is, the conclusion that a common frame potentially can both facilitate or hamper collaborative work, signals that the functionality of the establishment of a common frame may serve different (dis)functions in the collaborative process. A new paradox seems to come to the fore here, since our findings suggest that a common frame, i.e. frame alignment, can be both a source of collaborative advantage and collaborative inertia (cf. Vangen 2017a).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

In this final section, we propose several avenues for future research and, based on our findings, foreground insights that can provide bases for action for those involved in collaborative governance practices. Note that, rather than giving clear guidelines to practice, or 'recommendations' in the strict sense of the word, we aim to offer understandings about collaborative governance processes that might help practitioners to act meaningfully in collaborative settings.

### **Avenues for future research**

As suggested in literature, and as borne out of our empirical findings, collaborative governance processes are dynamic, temporally evolving phenomena: collaboratives and their constitutive elements unfold and evolve over time (Heikkila and Gerlak 2016). Yet, despite this recognition, only few scholars have actually engaged in process studies, i.e. in studies that explicitly focus on how and why collaboratives evolve over time (Langley et al. 2013). Such a focus implies a longitudinal perspective on collaboratives. Current research, however, is mostly limited to cross-sectional analyses or takes snapshots in time (Heikkila and Gerlak 2016; O'Leary and Vij 2012). As a consequence, longitudinal studies remain an important methodological gap in collaborative governance research (Heikkila and Gerlak 2016). As a first general recommendation for future research then, collaborative governance scholars should more explicitly invest in 'actually tracking collaborations in real time and more longitudinal studies' (O'Leary and Vij 2012, 516). By doing so, researchers can further develop our understanding of how and why collaboratives function and/or perform over time and make a start with developing a theory of collaborative change and evolution (Heikkila and Gerlak 2016; O'Leary and Vij 2012). This call for more process-oriented and longitudinal studies also implies a continued effort to develop methodological approaches

that enable to come to grips with change and motion in its own right (rather than as a dependent or independent variable) (Demir and Lychnell 2015; Langley et al. 2013). This study advanced an example of such a process-oriented, longitudinal approach and showed the added value hereof to study relations from a dynamic perspective. In the future, scholars should continue to explore similar approaches to longitudinal research in collaborative governance as to further our knowledge of how collaboratives, and their constitutive elements, evolve over time.

Another general topic for future research in the field of collaborative governance concerns the ways in which researchers can holistically communicate about the processual phenomena they study. This issue follows up on the limitations we experienced when reporting on our findings, which relate to the lack of a 'process language' (Lewis 2000; Stout 2012) and the traditional (familiar) publishing practices in the mainstream research outlets that tend to endorse 'tidy', linear accounts of research findings – which are difficult to abandon (Daher et al. 2017; Etherington 2004; Pinsky 2015). As a consequence, both our empirical reports (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) represent our findings in a rather traditional, linear and ordered fashion, thereby 'smoothing' the story and creating an impression of order, linearity and neatness of the complex and messy process of relating, and collaborating (cf. Connelly and Clandinin 1990; Etherington 2004). We believe the field could benefit from challenging these traditional modes of (linear) representation in writing and from exploring innovative ways of reporting that enable to more fully encompass the processual, dynamic and paradoxical nature of stakeholder relations.

This study developed a longitudinal understanding of two critical dimensions in collaborative work: stakeholders' relating dynamics and framing dynamics. However, other (process) elements may equally be interesting to study from a process-oriented, longitudinal perspective. One interesting topic concerns the power dynamics inherent to collaborative governance processes. We draw attention to this element, since, as Brisbois and de Loë (2016, 776) note, 'many of the variables affecting collaboration can be at least partially explained by theories of power'. In addition, scholars argue that sharing power is a core principle in collaborative governance processes and that the way power and resources are configured are critical for collaborative success (Ansell and Gash 2008; Emerson et al. 2012; Thomson and Perry 2006). An interesting question then is if and how power configurations actually shift throughout the collaborative process (over time) (see also Brisbois and de Loë 2016).

Another set of recommendations for future research follows up on our findings on the role of paradox in stakeholders' relating dynamics in a collaborative. These findings corroborate the insights in collaborative governance literature that point to the paradoxical nature of collaboration (Connelly et al. 2008; Ospina and Saz-Carranza 2010; Vangen and Win-

chester 2014; Vangen 2017a). O’Leary and Vij (2012) for example, refer to the existence of a management paradox which requires managers to balance between autonomy and interdependence. Similarly, Thomson, Perry and Miller (2009, 26-27) argue how ‘representatives from participating organizations in the collaboration are likely to experience significant tension as they are pulled between feeling accountable to the demands of their parent organization [...] and the demands of their collaborative partners’. Yet, despite the notion of paradox has gained considerable currency in collaborative governance literature, systematic empirical research that explicitly applies a ‘paradox lens’ (Vangen 2017a) is still rather scarce (Ospina and Saz-Carranza 2010). As a general direction for future research then, we believe the field would benefit from more fully exploring the role of paradox in illuminating dynamics within collaboratives. Bringing paradox to the centre of inquiry could enhance our understanding of collaborative work and enable scholars to get more contextualized and realistic – rather than idealistic – understandings of the ‘complex context of collaboration’ (Vangen 2017a, 270; Vangen and Winchester 2014).

One immediate task could be to consider how our insights on the relating paradox can inform the world of practice, i.e. to (re)frame our theoretical constructs into more practice-oriented conceptualizations in such a way that it can help practitioners to make sense of the paradoxical situation(s) they are confronted with in collaborative work. The finding that a hybrid (praxis) pattern to respond to this paradox instigated feelings of synergy gives indications that embracing, rather than negating, the tensions that characterize stakeholder relations may be important to achieve collaborative success. Through action-oriented forms of research, researchers and those involved in collaboratives could engage in collaboratively exploring how to appreciate more explicitly and work through the ‘relating’ paradox (or other paradoxes for that matter) in meaningful and creative ways (e.g. Lüscher and Lewis 2008). Such research could not only empower and support those involved in collaboratives to deal with these complex situations (Huxham 2003; Huxham and Beech 2003; Lüscher and Lewis 2008), it could also contribute to tackling the ‘missing link between theory and practice’ (O’Leary and Vij 2012). The action-oriented approach advanced by Lüscher and Lewis (2008) to work through managerial paradoxes offers interesting ideas in this respect. Translated to the ‘relating paradox’, this ‘working through’ could entail a number of consecutive ‘sense-making’ steps, starting with exploring the dilemmas stakeholders experience in their relating. Acknowledging that dilemmas, e.g. tensions, are part of relating in collaborative governance processes, enables to bring the complexity and intricacies of relating to the foreground. At the same time, the awareness of these dilemmas may create a ‘sense of paralysis, or “stuckness”, because it implies that a choice must be made between polarities’ (Lüscher and Lewis 2008, 229). As a second step then, it is important to get unstuck. Here, Lüscher and Lewis (2008) suggest to evoke paradoxical thinking, starting with the assertion that there is no single relating style that ensures collaborative

success. Through encouraging reflexivity and examining deeper implications of specific relating choices, those involved may become aware that an either/or mindset will probably be ineffective. This realization, in turn, can spark a search for both/and options. This both/and mindset then forms the basis for developing 'workable solutions', e.g. workable relations, that are based on the very idea that it is impossible to fully grasp the situation, and relations are always in the process of sensemaking.

Another interesting avenue to advance a research agenda that focuses on the role of paradox is to explore the paradoxical role frame alignment seems to have in collaborative work. Our findings suggest that the establishment of a common frame, i.e. frame alignment, may be both facilitating and putting up barriers to collaborative action. A first step could be to further flesh out the nature of this paradoxical situation. In addition, as proposed for the 'relating paradox', future research could – in collaboration with those involved in collaborative settings - take up the question of how to deal with this paradox and its associated tensions.

In this study we also explored why stakeholder relations changed, i.e. which events had a transformative impact on the relating discourse/style within the collaborative. We developed several insights hereon (cf. different type of events, impact through accumulation, the importance of group composition events), yet further research on this matter could focus on developing a sharper understanding of the way(s) these events interplay and have their impact on stakeholder relations. One interesting avenue concerns examining whether specific combinations of events trigger certain relating discourses/styles. In our study, it appears that the combination and/or co-occurrence of a social match between stakeholders, little contestation on the planning issues at stake, a supportive political context (little risk aversion, room for manoeuvre) and a concentration of developmental activities 'on the ground' is likely to trigger a hybrid style of relating (hybrid discourse). Future research could examine whether this (or other) conjunctures of events indeed produce certain relating styles. Qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) methodology could allow for examining such configurational explanations for relational change and evolution (Rihoux and Ragin 2009). Another possible suggestion for future research on the role of events is to analytically distinguish (more explicitly) the levels at which the different type of events 'originate': at the micro- (the collaborative context), meso- (the organizational context of stakeholders), or macro-level (the broader political and economic context). This could provide insights in how f.i. macro-level contexts, such as the political and economic landscape, constrain or foster specific styles of interpersonal relating within the collaborative (cf. Stout and Love 2015).

This study further illuminated five propositions about the connection between stakeholders’ relating dynamics and framing dynamics throughout the different phases of a collaborative process (see Chapter 6). These propositions make a start with unpacking the dynamic interplay between these two critical dimensions of collaborative work, however, these propositions are just a starting point. Being based on a single case study, they now need further empirical testing in other similar and different cases (in terms of diversity/ number of participants, policy domain, scale etc.) as to tease out if and how the interplay of these dimensions varies across different types of collaborative contexts. Figure 7.2. gives an overview of the proposed research agenda.

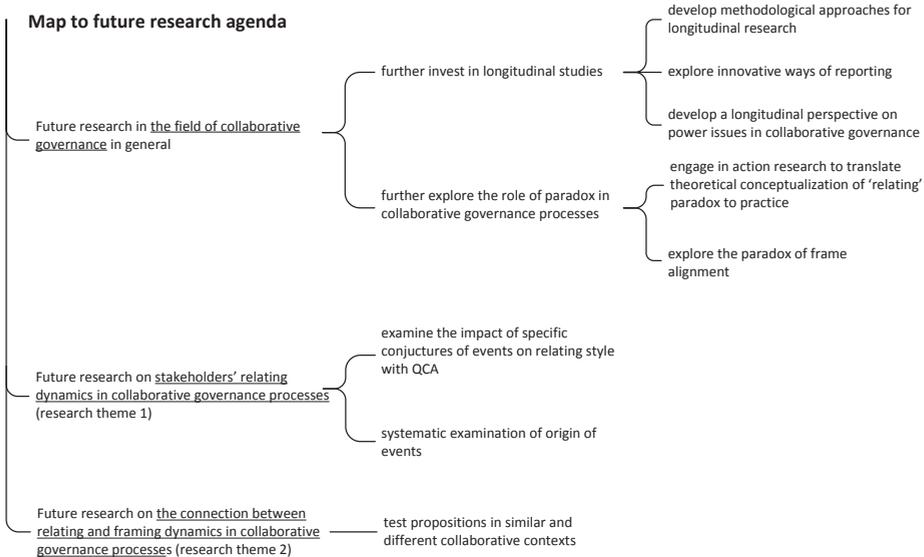


Figure 7.2. Visual overview of future research agenda.

## Cues for collaborative practice

Act always as if the future of the universe depended on what you did, while laughing at yourself for thinking that whatever you do makes any difference. It is this serious playfulness, this combination of concern and humility, that makes it possible to be both engaged and carefree at the same time (Czikszenmihalyi, 1997, p. 133)

If you know that you are not sure, you have a chance to improve the situation (Feynman 1998, 28).

In this final section of the thesis, we reflect on how our insights can aid those involved in collaborative governance practices. However, it should be noted that we consider formulating our ideas hereon as but a first step to transform our insights into 'actionable knowledge that is usable for policy actors in addressing the needs of the practical situation they encounter' (Bartels 2012, 439). A necessary next step would be to further conceptualize these ideas into practice-oriented understandings in dialogue with practitioners. We will elaborate on this idea below.

This study foregrounds a characterization of collaborative work, and more specifically stakeholder relations herein, as dynamic and paradoxical in nature. In addition, this study highlights how stakeholders' relating dynamics continuously interplay with the issue framing dynamics in various ways throughout the collaborative process. Findings furthermore suggest that the issue framing dynamics, and more specifically the process of frame alignment (working towards a common frame) may equally be a process characterized by paradox. Conceived as such, the central challenge in collaborative work is to find ways to deal with this ever-changing and paradoxical situation and with the ongoing interplay between relating and framing dynamics.

In literature, many of the recommendations made towards collaboratives and its leaders concerning the 'management' of stakeholder relations and framing processes advise to, for instance, create a working climate that is cohesive (Foster-Fishman et al. 2001), establish 'a high level of social coherence' (Oh and Bush 2016, 2017), promote a 'synthesis [...] of knowing the public problem' (Feldman and Khademian 2007), or converge images (van Buuren 2009). While such recommendations look like good advice in theory, they tend to downplay both the dynamic and paradoxical nature of stakeholder relations and issue frames. Firstly, they conceal the dynamism of collaborative processes by implicitly suggesting that there is an ideal/desirable state collaboratives should live up to, one characterized by social coherence, commitment, convergence or alignment of ideas etc. However, as this study showed, stakeholder relations and issue frames are dynamic: a collaborative, and the relating and framing that takes place in it, is in a constant state of flux. This implies that it is an illusion that collaboratives will be able to maintain a specific collaborative setting over longer periods of time (see Chapter 5) (cf. Huxham and Beech 2003). Second, in relation to the identification of the 'relating'-paradox in this study, such advices also implicitly propose to prioritize a specific relational discourse (cf. the emphasis on commonality, sharing). Similarly, they propose to focus on converging and aligning frames, while our findings suggest that a unilateral and rigid focus hereon may potentially lead to collaborative inertia. Implicitly, these advices thus suggest to ignore the paradoxical nature of collaboration. Yet, as our findings show, doing so may actually hamper the collaborative

to reach its full potential and achieve 'synergistic gains' (Ospina and Saz-Carranza 2010; Connelly et al. 2008; Vangen 2017a).

Meanwhile, explicitly appreciating and becoming more sensitive to the dynamic and paradoxical nature of collaborative work may pose real challenges to practitioners. Both dynamism and paradox are not the most comfortable concepts to act upon since "they do not lend themselves to actions that apply formal logic based on internal consistency" (Vangen 2017a, 266). Consequently, those involved in collaborative work often have the tendency to take actions oriented at regaining control and restoring order (Lewis 2000). However, the dynamic and paradoxical nature of collaboration, of stakeholder relations and issue frames implies that there "cannot be a simple process of identifying problems and appropriate solutions" (Vangen 2017b, 321). To put it in another way, there are no clear-cut solutions or magical prescriptions to deal with dynamism and paradoxes (Huxham 2003; Huxham and Beech 2003). This necessary entails, so Huxham and Beech (2003) argue, 'moving the acceptable target for action away from perfection'. The opening quotes of this paragraph are there to underline this idea and they illustrate the basic philosophy we believe should guide any action in practice.

The question that now arises is how then to work through or with paradoxes in practice? In the first place, aiding practitioners starts with raising awareness of the paradoxical nature of collaborative work (Huxham 2003; Huxham and Beech 2003). As Voss and Kemp (2005, 21) argue:

We think that it is fruitful to recognise the paradox, not to resolve it, but to work with it as suggested by Ravetz: "Another approach to paradoxes, characteristic of other cultural traditions, is to accept them and attempt to learn from them about the limitations of one's existing intellectual structures" (2003:819).

Hence, a sophisticated analysis of the types of paradoxes and tensions that arise in collaborative work can help to make sense of them, without 'solving' or doing away with the complexities attached to these paradoxes. As Luscher et al. (2006, 500) note: 'Exploring paradoxes often creates circles of reflection. An understanding of paradox does not solve problems, but rather opens new possibilities and sparks circles of even greater complexity.'

Specifically concerning the 'relating'- paradox, an enhanced understanding of what is going on relationally in collaborative processes, and of the inevitability of the competing demands of feeling connected with each other in the collaborative and of preserving a sense of autonomy and individuality throughout the process, might help practitioners to

become aware of the trade-offs and compromises inherent to building relationships in collaborative work (cf. Vangen 2017b).

The need to develop an enhanced understanding of the relational processes at play in collaborative work points to the relevance of relational work in collaborative governance, i.e. work oriented at creating connections between stakeholders. However, in collaborative governance literature, doing relational work is often unilaterally defined as working on and creating a community of belonging – thus disregarding the paradoxical nature of relating (see above). However, collaborative practice would benefit from broadening this conception of doing relational work to one that more explicitly embraces the paradoxical nature of relating, rather than ignoring it. A possible approach that is interesting to explore in that respect is a dialogical approach to relational work (DeKoven Fishbane 1998). In a general sense, such a dialogical approach entails a conscious and intentional effort to explore differences and tensions in people’s relating. Hence, first and foremost, it intends to normalize the struggle that is part of relating – recognizing that values as autonomy and individuality are equally central to relating as values as commonality and sharing. To raise awareness about and find ways to deal with the relating paradox (see above), facilitators of collaborative processes could, for example, make use of ‘relational claiming’, a technique used in group therapy settings. Relational claiming entails inviting those involved to express their own needs (claiming) while at the same time holding the relation itself as the entity to be nurtured (relational) (Fishbane 2001, 281). In other words, relational claiming gives relational partners the opportunity to explore and develop their own needs and identities (autonomy), while staying connected with the other. Following from that, a dialogical approach to relational work includes going beyond simply *exploring* each other’s perspectives to *taking* each other’s perspectives by using techniques like “‘becoming’ another” [Snyder, 1995], “‘trying on the feelings’ of the other” [Bergman & Surrey, 1992], and “‘imagining the [in] between” [Inger, 1993]’ (as cited in DeKoven Fishbane 1998). Such techniques intend to go beyond simply analyzing or interpreting others’ perspectives, but entail a conscious suspending of one’s own meaning system(s), i.e. a disidentification with one’s own particular perspective, and attempting to interiorize as fully as possible the meanings, values, etc. of the other. This enables empathic attunement with the different other and, in doing so, overcomes pitting viewpoint against viewpoint (Snyder 1995). Facilitators of collaborative processes could introduce such exercises into the collaborative process to bring out difference and allow to see these differences as opportunities, rather than as threats. In addition, such exercises help to recognize and legitimize multiple realities and to come to understand how others’ view reality. Furthermore, seeing and caring for how one’s own views and actions impact on stakeholders’ relating helps to move away from blaming and shaming others toward taking responsibilities and feel accountable for relations. One way facilitators of collaborative processes could invite those involved to take responsibility is

through interventions oriented at consciously stepping out the interaction process, and working on developing an understanding of the pattern that plays out in stakeholders' mutual interaction. To do so, facilitators could make use of 'freeze-frame' or slow motion techniques, i.e. 'to take the quick action/reaction escalation sequence and slow it down, look at it with its various nuances and meanings' (Scheinman and Fishbane 2004; see also Catlaw 2009). In doing so, stakeholders become aware of how their own actions and reactions are, in a circular way, interrelated and how they both take part in an 'interactional dance', i.e. co-construct their relating. Timelining could be a helpful technique to support the visualization and analysis of this 'interactional dance'. In turn, raising awareness of stakeholders' relating patterns, fosters responsibility and treats the collaborative as resilient and capable of change. To conclude, a dialogical approach to relational work explicitly opens up and foregrounds difference and dissensus, rather than trying to overcome them.

A similar argument can be made concerning the possible paradoxical role of working towards a common frame in collaborative governance processes. Similarly, collaborative governance literature predominantly emphasizes the importance of creating a collective way of knowing. Exploring different perspectives is thereby seen as instrumental to bridge difference, rather than to foreground difference. However, seen the finding that maintaining a common frame might be unattainable, it makes sense to assume that differences in issue framing are more than simply a matter of having different views or interests towards the issue at stake. Rather, difference ma

Having a greater appreciation of paradoxes and the existence of competing demands in practice (on relating or other important dimensions of collaborative work) can, in turn, enhance a practitioner's ability to deal with these in ways that fit their particular situation (Huxham 2003; Huxham and Beech 2003; Lewis et al. 2006). As Huxham (2003, 419) indicates: 'many practitioners find that simply understanding that the problems that they are experiencing are inevitable is empowering'. Shifting attention towards how practitioners can act in ways that are appropriate for their own situations presupposes that solutions are 'situational' and are best constructed by (or in collaboration with) practitioners themselves through 'reflexive judgment' (Vangen 2017a). These ideas connect to Catlaw's view of governing as a 'variable, situational, [...] process' (Catlaw 2009; see also Campbell Rawlings and Catlaw 2011), and to what Mary Parker Follett referred to as 'obeying the law of the situation' (Follett 2003 in Metcalf and Urwick). In addition, Follett (2003 in Metcalf and Urwick) argues that following the law of the situation requires all those involved in a collaborative to take stock of the situation. This also implies shifting the responsibility and authority to (continuously) 'create' a collaborative setting away from the public manager and/or collaborative leader to all those involved (Catlaw 2009). As Catlaw (2009, 6) argues, the challenge then is to decouple this creative role "from the 'role' of, say, the facilitator or

moderator [...]. To this end, we need to incorporate into our understanding of governing a deeper understanding of the dynamics of context-creation". Note that these ideas, albeit indirectly, also follow-up on the conclusion that an individual's impact on the collaborative process depends on how s/he 'matches' the collaborative. This conclusion, together with the ideas advanced here, suggest to see collaborative governing as a dynamic, situational and relational process – full of paradoxes.



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# **Appendices**



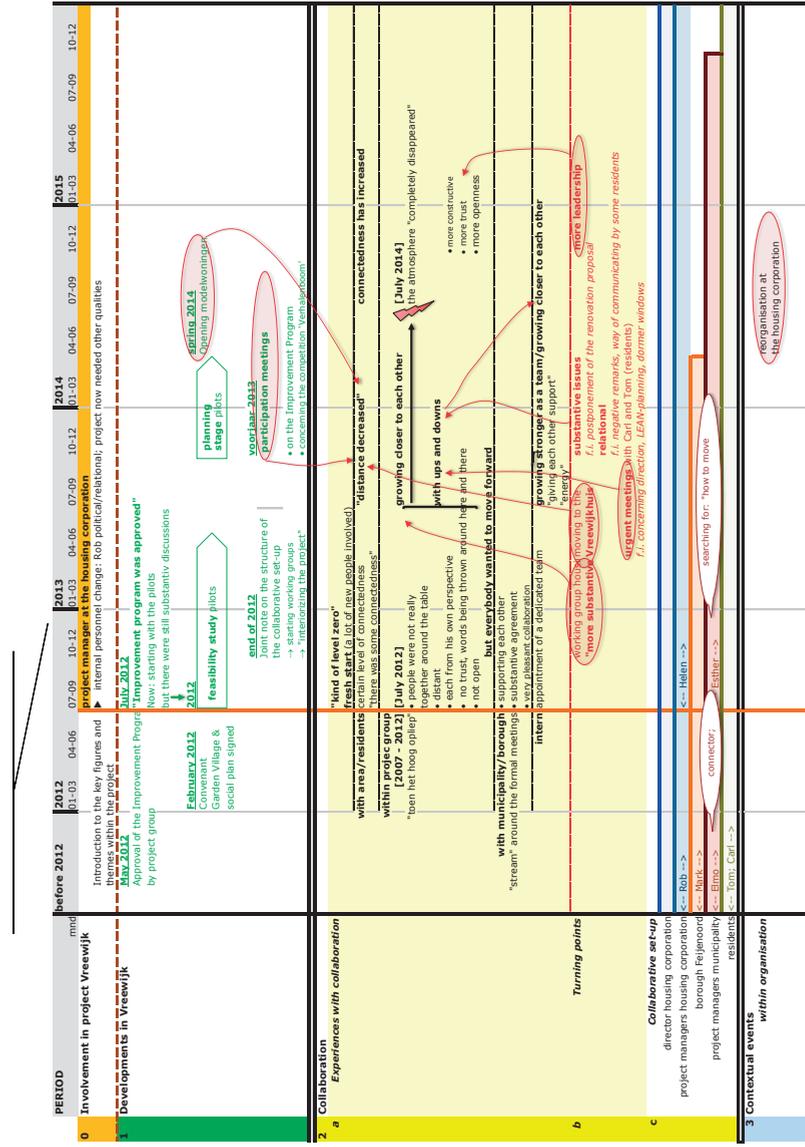
# APPENDIX A

## Graphic elicitation: Timeline.

### Thematic ordering

- Theme 1**  
Reference period (role and involvement in planning process)
- Theme 2**  
Urban planning developments (policy decision, spatial changes, etc.)
- Theme 3**  
Experiences with stakeholders' relations
- Theme 4**  
Stakeholders involved
- Theme 5**  
Contextual events (social, political, economic, etc.)

### Chronological ordering





## APPENDIX B

### Overview and categorization of critical relation events.

Episodes	Critical relation events	Conceptualisation events*	
		Category	Impact
2000	Change in group composition of the collaborative: appointment of a new planning professional to set up an integral approach.	GC/DE	T-comm
2000	Commitment acts by planning professional: drinking coffee, gaining historical awareness.	COMP	T-comm
2000	First developing activities in the area: first poles of the apartment block Tweede Katendrechtse Haven.	DE	T-comm
May 2000	Organisation of the Theme tables Katendrecht (on initiative of the planning professional): stakeholders, including residents and entrepreneurs, are invited to discuss the priorities for the area concerning facilities; public space and traffic; participation; environmental quality; living quality and economy.	COMP	T-comm
2000-02	Joint development of area agreements (agreements between city and housing association).	COMP	T-comm
2000-02	Establishment of a joint communication team and development of a joint communication strategy.	COMP	T-comm
2001	Small investments and visible 'quick wins': solving small problems in the area (for instance: organizing a better coordination of waste collection in the area).	COMP	T-comm
2001-02	Political decision to reduce the role of residents' associations in Rotterdam. Resident's associations lose central role in area: they are no longer considered to be the first point of call for the city's agencies.	CE	A-auto
2002	Joint realization Masterplan Public Space (all stakeholders involved).	COMP	T-comm
2002	Katendrecht scores a 3.8 on the Safety index <sup>1</sup> : increase in (political) sense of urgency, clear mandates and resources for planning professionals working on Katendrecht.	CE	T-comm
2003	Redevelopment of Katendrecht appointed as pilot project by the management of the housing association: increase in sense of urgency at one of the key organisations.	CE	T-comm

2000-2003  
Early collaborative efforts

Episodes	Critical relation events	Conceptualisation events*		
		Category	Impact	
2004-2007	2004	Launching of the joint area branding campaign 'Can You Handle the Cape?' (all stakeholders involved).	COMP	A-comm
	2004	Change in group composition of the collaborative: Involvement of a new private developer.	GC/DE	A-comm
	2005	Professional support for the residents' association of Katendrecht (KBO), facilitated by the city and the housing association: support to become more professional.	COMP	A-comm
	2005-07	Concentration of developing activities on Katendrecht, among others: building activities on the new-development site Laankwartier; building activities renovation project de Driehoek; first phase renovation of Katendrecht's central square; restructuring of public space Rechthuislaan in old Katendrecht; building activities primary school De Globetrotter.	DE	T-hybrid
	2006	(Overwhelming) successful sale of newly-built houses on Katendrecht. (Joint effort city and private developer).	DE	T-hybrid
	2006-07	Changes in group composition of the collaborative - new set of individuals representing the stakeholder groups becomes active within the collaborative: 2 new planning professionals; new project manager housing association.	GC/DE	T-hybrid
2008-2010	2008	Opening of theatre Walhalla on Katendrecht (joint effort between city, developer and entrepreneurs).	DE	A-hybrid
	2009	Completion of renovation of central square on Katendrecht (Deliplein) (joint effort between city and housing association).	DE	A-hybrid
	2009	New and contested planning issue for the collaborative: the redevelopment of the Fenix storehouses.	IRE	T-auto
	2009	Multiple parties hook on the developments on Katendrecht: common vision under pressure.	GCE	T-auto
	2009	Economic / financial crisis hits the city and housing association.	CE	T-auto
	2009	Katendrecht scores a 7.6 on the Safety Index of 2009: decrease political sense of urgency.	CE	T-auto
	2009-10	Reorganisations at the key organisations involved in the urban regeneration: slackening of resources (in personnel, in money); changing priorities.	CE	T-auto
	2008-10	Participation and winning design contests.	COMP	A-hybrid
	2010	New district council: less vigor.	CE	T-auto
	2004-2007	Establishment of an open and well-connected partnership		
2008-2010	Chemistry in the collaborative partnership			

Episodes	Critical relation events	Conceptualisation events*	
		Category	Impact
	2010–11	Change in group composition: new planning professional.	CE A-auto
	2011–13	Changing demographics on Katendrecht put the representativity of Katendrecht's residents' association under pressure.	CE A-auto
	2011	Take-over of the private developer's organization by a large construction company.	CE A-auto
	2012	Change in group composition: new area manager (borough), new planning professional	GCE T-comm
	2011–12	Price negotiations concerning the Fenix storehouses between city and private developer.	IRE A-auto
	2012	Lots of large developments are completed, among others: completion new-development sites Laankwartier and Parkkwartier; completion of renovation central square (Deliplein). Decrease of 'sense of urgency' of key organisations.	DE A-auto
	2012	Changing approach towards planning issue redevelopment Fenix storehouses: complete development of Fenix storehouses appointed to private developer instead of joint development with city.	IRE A-auto
	2012	Suspension of grants for the residents' associations of Rotterdam.	CE A-auto
	2012	City receives 80+ letters of objection concerning their plans with the Fenix storehouses..	IRE A-auto
	2011–13	Discussion in the external planning team increasingly need to be scaled up to management level.	IRE A-auto
	2013–14	Finalisation negotiations on Fenix storehouses between city and private developer	IRE T-comm
	2014	Changing role of the housing association in the redevelopment: from developing to managing housing.	CE T-auto?
	2014	District councils become territorial commissions: changes their role and mandates within the governance system of Rotterdam.	CE T-auto?

\* Since 2001, Rotterdam maps the safety situation in its areas using the Safety Index. The index is composed of objective data (data based on registration by police, fire brigade and city) and subjective data (data based on a safety survey of residents of Rotterdam).

**\*LEGEND**

<b>Category event</b>	<b>Impact event</b>
<b>COMP</b> collaboration oriented management practices	<b>A or T-hybrid</b> A(mplifier) or T(rigger) of a hybrid discourse
<b>DE</b> developmental events	<b>A or T-comm</b> A(mplifier) or T(rigger) of a commonality discourse
<b>IRE</b> issue-related events	<b>A or T-auto</b> A(mplifier) or T(rigger) of an autonomy discourse
<b>GC/DE</b> group composition/dynamic events	
<b>CE</b> contextual events	

## APPENDIX C

### Excerpt analysis issue frames throughout time

Issue framing throughout time →		2008	2012	2013-2014	2015 onwards	
2006–2007		Emergence of two opposing issue frames	Emergence of a third view on the issue	Frame alignment: the settlement & signing Improvement Program (common, extended frame)	Continuously restoring alignment	Frame transformation and diverging paths
<p><b>Issue frame A</b> (<i>housing association + borough</i>) (fp) houses constructively in a bad state; housing stock not differentiated enough; housing stock does not meet modern (constructive and technical) standards (fs) demolition and new building is the only approach that is technically and financially feasible</p>	<p><b>Issue frame C0</b> (<i>municipality</i>) (fp) comprehensive intervention is necessary (fs) conservation unless, instead of demolition unless – depending on technical and financial feasibility; cultural-historical responsible approach – elaboration of the restructuring approach in deliberation</p>	<p><b>Issue frame D0</b> (<i>housing corporation + borough + residents + supporting parties</i>) (fp) houses show signs of exhaustion, houses need to be improved, maintenance is costly (fs) cultural-historical value and social cohesion as guiding principles; 3 strategies: 1 maintenance as a solution; 2 renovation as a solution; 3 new building as a solution.</p>	<p><b>Issue frame D1</b> (<i>housing corporation + borough + residents + supporting parties</i>) (fp) " (fs) " + comfort of the houses + preservation of living area in terms of space and surface</p>	<p><b>Issue frame D2</b> (<i>residents</i>) (fp) " (fs) "</p>	<p><b>Issue frame E</b> (<i>housing corporation + part of residents</i>) (fp) " (fs) "Great Improvement Plus"; focus on extending the lifespan of the houses with 25 years</p>	
<p><b>Issue frame B</b> (<i>residents' association(s) + diversity of cultural and historical organizations</i>) (fp) houses need maintenance, housing supply is insufficiently differentiated, lack of houses for the elderly (fs) NO demolition; renovation and restoration, taking into account the cultural-historical and urban value of the houses and taking into account the interests of residents</p>						



# APPENDIX D

## Excerpt analysis relational narratives throughout time

Relational narratives throughout time →

	2006–2007	2008	2009	2010	2015
Labels	<p><b>Conflicts &amp; friction</b></p> <p>enemies; fighting; animosities; negativity; acting independent; blocking information</p>	<p><b>Resisting collaboration: adversarial relations</b></p> <p>distrust; critical; demarcating boundaries; foreclosing information</p>	<p><b>Cumulating feelings of commonality/unity</b></p> <p>need to figure things out together; becoming more familiar with each other; open; connected; constructive; improving relations</p>	<p><b>Maintaining feelings of commonality</b></p> <p>we are in this together; trust; mutual respect</p>	<p><b>Tension builds up</b></p> <p>tension; growing distance</p>
Theoretical	<p>Emphasis on maintaining individual control, on autonomy and protecting own identities.</p>	<p>Emphasis on maintaining individual control, on autonomy and protecting own identities.</p>	<p>Emphasis on sharing control, on commonality, on unity</p>	<p>Emphasis on sharing control, on commonality, on unity</p>	<p>Moving towards autonomy, protecting own identities.</p>
Illustrative excerpts	<p>"This was at the height of negativity. Stakeholders didn't speak to each other. There were a lot of animosities between parties. [...] At some point there was no contact at all between the director of the housing association and the chair of the residents' association. [...] Their relation was manifestly sick. [...]" (filmmaker)</p> <p>"Well, simply said: we were fighting. We were fighting a battle. And it was quite fierce. The knives were out. [...] And we needed to win that</p>	<p>"... there was a lot of fuzz about whether the residents could take part in the project group. 'If we openly share information as a housing association, then we do not want residents to sit at the table'. I have that on video, that [the director of the housing association] said: 'We don't want them to sit at the table!'" (filmmaker)</p> <p>"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</p>	<p>"In any case, doing research about the cultural-historical value of the area [within the context of developing a joint restructuring approach], was for residents... well, they were immediately enthusiastic about this, because it acknowledged their view. And Havensteder [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 support, well, than we benefit from this too'. So, all parties were like: 'this cultural-historical aspect,</p>	<p>"The mindset now is: 'we are going to do this together with residents!' instead of: 'we are going to do this in our way and residents need to accept that'... We all know there are different interests, but together we search solutions. From time to time, our ideas will diverge but we will always get back together." (resident)</p> <p>"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</p>	<p>I notice that the collaboration between residents and the housing association is tensed. Look, off course residents and the housing associations have different interests. Professionals have different interests [...]. Residents think about the short term, about living there, but the housing association also needs to think about who they want to live in the area, about target groups etc. I feel like the differences between the housing association and the residents are getting bigger again." (municipality)</p>

Relational narratives throughout time →		2008	2009	2013	2015
2006–2007	battle, period. [...] So, then it is a matter of who has the necessary stamina.” (resident)	not meet anymore because they didn't want to talk to each other anymore. [...] So then we've built on 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 <i>distrusting, very critical</i> [...]” (municipality)	<i>this is something we can talk about with each other</i> ’. And <i>working together</i> on this aspect has, I think, ... well, parties could become more <i>familiar</i> with each other, each others' tone, each other's attitude. And slowly, step-by-step, relations got <i>better</i> [more connected].” (municipality)	has grown... and eventually I can say that, apparently, throughout the years, <i>trust and mutual respect</i> has increased enough to harness such individual incidents.” (expert)	“What I've noticed is that, the housing association, well, [first] thought like: 'we need to involve the residents as much as possible' and, later, like: 'we do not need to go into too much detail, otherwise we keep running around and, well, it is hard to explain we have no money.”
	“The housing association is the enemy and you only get what you want if you <i>fight</i> , [residents' attitude was] really based on a <i>mindset dominated by a culture of conflict</i> . [...] Actually, they [residents] want to do our job, they want to be in charge. At a certain point, they [residents] were exploring if they could disconnect Vreewijk from the housing association. [...]” (housing association)	“There was <i>tension</i> . [...] Wanting to record everything. [...] ... real <i>distrust</i> , which became visible in this way. Battening up everything. <i>Endless sessions and meetings about: 'what are we talking about here at this table?'</i> [...] And what made it even more difficult was the continuous call of the residents for more openness and transparency and the initial refusal of the housing association to share information.” (filmmaker)	“And 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 <i>relations improved</i> and how collaboration <i>improved</i> .” (filmmaker)	“In the fall of 2015 it became clear that the way the pilots were financed was no longer feasible. And then the housing association [Havensteder] 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. [...]”	“In the fall of 2015 it became clear that the way the pilots were financed was no longer feasible. And then the housing association [Havensteder] 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. [...]”

Illustrative excerpts

Relational narratives throughout time →																				



# Summaries



# Summary in Dutch

## AANLEIDING, FOCUS EN DOEL VAN DIT ONDERZOEK

Het landschap van besturen en beleidsvorming is de laatste jaren sterk veranderd: steeds vaker zoeken overheidspartijen de samenwerking op met burgers, maatschappelijke en/of private partijen om vorm te geven aan beleid. Collaborative governance is zo'n samenwerkingsgerichte vorm van governance: de term verwijst naar die governance processen waarin verschillende belanghebbenden (over organisationele en groeps grenzen heen) zoeken naar een gezamenlijke aanpak t.a.v. een beleidskwestie die eenieder aan tafel aanbelangt. De typering van collaborative governance als een 'proces' duidt op het dynamische, procesmatige karakter ervan. Terwijl de duiding van collaborative governance als dynamisch en procesmatig gemeengoed is in de literatuur, is er vooralsnog weinig empirisch onderzoek dat die dynamiek en evolutie in collaborative governance processen verkent. Dit onderzoek wil hierop inspelen door zich precies hierin te verdiepen: de focus komt te liggen op het verloop en de dynamiek in collaborative governance, c.q. op hoe en waarom aspecten van collaborative governance veranderen over de tijd heen. Inzicht hierin kan een beter begrip opleveren over hoe samenwerkingsgroepen presteren over de tijd heen, van begin tot eind.

Meer specifiek focust dit onderzoek op het verkennen van de dynamiek in relaties tussen belanghebbenden in een collaborative governance proces, c.q. de relationele dynamiek, en het samenspel hiervan met de dynamiek in issue framing. *Relationele dynamiek verwijst in dit onderzoek naar de dynamiek in de wijze waarop relationele partners hun relaties ervaren en gezamenlijk betekenis geven. Relaties worden gezien als 'fenomenologische realiteiten'. Het zijn werelden van betekenissen die relationele partners, al interacterend, samen creëren en construeren.* Dat betekent ook dat deze betekenissen veranderlijk zijn en nooit 'vastliggen'. De klemtoon ligt in dit onderzoek dus niet op de vorm van relaties (bijvoorbeeld het al dan niet hebben van contact, of de frequentie van interacties), of op de normen en regels die relaties structureren (bijvoorbeeld de mate van vertrouwen in relaties), maar expliciet op hoe relationele partners hun relaties ervaren en op de intersubjectieve betekenisgeving die plaatsvindt wanneer gerelateerd wordt. *Issue framing dynamiek* dan verwijst naar *de dynamiek in de wijze waarop belanghebbenden de beleidskwestie die centraal staat, bijvoorbeeld de herinrichting van een straat of het ontwikkelen van een perceel in een stadswijk, definiëren en begrijpen. Issue frames worden in dit onderzoek begrepen als tijdelijke, intern coherente interpretaties die weergeven hoe belanghebbenden de inhoud van een beleidskwestie op een bepaalde manier begrijpen en definiëren, daarbij*

*bepaalde aspecten over- en onderbelichten, en vanuit die interpretatie een handelingsvoorkeur hebben voor bepaalde oplossingen en acties.*

Zowel de relationele dynamiek als de issue framing dynamiek van een samenwerkingsgroep zijn cruciaal voor het succes en de duurzaamheid van een collaboratief governance proces. De nadruk in dit onderzoek ligt weliswaar vooral op het verkennen van de relationele dynamiek. Hierop voortbouwend is het doel van dit onderzoek inzicht te verkrijgen in en het verkennen van de relationele dynamiek in collaborative governance processen en het samenspel van die relationele dynamiek met de issue framing dynamiek. De volgende meerledige vraag staat daarbij centraal:

*Hoe en waarom evolueren relaties tussen belanghebbenden in collaborative governance processen en hoe speelt deze relationele dynamiek in op de issue framing dynamiek?*

Om een antwoord te formuleren op deze onderzoeksvraag, worden in dit onderzoek drie opeenvolgende stappen genomen. De eerste stap in dit onderzoek richt zich op de vraag hoe de relationele dynamiek tussen belanghebbenden en het samenspel hiervan met de issue framing dynamiek op een systematische manier onderzocht kan worden. De focus ligt hier op het zoeken en vinden van theoretische en analytische houvast die in staat stelt de relationele dynamiek en de issue framing dynamiek die zich afspeelt in een concreet collaborative governance project te analyseren. De tweede stap is methodologisch van aard en pakt de vraag op hoe de dynamiek, evolutie en veranderlijkheid in relaties en frames zo goed mogelijk 'gevangen' en 'opgevolgd' kan worden in onderzoek. De nadruk op dynamiek en veranderlijkheid in dit onderzoek veronderstelt een onderzoeksbenadering die inzichtelijk kan maken hoe en waarom relaties en issue frames veranderen over de tijd heen en hoe beide dynamieken op elkaar inspelen. Dit veronderstelt het ontwikkelen van een longitudinaal perspectief op relaties en frames. In een laatste stap, de empirische stap, worden het uitgewerkte analytische kader en de ontwikkelde onderzoeksbenadering gebruikt om twee concrete empirische casussen te onderzoeken. Dit is de laatste stap in dit onderzoek, en stelt in staat een antwoord te formuleren op bovenstaande onderzoeksvraag.

## **SETTING VAN HET ONDERZOEK**

De empirische focus in dit onderzoek ligt op collaborative governance processen in het domein van stedelijke planning. Stedelijke planning wordt hier benaderd als een praktisch, interactief project om de ruimtelijke en sociale aspecten van steden of stedelijke samen-

levingen te verbeteren. In Nederland is stedelijke planning voornamelijk een overheidsopgave, en het Nederlands planningsysteem is internationaal bekend als een robuust en effectief systeem, gekenmerkt door een ‘omvangrijk integrale benadering’. In de voorbije decennia is binnen de stedelijke planning in Nederland, en daarbuiten, een verschuiving zichtbaar van plannen *vóór* de samenleving, vanuit top-down opgestelde blauwdrukken, naar plannen *samen* met lokale belanghebbenden. In de planningstheorie wordt die aanpak vaak aangeduid als collaborative planning: een aanpak waarbij planologen samen met bewoners en andere lokale partijen een planningsvraagstuk oppakken en gezamenlijk oplossingen creëren.

In dit onderzoek zijn twee collaborative planningsprocessen onderzocht. De eerste casus betreft de stedelijke herstructurering van Katendrecht, een voormalig havengebied in de gemeente Rotterdam (verder: casus Katendrecht). De tweede betreft de grootschalige verbeteraanpak van Vreewijk, eveneens een deelgebied in de gemeente Rotterdam (verder: casus Vreewijk). Deze casussen zijn geselecteerd omdat (1) ze beide een ‘collaboratieve’ aanpak hanteerden t.a.v. het planproces, waarbij verschillende belanghebbenden face-to-face bijeenkwamen om een gezamenlijke aanpak uit te werken, (2) over allebei de cases veel informatie beschikbaar is waardoor ontwikkelingen in het proces makkelijker gereconstrueerd kunnen worden en (3) beide projecten bij het begin van dit onderzoek nog aan de gang waren, wat het mogelijk maakte de relationele dynamiek en issue framing dynamiek niet alleen retrospectief, maar ook in ‘real time’ te observeren.

## **STRUCTUUR VAN HET PROEFSCHRIFT**

Dit proefschrift bevat, naast het inleidend en concluderend hoofdstuk, vijf hoofdstukken (hoofdstuk 2 t.e.m. 6) die de kern van dit onderzoek vormen. Samen nemen deze hoofdstukken de drie stappen zoals hierboven omschreven.

Hoofdstuk 2 omvat de theoretische stap in dit onderzoek. Om in staat te zijn het dynamische karakter van de relaties tussen belanghebbenden en hun issue framing in kaart te brengen, en het samenspel tussen beiden, is een theoretisch perspectief en een conceptueel vocabulaire nodig dat expliciet de aandacht vestigt op de dynamiek en veranderlijkheid van deze twee verschijnselen. Waar de literatuur weliswaar erkent dat relationele dynamiek en issue framing dynamiek cruciaal zijn voor het welslagen van een collaborative governance proces, ontbreekt vooralsnog de nodige theoretische en analytische houvast om deze dynamiek op een systematische manier te analyseren. Hoofdstuk 2 werkt daarom twee analytische sporen uit die gericht zijn op het in kaart brengen van, respectievelijk, de relationele dynamiek en de issue framing dynamiek. Het combineren van beide analytische

sporen resulteert in een analytisch raamwerk dat de theoretische basis vormt in dit onderzoek (zie Figuur 2.1 in Hoofdstuk 2).

Hoofdstuk 3 en 4 zijn beide methodologische hoofdstukken en zetten aldus de methodologische stap die deel uitmaakt van dit onderzoek. Willen we het procesmatige karakter van relaties en frames op een goede manier te pakken krijgen, dan vereist dat een onderzoeksbenadering die helpt om expliciet in te zoomen op verandering, beweging en dynamiek – met andere woorden, die helpt om de ‘flux’ in relaties en frames op te volgen. Deze focus impliceert m.a.w. een procesgerichte onderzoeksbenadering. In hoofdstukken 3 en 4 wordt d.m.v. een verkenning van de ontologische en epistemologische principes van deze procesgerichtheid in kaart gebracht aan welke methodologische principes een procesgerichte onderzoeksbenadering dient te voldoen (zie Hoofdstuk 4). Met deze leidende principes in het achterhoofd, is een onderzoeksbenadering ontwikkeld die in staat moet stellen greep te krijgen op de veranderlijkheid en beweging in relaties en frames. Het uitwerken van een dergelijke procesgerichte onderzoeksbenadering vereist een creatieve inzet van methodes en tools, een die voorbij gaat aan de geijkte paden in kwalitatief onderzoek. Dit wordt in de literatuur ook wel aangeduid als methodologische bricolage: een methodologische praktijk waarin verschillende methoden en tools, vanuit verschillende disciplines, worden samengebracht en aangepast om tegemoet te komen aan de specifieke vereisten van de onderzoeksvraag. Aldus wordt in hoofdstuk 3, ‘al bricolierend’, een procesgerichte onderzoeksbenadering uitgewerkt: verschillende, zowel standaard, als meer innovatieve methodes en tools worden daarbij op zo’n manier getweakt en ingezet dat ze meer proces-sensitiviteit toelaten (zie Hoofdstuk 3, zie Tabel 7.1 in Hoofdstuk 7). Het daadwerkelijke gebruik van deze methodes en tools, en de proces-sensitiviteit die dit oproept bij de onderzoeker, brachten zowel waarden als uitdagingen van een procesgerichte onderzoeksbenadering aan het licht. Deze worden uitgebreid besproken in hoofdstuk 3 en 4.

Hoofdstukken 5 en 6 bespreken de bevindingen van de empirische studies die onderdeel zijn van dit onderzoek. In deze hoofdstukken wordt dus de laatste stap genomen, de empirische stap. Het ontwikkelde analytisch raamwerk, zoals gepresenteerd in hoofdstuk 2, en de procesgerichte onderzoeksbenadering, zoals voorgesteld in hoofdstuk 3, vormen de theoretische en methodologische basis voor deze empirische studies. In een eerste studie, over het collaborative governance proces t.a.v. de gebiedsontwikkeling van Katendrecht, wordt ingezoomd op de relationele dynamiek tussen belanghebbenden. Aan de hand van het analytisch raamwerk wordt in kaart gebracht hoe de relaties in dit samenwerkingsverband ontwikkelen. Daarnaast wordt geanalyseerd welke gebeurtenissen bepalend zijn geweest voor het verloop van deze relationele dynamiek. Hiermee wordt een antwoord geformuleerd op het eerste deel van de meerledige onderzoeksvraag, namelijk: hoe en

waarom relaties evolueren (zie Hoofdstuk 5). In de tweede empirische studie over het collaborative governance proces ten aanzien van de verbeteraanpak in Vreewijk, wordt de scope verbreed en wordt, naast de relationele dynamiek, ook de issue framing dynamiek geanalyseerd. Hier wordt dus ook gekeken hoe de issue frames zich over de tijd heen ontwikkelen. Daarnaast wordt 'opgespoord' hoe beide dynamieken zich tot elkaar verhouden. Dit stelt ons in staat om ook de tweede helft van de onderzoeksvraag te beantwoorden: hoe relationele dynamiek en issue framing dynamiek op elkaar inspelen (zie Hoofdstuk 6).

In het conclusiehoofdstuk wordt gereflecteerd op de (meer)waarde van de procesgerichte insteek van dit onderzoek, zowel theoretisch als methodologisch. Daarnaast worden de empirische bevindingen uit de twee empirische studies met elkaar verbonden om zodoende een antwoord te formuleren op de centrale onderzoeksvraag.

## **RESULTATEN EN CONCLUSIES**

Dit laatste onderdeel vat de resultaten en conclusies van dit onderzoek samen. Eerst wordt stilgestaan bij de theoretische en methodologische resultaten en conclusies. Meer specifiek reflecteert dit onderdeel over de bijdrage en waarde van de procesgerichte insteek van dit onderzoek, zowel vanuit theoretisch als methodologisch oogpunt, voor het bestuderen van (relationele) dynamiek. Vervolgens worden de empirische bevindingen en conclusies besproken.

### **De waarde van een procesgerichte insteek voor het bestuderen van (relationele) dynamiek in collaborative governance processen**

Het centrale doel in dit onderzoek is begrip ontwikkelen over de relationele dynamiek tussen belanghebbenden in collaborative governance processen, en over het samenspel van die dynamiek met de issue framing dynamiek. Daarbij ligt de nadruk in dit onderzoek vooral op kennisontwikkeling over relationele dynamiek. Deze focus op dynamiek veronderstelt een procesgerichtheid, d.w.z. een blik die zich expliciet richt op evolutie, verandering en beweging. Dit, op zijn beurt, impliceert een procesgerichte onderzoeksbenadering, zowel in theoretische, als methodologische zin. Een groot deel van dit onderzoek richt zich daarom op het ontwikkelen van een analytische en methodologische benadering die in staat stelt het dynamische en procesmatige karakter van relaties en issue frames te vangen (zie Hoofdstukken 2, 3 en 4).

Theoretisch gezien vereist de procesgerichte insteek van dit onderzoek dat het analytisch raamwerk verankerd is in een procestheorie, d.w.z. een theorie die bestaat uit uitspraken over de dynamiek van interpersoonlijke relaties, en over hoe en waarom interpersoonlijke relaties veranderen. Het analytisch raamwerk van dit onderzoek, en meer specifiek het analytische spoor t.a.v. de relationele dynamiek, is geworteld in de relational dialectics theorie, een theorie die ontwikkeld is en vaak toegepast wordt in het domein van interpersoonlijke communicatie theorie en community psychologie. De kernaanname in relational dialectics theorie is dat interpersoonlijke relaties in essentie draaien rond het dynamische, steeds doorgaande, samenspel tussen twee tegenstrijdige, maar tegelijkertijd elkaar niet-uitsluitende 'waarden' – ook wel aangeduid als dialectische spanningen. Een voorbeeld van zo'n dialectische spanning is het samenspel tussen de relationele waarden 'stabiliteit' en 'verandering'. Relational dialectics theorie stelt dat relateren uiteindelijk draait rond de manier waarop relationele partners betekenis geven aan dat constante samenspel tussen waarden en bepaald wordt door hoe ze omgaan met dergelijke dialectische spanningen. Relationele partners kunnen voor een bepaalde periode een specifieke waarde, bijv. stabiliteit, de boventoon laten voeren in hun relatie, of ze kunnen 'segmenteren': in bepaalde situaties is stabiliteit de dominante waarde in de relatie, in andere situaties net verandering. Hieruit volgend, is een andere kernaanname binnen relational dialectics theory dat relateren gezien wordt als een ongedefinieerd, altijd veranderend proces zonder duidelijk eindpunt of noodzakelijk verloop. Relateren moet met andere woorden niet gezien worden als een rechtlijnig pad naar steeds meer verbondenheid, maar eerder als een altijd doorgaande zoektocht naar hoe verschillende tegenstrijdige relationele waarden, c.q. dialectische spanningen, betekenis krijgen in relaties.

Relational dialectics theorie benadert relaties dus expliciet als dynamische fenomenen (zie Hoofdstukken 2, 5 en 6). Hierdoor stelt dit theoretisch perspectief in staat een alternatief begrip te ontwikkelen van relaties: de focus ligt op relaties in hun oneindige veranderlijkheid, en hun evolutie en dynamiek, eerder dan op relaties als statisch of als stabiele vorm of structuur. Expliciet de blik richten op veranderlijkheid (als denkkader) stelt ook in staat de veranderlijkheid in sociale verschijnselen, hier de relaties tussen belanghebbenden en de issue frames, daadwerkelijk méér te zien. In dit onderzoek is, dankzij die gerichtheid op proces en dynamiek, bijvoorbeeld zichtbaar geworden hoe relationele betekenisgeving voortdurend onderhevig is aan verandering, en hoe gebeurtenissen zelden in absolute zin effect hebben op relationele betekenisgeving maar eerder op cumulatieve wijze: de gebeurtenissen stapelen zich op en gezamenlijk leiden ze tot verandering in relationele betekenisgeving (zie Hoofdstuk 5).

Een procesgerichte insteek, c.q. een expliciete focus op dynamiek, vereist ook een methodologische benadering die de aandacht vestigt op beweging, verandering en evolutie.

In hoofdstuk 4 worden de methodologische principes besproken van een procesgerichte onderzoeksbenadering. Deze omvatten: (1) nauwe en intensieve betrokkenheid van de onderzoeker in de proces(sen) die onderzocht worden, (2) lange termijn betrokkenheid, en (3) polycontextuele inbedding, c.q. betrokkenheid van de onderzoeker in processen (contexten) waarin het proces waarop het onderzoek gericht is, is ingebed (bijvoorbeeld ten aanzien van het bestuderen van een collaboratief proces waarin verschillende organisaties betrokken zijn, is het belangrijk dat een onderzoeker ook minimaal begrip ontwikkelt van de intra-organisationale processen die van invloed zijn/kunnen zijn op het collaboratieve proces)(zie Hoofdstuk 4). Deze methodologische principes liggen ten grondslag van de procesgerichte onderzoeksbenadering zoals uitgewerkt in hoofdstuk 3 (zie Hoofdstuk 3). Deze onderzoeksbenadering bouwt voornamelijk op participerende observaties, narratieve interviews en het gebruik van twee visuele tools: diagrammen en tijdslijnen (zie Hoofdstuk, Tabel 7.1). De combinatie van deze methoden en tools maakt het mogelijk, om ‘van binnenuit’ en ‘van dichtbij’ een caleidoscopisch en dynamisch begrip te ontwikkelen van de interpersoonlijke relaties tussen belanghebbenden (zie Hoofdstuk 3).

Een belangrijke tool die deel uitmaakt van deze onderzoeksbenadering is de tijdslijn, een visuele methode die erop gericht is het tijdsverloop in het verhaal van respondenten op een summiere en overzichtelijke manier te presenteren op verschillende dimensies (zie Appendix A). Zodoende maken tijdslijnen een langlopend proces inzichtelijk, zonder daarbij de meerlagigheid van het proces af te vlakken. Naast de beoogde doelen t.a.v. het gebruik van de tijdslijn in dit onderzoek – presenteren, afdichten en verdiepen van verhalen - blijkt de tijdslijn eveneens een krachtig instrument om zowel respondenten en onderzoekers aan te zetten tot reflexiviteit. D.w.z. de tijdslijn kan een krachtig (interventie)middel zijn om te reflecteren op de eigen positie en rol in het collaborative governance proces, en in de wijze waarop eigen aannames t.a.v. het proces en de relaties vorm geven aan de acties die ondernomen worden en dus de gevolgen van die acties op lange termijn medebepalen. Meer specifiek geeft een tijdslijn inzicht in de ontstaansgeschiedenis van een collaboratief governance proces. Deze vorm van reflexiviteit wordt in dit proefschrift aangeduid als historisch-bewuste reflexiviteit (zie Hoofdstuk 4).

## **Relationele dynamiek, en samenspel met de issue framing dynamiek**

Hoofdstukken 5 en 6 brengen de relationele dynamiek van respectievelijk de casus Katendrecht en de casus Vreewijk in kaart. Deze empirische studies brengen aan het licht dat de interpersoonlijke relaties tussen belanghebbenden in deze samenwerkingsgroepen draaien rond het dynamische samenspel tussen twee waardenclusters: een waardencluster waarin autonomie en individualiteit de boventoon voeren en, een waardencluster waarin gemeen-

schappelijkheid en samenhangigheid de boventoon voeren. Beide studies wijzen verder uit dat deze waardenclusters elkaar, meestal, volgtijdelijk afwisselen. D.w.z. dat in sommige periodes relaties vooral draaien rond (beschermen van) autonomie en individualiteit, om vervolgens 'afgelost' te worden door periodes waarin er in relaties een eenzijdige nadruk is op gemeenschappelijkheid en samenhangigheid. Een belangrijke bevinding rondom deze cyclische afwisseling van waarden is dat – tegen de verwachting in – periodes waarin relaties bouwen op waarden als autonomie en individualiteit door belanghebbenden niet perse als negatief beschouwd worden. Veeleer geven belanghebbenden aan dat de tijdelijke nadruk op deze waarden ook potentie heeft in het proces, bijvoorbeeld voor het oplossen van onproductieve verstrengelingen van belangen en/of projecten (zie Hoofdstuk 5).

De casus Katendrecht laat bovendien zien dat, wanneer de verschillende belanghebbenden erin slagen beide waardenclusters te integreren in de wijze waarop ze hun relaties betekenis geven, c.q. erin slagen in hun relaties elkaars eigen identiteit te erkennen en tegelijkertijd te verbinden in gemeenschappelijkheid, zonder dat dit als tegenstrijdig ervaren wordt, dit synergie teweeg brengt in de relaties tussen belanghebbenden (zie Hoofdstuk 5).

Deze bevindingen tonen dat zowel relaties die bouwen op autonomie en individualiteit, als relaties die gebaseerd zijn op gemeenschappelijkheid en samenhangigheid potentieel waardevol kunnen zijn in samenwerking. Dit gegeven kan geduid worden als het bestaan van een 'relationele' paradox in samenwerking: de dominantie van een van beide waardenclusters in een relatie kunnen de samenwerking zowel faciliteren als frustreren. Dit suggereert dat, in tegenstelling tot wat vaak in de literatuur wordt beweerd, het niet zaak is van zich blindelings te richten op het bouwen van steeds méér verbondenheid, maar dat het veeleer zaak is de spanning tussen deze ogenschijnlijk tegenstrijdige waardenclusters te erkennen en zich te realiseren dat beide potentieel waarde hebben voor het collaborative governance proces.

Naast het in kaart brengen van de relationele dynamiek an sich, c.q. van hoe relaties veranderen door de tijd heen, wordt in de casus Katendrecht ook geanalyseerd welke gebeurtenissen bepalend zijn geweest voor wanneer en de wijze waarop de interpersoonlijke relaties tussen belanghebbenden veranderen. Deze studie laat zien dat er vijf type gebeurtenissen zijn die herhaaldelijk in verband worden gebracht met verandering in de interpersoonlijke relaties tussen belanghebbenden: (1) managementstrategieën gericht op het faciliteren van de samenwerking: dit betreffen de doelgerichte inspanningen om belanghebbenden samen te brengen, (2) stedelijke planningsactiviteiten en interventies, c.q. de tastbare planningsactiviteiten in de wijk, (3) gebeurtenissen gerelateerd aan de inhoudelijke kwesties die ter discussie staan, (4) gebeurtenissen die betrekking hebben op de groepsamenstelling en/of groepsdynamiek en, tot slot, (5) contextuele gebeurtenis-

sen: dit zijn gebeurtenissen die niet direct gerelateerd zijn aan het proces zelf, maar toch bepalend zijn voor de relaties, bijv. politieke machtswisseling (zie Hoofdstuk 5).

Een opvallende bevinding t.a.v. waarom relaties veranderen is dat geen enkele gebeurtenis in absolute zin van invloed is op de interpersoonlijke relaties tussen belanghebbenden. Veeleer is het de opeenstapeling en het volgtijdelijk accumuleren van verschillende type gebeurtenissen die ertoe leiden dat relaties veranderen. Met andere woorden: iedere gebeurtenis daagt op een latente manier de geldende relationele betekenisgeving uit, maar het is pas in het samenspel met andere gebeurtenissen dat die verandering manifest wordt en zich doorzet in de relationele betekenisgeving van belanghebbenden (zie Hoofdstuk 5).

De studie van de casus Katendrecht laat verder zien dat – in verhouding tot alle andere type gebeurtenissen – gebeurtenissen die betrekking hebben op de groepssamenstelling en/of -dynamiek herhaaldelijk deel uitmaken van het geheel van gebeurtenissen dat aanleiding geeft tot een verandering in de relaties tussen belanghebbenden. Dit geldt vooral voor gebeurtenissen gerelateerd aan het toetreden of uittreden van personen in de bestaande groep. Een opvallende observatie hier is dat het effect hiervan niet wordt toegeschreven aan de persoon zelf, maar eerder aan de ‘match’ van die persoon met de andere groepsleden. Dit suggereert dat het effect dat een bepaalde persoon heeft op de interpersoonlijke relaties en het collaborative governance proces, samenhangt met hoe hij/zij ‘past’ in de groep. Deze bevinding nuanceert het heersende idee dat bepaalde personen, omwille van hun persoonlijkheid, vaardigheden en competenties de samenwerking kunnen ‘maken’ of ‘breken’. Eerder wordt de wijze waarop een bepaald persoon de samenwerking kleurt, relationeel of situationeel bepaald (zie Hoofdstuk 5).

In hoofdstuk 6, over de casus Vreewijk, wordt, naast het in kaart brengen van de relationele dynamiek, ook geanalyseerd hoe deze relationele dynamiek zich verhoudt tot de issue framing dynamiek. Deze studie wijst uit dat noch de relationele dynamiek, noch de issue framing dynamiek in absolute zin bepalend zijn voor het verloop van het collaborative governance proces. Veeleer varieert de mate waarin een van deze dynamieken, of beide, bepalend zijn voor de samenwerking doorheen verschillende fasen van het proces (zie Hoofdstuk 6). De bevindingen bevestigen bestaande inzichten rondom het samenspel tussen de relationele en issue framing dynamiek in collaborative governance processen: soms is de relationele dynamiek doorslaggevend voor het verloop van het proces, soms de issue framing dynamiek. Op weer andere momenten werken beide dynamieken – op cyclische wijze – op elkaar in: ze versterken elkaar. Deze studie suggereert echter ook dat welke van deze patronen de bovenhand krijgt, samenhangt met de fase waarin een collaborative governance proces zich bevindt, d.w.z. de wijze waarop ze samenspelen varieert naargelang het proces zich in de initiatie-, onderhandelings- of implementatiefase

bevindt. Gebaseerd op de observaties t.a.v. dat samenspel in de casus Vreewijk, worden vijf theoretische verwachtingen geformuleerd (zie Hoofdstuk 6).

Specifiek m.b.t. de rol van de issue framing dynamiek wijst de empirische studie in hoofdstuk 6 ook uit dat het convergeren van de verschillende issue frames zowel een catalyserend effect kan hebben, als barrières kan opwerpen. Het uitwerken van een gedeelde visie is een keerpunt in het collaborative governance proces in Vreewijk: het vastleggen hiervan bestendigt de relaties tussen stakeholders en heeft de belanghebbenden houvast voor het ondernemen van collectieve acties. Niettemin wijst deze studie ook uit dat het vastleggen van een gedeelde visie ook barrières kan opwerpen in een collaborative governance proces. De gedeelde visie wordt dan een vast ijkpunt, een keurslijf, die inhoudelijke discussies in de kiem smoort. Wanneer al te rigide vastgehouden wordt aan die gedeelde visie, kan het proces dus net gehinderd worden, i.p.v. gefaciliteerd.

# Summary in English

## MOTIVATION, FOCUS AND RESEARCH AIM OF THIS STUDY

In the past few decades, a major change has occurred in the landscape of governing and policy making: making and implementing public policies have increasingly become endeavours that governmental actors undertake collaboratively with other players, such as citizens, social and/or private actors. Collaborative governance refers to this trend towards more open and collaborative forms of policymaking: the term denotes those processes in which a variety of stakeholders (across organizational and/or group boundaries) work together to develop a joint approach to address a public issue of common concern. The 'process' element is notable here; it defines collaborative governance as a dynamic, evolving phenomenon. Yet, although scholars acknowledge the dynamic and processual nature of collaborative governance, empirical studies that systematically explore this dynamism are relatively scarce. This study responds to this gap and explicitly turns the attention to the dynamic and processual nature of collaborative governance, to how and why collaboratives change over time. Insights herein can give us a more complete view of how a collaborative actually performs over time: from its inception to its culmination.

More specifically, this study focuses on developing an understanding of the dynamism in stakeholders' relationships, e.g. the relating dynamics, and on the way these are connected to the dynamism in stakeholders' issue framing. In this study, *stakeholders' relating dynamics* are conceptualized as *the changes and evolution in the way those involved in the collaborative governance process 'live through', i.e. experience, and come to give meaning to their relationships. Relationships are considered as 'phenomenological realities': they are 'worlds of meanings' that relational partners, through their interactions, jointly create and construct.* Relationships continue to unfold through these interactions and are, thus, ongoing and dynamic. This implies that the focus in this study is not on the morphology of relationships (such as mapping the absence/presence of a specific type of relationship, or the frequency of interactions), nor is it on the norms and rules that structure relationships (such as the level of trust), rather it is on the way relational partners 'live through' relationships and on interpersonal meaning making of stakeholders' relationships. *Issue framing dynamics*, then, refer to *the dynamism in the way stakeholders define and interpret the policy issue that is being dealt with in a collaborative governance process, such as the renovation of a street, or the development of an urban area. Issues frames are understood 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.*

Both stakeholders' relating dynamics and issue framing dynamics of a collaborative are, in collaborative governance literature, 'process' dimensions that are considered critical to the success and durability of a collaborative governance process. In this study, however, we predominantly focus on stakeholders' relating dynamics. Following on from this, the aim of this study is to understand and explore stakeholders' relating dynamics and their connection to the issue framing dynamics. The research question that guides this study is:

*How and why do stakeholder relations evolve over time in collaborative governance processes, and how do relating dynamics interplay with issue framing dynamics?*

In order to formulate an answer to this research question, this study takes three consecutive steps. As a first – theoretical – step, this study explores how stakeholders' relating dynamics and its connection with issue framing dynamics can be systematically analysed. Here, the focus is on searching and finding the theoretical and analytical grip necessary to analyse stakeholders' relating dynamics and issue framing dynamics in a concrete, collaborative governance process. The next step considers how, methodologically, to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of stakeholders' relationships and issue frames. The overarching analytical and empirical focus in this thesis on dynamism and change implies a research approach that allows to gain insight into how and why stakeholders' relationships and issue frames change over time and into how they are connected. This implies developing a longitudinal view of these phenomena. In a final, empirical, step, the developed analytical framework and research approach are used to study two concrete, empirical cases. This is the last and final step in this study and allows the formulation of an answer on the abovementioned research question.

## **SETTING OF THE STUDY**

The empirical focus of this study is on collaborative governance processes in urban planning. Urban planning is here conceived as a practical and interactive project to improve spatial and social aspects of cities, urban areas, or urban society. In the Netherlands, urban planning is mainly a governmental preoccupation, and the Dutch planning system is internationally renowned as a robust and effective system, characterized by a comprehensive integral approach. In the past few decades, urban planning in the Netherlands and abroad has seen a shift from a top-down, rationalistic, technical-instrumental approach to planning, i.e. planning *for* society, towards more horizontal forms of planning, i.e. planning *with* society. In planning theory these approaches to planning are generally referred to as collaborative planning practices, which are practices in which urban planners, together

with citizens and other relevant stakeholders seek consensus on a planning issue of common concern.

This study empirically investigates two specific collaborative planning processes. The first case concerns the urban (re)development of Katendrecht, a former harbour area in the city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands (the Katendrecht case). The second case concerns the large-scale improvement of the Vreewijk area, also part of the city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands (the Vreewijk case). These cases were selected because (1) both were clear cases of collaborative governance, since in both a diversity of stakeholders meets face-to-face with the aim to develop a joint approach; (2) both had richly documented histories: many secondary sources were available, making both processes accessible and transparently observable; and (3) both projects had, at the time of case selection, still some years ahead as a collaborative, enabling the examination and observation of stakeholders' relating dynamics and issue framing dynamics not just retrospectively, but also in 'real time'.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

Besides the introductory and concluding chapter, this thesis consists of five chapters (chapters 2 to 6), which form the core of this research. Together these chapters take the three steps as described above.

Chapter 2 covers the theoretical step of this research. To allow for a more dynamic understanding of stakeholders' relationships and issue frames, a theoretical perspective and conceptual vocabulary is needed that explicitly focuses on the dynamic and processual character of these phenomena. Whereas collaborative governance literature acknowledges that stakeholders' relating dynamics and issue framing dynamics are critical for the success of a collaborative governance process, it offers nor strong theoretical grip nor analytical tools to systematically study these dynamics. Hence, in chapter 2, two analytical tracks are developed to analyse respectively stakeholders' relating dynamics and issue framing dynamics. The combination of these two analytical tracks results in an analytical framework that forms the theoretical basis of this research (see Figure 2.1 in Chapter 2).

Both chapter 3 and 4 are methodological chapters and, as such, cover the methodological part of this research. Coming to grips with the dynamic and processual nature of stakeholders' relationships and frames requires a research approach that allows to explicitly focus on change, motion and dynamism – in other words, that allows to capture the 'flux' in relationships and issue frames. This focus implies a process-oriented research approach. Through exploring the ontological and epistemological principles of such an approach,

chapter 4 sets out which methodological principles such a process orientation requires (see Chapter 4). Keeping in mind these guiding principles, a research approach is developed that allows to come to grips with motion and change in stakeholders' relationships and frames. This implies the creative use of methods and tools that go beyond the well-worn paths in qualitative research. In qualitative research literature, this practice is often referred to as methodological 'bricolage': a methodological practice in which different tools and methods, across disciplinary boundaries, are amalgamated and adapted to the specific demands of the inquiry at hand. Hence, chapter 3 presents a bricolaged process-oriented research approach: different, both standard and more innovative methods and tools are tweaked and used in such a way that they allow for more processual sensitivity (see Chapter 3, see Table 7.1 in Chapter 7). Applying this combination of tools and methods in practice, and the processual sensitivity this instils, brings to light both the added value as well as the challenges of a process-oriented research approach. Both chapter 3 and 4 elaborate on these.

Chapter 5 and 6 discuss the findings of the empirical studies that are part of this research. These chapters address the empirical part of this research. The analytical framework, as introduced in chapter 2, and the process-oriented research approach, as presented in chapter 3, form the theoretical and methodological basis for these empirical studies. The first study, about the collaborative governance process concerning the area development of Katendrecht, focuses on stakeholders' relating dynamics. Guided by the analytical framework, this chapter maps how stakeholders' relationships within the collaborative evolve over time. In addition, this chapter identifies which events affected, i.e. were critical for stakeholders' relating dynamics. Hence, this chapter addresses the first part of the research question that guides this research: how and why do stakeholders' relationships evolve (see Chapter 5)? In the second study, on the collaborative governance process concerning the area improvement of Vreewijk, the scope is broadened: both stakeholders' relating dynamics and issue framing dynamics are analysed. This implies that this empirical study also investigates how issue frames evolve over time. In addition, this study identifies how both dynamics are connected to each other. In so doing, the second part of the research question is addressed: how stakeholders' relating dynamics are connected to the issue framing dynamics (see Chapter 6).

The concluding chapter (Chapter 7) reflects on the (added) value of the theoretical and methodological focus on process, change and motion in this research. In addition, it ties together the findings of the two empirical studies.

## RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

This final section summarizes the results and conclusions of this research. The first paragraph discusses the theoretical and methodological results and conclusions. More specifically, this paragraph reflects on the value and contribution of a process orientation to study (stakeholders' relating) dynamics. The second paragraph discusses the empirical findings and results of this research.

### **The value of a process orientation to study stakeholders' relating dynamics in collaborative governance**

At the core of this research project is the aim to develop a dynamic understanding of stakeholders' relationships, i.e. of how and why stakeholders' relationships evolve over time, and of their connection to the issue framing dynamics at play in collaborative governance processes. The focus in this research is predominantly on developing an understanding on stakeholders' relating dynamics. This emphasis on dynamics presupposes a process orientation, i.e. an orientation towards evolution, change and motion. This, in turn, implies a process-oriented research approach, both in terms of theoretical perspective and methodological approach. Hence, a large part of this research is dedicated to developing an analytical framework and research approach that allows to come to grips with the dynamic and processual nature of relationships and issue frames.

Theoretically, the process orientation of this research requires an analytical framework that is anchored in a theory of process, which consists of statements about interpersonal relating dynamics and about how and why interpersonal relationships unfold over time. In this research, the analytical framework, and more specific the analytical track concerning stakeholders' relating dynamics, is grounded in relational dialectic theory, a theory developed in the field of interpersonal communication theory and community psychology. The core premise of relational dialectics theory is that interpersonal relationships essentially revolve around the dynamic and ongoing interplay between two opposing, yet interrelated values – referred to as dialectical tensions. An example of such a dialectical tension is the interplay between the value of stability and the value of change in relationships. Relational dialectics theory argues that it is the continuous interplay between such values and the way relational partners give meaning to and cope with this dialectical tension that constitutes relating. Relational partners can allow one specific value to prevail over another for some time, for example stability over change. Also they may 'segment': a specific value (e.g. stability) may be dominant in one situation and of only marginal importance in another. Another central assumption in relational dialectics theory is that relating is considered as an indeterminate, ever-changing process without clear end-states or necessary paths

of change. In other words, relating should not be conceived as a unidirectional path towards more connectedness, but rather as a never-ending search for how opposing, yet interrelated relational values, i.e. dialectical tensions, can be made sense of within the relationship between stakeholders.

Relational dialectics theory thus approaches relationships as dynamic phenomena (see Chapters 2, 5 and 6). In doing so, this theoretical perspective allows to develop an alternative understanding of relationships: the focus is on the indeterminate, dynamic and processual nature of relationships, rather than on how relations 'are' (i.e. relational states). Turning full attention to this dynamic (as a frame of mind), in turn, allows for more clearly targeting the empirical processual nature of relationships. This focus on dynamics, change and motion has, for instance, made it possible to observe how relational meanings shift over time and to gain insight into the (temporal) accumulation of critical events that triggered change (see Chapter 5).

Adopting a process orientation, i.e. turning full attention to dynamics, also requires a methodological approach that explicitly draws attention to motion, change and temporal evolution. Chapter 4 discusses the methodological principles of a process-oriented research approach. These entail: (1) the direct and close involvement of the researcher in the process(es) under study, (2) prolonged engagement and, (3) poly-contextual embeddedness, i.e. involvement in the different processes (contexts) which the process that is being studied is embedded in (for instance, when studying a collaborative governance process, it is important to also develop a basic understanding of the intra-organizational processes that influence or might influence this collaborative process)(see Chapter 4). These principles form the basis for the process-oriented research approach as developed in this research (see Chapter 3). This research approach mainly builds on participant-observer research, narrative interviews and the use of two graphic elicitation tools: diagrams and timelines (see Chapter 7, Table 7.1). The combination of these methods and tools made it possible to develop 'from within' and 'in between', a kaleidoscopic and processual understanding of stakeholders' interpersonal relationships (see Chapter 3).

An important tool in this research approach is the timeline, which is a type of graphic elicitation that visualizes, in a summarized way, the temporal flow in a person's account along different dimensions (see Appendix A). Hence, timelines help to get an overview of long-lasting processes, without completely flattening out the multilayeredness of a process. Besides the anticipated purposes of using the timeline in this research, i.e. presenting, checking and enriching participants' accounts, the timeline shows to be a powerful tool to encourage a sense of reflexivity in both participants and researchers. This implies that the timeline has the potential to be a powerful instrument (for intervention) to reflect on a

participant's position and role in the collaborative process, and on how one's assumptions concerning the process and the interpersonal relationships shape actions, and as a result, the consequences of these actions in the long term. More specifically, the timeline gives insight in the genealogy of a collaborative governance process. In this thesis, this type of reflexivity is labelled historical-aware reflexivity (see Chapter 4).

## **The empirical reality of stakeholders' relating dynamics, and its connection to issue framing dynamics**

Chapter 5 and 6 map the relating dynamics of the collaboratives of respectively case Katendrecht and case Vreewijk. These empirical studies show how stakeholders' interpersonal relationships revolve around the dynamic interplay between two value-clusters: a value-cluster that favours autonomy and individualism and one that favours commonality and sharing. Both empirical studies reveal how, most of the time, these value-clusters, alternate (in sequence). This means that in some periods, stakeholders' interpersonal relationships revolve around (protecting) their own autonomy and individualism, in order to, in a subsequent period, shift towards an emphasis on commonality and sharing. An important finding concerning this cyclic alternation between these value clusters is that the periods in which stakeholders' interpersonal relationships revolve around the value cluster of autonomy and individualism are – other than expected – not experienced as undesirable or unproductive. Rather, a temporary emphasis on autonomy and individualism in stakeholders' interpersonal relationships can be valuable to the collaborative process, for instance to dissolve unproductive entanglements of interests and/or projects.

In addition, the Katendrecht case shows that, when stakeholders are able to integrate both value clusters in their meaning making, i.e. succeed in simultaneously recognizing stakeholders' own identities while focusing on commonality and sharing without framing this as oppositional, they experience the collaborative as synergistic.

Together these findings point out that both interpersonal relationships that build on the value cluster of autonomy and individualism and interpersonal relationships that are based upon the value cluster of commonality and sharing can be potentially valuable to collaborative work. This can be labelled as a 'relating' paradox in collaborative work: an emphasis on either one of both value clusters in interpersonal relationships can both be a source of advantage or a source of inertia. This suggests that, in contrary to the majority of the literature on that matter, it is important to recognize the paradoxical nature of collaborative work and to realize that the emphasis on both these value clusters in interpersonal relationships can be of potential value to the collaborative governance process.

Besides mapping stakeholders' relating dynamics, i.e. how stakeholders' interpersonal relationships evolve over time, in the Katendrecht case it is also analysed which events have been critical for when and how stakeholders' interpersonal relationships changed. This study shows that there are five types of events that are recurrently associated with relational change: (1) collaboration-oriented management practices: these concern deliberate management efforts to bring stakeholders together; (2) urban developmental events: tangible activities 'on the ground', (3) issue-related events: these involve the emergence or change of issues the collaborative needs to deal with; (4) group composition/dynamic events: these concern changes in the group composition of the collaborative in terms of the individuals involved and/or changes in group members' attitudes or actions; (5) contextual events: events that occur alongside the collaborative process but have an impact anyway (e.g. a change in the political power structure)(see Chapter 5).

One notable finding concerning how stakeholders' interpersonal relationships change is that no single event in itself has a transformative impact on stakeholders' interpersonal relationships. Rather it is the accumulation of different type of events that lead interpersonal relationships to change. To put it another way: each event challenges the dominant understanding of stakeholders' interpersonal relationships in a latent way, but it is the conjuncture with other events that causes change to become manifest (see Chapter 5).

The empirical study of the Katendrecht case further reveals how – proportionally to other type of events – group composition/dynamic events recurrently are part of the conjuncture of events that leads to change in stakeholders' interpersonal relationships. This particularly applies to events that are related to the accession (or departure) of new individuals to the collaborative group. An important observation here is that stakeholders do not attribute this effect to the specific individual him or herself, but to the 'social match' of this individual with the incumbent group. This implies that the impact a specific individual has on the interpersonal relationships and the collaborative governance process, at least in part, depends on how s/he 'fits' in the group. This finding nuances the predominant conception that the effect of specific individuals is dominantly connected to an individual's skills, capacities, knowledge or personal characteristics. This implies that the effect of a given individual is also 'relational' and 'situational' (see Chapter 5).

Chapter 6, which discusses the findings of the empirical study of the Vreewijk case, also analyses how stakeholders' relating dynamics are connected to the issue framing dynamics. This study shows that neither stakeholders' relating dynamics nor the issue framing dynamics determined the process in an absolute way. Rather, the decisive role of stakeholders' relating dynamics or issue framing dynamics in shaping the collaboration varied throughout the collaborative governance process (see Chapter 6). These findings reaffirm

the prevailing insights on the connection between relating and issue framing in collaborative governance processes: at times stakeholders' relating dynamics play a decisive role in the collaborative process, while at other times the process is influenced more by the issue framing dynamics. At other times both dynamics equally shaped the collaborative process in a cyclical fashion. However, this study also shows that how the connection between both dynamics plays out differs depending on the phase the collaborative process is in, i.e. depending on whether the collaborative finds itself in the prenegotiation, negotiation or implementation phase. Drawing upon these observations in the Vreewijk case, in chapter 6 five theoretical propositions are formulated (see Chapter 6).

The empirical study of the Vreewijk case further reveals how reaching alignment between diverging issue frames in a common frame can potentially both have a catalytic and a hindering effect. The establishment of a common frame is a crucial moment in the collaborative governance process in Vreewijk: seeking and reaching agreement on a shared vision, e.g. common frame, helps to consolidate stakeholders' interpersonal relationships and to facilitate collaborative action. Yet, this study also points out how the establishment of a such a shared vision can also create barriers to the collaborative process. The shared vision can become a fixed point of reference, a straitjacket, which bans the substantive dynamism from the process. In other words, when stakeholders cling too rigidly to the shared vision once established, this can hinder, rather than facilitate collaborative work.



**Dankwoord**



*We are islands, we are we are ...  
Drifting lost at sea...*

(Intergalactic Lovers)

Hoewel ik deze tekst van een van mijn favoriete Belgische bands, Intergalactic Lovers, altijd enthousiast meezing, valt het niet helemaal samen met hoe ik de wereld zie. We zijn geen geïsoleerde eilanden, verloren en van elkaar gescheiden door een eindeloze, onoverbrugbare oceaan. Al heeft ieder zijn of haar eigen eiland, elk eiland is ingebed in een complex net van onderlinge verhoudingen en contacten met andere eilanden. Zozeer dat we er diepgaand door worden gedefinieerd. Dat contact is zo divers als het leven zelf: korte of lange handelsrelaties, culturele uitwisselingen, vriendschappen, vijandschappen. We dobberen dus niet doelloos rond, maar zijn juist innig verbonden. Eilanden in een oceaan van relaties. Al ben ik uiteindelijk degene die dit proefschrift heeft geschreven, opgedolven als een schat uit de grond van mijn eigen eiland, ik had dit nooit kunnen doen zonder de vele lieve, interessante en mooie mensen die me toelieten op hun eiland of op bezoek kwamen op het mijne. Samen vormden ze voor mij een levendige archipel, waar ik met veel plezier doorheen heb gereisd.

Het vaakst heb ik voet aan wal gezet bij mijn begeleiders, Jurian Edelenbos en Jasper Eshuis. Het is op hun eilanden dat ik de academische cultuur leerde kennen en waar ik het intensiefst ideeën en gedachten kon uitwisselen. Jurian, ik bewonder hoe je steeds op een empathische en constructieve manier de inhoudelijke aanscherping kan zoeken, terwijl je tegelijkertijd de ander in zijn of haar waarde laat. Daarmee heb je zonder meer de meest bepalende rol gespeeld in mijn 'coming-of-age' als academicus. Nooit bepaalde je welke richting ik op moest; je stimuleerde me juist mijn eigen richting te vinden – bijna op socra-tische wijze. Die ruimte en vrijheid om mijn eigen weg te zoeken tijdens mijn zwerftochten door de wetenschappelijke archipel was van onschatbare waarde. Je bent een fantastische mentor. Jasper, zonder jouw enthousiasme over mijn ideeën en bijdrages, of dat nu op gebied van onderzoek lag of in het onderwijs, zou ik nog steeds moeite hebben gehad te geloven dat ik in de universitaire wereld hoor. Waar je kon maakte je ruimte voor me, je liet me de handigste vaarroutes binnen de afdeling zien en zag altijd mogelijkheden mij wat meer over het voetlicht te brengen. Dat heeft mij vaak kansen gegeven om te groeien, kansen die ik anders misgelopen was.

Mijn jarenlange odyssee door de archipel heeft me langs tal van eilanden gevoerd. En al was overal de vegetatie anders, de cultuur, de geschiedenis en de taal, steeds heeft dat me meer wijsheid gebracht. Kennis van andere werelden, maar misschien nog wel

belangrijker: kennis over mijzelf en mijn eigen onderzoeksproject. Want wie reist leert niet alleen de ander, maar vooral ook zichzelf kennen. Zo heb ik veel mensen kunnen ontmoeten. Medeonderzoekers, respondenten, etc. Op sommige eilanden heerste een academische cultuur die me erg inspireerde, in het bijzonder op die van Lasse Gerrits en Koen Bartels; andere eilanden, zoals dat van Salina Teeuw, hadden een meer praktische inslag. Lasse, naast de tutorial over coderen in Bamberg, hebben ook de verschillende gesprekken doorheen de jaren aan de EUR en ook daarna mij steeds geïnspireerd. Koen, al hebben we elkaar niet vaak uitgebreid gesproken, jij bent voor mij een echte inspiratiebron geweest op het vlak van relationele bestuurskunde. Eerder dan ik wist je uit welk 'relationeel hout' ik gesneden ben. Salina, naast 'respondent' in mijn onderzoek ben jij ook belangrijk geweest als gesprekspartner. Onze gesprekken over Vreewijk, over mijn observaties en jouw duidingen daarbij, hebben mij regelmatig de ogen geopend. Door jou ben ik er bovendien van overtuigd geraakt dat ik me als onderzoeker daadwerkelijk wil engageren met mijn 'respondenten'.

Vast onderdeel op mijn reisroute waren de eilanden van mijn collega's. Wouter, Stefan, Danny, Ewald, Jitske, Corniel, Mike, nog steeds heb ik er spijt van dat ik mijn werkplek in ons eilandengroepje vrijwillig heb afgestaan (sorry!), omdat ik me zo nodig moest concentreren op het afmaken van mijn proefschrift. Het is maar zeer de vraag of deze beslissing me sneller bij dat doel heeft gebracht, want productiviteit gaat hand in hand met ontspanning en juist daar was in ons blok altijd spontaan ruimte voor. Voor de broodnodige ontspanning kon ik ook altijd terecht op de eilanden van Warda, Ilona en Jaap. Met plezier denk ik terug aan de fijne gesprekken/koffiepauses met Warda, de zorgzame betrokkenheid van Ilona en Jaaps interesse in mijn willekeurige verhalen (en die ene mop over de parachutespringer). Jammer dat ik jullie niet kan meenemen als onmisbare kantoorbenodigdheden, dan kregen jullie de mooiste plekjes op mijn vensterbank! En dan zijn er nog vele andere collega's: Rianne D., Robert, Rik, Vidar, Ingmar, Stephan, William, Alette, Anna, Rianne W. enzovoorts. Lunches met jullie mondden altijd uit in intrigerende gesprekken, van *small talk* tot diepgaande conceptuele beschouwingen.

Tijdens mijn 'island hopping' ontmoette ik ook mensen die zo bijzonder zijn geworden dat ze een speciale vermelding verdienen. Iris, wist je dat de bomen langs het paadje zijn gekapt? Niemand die nu nog kan navertellen hoe vaak we daar alle mogelijke onderwerpen hebben besproken. In de eerste jaren van mijn promotietraject was jij degene waar ik me aan kon optrekken, die met mij kon sparren over alles wat direct (of juist bijna niet) met mijn onderzoek had te maken. En altijd had je wel een mooi advies voor mij in petto op het gebied van onderzoek, carrière etc. Tebbine, wat kwam ik graag op jouw eiland vol tropische palmbomen, cocktails en een insectenbeet hier en daar. Toen jij kwam binnenwaaien op de afdeling, was ik achterdochtig, misschien zelfs licht vijandig.

Dat is gelukkig niet maatgevend gebleken voor het vervolg: de oprichting van de totem, de tienermeisjes-fietstochten huiswaarts, onze skireis naar La Clusaz. Waarom ligt Genève niet in Nederland of Nederland in Genève? Noortje, zonder jou leefde ik nog steeds in de twintigste eeuw en had ik nooit leren appen met tien vingers, hoogte gekregen van het concept 'unicorn' of geweten dat giffen een zeldzame kunst is waarin vooral jij uitblinkt. Al bevinden we ons allebei aan de andere kant van het spectrum (dixit Nadine), ik wens vooral dat je altijd blijft wie je bent... Nadine, ik hou enorm van de manier waarop jij in elkaar steekt; je humor en gevatheid in combinatie met je nuchterheid maken je een bijzonder mens. Ongeacht het humeur waarmee ik bij je kom binnenvaren, of jij bij mij, altijd zijn we snel 'in tune'. Wát we ook ondernemen, koffie in DE, boulderen of zomaar wat hangen, jouw gezelschap geeft me altijd een warm en goed gevoel. Tijdens mijn reizen was en ben jij een van mijn favoriete aanlegplaatsen.

Een apart en belangrijk deel van de archipel zijn mijn 'oude' vrienden uit Poperinge, uit België, de Gaffelaars en de Klerksjes. Ik doe jullie geen recht door jullie in één paragraaf te persen. Ook jullie hebben me, elk vanaf jullie eigen unieke eiland en op jullie eigen manier, gestimuleerd door te gaan. Annelies, Dieter, Dries, Griet, Isabelle, Jan, Joost, Kristof, Pieter en Steve, jullie deden dat door me met regelmaat terug te voeren naar mijn naïeve jeugdigheid. Valerie, jij bent er altijd en accepteert tegelijk dat ik er niet altijd ben, wat ben je een prachtig mens! Sandrine en Bart, jullie lieten op gezette tijden mijn boulder- en berghart weer sneller kloppen. Greet, laten we blijven hopen dat we nog veel lol trappen op de spaarzame momenten dat dat lukt. Mijn 'buurtjes', de Gaffelaars, jullie voorzagen in de nodige ontspanning en voerden me naar zomerse sferen via geplande of spontane barbecues. De Klerksjes Ton, Carla, Judith & Russel, jullie waren altijd betrokken bij mijn plannen en ambities en steunden me daarin enorm, ook wanneer mijn energie of humeur zich op een dieptepunt bevond.

Sommige eilanden waren onbewoond. Heel af en toe, als de tijd dat toeliet (en ik het mezelf toestond) legde ik daar aan; plekken waar ik even alleen kon zijn en me kon verwonderen over oude bossen, hoge bergen, mijmerend uitkeek over de eindeloze zee met de zeewind in mijn haren. De sublieme schoonheid van de eeuwige natuur, die de altijd maar bedrijvige mens kleinmaakt en zijn plaats wijst, bracht me relativering en rust.

Mijn lieve familie is, hoe kan het ook anders, de kern van mijn archipel, het harde, maar toch prachtige koraal waarop mijn eiland uiteindelijk steunt: mama, papa (†), Wannes en Karen, Bet en David, mémé. Bij de mensen die je het liefste ziet, is het moeilijkst onder woorden te brengen wat ze voor je betekenen. Gelukkig zijn juist bij die mensen woorden uiteindelijk ook helemaal niet nodig. Mama: wat jij me liet zien en voelen was het ongebreidelde, misschien soms zelfs wel overmoedige, geloof dat uiteindelijk alles op z'n

pootjes zal terechtkomen. Wat dat betreft heb jij de allerbelangrijkste bijdrage aan mijn zeetochten geleverd. Dat onwrikbare en vanzelfsprekende vertrouwen en optimisme is een stevige basis om de wereld te blijven verkennen. Papa, als iemand ons geleerd heeft het onderste uit de kan te halen, dan ben jij het. Dat is soms wel, soms niet een mooie erfenis! Sowieso weet ik dat je nu ontzettend trots op me zou zijn en dat gevoel koester ik van in mijn kruin tot mijn tenen. Wannes, eens een kleine zus, altijd een kleine zus. Ik ben blij dat dat nooit verandert en dat we met een vingerknip zó weer de grapjas zitten uit te hangen. Ik word daar altijd vrolijk van. Betje, ik koester onze goeie babbels over van alles en nog wat, tot wasproducten aan toe. Jij bent nog altijd het dichtste bij, omdat je mijn zus bent en niemand me beter doorziet dan jij. Mémé, je bent op vele manieren een voorbeeld, maar misschien nog het meest als het gaat om jouw nooit aflatende nieuwsgierige en leergierige kijk op de wereld. Daarom is dit proefschrift ook voor jou.

Stan, jij bent de veilige thuishaven waar ik na mijn vele zeereizen altijd weer het anker uitgooi en aanleg. Ik kom aan land, vertel vol vuur mijn verhalen (soms boeiende, soms minder boeiende), terwijl jij luistert met oneindig veel geduld. En daarna geef je advies over de gekozen zeeroute, tips voor de volgende zeereis – die ik natuurlijk niet wil horen, maar me meestal verder helpen. En dan hijs ik weer de zeilen en kies het ruime sop... Dat we de wereld soms zo anders bekijken is waardevol aan ons. Jij bent écht echt... en daarom zie ik je zo graag.

Lieve Felix, lieve Luka, mijn schiereilandjes, dit boek gaat helaas niet over krokodillen. Wie weet het volgende wel. Nederland heeft me veel gebracht, een fantastisch lief, lieve 'nieuwe' vrienden, lieve burens, een 'boek', een fantastische plek om te wonen... maar niets daarvan (het is een waarheid waar ik me niet voor schaam) komt ook maar een beetje in de buurt van mijn twee prachtige 'bolletjes'. Ik wist niet dat ik zoiets moois kon voortbrengen.

Lieselot Vandenbussche,  
*28 november 2019, Rotterdam*



While there is agreement in literature that collaborative governance processes are dynamic, only few scholars have attempted to theorize or empirically explore this dynamism through longitudinal research. This study responds to this lacuna and explicitly aims to develop a dynamic understanding of two process dimensions that are deemed critical in collaborative work: stakeholders' interpersonal relations and issue framing. To explore the dynamism in stakeholders' relating and issue framing, we first developed an analytical and methodological approach that is process-sensitive, i.e. explicitly draws attention to change and temporal evolution. By longitudinally studying two collaborative governance practices, this study led to the conceptualization of a 'relating paradox': stakeholders' relating dynamics are characterized by the interplay between opposing, yet equally valid relational value-clusters: an autonomy/own identity cluster and a commonality/sharing cluster. This study further finds that collaboratives are most likely to reach their full potential if they succeed in simultaneously accommodating both value-clusters in their interpersonal relating. Furthermore, this study brings to light how stakeholders' relating styles are connected in different ways to the issue framing processes throughout the collaborative process. This study concludes with highlighting the relevance of recognizing and embracing the paradoxical and dynamic nature of collaborative work.