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Institutionalization or interaction: Which organizational factors help community-based initiatives acquire government support?

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Abstract

Increasingly, Western local governments are dealing with community-based initiatives (CBIs) of citizens providing public services. Municipalities possess critical resources CBIs generally lack, including subsidies, buildings, and exposure. There is still little knowledge on CBIs' factors for government support. Therefore, this study adopts an organizational perspective distinguishing among institutionalization (intraorganizational, e.g., organizational size and democratic legitimacy) and interaction (interorganizational, e.g., boundary spanning leadership [BSL]) factors for the support CBIs obtain from local government. Analyzing large *N* data (*N* = 2331) from CBIs in six countries by using structural equation modeling, we found that interaction factors are related to more government support, whereas institutionalization factors are less significant. More specifically, we found stronger relationships for BSL and linking social capital than for the factors related to the formalization and development of organizational infrastructure, including the much-discussed democratic legitimacy of CBIs, suggesting a limited interest of governments in this topic as a factor for support.

1 | INTRODUCTION

With the shift toward the community in the public service delivery of various Western states, citizens increasingly become active in community-led co-production projects and initiate community-based initiatives (CBIs). In these initiatives, the community provides the practical delivery of public services and goods, controlling the aims, means, and implementation of activities (Bailey, 2012; Bovaird, 2007; Healey, 2015). Examples of CBIs derived from this study concern community gardens in the Netherlands, neighborhood and property-fixing initiatives in the Unites States for a safe and clean community, German CBIs supporting refugees with accommodation and integration in the community, and initiatives aimed at development of the French youth with social, sports, and cultural activities. With such CBIs, citizens provide a hands-on solution to various needs of their community, playing an important role in solving local challenges, and they often have the ambition to form a durable cooperation (Healey, 2015; Igalla et al., 2019). This sets CBIs apart from advocacy groups, citizens' panels, and formal citizens' initiatives, centered on influencing political decision-making and public opinion.

In public administration, the shift toward the community does not only manifest in an increase in the number of CBIs in local communities (e.g., Bailey, 2012; Hassink et al., 2016), but also in a growing interest of governments in countries, like the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, and the United Kigdom in community self-organization and co-production as alternative ways to deliver services and goods in the public sphere (Bailey, 2012; Wagenaar & Healey, 2015). Even though CBIs are a form of self-control (Arnstein, 1969) and are often informal by nature, they do not take place in "splendid isolation" when trying to establish service delivery. CBIs work in institutionalized environments; they encounter rules, laws, and procedures, especially from governmental organizations, and they usually build relationships with other organizations (Bakker et al., 2012; Healey, 2015; Kleinhans, 2017), which is also the case for the above examples in this study.

Though reliance on external resources can be associated with costs and dangers, such as a loss of autonomy (e.g., Froelich, 1999), local governments still form major sources of support for CBIs. They possess critical resources CBIs generally lack, such as subsidies, buildings, assistance with resource acquisition, help with rules and regulations, and exposure (e.g., Bailey, 2012). Given that many CBIs are not (yet) financially self-sustaining, they often rely on government funding (Bailey, 2012; Hassink et al., 2016). Institutional support can even be critical for the long-term viability and performance of CBIs, making government support an important and significant subject to study (e.g., Dale & Newman, 2010; Kleinhans, 2017).

In the public administration literature, there is an increased attention for the government support of CBIs (Kleinhans, 2017), but we still lack clear understanding and insights into the factors of CBIs' obtainment of government support. This question has gained more attention in the field of the third sector and nonprofit organizations, in which organizational theory has proven to be a valuable lens (Froelich, 1999; Lu, 2015; Stone et al., 2001; Suárez, 2011). In their form and approach, CBIs are distinct from established and institutionalized organizations that are part of the traditional third sector or nonprofit sector (e.g., Brandsen et al., 2017). For instance, CBIs are citizen-led, more informal and voluntary-based (see also Appendix A for more information on the characteristics of CBIs). However, both are part of the broader civil society and share characteristics, such as their non-for-profit goals and relationships with government (Brandsen et al., 2017). Therefore, this study makes also use of the broader nonprofit and third sector literature, while simultaneously discussing differences with CBIs.

This article seeks to add to the literature on government-CBIs interactions, by integrating different literature fields to test CBIs' organizational factors that are related to government support. We analyze an integral theoretical model based on survey research among 2331 participants of CBIs collected from six countries with the use of structural equation modeling. Our research question is: *"How do organizational factors explain the support CBIs get from local government?"*

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CBIs are defined as a form of self-organization in which citizens mobilize resources to collectively define and carry out projects aimed at providing public goods or services for their community (Bakker et al., 2012; Healey, 2015). In this study, CBIs are characterized by recurring and theoretically based core features: a (formal/informal) form of self-organization, providing public services or goods to a community, being in control of internal decision-making, not-for-private-profitmaking, mainly operating on voluntary work, and being community based (e.g., Bailey, 2012; Healey, 2015). Although citizens control aims, means, and actual implementation of their activities, they often rely on external resources, especially local government resources (Bailey, 2012; Bakker et al., 2012; Korosec & Berman, 2006). Furthermore, CBIs usually operate in institutionalized settings with regulations at multiple scales and therefore interact with government (e.g., Edelenbos & van Meerkerk, 2016; Healey, 2015). Therefore, in the public administration and public management literature, CBIs are often conceptualized as a form of co-production or co-creation (Kleinhans, 2017; Voorberg et al., 2015). Appendix A contains more elaboration on the characteristics of CBIs (in our sample), also regarding their "membership of the family of co-production."

2.1 | Defining government support

In this article, with government we refer specifically to local government, that is, municipal government, as CBIs with their community orientation especially interact with local authorities. Building on CBI literature (e.g., Bailey, 2012; Korosec & Berman, 2006), government support, assistance of CBIs by allocating for instance public staff, time, and resources, can take on different forms and differs in magnitude.

Government funding (e.g., contracts and grants) is one form, which is often stressed in the literature on nonprofits (e.g., Lu, 2015; Stone et al., 2001; Suárez, 2011). Even though CBIs have the ambition to be self-funding (e.g., through membership subscription fees, commercial exploitation, and fund-raising activities) they usually depend (to some extent) on government resources (e.g., start-up funds, subsidies, and contracts) as they have limited access to economic capital (e.g., Bailey, 2012; Newman et al., 2008). Besides financial assistance, other types of support can be equally important for CBIs. As CBIs operate in the public sphere, they often have to deal with legislation, such as health care and well-being policies for care cooperatives. Access to information, and advice on how to cope with institutional structures of government (divisions) for instance, can help prevent entanglement of CBIs in bureaucratic cobwebs (Healey, 2015; Korosec & Berman, 2006). Furthermore, CBIs can benefit from an open and encouraging governmental environment that enables assistance with exposure by raising awareness of their initiative, assistance with networking or enabling support through active cooperation with the CBI to realize shared goals (Igalla et al., 2019; Korosec & Berman, 2006).

2.2 | Organizational factors to explain government support for CBIs

We use organizational theory to analyze what factors foster government support to CBIs. Specifically, we take institutional and resource dependence theory. Drawing upon these theories, we make a distinction between intraorganizational and interorganizational factors (e.g., Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003), which we define as institutionalization and interaction factors. We use these as explanatory frameworks to further conceptualize and examine the relationships between organizational factors and government support.

2.2.1 | Institutionalization factors

For the first set of organizational factors, we build upon institutional theory. A basic idea of this theory is that organizations gain legitimacy and support from their environment by adapting to professional norms, standard operating

procedures, and other elements that form a social structure in the environment (Alexander, 2000; Helmig et al., 2014; Zucker, 1987). Various studies tested the role of intraorganizational factors in nonprofits' obtainment of government funding, including professionalization (e.g., Stone et al., 2001; Suárez, 2011). The literature stresses the shift toward organizational professionalization and institutionalization in the nonprofit sector (e.g., Suárez, 2011), which denotes an integration of routines, roles, rules, and specialized expertise that formalize and professionalize nonprofits, and "embed them in the broader discourse of administrational organization" (Suárez, 2011, p. 310). In the field of CBIs, which is characterized with a fundamental focus on being community-based, institutionalization seems to be at least visible in the development of an organizational infrastructure (e.g., Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Igalla et al., 2019).

Organizational size

The first institutionalization factor we test is organizational size. CBIs' abilities to fulfill their mission, that is, organizational capacity, can be an important indication for providing government support. A central characteristic of organizational capacity is human/member capacity or organizational size (e.g., Foster-Fishman et al., 2001).

The literature argues that larger community organizations are likely to be related with more government funding, because they have a greater capacity to increase the scope of their services, geographically and programmatically (Stone et al., 2001, p. 280). One way to measure this is by looking at the human capacity. In this regard, CBIs work especially with volunteers (e.g., Bailey, 2012; Healey, 2015); having more volunteers, helps CBIs increase their capacity to achieve desired outcomes. Furthermore, by showing their scope of volunteering residents committed to the organization's goals by investing their time and energy, CBIs can enhance their legitimacy as providers of public services. We therefore hypothesize the following:

H1. *The organizational size, in terms of human capacity, is positively related to the level of government support of CBIs.*

Formal organization

Oftentimes CBIs institutionalize themselves by establishing a formal organization, for instance to be taken more seriously as a reliable actor by government; adopting a legal entity makes it easier to link with formal institutions (Hassink et al., 2016). Moreover, a formal organization is often a requirement for institutional support (Van Dam et al., 2014). Formality helps to create a stable and predictable structure and operating procedures (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Lu, 2015). We expect a higher compatibility between formalized CBIs and governments, which should enable government support:

H2. *CBIs with a formal organization structure will obtain more government support.*

Decision-making process: Operating as democratic legitimate

For governments, bureaucratic and political values such as transparency, equal treatment, openness, and accountability are important goals to realize in their decision-making process and daily operations (e.g., Edelenbos & Van Meerkerk, 2016). Therefore, in line with institutional theory, values related to democratic legitimacy also become important to consider for (nonprofit) organizations seeking government resources (cf. Helmig et al., 2014; Lipsky & Smith, 1989). The literature stresses the complex and normative nature of democratic legitimacy (cf. Bekkers & Edwards, 2007). Without going in-depth into the democracy and legitimacy literature, which is not our intention here, we define democratic legitimacy as a quality that tells us something about the degree in which the internal functioning, that is, decision-making of CBIs has been recognized as justified. The latter can be assessed according to the common distinction into input (focus on how input is being regulated equally), throughput (focus on how input is being processed), and output (focus on how output serves communal needs) legitimacy (e.g., Bekkers & Edwards, 2007).

The literature has characterized the democratic legitimacy of CBIs, which are seen as an expression of direct participatory democracy, as both an opportunity and challenge (cf. Geurtz & Van de Wijdeven, 2010; Wagenaar & Healey, 2015). On the one hand, CBIs can be indicated as key driver of democracy. They are argued to promote more democratic

governance forms, because of their ability to link policymaking and practical delivery much stronger than is common in participation models in formal planning processes (Wagenaar & Healey, 2015, p. 557). They can offer arrangements for direct interaction between citizens and between citizens and institutional representatives (Geurtz & Van de wijdeven, 2010). However, as widely discussed in the literature, tension often arises when such an expression of direct participatory democracy meets with the representative democracy in modern states (e.g., Geurtz & Van de wijdeven, 2010). Both understandings of democracy show differences in their "internal logic, such as different types of accountability, different takes on legitimacy, and different types of steering" (Geurtz & Van de wijdeven, 2010, p. 534), making it challenging to find a balance between them. This challenge forms also an argument for some of the critical voices in the literature to question CBIs regarding matters of accountability, equality, and representation (e.g., whose concerns do they represent, how is accountability organized), especially when public resources are handled over to CBIs, which if often the case (cf. Uitermark, 2012; Wagenaar & Healey, 2015). Citizen self-organization can become introverted and exclusionary (Healey, 2015, p. 117), and it can create a divide among citizens and communities with and without self-organizing capacities (e.g., Uitermark, 2012).

Based on the above, we expect that CBIs who score low on democratic legitimacy will have trouble applying for support. We therefore hypothesize the following:

H3. *The democratic legitimacy of CBIs is positively associated with the level of government support*.

2.2.2 | Interaction factors

For the second set of organizational factors, we build upon resource dependence theory. In this theory, organizations are embedded in networks of interdependencies and social relationships (Froelich, 1999; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Acquiring and maintaining resources becomes of vital importance, but this task is not straightforward due to resources being scarce and uncertain (Froelich, 1999). Organizations must engage with their environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). We therefore investigate factors related to interaction with and management of the environment, which help CBIs to coordinate their relationship with local government (cf. Alexander, 2000).

Linking social capital: Interorganizational ties that help to mobilize support

Interorganizational ties are important to deal with situations of interdependence (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). CBIs usually rely upon external ties to secure resources, such as buildings, grants, and information, as they generally have limited access to economic resources (e.g., Korosec & Berman, 2006; Newman et al., 2008). Interorganizational ties allow the exchange of resources when goals are shared. This forms a basis in the literature on social capital, that is, "features of social life – networks, norms, and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (Putnam, 1995, pp. 664–665).

In the social capital literature, there is a point of general agreement, which is that better connected actors enjoy higher advantages (Burt, 2000, p. 348). Social capital facilitates the mobilization of resources and the coordination of action. It is generally conceptualized with the actor's social network as core element, which consists of ties that connect the actor with other entities (Burt, 2000; Granovetter, 1973). Through strong and diverse ties in the network, CBIs can get connected to actors with resources that help them realize their goals (cf. Burt, 2000; Newman et al., 2008). Different types of ties exist. Because we are interested in the mobilization of government resources, we focus on linking capacity (and not on bridging and bonding capacities).

Linking capital refers to ties of exchange between actors who know themselves to be unequal in their power and access to resources (Szreter, 2002, p. 579). These ties in a CBI's social network, express the relationships between CBIs and formal institutions, including government and funding agencies (Dale & Newman, 2010; Szreter, 2002). The ties function as means of bringing new (government) resources and opportunities to the organization, which help improve the implementation of activities (e.g., Alexander, 2000; Dale & Newman, 2010; Igalla et al., 2020).

Such interorganizational linkages provide channels for communicating information to organizations on which the focal organization depends (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003, p. 145). A civil servant is easily informed about the CBI's needs for support when CBIs and civil servants keep interacting frequently. Moreover, interorganizational linkages have a value for legitimating the focal organization (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Legitimate institutions represented in the network of CBIs provide information to "…the world of the value and worth of the organization" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003, p. 145), increasing a CBI's legitimacy and reputation with government authorities, and, thereby, the likelihood of obtaining government support.

We therefore hypothesize the following:

H4. *Strong linking social capital ties are positively associated with the level of government support of CBIs.*

Boundary spanning leadership to manage interorganizational dependencies

Interorganizational relationships do not appear just out of thin air. Connecting and collaborative capacities are important (for CBIs) to cultivate relationships with outside organizations, which can help in making a network of organizations and funding opportunities happen (e.g., Alexander, 2000; Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018). Such capacities are found in a specific (community) leadership style, that is, boundary spanning leadership (BSL; e.g., Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018). Boundary spanning encompasses the activities and competences of (individuals within) organizations to cross organizational boundaries, thereby adapting to the environment and creating a better fit (Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018). A boundary spanning orientation helps to form and maintain interorganizational relationships, mobilize resources, and enhance legitimacy (e.g., Williams, 2002).

There are different types of boundary spanning competences and activities highlighted in the literature, including the ability to understand the interests of people and organizations outside one's own circle (Williams, 2002). For CBIs relevant boundary spanning activities are focused on "collecting relevant information, gaining resources, and negotiating and coordinating with institutional players" (Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018, p. 108). In this sense, boundary spanning helps CBIs initiate institutional sensors that help them navigate through and connect with the governmental system and generate support. We therefore hypothesize:

H5a. *BSL is positively related to government support of CBIs.*

Furthermore, boundary spanners play a necessary role in overcoming institutional logics—that is, different perspectives, interests, and rules between organizations—resulting in increasing mutual understanding, and realizing strong linkages to institutional actors (Miller, 2008; Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018, p. 145), thereby specifically oriented at creating linking social capital. In this process of mutual understanding, having knowledge of what is important for institutional actors, and devoting time to maintain contact with them, can help CBIs in connecting their goals with policies and objectives of institutions, fostering the creation and strengthening of linking social capital (Igalla et al., 2019). We therefore hypothesize the following:

H5b. *BSL is positively associated with the strength of linking social capital of CBIs.*

Moreover, we argue that CBIs with a strong boundary spanning orientation, will, consequently, invest more in democratic legitimacy. Our argument lies especially in the advantages of connective capacities (which can be considered a specific boundary-spanning activity focused on interrelating actors) for democratic outcomes found in the governance literature (e.g., Van Meerkerk et al., 2015). Connecting capacities enable boundary spanners to include engaged actors and connect them to relevant processes. They bring people together, provide opportunities for actors to engage and to deliver input (for decision-making), and have a feel for what is relevant for the different involved actors (Van Meerkerk et al., 2015; Williams, 2002). Furthermore, a strong boundary spanning orientation is also characterized by sharing and managing information (flows), which helps to connect relevant external developments to

the internal organization (Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018). Based on the above, BSL with its connective capacities is important for enhancing the conditions of democratic legitimacy (Van Meerkerk et al., 2015). A strong boundary spanning orientation empowers CBIs to deal with matters of input (e.g., opportunities for community members to engage and provide input for new activities), throughput (e.g., the sharing of information about the initiative), and output (e.g., its responsiveness to community needs) legitimacy (e.g., Miller, 2008;). We therefore hypothesize that:

H5c. *BSL is positively related to the democratic legitimacy of CBIs' decision-making process.*

Above, we have provided a theoretical argumentation for several associations that explain the level of government support CBIs receive, using organizational factors building on institutional and resource dependence theory. We summarize the hypothesized relationships in Figure 1, our conceptual model.

3 | METHODOLOGY

3.1 | Data collection and sample

We conducted a web-based survey among respondents participating in CBIs in six countries: the Netherlands, Germany, France, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. We included multiple countries in order to test our conceptual model beyond a single country to increase the external validity of our results. Furthermore, we have chosen Western developed countries that share a strong relationship to CBIs, historically and/or more recently with the increase in (attention for) community initiatives (e.g., Bailey, 2012; Kleinhans, 2017; Wagenaar & Healey, 2015).

Data were collected in November and December 2016. A difficulty of the target population is that inclusive lists of people participating in CBIs do not exist. Therefore, the sample was drawn from online panels managed by Kantar Public (regarding the unit of analysis, the strategy was aimed at including one CBI participant per CBI). Kantar Public is an integrated consulting and research agency that works across the world and aims to improve public policy, public services, and public communication.

For the Netherlands, we included a screening to identify respondents participating in CBIs, trying to rule out respondents active in other kinds of civic participation, such as formal political participation. People participating in the online

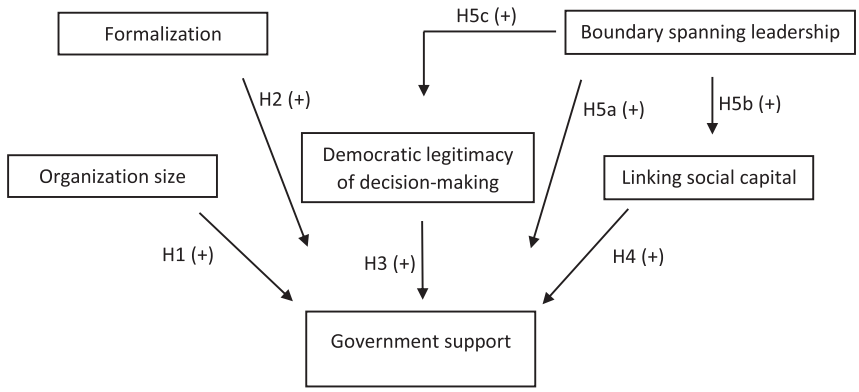

FIGURE 1 Conceptual model: CBIs' organizational factors for government support
Note: (+) = positive relationship. This conceptual model is a simplification of social reality with the purpose of visualizing the relationships between the variables with the use of arrows. In theory, the variables could be causally related, but this must be proved empirically with another research design. In this manuscript, we do not imply to prove causality with our own empirical analyses

panels were asked whether they are or were involved (in the last year) in a CBI, describing them as "activities that are organized by people *themselves* with little or no involvement from the government." For the other countries, the screening took place in the survey and not in the panels, because this was not possible for international data. However, we did screen the data intensively in different ways to ensure their quality. A detailed elaboration on the selection and screening process, including information on the representativeness of the data, can be found in Appendix A.

The total response for all countries is 2331 (see also Table 1). Specific examples of CBIs in our database include for instance community associations delivering services for the elderly or people with disabilities; neighborhood watches; initiatives focusing on maintaining greenery; initiatives aimed at realizing centers for seniors, and cooperatives for sustainable energy, such as solar energy. Appendix A shows a detailed elaboration on the characteristics of the CBIs.

Regarding the respondents, we asked them about the average number of hours (per week) they participated in the CBI to control whether more active respondents report more or less government support. The relationship is significant, though weak (see also Results section), but suggests that less active participants could have underrated the level of government support. To test whether passive members might indeed have been less equipped to answer questions about our dependent variable, we also examined the role respondents have in the CBI (see also control variables). Most respondents identified themselves as an active member, involved as a volunteer in a specific project (45.47%), followed by passive or supporting members (34.19%), and board members (16.30%). No significant relationships were found between the role of respondents as a control and our dependent variable government support. Furthermore, considering the questions about democratic legitimacy and BSL, the lack of predominance of respondents in a leadership position reduces risks of overly positive self-reporting.

3.1.1 | Purpose of multicountry data set

In this article, we aim to test our theoretical model in different institutional contexts/environments. Our goal is to find patterns across countries; however, we are not aiming for a theory-based comparison of countries. The latter is an important next step for which this study provides future research directions. We therefore work with the complete data set and only test whether the theoretical model holds in the different countries (see section structural equivalence test).

TABLE 1 Overview of respondents' descriptives for each country and total data set (N = 2331)

	N	%	Average age (SD)	Predominant educational level (%)	Common status of employment (%)
Total data set	2331	53% **Male**	56.11 (13.54)	University education (30.76%)	Paid employment (46.46%)
The Netherlands	671	54%	56.45 (14.10)	Higher vocational training (31.89%)	Paid employment (40.83%)
United Kingdom	372	59%	59.76 (11.73)	University education (43.55%)	Pension plan (40.32%)
United States	222	41%	61.95 (12.87)	University education (70.72%)	Paid employment (40.54%)
Germany	388	61%	54.52 (12.63)	Intermediate general secondary education (27.32%)	Paid employment (53.09%)
France	461	46%	53.20 (12.68)	University education (28.63%)	Paid employment (56.40%)
Sweden	217	51%	51.81 (15.11)	University education (44.24%)	Paid employment (53.46%)

3.2 | Measurement of variables

3.2.1 | Government support

We measured the level of perceived government support by building on the scales of Korosec and Berman (2006). They distinguish three types of support that are highly interrelated and can therefore function together as a measure for government support. Igalla et al. (2020) used several of their items and made them context-specific for CBIs, resulting in a reliable scale consisting of 11 items (see Table 2), which we used in this article. The scale is a seven-point scale,[1] ranging from (1) "absolutely not" (agreeing with the statement presented in the item) to (7) "very strongly" (agreeing with the specific item), with a not applicable category, which we recoded into missings. The latter lead to the exclusion of 75 CBIs from the analyses, suggesting that 3.22% of the CBIs in our data do not obtain any form of government support (in theory, this percentage can include respondents that could not adequately answer the items about government support and therefore choose the not applicable answer category). Regarding the broad operationalization of government support; this is suitable to the field of CBIs, because there are different ways in which local governments can support CBIs, including financial help, assistance with coordination, information sharing, and co-operation (e.g., Korosec & Berman, 2006), which this operationalization includes.

3.2.2 | Organization size

We measured organization size using human capacity of CBIs as indicator (cf. Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Healey, 2015). We asked respondents about the average number of volunteers and/or active members participating in the CBI, using a six-point scale ranging from (1) "1–10 volunteers" to (6) "81 or more volunteers." In the literature, for instance on nonprofits, other operationalizations of organization size are used as well, including financial indicators (e.g., Lu, 2015). We, however, choose for a human indicator, because we think this better fits the nature of CBIs as citizen-driven, operating with especially volunteers, and having usually more access to human capital rather than economic capital (e.g., Healey, 2015; Newman et al., 2008), thereby acknowledging the informal and smaller CBIs as well. It is interesting, however, to include financial and/or output related indicators in a future operationalization of CBIs' organization size, such as the total annual operating budget, and the volume of services, to check whether different types of indicators (human/financial/production) affect the results differently.

3.2.3 | Democratic legitimacy of decision-making process

Based on the literature, democratic legitimacy can be assessed using the well-known distinction in political science between input, throughput, and output legitimacy (Bekkers & Edwards, 2007). Important aspects for input-legitimacy are about opportunities for citizen participation, and the openness of the agenda-setting process. Throughput legitimacy refers to the quality, and transparency of the decision-making process, and output legitimacy is about the way accountability is organized, and the responsiveness of decisions to the expressed concerns of citizens (Bekkers & Edwards, 2007). We constructed six items based on these aspects to measure democratic legitimacy. Because the aspects are especially designed to assess the democratic legitimacy of institutional governance practices, we translated the aspects into items that fit the context of CBIs. The items were measured using a seven-point scale ranging from "totally disagree" (1) to "totally agree" (7). Furthermore, we acknowledge that we focus on the *internal* decision-making and legitimacy mechanisms of CBIs, while the recognition of having a justified decision-making could also depend on their (administrative) environment, for example, on the input from their environment and on their accountability toward local government. A future operationalization of CBIs' democratic legitimacy should take such *external* legitimacy mechanisms also into account.

3.2.4 | Formal organization

Being formally organized is another identified factor that can affect the level of government support. Each country can have its own set of legal entities for CBIs. We therefore worked with general legal forms that are often used by CBIs and applicable in all six countries. We asked respondents about the formal organization of their initiatives using a nominal variable (see Table 2 for the five categories) and recoded the options "other" and "I do not know" into missings. The five categories were recoded into a dummy variable, comparing "no formal organization" (the reference category) to "formal organization" (the four categories with formal entities).

3.2.5 | Linking social capital

We measured linking social capital by asking respondents to score the frequency of interaction with actors that are identified as institutional parties in the literature, and which are often linked to CBIs—see Table 2 for the actors (cf. Dale & Newman, 2010; Szreter, 2002). With this approach, we measure the strength of linking ties in an actor's network, which is common in research about social capital (cf. Burt, 2000; Granovetter, 1973). We used a seven-point scale to measure the frequency of interaction with each actor using the following scores: (0) never, (1) less than once per year, (2) once per year, (3) every few months, (4) every few weeks, (5) weekly, and (6) daily. Thereafter, we made an index score (ranging from 0 to 42) showing the sum of the interaction frequency with institutional actors in the network of CBIs. While this operationalization method is common in the (quantitative) literature to measure (linking) social capital, it does however not fully capture the complexity of the relationships CBIs maintain with institutions, which is a limitation of this study. We acknowledge that tie strength has different other dimensions to consider, just like social capital has more elements besides the social connections, including qualitative and cognitive elements that point to aspects of values, norms, trust and attitudes, such as the character of the interactions, the emotional intensity, and mutual confiding of the actors engaged (e.g., Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 1995). Nevertheless, interaction frequency does offer a theoretically and an empirically tested instrument to measure a network's worth and relate this to different outcomes, including access to resources (cf. Burt, 2000; Granovetter, 1973), which corresponds with our research goal.

3.2.6 | Boundary spanning leadership

We used a previously tested scale to measure BSL (Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018), and made the items context-specific for CBIs (see Table 2 for the items). The items were measured with a seven-point scale ranging from (1) "absolutely not" to (7) "very strongly." With this scale, we measure activities that are related to an external perspective on BSL, that is, about connecting the CBI to actors and processes outside the CBI. In the literature, however, one can find other forms of measurement for BSL (see Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018). With our approach, we specifically aim to understand how an externally oriented management style is related to government support, that is, external support. This operationalization also helps avoiding a possible overlap with the activities of democratic legitimacy, which have an internal focus.

Table 2 shows the specific items of the scales, their factor loadings, and the construct reliability and validity measures.

3.3 | Data analysis

To test our hypotheses, we use structural equation modeling (SEM) with Amos, Version 24 and follow the two-step modeling approach introduced by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), creating a measurement and a structural model. See Appendix A for an elaboration on our data analysis approach.

TABLE 2 Measurement items and construct's reliability

Constructs and items	Standardized factor loadings	Average variance extracted and squared correlation estimate	Alpha/ composite reliability
Government support (GS) (N = 2256)			
The municipality…		0.67	0.96/0.96
(1) provides financial assistance to the initiative (such as subsidies)	0.673	GS – DL: 0.09	
(2) supports the initiative in obtaining extra resources (e.g., acquisition, submitting applications for subsidies, fundraising)	0.797	GS – BSL: 0.22	
(3) helps the initiative by providing availability to real estate (buildings) or land	0.679		
(4) gives the initiative the opportunity to execute assignments (e.g., waste collection, maintenance of public green spaces, etc.)	0.743		
(5) supports the initiative through the provision of information	0.866		
(6) contributes toward initiative awareness	0.873		
(7) assists in the coordination with other involved parties	0.887		
(8) encourages collaboration between those parties with an interest in the initiative	0.867		
(9) provides the initiative with advice, if required	0.854		
(10) actively cooperates with the initiative	0.897		
(11) participates in the initiative by taking responsibility for certain tasks	0.838		
Boundary spanning leadership (BSL)			
The board of the initiative…		0.71	0.93/0.93
(1) involves people from outside the organization when making decisions	0.787	BSL – DL: 0.34	
(2) works closely with others (outside the organization) to achieve results	0.872		
(3) aims to link external developments (new opportunities, possibilities, etc.) to the citizen initiative	0.847		
(4) devotes a lot of time to maintaining contact with parties outside the organization	0.868		
(5) has a sense of what is important for parties outside the initiative	0.844		
Democratic legitimacy (DL)			
Output legitimacy		0.67	0.93/0.93
The board of the initiative…			
(1) is accountable to its members/volunteers	0.793		
(2) follows input from its members/volunteers	0.788		
Input legitimacy			
The members/volunteers…			

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Constructs and items	Standardized factor loadings	Average variance extracted and squared correlation estimate	Alpha/ composite reliability
(3) have the ability to influence the direction of the initiative	0.812		
(4) have, in principle, an equal opportunity to express their preferences to the board	0.829		
Throughput legitimacy			
The grassroots initiative…			
(5) has a clear system for making decisions	0.847		
(6) provides information to members/volunteers in a well-organized manner	0.851		
Organization size			
Human resources			
How many people (volunteers and/or active members) are active in the grassroots initiative (scale 1–6, with (1) 1–10, (2)11–20, (3) 21–40, (4) 41–60, (5) 61–80, (6) 81 or more)?	N/A	N/A	N/A
Linking social capital (*N* = 2330)			
Generally speaking, how often is the citizen initiative in contact with the following parties? This contact can take various forms, for example, working together, performing a financial consultation and/or receiving advice.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Central government, province (county), municipality: local council, municipality: municipal executive, municipality: civil servants, funds/sponsors, housing corporations			
Formal organization (*N* = 2043)			
How is the grassroots initiative organized?	N/A	N/A	N/A
There is no formal organization, as an association, as a foundation, as a cooperative, as a company (public limited company or private company)			

Note: If not mentioned otherwise in the table, *N* = 2331. All factor loadings are statistically significant: $p < 0.001$. See also Appendix A for a description of the measures in the table.

3.4 | Reliability and validity

The measurement model has been examined for convergent and discriminant validity based on the confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs). For the sample, all factor loadings are ≥0.67 and most go beyond 0.80, which is a first indicator to demonstrate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2014). A second indicator is the average variance extracted (AVE), which is for all variables higher than the threshold of 0.50 (see Table 2). Comparing the shared variance (squared correlation estimate) between each pair of constructs against the AVEs for these two constructs, we found that the AVEs of all constructs are larger than the corresponding shared variance, providing evidence for discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2014). Regarding reliability, the Cronbach alpha and composite reliability values of all constructs exceed the 0.70 threshold (Hair et al., 2014). See Appendix A for a detailed description of the reliability and validity measures.

3.5 | Common method bias

We need to address common method bias (CMB)—an issue that appears when the estimated relationships between constructs might be distorted—as our study was based on self-reported data obtained from the same source (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We have given much attention to this issue, before and after data collection, and during data analyses. We used for instance ex-ante procedural remedies for reducing the likelihood of CMB in the survey design, and ex-post statistical controls for testing CMB. In Appendix A we give a detailed discussion of how we dealt with CMB.

3.6 | Control variables

We selected control variables related to respondents, as personal attributes can be related to CBIs' mobilization successes of government resources (e.g., Uitermark, 2012), and two more controls related to the organization of CBIs. First, we controlled for age, gender, educational level, status of employment, and organizational background. We also controlled for the role of the respondent in the initiative, distinguishing between being a member of the board (reference category), being an active member, involved as a volunteer in a specific project, and being a passive member or volunteer (or "otherwise" involved, recoded into missings). Moreover, we included the average number of hours (per week) the respondents participate in the CBIs. Second, regarding the CBIs, we included the sector in which the CBIs operate (16 sectors, including health care, sustainable energy, education, and recreation), and the evolutionary phase of the initiative (five categories, with the initial phase as reference category; see Appendix A for descriptives of the phases).

3.7 | Structural equivalence test

Though, as explained above, our goal is not focused on comparing the countries in our sample, we do want to examine to what extent our significant structural model has external validity for the countries within the database—that is, we want to demonstrate structural equivalence of our final significant model across the countries in the sample (see Results). Therefore, we performed a multiple-group analysis in Amos, Version 24 (cf. Byrne, 2010). See Appendix B for more information about this method and for the results of the structural equivalence test. The results are further discussed in the next section.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Descriptive statistics

Table 3 shows the means, SDs, and correlations for all model constructs and control variables. The (significant) correlations with government support are positive for all model constructs and indicate that our expected relationships are likely to occur. Yet, the strength of the correlations is rather modest for most variables in the table (especially regarding the relationships between the research concepts and the control variables), with the interaction factors showing stronger correlations than the institutionalization factors. These observations indicate that a weak (or no) association can be expected concerning the institutionalization factors when performing the SEM analyses. This is an interesting first observation that we will further test with the SEM analyses and discuss in the following section.

Furthermore, the descriptive statistics for government support show that the average score for all items is 3.50 (SD = 1.54) on a seven-point scale, which is somewhat below the mid-range of the scale. The highest scoring is for

TABLE 3 Means, SDs, and correlations of model constructs and significant controls

Construct	Mean	SD	GS	BSL	DL	LSC	OS	FO	RA	HA	CISS	CISI	CISPS	SEUW
GS	3.50	1.54	1	0.44**	0.27**	0.37**	0.06**	0.13**	−0.10**	0.17**	0.01	0.04	0.10**	−0.01
BSL	4.23	1.46	—	1	0.53**	0.38**	0.16**	0.18**	−0.03	0.18**	0.08**	0.09**	0.04	0.04*
DL	5.04	1.27	—	—	1	0.19**	0.13**	0.12**	0.12**	0.08**	0.15**	0.06**	0.04	0.07**
LSC	N/A	N/A	—	—	—	1	0.25**	0.23**	−0.05*	0.25**	0.04	0.15**	0.08**	0.02
OS	2.72	1.72	—	—	—	—	1	0.15**	−0.02	0.04	0.02	0.05*	−0.04*	−0.04
FO	N/A	N/A	—	—	—	—	—	1	−0.01	0.18**	0.05*	−0.00	−0.04	−0.01
RA	56.11	13.54	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	−0.08**	0.04	0.04*	0.06**	0.01
HA	8.50	11.42	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0.03	0.05*	−0.03	0.01
CISS	N/A	N/A	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0.03	0.06**	−0.00
CISI	N/A	N/A	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0.21**	−0.02
CISPS	N/A	N/A	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0.00
SEUW	N/A	N/A	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1

Note: *N* is in between 2043 and 2331 (pairwise deletion of missing values). If applicable, the scale minimum and maximum are provided in abbreviations in the list of names hereafter. The other control variables are not significant in the SEM and therefore excluded.

Abbreviations: BSL, boundary spanning leadership (1–7); CISI, community initiative sector, infrastructure (control variable); CISPS, community initiative sector, caring for public spaces and planting greenery (control variable); CISS, community initiative sector, social cohesion (control variable); DL, democratic legitimacy (1–7); FO, formal organization; GS, government support (1–7); HA, hours active (control variable); LSC, linking social capital; OS, organization size (1–6); RA, respondent age (control variable); SEUW, status of employment, unpaid work outside own household (control variable).

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$ (two-tailed).

Item 5, government support through the provision of information (M = 3.75, SD = 1.78) and the lowest scoring is for Item 1, government support through financial assistance (M = 3.20, SD = 1.92). In Appendix A, we show the descriptive information for all items. Based on these statistics, an interesting observation is that CBIs especially receive "nonmaterial" forms of government support, such as advice and assistance with coordination and implementation, whereas the "material" forms of government support, including financial assistance and providing availability to real estate have lower average scores (see Appendix A). Regarding some other variables, democratic legitimacy has an average of 5.04 on a seven-point scale, indicating a positive evaluation. Respondents score BSL (slightly) positive with an average slightly above the mid-range of the scale.

4.2 | Hypothesis testing

Figure 2 presents the results of the hypothesis testing, that is, the outcomes of the significant structural equation model, with information about the model fit.

4.2.1 | Relationships between institutionalization factors and government support

Impact of organization size on government support

In Hypothesis 1, we expected a positive relationship between the organization size and government support, which, as Figure 2 shows, is not the case as a negative relationship is present. Larger CBIs in terms of human capacity (number of volunteers) are not related to having more government support.

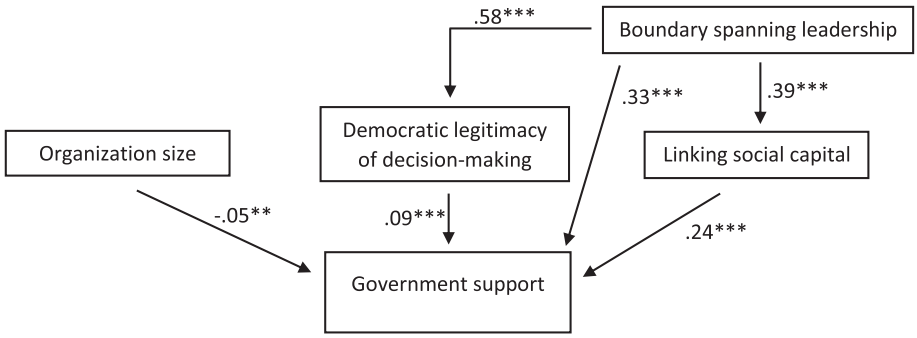

FIGURE 2 Results of the structural equation model

Note: $^{*}p \leq 0.05$; $^{**}p \leq 0.01$ $^{***}p \leq 0.001$. The scores on all lines indicate the (direct) standardized regression coefficients (beta coefficients) for the significant relationships. The significant control variables are not depicted for display reasons. Function estimate means and intercepts used to deal with some missing values. The beta coefficients of the control variables (in relation to government support) are: age of respondent: −0.08***; hours active: 0.05**; status of employment: unpaid work outside own household: −0.04*; sector/goal: promoting social cohesion: −0.04*; sector/goal: establishing infrastructure: −0.04*; sector/goal: caring for public spaces and planting greenery: 0.07***. R^2 Government support: 0.29; R^2 Democratic legitimacy: 0.34; R^2 Linking social capital: 0.16. The overall fit of the structural model was tested using the following fit indices: CMIN/DF, the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), PCLOSE, and the comparative fit index (CFI). Good model fit exists when CMIN/DF has a value between 1 and 3; RMSEA $\leq$0.5; PCLOSE $\geq$0.5; CFI $\geq$0.95 (Byrne, 2010). However, the sample size affects the value for CMIN/DF, and therefore a cut-off value as high as 5 can indicate a reasonable fit (cf. Marsh & Hocevar, 1985). Overall, the fit to the data of both the significant structural equation model (CMIN/DF: 4.84, RMSEA: 0.041, PCLOSE: 1.00 and CFI: 0.97) and the measurement model (CMIN/DF: 4.15, RMSEA: 0.037, PCLOSE: 1.00 and CFI: 0.99) were good

Impact of formalization on government support

In our second hypothesis, we expected that formalized CBIs have more government support than informal CBIs (without a legal status). However, no significant differences in government support were found between formalized and informal CBIs.

Impact of a democratic legitimate decision-making process on government support

Regarding the democratic legitimacy of the decision-making process of CBIs, we expected in Hypothesis 3 a positive relationship with government support. Based on Figure 2 this can be confirmed (cf. Lipsky & Smith, 1989). CBIs that run their organization more democratically have more government support, though the relationship is weak.

4.2.2 | Relationships between interaction factors and government support

Impact of linking social capital on government support

The first interaction factor is linking social capital for which we expected a positive relationship with government support in hypothesis 4. Figure 2 indeed presents a positive relationship; therefore, this hypothesis is confirmed.

Direct impact of BSL on government support

In Hypothesis 5a, we expected a positive relationship between BSL of CBIs and government support. Figure 2 confirms this hypothesis, which is in line with the literature (e.g., Igalla et al., 2020; Lu, 2015; Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018).

Impact of BSL on linking social capital

The results in Figure 2 also confirm the positive expected relationship between BSL and linking social capital of CBIs, showing the importance of BSL for building and strengthening government relationships (cf. Alexander, 2000; Igalla et al., 2019).

Impact of BSL on democratic legitimacy of CBIs' decision-making

In our final Hypothesis, 5c, we expected that BSL is positively associated to the democratic legitimacy of CBIs' decision-making process. As Figure 2 presents, there is indeed a positive (and strong) relationship, which confirms the hypothesis.

4.2.3 | Controls

The notes under Figure 2 show the relationships between the significant controls and government support. A first impression is that the personal and organizational attributes we distinguished are weakly or not related to CBIs' mobilization successes of government resources. Though this research does not have the goal to test expectations about unequal opportunities for self-organizing citizens to public resources, this finding at least seems to suggest that such a consequence is less present in our sample. Yet, a few attributes are still significantly related to the acquisition of government support. It seems that older CBIs' participants, and participants without paid work, tend to indicate lower levels of support. Furthermore, CBIs that promote social cohesion or establish infrastructure, are related to less government support—compared to CBIs that are not active in those sectors—whereas CBIs active in caring for public spaces and planting greenery indicate higher levels of support—compared to those that are not active in this area—though the relationships are weak. Moreover, the life cycle of CBIs does not relate to government support, meaning, no significant differences in government support were found between CBIs in the initial, growing, mature, upscaling, or finishing phase.

4.2.4 | Results of the structural equivalence test

To test whether the model in Figure 2 is equivalent across the countries in the sample, we performed a multiple-group analysis. Appendix B contains a description of the analysis and the outcomes. The results show that the significant structural model is not invariant across the countries, that is, the countries show differences regarding the relationships in Figure 2. We can make a few interesting conclusions regarding these differences, that is, the validity of the tested model. First, the countries in the sample differ on the relationship between democratic legitimacy and government support (only significant for France), and the relationship between organization size and government support (only significant for Germany). Furthermore, the countries show differences regarding the control variables, see Appendix B for the exact differences. On the other hand, the countries showed equivalence regarding the relationships between BSL and democratic legitimacy, BSL and government support, BSL and linking social capital, and linking social capital and government support (though the strength of the relationships differ, see Appendix B). Hence, for the interaction factors, our model has structural equivalence. We discuss these findings further in the next section.

5 | CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Before we discuss the conclusions of our research, we want to mention a few limitations of our study. First, we want to underline that we did not prove causality in our study. We also cannot rule out the possibility of reversed causality regarding the factors in relation to government support. To provide evidence on the causality, other research data and research designs, such as studies that collect longitudinal data or employ an experimental design, are necessary. Furthermore, we want to mention the limitation of our research regarding the social reality of the interactions between CBIs and government. This reality is more complex than we (can) capture with our study, which is less aimed at the qualitative nature of interactions (e.g., how government-CBIs' relationships came into being, and how both actors perceive their relationships), and its association with government support. Keeping these limitations in mind, we can draw several meaningful conclusions from our study.

The first conclusion is about the support CBIs in our sample obtained of local governments. By far, most CBIs (at least 96.78%) receive one or more forms of government support with, on average, a rather moderate magnitude, and of especially a "nonmaterial" nature. It is interesting to examine whether demand and supply of government support are in balance or that CBIs perhaps do need the "material" resources but are not getting them sufficiently. Especially in the latter case, a policy recommendation for local governments would be to inventory the different forms of support they have available, which forms are wanted by the local CBIs, and which forms they actually give to the CBIs, and make these data public. This helps in identifying the (dis)balances in desired and supplied government support. Furthermore, it enables empirical research into an important question in the current literature, how government support affects the existence and performance of CBIs (cf. Igalla et al., 2019; Kleinhans, 2017).

To further develop the literature on government support, future research should use qualitative methods to examine the nature, appreciation and preferred level(s) of the support (forms). In doing so, there should also be attention for possible negative effects of government support (forms), as it can come with a price tag, such as red tape (Igalla et al., 2019). Moreover, as a counterpart of this study, future research should examine government's organizational factors for supporting CBIs. Finally, this study shows that a broad operationalization of government support instead of a focus on financial support is more appropriate in research on CBIs (cf. Korosec & Berman, 2006).

The second conclusion is that interaction factors are positively related to the acquisition of government support. Specifically, CBIs with stronger linking social capital and BSL are related to higher levels of government support, and BSL is positively associated with linking social capital. In line with the social capital and community development literature, this confirms the importance of vertical ties for CBIs to mobilize and acquire government resources (e.g., Dale & Newman, 2010). Furthermore, these findings confirm that CBIs' capacities to (further) connect the

organization to external opportunities and (institutional) actors, like government officials, is of great importance for the acquisition of government resources (Miller, 2008; Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2018).

Thirdly, institutionalization factors are hardly related to government support. Specifically, the formalization of CBIs has no relationship with support—though the literature assumes a better fit between formalized CBIs and government (cf. Hassink et al., 2016; Van Dam et al., 2014)—larger CBIs are related to less support, and CBIs with a stronger democratic decision-making process are associated with more government support, though this relationship is weak.

The negative relationship between organization size and government support seems to contradict the literature on the third sector in which a greater capacity has been related to more support. In this study, we approached government support more broadly, not only including funding aspects, but also coordination, information, and cooperation aspects. This differs from the focus on funding in most studies on nonprofits (e.g., Lu, 2015; Suárez, 2011), which could be an explanation for this difference. Furthermore, this study uses the number of volunteers as indicator for organizational size, whereas other scholars, such as Stone et al. (2001), measured organization size of nonprofits by using a financial indicator. However, Stone et al. (2001) did also find that nonprofits that use fewer volunteers are more likely to receive a higher proportion of total revenues from government sources, which is in line with our study. As we found the same negative relationship between number of volunteers and government support, it is interesting to investigate whether the same impact of professionalization found in the third sector has inched into the field of CBIs as well.

Regarding the decision-making process, it is striking that this factor has such minimal explanatory power for government support. In our sample, CBIs do give quite the attention to the democratic functioning of their organizations, but it seems that in practice, governments do not consider this as an important factor for support. Though more research is needed to confirm this finding, we would like to discuss this outcome further. One explanation for this finding lies in the focus of CBIs under study, which is foremost on the practical delivery of services and goods. It is conceivable that government officials give more attention to democracy issues in participation forms centered on influencing political decision-making and public opinion, such as citizens' panels. Furthermore, governments themselves might not be that fascinated in the democratic outcomes CBIs might produce. In fact, such innovative and alternative forms of democracy could challenge the representative model upon which the government operates (e.g., Wagenaar & Healey, 2015). CBIs, whether deliberately or not, might contribute to organizing alternative pathways to produce and deliver societal services that can challenge established practices in the hierarchical top-down models of state delivery (Wagenaar & Healey, 2015). Nevertheless, our finding does have an important policy implication regarding CBIs that over time have developed themselves into key local suppliers of specific public services, for instance because of government retreat in areas, such as neighborhood regeneration. Democratic legitimacy is, then, an inevitable factor for local governments to consider when giving or continuing support. Future research should further examine the significance of democratic legitimacy as factor for government support and explore how the democratic potential or democratic danger of CBIs manifests empirically.

Our fourth conclusion is that BSL can function as a strategy for CBIs to enhance the democratic legitimacy of their decision-making process. The relationship between both variables is the strongest one in this research. While we measured BSL from an external perspective, our results show that this leadership style has strong internal impact as well. Community leaders who invest in connecting with the environment, including institutional parties, in collaboration activities, and in sharing and managing information about their initiatives, seem to be able to make their CBIs open places that value connections and that are responsive to their members/volunteers. In other words, the above BSL-activities can help CBIs in dealing with organizational matters of transparency, information sharing (throughput legitimacy), involvement of community members (input legitimacy), and responsiveness to community needs (output legitimacy).

Our final conclusion concerns the differences in explanatory power between institutionalization and interaction factors for government support. Comparing the findings on both types of factors, we conclude that interaction factors, stressing interorganizational aspects, have more explanatory power regarding differences in the level of

government support among the CBIs in our sample. This conclusion is supported by the structural invariance test we performed to examine to what extent our significant structural model has external validity for the different countries in the sample. Since we found structural equivalence across the countries for the interaction factors only, we can conclude that, regardless of country context, for the mobilization of government resources, building linking capital and BSL seem to be more effective than institutionalizing the organization. Furthermore, as the equivalence test did reveal country differences regarding institutionalization, conducting country comparative research would be an interesting and relevant way forward (cf. Brandsen et al., 2017).

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflict of interest.

ENDNOTE

[1] We performed PCA with oblique rotation in SPSS 24 and CFA analyses in Amos version 24 for all latent variables. Results showed clear one-component structures, meaning the scales for government support, BSL, and democratic legitimacy responded to the scales used in literature.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The research data are limited available from the authors upon reasonable request, due to privacy registration.

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APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY: A FURTHER ELABORATION

Further elaboration on theoretically based characteristics CBIs in sample

Concerning the composition of the sample, we have used the recurring theoretically based core features of CBIs, as discussed in the theoretical framework, based on a systematic literature review on CBIs (Igalla et al., 2019) to preselect and screen the CBIs in our sample. Before and during data collection, we have put effort in pre-selecting and screening CBIs that share these same theoretical core features (e.g., through the specific pre-selection question and examples we gave to potential respondents based on these features, and through the questions for potential respondents about other types of participation, such as political participation, in order to rule those out). After data collection, we screened the data intensively, for some countries, this was also with help of native speaking colleagues, in order to ensure that the CBIs in our sample all have the same theoretical core features. We will discuss these characteristics we introduced in the theoretical framework below in more detail.

With CBIs we refer to nonprofit and bottom-up activities of citizens aimed at self-organizing public goods or services for their community. They provide and maintain an alternative form of traditional governmental public services, facilities, and/or goods themselves, such as education and training, work integration programs, and residential care (Igalla et al., 2019). CBIs can be both informally and formally organized and differ in their legal structures. Whether or not formally organized (we include both formalized and informal initiatives in our sample), citizens (and not governmental nor private organizations/entrepreneurs) organize these activities themselves, but they are likely to link to various public and private organizations for support, of which local government is an important institution they often interact with (see also Bailey, 2012; Edelenbos & Van Meerkerk, 2016; Igalla et al., 2020). If formalized, the initiatives can differ in their organizational structure (e.g., being an association or a cooperative). However, we have put effort to screen the initiatives in our sample so that they have the same theoretical characteristics of:

- Being a (formal/informal) form of self-organization, providing public services or goods to a community (so we do not focus for instance on charities; ballot initiatives; dialogue and deliberation initiatives, such as citizen juries, and political and policy groups or movements, including interest groups).
- Being in control of internal decision-making.
- Not-for-private-profitmaking, even though CBIs can use market-based approaches (e.g., investing in their own revenue model) to increase financial stability.
- Mainly operating on voluntary work.
- Being community-based, meaning that local collectives of residents are the (current) driving force behind the initiatives, they focus on community needs, and they mobilize volunteers from the community (Bailey, 2012; Igalla et al., 2019; Igalla et al., 2020).

These characteristics distinguish CBIs from activities of established and institutionalized organizations in the traditional third sector/nonprofit sector with paid workers and no or limited link to voluntary citizen self-organization and participation (Brandsen et al., 2017; Igalla et al., 2020).

Furthermore, in the public administration and public management literature, CBIs are often conceptualized as a form of co-production or co-creation (Kleinhans, 2017; Voorberg et al., 2015). The above characteristics of CBIs sets them apart from regular/traditional co-production, where citizens are involved in the production process under (strict) conditions and frameworks set by governments (cf. Arnstein, 1969; Voorberg et al., 2015). Instead, CBIs can be understood as "a member of the family of co-production" (Voorberg et al., 2015). Some authors point at specific forms of co-production in which the community has a more leading role; in this literature one speaks of community-led co-production (e.g., Bovaird, 2007). Citizens are not "just" involved as co-designer or co-implementer in the production processes under frameworks set by governments, but they initiate and lead whereas governments react and facilitate.

Descriptive statistics: Character of CBIs and their received government support

In our sample, we see that the CBIs are active in different sectors. Not surprisingly, most CBIs provide their services in relation to social objectives. The three most common sectors (or objectives) in which the CBIs are (at least) active are (promoting) liveability/quality of life (45.22%), (promoting) social cohesion (33.42%), and (promoting) wellbeing (32.56%). The CBIs in our sample are much less focused on (generating/organizing) renewable energy (3.78%), (increasing) entrepreneurship (3.86%), and (establishing) infrastructure (11.58%).

With regard to the organizational size of the CBIs, 69 percent of the CBIs have more than 10 volunteers. Furthermore, in our sample, most CBIs do have a formal legal structure (1199 CBIs, corresponding with 51.44% of the sample [sample contains here 2043 CBIs, with 288 missings]). Yet, there are still quite some CBIs that organize their services informally (844 CBIs, corresponding with 36.21% of the sample). Regarding the life cycle or evolutionary phases of the CBIs, we see that most CBIs are in a mature phase, being fully operational (1023 CBIs, 43.89%), followed by the growing phase, indicating a status of development in which support is being mobilized as well as recognition by established parties (478 CBIs, 20.51%). The finishing phase is the third most common evolutionary phase, meaning the CBIs have ended (372, 15.96%). Next, 338 CBIs (14.50%) can be found in an upscaling phase, referring to activities, such as exploring new services. Finally, 120 CBIs (5.15%) are in an initial phase, being active in activities like researching, preparing and experimenting.

Next, we compared the average scoring of the different items of government support to show which types of support the CBIs receive the most. Though the differences between the different types of support are not very high for some items, they do show an interesting pattern when compared, which is that the CBIs, on average, seem to get more "nonmaterial" forms of government support than "material" forms (see also results and discussion sections). The statistics, the scores on the items / forms of support, from high to low average scores are:

- Item 5, support through the provision of information (M = 3.75, SD = 1.78).

- Item 9, support through advice, if required (*M* = 3.72; SD = 1.81).
- Item 8, support through encouragement of collaboration between those parties with an interest in the initiative (*M* = 3.67; SD = 1.77).
- Item 6, support through contribution toward initiative awareness (*M* = 3.63; SD = 1.79).
- Item 10, support through actively cooperating with the initiative (*M* = 3.59; SD = 1.79).
- Item 7, support through assistance in the coordination with other involved parties (*M* = 3.48; SD = 1.77).
- Item 4, support through giving the initiative the opportunity to execute assignments (e.g., waste collection, maintenance of public green spaces, etc.) (*M* = 3.46; SD = 1.88).
- Item 3, support through providing availability to real estate (buildings) or land (*M* = 3.42; SD = 1.98).
- Item 11, support through participating in the initiative by taking responsibility for certain tasks (*M* = 3.30; SD = 1.85).
- Item 2, support with obtaining extra resources (e.g., acquisition, submitting applications for subsidies, fundraising) (*M* = 3.22; SD = 1.82).
- Item 1, support through providing financial assistance to the initiative (such as subsidies) (*M* = 3.20; SD = 1.92).

Data collection and screening process: A detailed elaboration

The data were collected in two rounds: for the Dutch respondents and for the international data. For the Netherlands, data were collected in November 2016 (from the 8th until the 16th of November, including one reminder on the 14th of November), and for the other countries data were collected in December 2016 (from the 20th until the 29th of December, without reminders).

A difficulty of the target population is that inclusive lists of people participating in CBIs do not exist. Therefore, the sample was drawn from online panels managed by Kantar Public (regarding the unit of analysis, the strategy was aimed at including one CBI participant per CBI). Kantar Public is an integrated consulting and research agency that works across the world and aims to improve public policy, public services and public communication.

For the Netherlands, this organization has a large reach of its online panel and representativeness, which consists of 124,000 randomly selected respondents from different social-economic categories. We included a screening to identify respondents participating in CBIs, trying to rule out respondents active in other kinds of civic participation, such as formal political participation, and activism (e.g., writing petitions). People participating in the online panels were asked whether they are or were involved (in the last year) in a community-based initiative, describing them as "activities that are organized by people *themselves* with little or no involvement from the government." We provided examples, like community-based activities focused on providing care facilities, caring for public spaces and planting greenery, and starting community enterprises. If they did, then they were invited to complete the full questionnaire. From this screening a total of 1500 people were representatively (age, social class, education, gender, etc.) selected to complete the full questionnaire. Of these respondents, a group of 797 respondents participated in the research (response rate of 53.13%). After screening the data to ensure the quality of response and to ensure the respondents were indeed participating in CBIs, a total of 671 respondents remained in the data set (adjusted response rate of 44.73%). See Table 1 for the descriptive statistics of this group.

For the other countries, the screening took place in the survey and not in the panels, because this was not possible for international data. However, we did screen the data in different ways to ensure their quality (see below, Section A.4), as is explained in the main text. Although the research agency has sought to include a good variance in background characteristics, we acknowledge that we cannot ensure representativeness for the international data. The response for each country was: United Kingdom (468), United States (368), Germany (604), Sweden (365), and France (815). As we did for the Dutch data, we screened the international data on their quality and appropriateness, for which we involved native speaking scholars when necessary. This resulted in adjusted sample sizes (see Table 1 in main text), excluding many politically and lobby-oriented initiatives,

especially in the United States, United Kingdom, and France, which is also an important explanation for the changes in sample sizes.

Common method bias

CMB is an issue that appears when the estimated relationship between constructs might be distorted, and, consequently, can have the potential to jeopardize the validity and reliability of the research findings (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Rodríguez-Ardura & Meseguer-Artola, 2020). As potential sources for CMB appear in studies with single-source, self-report and/or cross-sectional designs (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Rodríguez-Ardura & Meseguer-Artola, 2020), we have given much attention to this issue, both before and after data collection, as well as after data analyses, following the guidelines in the survey methodology literature to deal with CMB.

First, we have used a series of procedural remedies in the early stage of questionnaire design that are ex-ante, seeking to prevent the emergence of CMB by increasing the respondent's willingness to answer questions and provide noninfluenced responses (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Rodríguez-Ardura & Meseguer-Artola, 2020, p. I). One of the procedural remedies we used to reduce the risk of CMB, is guaranteeing the respondents' answers to be anonymous, which helps diminishing respondents' urge to provide socially desirable answers (Podsakoff et al., 2003, p. 888; Rodríguez-Ardura & Meseguer-Artola, 2020, p. II). Other procedural remedies we used are separating between measures (e.g., between the dependent variable and the independent variables) in the survey; using different questionnaire and scale formats, and defining complex or unfamiliar concepts with examples (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Rodríguez-Ardura & Meseguer-Artola, 2020, p. II). Furthermore, we carefully constructed the items, by pretesting the survey among researchers and practitioners, which helps in reducing item ambiguity (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Moreover, for most variables (including the dependent variable), we used multiple items in our measurement, which reduces the likelihood of CMB (cf. George & Pandey, 2017).

Furthermore, after data collection, we have screened all data intensively (for some of the countries with help of native speaking colleagues) by controlling for instance for unreliable data, such as data containing the same score for most of the questions and/or data in most open ended questions that reflect unreliable answers (e.g., answering with symbols, punctuations, and/or random sets of letters)—we always controlled red flags by checking different parts of the data instead of just focusing on one specific part, and we discussed the red flags before taking a collective and well-argued decision to delete those cases.

Finally, during analyses, we found that the scale reliability of all relevant constructs was well above general thresholds, which also reduces the likelihood of CMB (cf. George & Pandey, 2017). Next, we have used ex-post statistical controls/techniques to test CMB post-hoc. We conducted the Harman one-factor test in SPSS and the unmeasured latent method construct in AMOS to assess whether the majority of the variance could be explained by a single factor (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Results confirmed that CMB did not pose a threat to the study.

Further description of data analysis approach

As described in the methodology, in order to test our hypotheses, we use SEM with Amos, Version 24. SEM has several advantages compared to traditional multivariate procedures, including regression analysis (Byrne, 2010: 3–4). First, SEM allows for modeling multivariate relationships, analyzing all model variables simultaneously. Furthermore, SEM takes a confirmatory (i.e., hypothesis-testing) rather than an exploratory approach to the data analysis, moving beyond essentially descriptive outcomes, thereby lending itself well to the analysis of data for inferential purposes (Byrne, 2010, pp. 3–4). Moreover, by using separate factor loadings for each observed indicator (the actual survey items), SEM procedures can include both observed and unobserved (i.e., latent) variables in the model (Byrne, 2010, pp. 3–4). Finally, "whereas traditional multivariate procedures are incapable of either assessing or correcting for measurement error, SEM provides explicit estimates of these error variance parameters," which enhances the accuracy of the data analysis (Byrne, 2010, pp. 3–4).

To carry out the SEM analyses, we followed the two-step modeling approach introduced by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Beforehand, EFA – explorative factor analyses –are carried out, with SPSS Version 24, to explore the factor structure and prepare the variables for the SEM. We also used SPSS for the descriptive analyses in the manuscript. For the SEM, we first performed a CFA, examining (confirming) the factor structure of all research variables in the measurement model and testing the resulting model's fit. Second, we created the structural model to test the proposed relationships between the constructs.

We modified the measurement model when necessary. One modification to enhance the model included correlations of errors (note that we performed within factor error correlations for two variables: government support [items 1 and 2, 1 and 3, 2 and 3, 3 and 4, 5 and 6, and 5 and 9], and democratic legitimacy [items 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6]), which can be used for instance, if correlated errors arise from items that are very similarly worded. This seems to be an important reason in our research.

Description of reliability and validity measures

As described in the methodology, we used measures to test reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs. Below, we will explain these measures in more detail based on and quoting the work of Hair et al. (2014).

Reliability refers here to the internal consistency of the variable, assessing the degree of consistency between multiple measurements (the survey items) of a variable, that is, a measure of the degree to which a set of indicators of a latent construct is internally consistent based on how highly interrelated the indicators are with each other (Hair et al., 2014). To assess internal consistency, we have looked at the reliability coefficient with Cronbach's alpha, which assesses the consistency of the scale (Hair et al., 2014). The generally agreed upon cut-off value is 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014). We also looked at the composite reliability, which has the same cut-off point, and is also a reliability measure to test the internal consistency of a scale, but one that is derived from CFA (Hair et al., 2014).

For validity, which is about the extent to which a scale or set of measures accurately represents the concept of interest, we measured convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2014).

For convergent validity, the items that are indicators of a specific variable should converge or share a high proportion of variance in common (Hair et al., 2014). One way to consider convergent validity is by the size of the factor loadings (here we use the standardized factor loadings, that is, the standardized regression coefficients, showing the relationships between the survey items and the latent construct). The standardized factor loadings should be statistically significant and should be 0.5 or higher, and ideally 0.7 or higher. Significant and high loadings on a factor would indicate that they converge on a common point, the latent structure (Hair et al., 2014).

A second way to demonstrate convergent validity is with the AVE, the average amount of variance in observed variables (the survey items) that a latent variable is able to explain. With CFA, the AVE is calculated as the mean variance extracted for the items loading on a construct and is a summary indicator of convergence (Hair et al., 2014). An AVE of 0.5 or higher suggests adequate convergence for the specific latent construct (Hair et al., 2014).

The discriminant validity is the extent to which a construct is truly distinctive from other constructs. A high discriminant validity indicates that a construct is unique and captures some phenomena other measures do not (Hair et al., 2014).

A rigorous test for assessing the discriminant validity for any two constructs, is by comparing the AVE of each construct with the shared variance (the square of the correlation estimate, the amount of variance in observed variables (the survey items) relating to a construct (A) that another latent construct (B) is able to explain) between these two constructs. The AVE should be greater than the squared correlation estimate to provide good evidence of discriminant validity, because, then, a latent construct is able to explain more of the variance in its item measures that it shares with another construct (Hair et al., 2014).

APPENDIX B.: RESULTS OF STRUCTURAL EQUIVALENCE TESTS

As explained in the methodology, we performed a structural equivalence test to examine whether the significant structural model is equivalent across the countries in the sample. We carried out this test through a multiple-group analysis in Amos, Version 24 (cf. Byrne, 2010). This is a chi-square difference test examining whether the unconstrained model significantly differs from the constrained model in which the relationships are constrained to be equal across countries (i.e., the unconstrained model is tested against structural weights). This test imposes the null hypothesis that the structural model is equivalent across countries. As Amos only enables pairwise comparisons, we repeated the analysis until all countries were compared to each other. Based on the outcomes, as shown in Table B1, the null hypothesis is rejected for all pairs of countries; the significant structural model is not invariant across the countries. To test which relationships in the structural model, differ across the countries, we tested the model for each country separately (see the results for each country in Table B2) and compared the results to the model in Figure 2.

TABLE B1 Results of multiple-group analyses testing structural equivalence of SEM for each pair of countries

	NL	UK	FR	DE	SE	US
NL	—	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 226.37 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 320.79 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 292.49 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 236.24 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 294.55 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00
UK	—	—	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 278.23 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 134.62 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 238.41 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 118.47 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00
FR	—	—	—	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 252.05 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 303.69 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 237.76 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00
DE	—	—	—	—	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 278.40 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 166.87 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00
SE	—	—	—	—	—	$\Delta\chi^2$ = 247.21 Δdf = 54 p = 0.00

Note: Results are shown for the structural weights in the model assuming model unconstrained to be correct. Results of the multiple-group analysis/chi-square test: $\Delta\chi^2$ = the difference in the Chi-Square values of the models unconstrained and structural weights; Δdf = the difference in the degrees of freedom of the models unconstrained and structural weights; p = the probability value of the multiple-group analysis/chi-square test, showing that all p values of all pairs of countries are statistically significant, meaning that the null hypothesis is rejected—that is, the significant model in Figure 2 is not equal across countries.

Abbreviations: DE, Germany; FR, France; NL, the Netherlands; SE, Sweden; SEM, structural equation modeling; UK, the United Kingdom; US, the United States.

TABLE B2 Results for structural equation modeling (SEM) tests for each country separately

The Netherlands		
Predictor	**Outcome**	**Std. beta and significance**
BSL	DL	0.55***
BSL	LSC	0.39***
BSL	GS	0.35***
LSC	GS	0.27***
DL	GS	0.06 NS
OS	GS	0.02 NS
HA	GS	−0.07*
RA	GS	−0.09**
SEUW	GS	−0.06 NS
CISS	GS	−0.11***
CISPS	GS	0.12***
CISI	GS	−0.07*
The United Kingdom		
Predictor	**Outcome**	**Std. beta and significance**
BSL	DL	0.52***
BSL	LSC	0.43***
BSL	GS	0.37***
LSC	GS	0.13*
DL	GS	0.01 NS
OS	GS	0.00 NS
HA	GS	0.18***
RA	GS	−0.02 NS
SEUW	GS	−0.01 NS
CISS	GS	−0.04 NS
CISPS	GS	0.15**
CISI	GS	−0.04 NS
France		
Predictor	**Outcome**	**Std. beta and significance**
BSL	DL	0.56***
BSL	LSC	0.40***
BSL	GS	0.21***
LSC	GS	0.25***
DL	GS	0.21***
OS	GS	−0.04 NS
HA	GS	0.06 NS
RA	GS	−0.03 NS
SEUW	GS	−0.03 NS
CISS	GS	−0.04 NS

(Continues)

TABLE B2 (Continued)

France		
Predictor	**Outcome**	**Std. beta and significance**
CISPS	GS	0.17***
CISI	GS	−0.08 NS
Germany		
Predictor	**Outcome**	**Std. beta and significance**
BSL	DL	0.60***
BSL	LSC	0.30***
BSL	GS	0.36***
LSC	GS	0.19***
DL	GS	0.04 NS
OS	GS	−0.09*
HA	GS	0.14**
RA	GS	−0.12**
SEUW	GS	0.01 NS
CISS	GS	0.05 NS
CISPS	GS	0.00 NS
CISI	GS	0.02 NS
Sweden		
Predictor	**Outcome**	**Std. beta and significance**
BSL	DL	0.58***
BSL	LSC	0.42***
BSL	GS	0.27**
LSC	GS	0.32***
DL	GS	0.12 NS
OS	GS	−0.06 NS
HA	GS	0.07 NS
RA	GS	−0.18**
SEUW	GS	0.03 NS
CISS	GS	−0.01 NS
CISPS	GS	−0.05 NS
CISI	GS	−0.12*
United States		
Predictor	**Outcome**	**Std. Beta and significance**
BSL	DL	0.72***
BSL	LSC	0.44***
BSL	GS	0.39***
LSC	GS	0.21**
DL	GS	0.07 NS

TABLE B2 (Continued)

United States		
Predictor	**Outcome**	**Std. Beta and significance**
OS	GS	−0.02 NS
HA	GS	0.05 NS
RA	GS	−0.01 NS
SEUW	GS	−0.10 NS
CISS	GS	0.04 NS
CISPS	GS	0.07 NS
CISI	GS	−0.01 NS

Note: The reporting of the analyses in this table is based on the Merge SWR tables tool of Gaskin and Lim (2018).
Abbreviations: BSL, boundary spanning leadership; CISI, community initiative sector, infrastructure (control variable); CISPS, community initiative sector, caring for public spaces and planting greenery (control variable); CISS, community initiative sector, social cohesion (control variable); DL, democratic legitimacy; FO, formal organization; GS, government support; HA, hours active (control variable); LSC, linking social capital; NS, not significant; OS, organization size; RA, respondent age (control variable); SEUW, status of employment, unpaid work outside own household (control variable).
$^{*}p \leq 0.05$; $^{**}p \leq 0.01$; $^{***}p \leq 0.001$.