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## **Chapter 9: Institutional Evolution Within Local Democracy – Local Self-Governance Meets Local Government**

*Jurian Edelenbos and Ingmar van Meerkerk*

### **Introduction**

In the Netherlands, citizens have the formal opportunity to put issues – under certain conditions – on the political agenda. This has been possible since May 2006 at the national level and at the local level since March 2002. In addition, people increasingly engage in an informal way, on their own initiative, to draw from their expertise, experience and knowledge to formulate ideas for policy that they may offer to government. Such ‘citizens’ initiatives’ can be seen, in addition to interactive policy making, as a form of citizens’ participation (Edelenbos *et al.* 2008). Citizen participation is often initiated by government; it is a bottom-up development started by citizens themselves (Edelenbos *et al.* 2008).

In this chapter, we elaborate on the institutional implications of the ‘citizens’ initiatives’ within local democracy. These initiatives could be described as forms of self-governance, leading to the emergence of ‘proto-institutions’ (Lawrence *et al.* 2002). These proto-institutions interact with established institutions of representative democracy. This interaction is a co-evolving process in which both types of institutions react to each other in certain ways. In this contribution, we describe this institutional evolution and try to find determining factors in this process. We want to provide explanatory factors of processes of institutional co-evolution. We argue that these factors are of major importance with regard to processes of citizen participation and co-operating

mechanisms between proto-institutions developed by citizens' initiatives and established institutions of representative democracy.

We will treat one in-depth case study: the citizens' initiative in the municipality of Vlaardingen. At this moment there is an initiative for the (re)development of Broekpolder, an area southwest of Vlaardingen. For the case study, we used two main research methods: document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The Broekpolder case was selected for scientific research is because it is unique in the Netherlands – here we see that a formal right to put something on the government agenda through citizens' initiative developed to a form of self-organisation. In general, citizens' participation is initiated and organised by government, but in this case it was organised by the local community. In the research, all relevant written documents, such as memos, reports and political documents, were subjected to accurate study. In addition, eleven key players were interviewed, some several times, and these were made up of civil servants, council members, aldermen and citizens. The interviews were semi-structured and main themes were used to structure the interview – process development, institutions, co-operation, and change. We reconstructed the process and history of the case, and then asked questions about the coordination and co-operation between the federation (citizens) and government (council, civil servants, administrators).

The structure of this chapter is as follows:

- set out the theoretical perspective in which we place the case of Broekpolder Vlaardingen;
- examine the concepts of institutions, citizens' initiative and adaptive capacity;
- introduce the Broekpolder case study;
- analyse the institutional implications and tensions;
- describe the institutional evolution in the case study;
- provide an explanation of this evolution; and
- draw conclusions.

## **Theoretical Perspective**

### ***A Sociological Perspective on Institutions***

The institutional approach in the functioning of public administration has received much attention in recent years (March & Olsen 1989; Goodin 1996). The institutional theory has a versatile ‘body of knowledge’ (Peters, 2005). This theory involves roughly three streams: economic, political and sociological (Edelenbos, 2005), which do not exclude each other. This chapter introduces the concept of ‘institution’ in accordance with the sociological perspective.

The sociological perspective focuses on rule systems and roles of (organised) individuals who shape interaction patterns between actors in a certain policy area (policy arena or policy situation) (Giddens 1984; Eggertson 1990). We then speak of ‘rules of the policy game’ and ‘roles in the policy game’ (Kiser & Ostrom 1982; Goodin 1996). Goodin defines (1996: 52) institutions as ‘organised patterns of socially constructed norms and roles’.

### ***Interactive Policy Making as Self-Organisation***

Local citizens’ initiatives and interactive policy making can be seen as processes of self-organisation where (organised) citizens and social interest groups spontaneously come to a common action (Edelenbos *et al.* 2008). Informal citizens’ initiatives often arise from dissatisfaction with the actions of governments and function as a response to proposed government policy. Citizens and social groups often see that resistance is useless and then switch to a more proactive way of resistance by developing plans on their own initiative. Self-organisation is the internal capacity of elements within systems to adjust and develop (e.g. Cilliers 1998; Heylighen 2002). The concept focuses on how processes come about, develop and change. Processes evolve out of events, actions and interactions and build an institutional structure (Benson 1977; Teisman *et al.* 2009). Through interaction and bonding among citizens and public officials, information exchange, learning and mutual experience develop, which may promote new patterns of relationships (Meek 2008: 420; Morçöl 2008). Processes of self-organisation in turn might lead to new relationships between governmental institutions and civil society. A

form of participatory democracy enters a representative democracy, which could lead to a reorientation of existing democratic institutions (Edelenbos 2005).

## **The Interaction Process between Institutions and Proto-Institutions as a Source of Institutional Evolution**

Although many definitions and descriptions underline the sustainable, regulatory and stable character of institutions (Kiser and Ostrom, 1982; Giddens 1984), here we also want to emphasise the volatility and transience of institutions (Lawrence *et al.* 2002). The institutions that are now stable and sustainable all had an origin in which they were capricious in nature and were experienced as a new institution. Institutions do not only regulate the act, but are also found in that act and brought to further development (Eggertson, 1990). In this chapter, we approach institutions as being processes of social interaction that could become the object of transformation when different, interrelated but sometimes incompatible social arrangements meet (Benson 1977; Seo and Creed 2002).

As a result of the application of citizens' initiative, new institutional arrangements could be constructed that interact with the existing institutions of representative democracy. This interaction can produce tensions or 'incompatible institutional processes' (Seo and Creed 2002). It leads to pressure on both institutional arrangements. The 'proto-institutions' (Lawrence *et al.* 2002) in participatory democracy can be understood as temporary, and these short-term institutions can provide a 'de-institutionalisation' of existing institutions that have a stable and long-term character (Edelenbos 2005). Old and new institutions influence each other, and from this co-evolutionary process, both can mutually adapt themselves into a search for new operation logic. 'Ongoing social construction produces a complex array of contradictions, continually generating tensions and conflicts within and across social systems, which may, under some circumstances, shape consciousness and action to change the present order' (Seo and Creed 2002: 225).

Finding a balance between the old institutions of representative democracy and the proto-institutions of participatory democracy asks for adaptability of both institutions. The interaction between the different institutions is therefore of major importance. However, in practice, this interaction process is difficult to bring about and in many cases does not lead to institutional evolution. 'Interactive governance is often organised as an informal process with different rules and roles than the existing institutional representative system, which runs parallel or prior to the formal institutions of negotiation and decision making' (Edelenbos 2005: 128). This could easily result in the evaporation of emerging proto-institutions in participatory democracy and the reestablishment of existing patterns of behaviour within the institutions of representative democracy.

In the literature on adaptive capacity of systems different factors are mentioned which are important with regard to processes of adaptation, innovation and uncertainty. These factors are grounded in interaction processes between different institutions or systems and could therefore stimulate institutional co-evolution.

### ***Factors of Adaptability Grounded in Interaction Processes***

In the literature on adaptive governance and processes of institutional change, several factors are mentioned that may affect the evolution of institutions (Edelenbos 2005; Folke *et al.* 2005; Granovetter 1973; Koppenjan and Klijn 2004; Maguire *et al.* 2004; Seo and Creed 2002; Teisman *et al.* 2009; Williams 2002). Three important and interrelated factors are: informal networks, trust and boundary spanning.

*Informal networks*: interactions between actors within informal networks outside the realm of formal institutions could enhance the chance of the emergence of innovative policies and arrangements (Bekkers *et al.* 2010). This factor is about networks with an informal character that connect agents operating within traditional institutions of representative democracy and agents operating outside these institutions. The informal character of the networks provides room for involved actors to think and behave outside their established roles and rules according to their formal position within established

institutions. People are not directly pinned down to or held accountable for certain statements. Informal networks give room for experimentation and could lead to change. However, not all informal networks facilitate institutional evolution. Important in this matter is the structural ‘embeddedness’ of the networks (Granovetter 1973). ‘Structural embeddedness is critical to our understanding of how social mechanisms coordinate and safeguard exchanges in networks, for it diffuses values and norms that enhance coordination among autonomous units ...’ (Jones *et al.* 1997: 924). For institutional evolution to happen, it is important that different parts of the social system representing the institutional processes of representative democracy are connected to one another.

*Trust:* besides the structure of the networks, the quality of social relationships (Granovetter, 1973) is a determining factor for change. Trust is seen as an important facilitating mechanism for cooperation between different parts of social systems (Edelenbos and Klijn 2007; Nooteboom 2002; Ring and Van de Ven 1992). This could ultimately lead to changes within existing, established patterns of behaviour. Because trust helps people to tolerate uncertainty and make decisions where there is uncertainty (Luhmann 1979; Bachmann 2001), it is especially important in horizontal and emerging partnerships (Edelenbos and Klijn 2007; Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). In the interaction between the emerging institutions of participatory democracy and the institutions of representative democracy, there is uncertainty regarding the rules and roles of individuals. Representatives of both institutions must have trust in the partners’ intentions and competences for accepting their views and their influence.

*Boundary spanning:* as stated above, the existence of informal networks and processes in which new forms of governance are developed is not enough for the institutional evolution of the involved governmental entities to occur. Institutional change could happen when new practices are linked with existing routines (Maguire *et al.* 2004). Meaningful connections have to be made with the existing institutions of representative democracy (Edelenbos 2005). Individuals who are able to connect emerging rules and roles within these informal networks with established rules and roles within the institutions of representative democracy could therefore be described as key persons.

These so-called ‘boundary spanners’ understand ‘...both sides of the boundary, enabling them to search out relevant information on one side and disseminate it on the other’ (Tushman and Scanlan 1981: 291–2). Boundary spanners have a feeling for different institutional arrangements (cf. Williams 2002) and could therefore make connections between these institutional arrangements, which could lead to institutional co-evolution.

### ***Framework for Approaching and Analysing the Case***

We describe and analyse the developments in institutions in the encounter between representative democracy (municipal institutions) and participatory democracy (citizens’ initiative). We speak of institutional evolution when new ways of working emerge. With regard to this case, this means that existing municipal institutions show resilience: they are able to connect (new) participatory forms of democracy with their institutional practices, developed within representative democracy. New forms of citizen participation are incorporated, leading to new patterns of behaviour. For actors in those institutions, it means that they are able and willing to change their roles and rules of behaviour. We speak of ‘institutional rigidity’ when municipal institutions resist new ways of working. This is the case when actors are not able or willing to change their roles and rules of behaviour: changes or new developments are delayed, resisted or absorbed in existing institutional procedures.

Our research examined the interaction processes between the emerging proto-institution (citizens’ initiative) and the (three) institutions of representative democracy within the municipality of Vlaardingen (see the three arrows in Figure 9.1). In these three interaction processes, we looked at how the institutions of both citizens’ initiative and the local government developed in time (from 2005 to 2010). We depict institutions as the roles people play in practice, as argued above. We therefore looked closely at how representatives of the citizens’ initiative, the city council, the Civil Service, and the board acted, analysing their daily activities in performing their jobs.

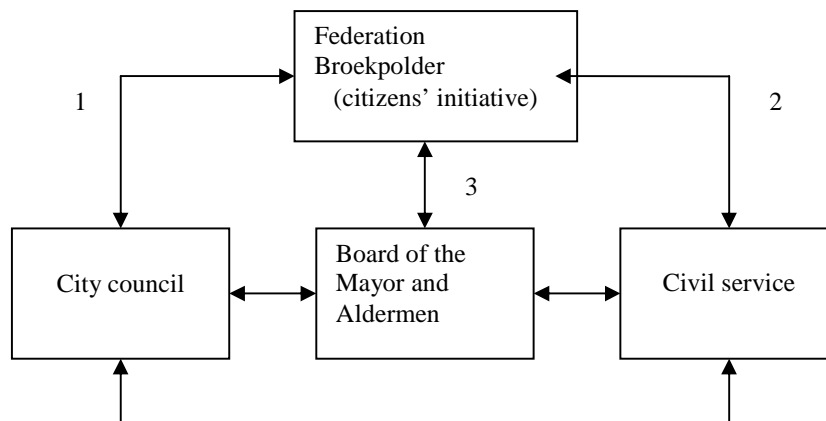


Figure 9.1: Relations between citizens' initiative and existing municipal institutions

## Case Study: Introduction

### *The Origin of the Citizens' Initiative in Broekpolder*

The Broekpolder is an old recreational area of approximately 300 hectares in the north-western part of the city of Vlaardingen. In early 2000, the city and the province of Zuid-Holland had plans to build houses in the area. The Broekpolder was designated as a search location for 'rural living' by the regional government. This caused a large protest in the local community, which resulted in 10,000 signatures against the arrival of country houses in the Broekpolder. The regional government decided not to take any initiatives until 2010.

Meanwhile, a group of thirty citizens of Vlaardingen had gathered with the aim of maintaining the open and green character of the area. At the end of 2002, this group organised a number of meetings where citizens were invited to consider the future of the Broekpolder. It looked for co-operation with the council, Mayor and Aldermen (administrative body), and civil servants (see Figure 9.2).

### *The agreement between the municipality and Federation*

This citizens' initiative was formalised on 5th October 2006 in the Foundation Federation Broekpolder. The Foundation has two goals:



1. In the broadest sense, to develop and maintain the Broekpolder area through sport, recreation, culture, cultural history, nature and education.
2. To take care of the common interests of the users of the Broekpolder on a voluntary basis.

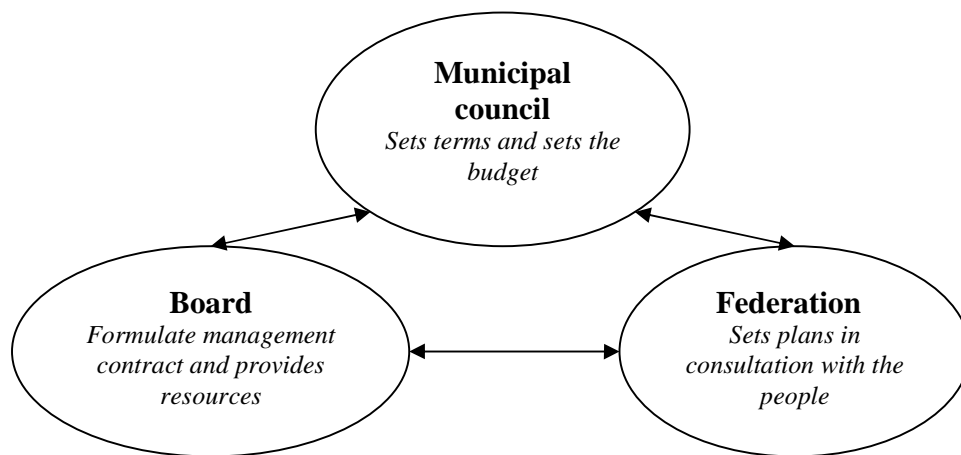


Figure 9.2: The model of Vlaardingen

The municipality (the administration) and the Federation jointly developed a policy note that later became a social contract in which the citizens' initiative and its relationship with the municipality were elaborated. Special attention was paid to the degree and the extent of citizen participation and initiative of the Federation. With respect to participation possibilities, a distinction was made between *area maintenance* and *regional development* of the Broekpolder. With regard to the maintenance activities, the Federation was allowed to give *qualified advice* on the contract extension of the Board, which is the basis of the performance of daily maintenance in the Broekpolder. The municipal administration can only differ from the advice if there is a strong argument against it. However, the Federation should refrain from a direct interference with the normal daily maintenance.

With regard to the regional development, two categories are distinguished: small enhancements and large development projects. With regard to small enhancements, the Federation gives *binding* advice to the Mayor and Aldermen. With regard to the large development plans and projects, the Federation takes *the initiative* in generating ideas and subsequently develops in cooperation with the municipality those projects. However, there is the precondition that the Federation provides societal support for their ideas and plans – it should make enough effort to bring all the interested parties and stakeholders together that reflects the population of Vlaardingen. The Federation receives a budget for

their organisation and the maintenance and development of the area. This budget is approved by the council. The Federation is bound by this budget, by the overall structure plan for the region and by legal requirements.

### *Practice of the Federation*

The Federation has the ambition, while practicing its initiating role, to serve as a platform where all citizens are able to get in contact with each other. A number of chambers are created in which several themes, such as recreation, sport and environment, are elaborated. The Federation sees its added value in acting as a loosely coupled organic network, where participants form linkages and alliances with others to obtain their goals.

The Federation also proposes to arrange the communication with the city council through the creation of a political portal:

If some ideas are beginning to show maturity in the Federation or if council members like to raise something, then an orientation meeting between Federation and (parts of) the city council can take place. These meetings are informal in the sense that the municipalities' members are free to bring their ideas (Municipality of Vlaardingen 2007: 6).

With regard to its representativeness and creating support for ideas and plans, the Federation is focused on creating linkages to municipality (council, administration and Civil Service) and the broader society in Vlaardingen. It has several informal links to key players in the Civil Service, the Mayor and Aldermen. The vision document for the area is developed with the consent of the council and administration. The Federation will also involve the broader public in the development of the vision document and the specific projects it embraces. The Federation continuously tries to reach and involve the citizens of Vlaardingen through advertisements, presentations and (public) meetings and events. In this way, the Federation responds to the demand of the city council to represent the population of Vlaardingen as much as possible.

## **Analysis: Institutional Implications in Three Relationships**

### ***Relationship 1: Board of Mayor and Aldermen – the Federation***

From the beginning, the relationship between the Federation and the Board of Mayor and Aldermen has been positive and productive. People with management experience participated in the Board. The chairman of the Federation was a former council member and knew her way in the municipal organisation. At the time of the citizens' proposal, one of the aldermen (Mr Versluijs of the Labor Party), had a (personal) connection with the group of citizens. He had been actively involved in the design of the citizens' initiative. This seems to be a crucial aspect. Through this connection, support for the citizens' initiative was embedded in the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. The involved alderman played an important role in convincing the Board and the city council to support the citizens' initiative.

The Board parties – Labour, Christian Democrats and Green Party – attached relatively great value to the citizens' initiative. Citizen participation was included in the Coalition Agreement (2006–2010) as an explicit theme and political ambition. The citizens' initiative fitted in well here.

Nevertheless, the Board had to get used to the new (co-operative) structure. This was especially expressed in the preparation of the strategic vision for the Broekpolder region. After a motion of the council, in article 2 of the Covenant, it was determined that, first, a financial framework should be developed, offering clarity about the conditions that related to the ideas proposed by the Federation. This vision should be jointly prepared by the Federation and the municipal board. However, the Board had given this task to the Civil Service, but without taking the new role of the Federation into account. Hereby, a regular internal work approach was activated contradictory to the covenant that proposed co-operation between municipality and Federation. Through well-timed and appropriate responses by an involved and committed civil servant and the involved alderman, a vision in collaboration with the Federation was finally drawn up.

### ***Relationship 2: Municipal Council – Federation***

The institutionalised role of the council (setting the terms and controlling the Board on these terms) was (to some extent) challenged by the citizens' initiative. There was uncertainty about the future role of the council. To what extent would the council still be involved in the decision-making process concerning the Broekpolder? Implementing such projects was politically sensitive in the Broekpolder area, where competing political interests were at stake. The councils' discussion about the citizens' initiative proposal on 19th January 2006 (Gemeente Vlaardingen 2006a) shows that the council had reservations. For example, some council members feared making a decision from which they could not later withdraw. The council was afraid of losing its grip on the citizens' initiative that matters may be seen as a *fait accompli*. Some councillors wanted clear rules provided in advance, while the council as a whole was reluctant to create an extra organisational layer that could not be democratically controlled.

There are also some criticisms about the representativeness of the Federation. The strong involvement of some prominent Labor members (PvdA) in the initiative caused the scepticism with some political parties. This led the Federation to involve more people with other (political) backgrounds (such as the VVD, liberal party).

The politicised situation in the city council frustrated the development of a council portal, ardently desired by the Federation. The political portal would accelerate the decision-making process by ensuring a timely alignment with politics on specific project proposals. However, the political parties had insufficient confidence in each other to create this portal. Who can we trust to represent the council in this portal? Do we like it to prematurely commit ourselves to specific project proposals? The council wanted to retain the freedom and opportunity to have the final say at the end of the policy process, as they always had. It was, therefore, decided to operate in accordance with the traditional political procedures to deal with project proposals; that the council would be involved through the whole Council Commission and would be informed by the Municipal Board on this issue.

Despite a reluctant and critical attitude, the citizens' initiative proposal was approved by the council with a large majority. What we observed in this case was that the

political system was on the average positive about the initiative, but did not change its own patterns of behaviour. The council absorbed the initiative into its existing institutionalised practices. For example, the political portal is subjected and the treatment of new developments regarding the Broekpolder area (and therefore the citizens' initiative) takes place according to the usual procedures in the Council Commission on urban development. (This Commission meets two times each year.)

Later in the process, around the beginning of 2010, one political party (Christian Democrats) was very negative about the way the plans were developed out of sight of the council. This party was not happy with the way the council had no democratic role anymore in the process.

### ***Relationship 3: Civil Service – Federation***

The arrival of the Federation as a new partner to the Civil Service caused some consternation. Previous negative experiences with a citizens' initiative did not help. Because of a lack of professional expertise among citizens, civil servants feared that the involvement of the Federation would only delay implementing any projects. According to some respondents, the proposed co-operation implicitly felt as if the functioning of the Civil Service was questioned. Until the decisive council meeting (in 2006), the attitude among officials was mainly passive and negative. Previous investments in the relationship would count for little if the plans of the Federation for the city council were to be rejected.

With the formal acceptance of the covenant between the city council and the Federation, civil servants had to take their new partner more seriously. Article 10 of the Covenant provides for assistance and support to be given to the Federation – something that had not occurred before. Civil servants are obligated to provide this through information or advice, in the same way they are obliged to assist the Mayor and Aldermen. Article 10 is made with regard to a lack of resources available for the Federation, such as time, procedural experience and finance. However, both Federation and Civil Service experienced difficulties with putting this into practice. For civil servants, the system became diffuse and unclear. Civil servants now have to deal with

two principal players: the Board and the Federation. Who do they have to serve, especially when there are conflicts of interests between the two principals? The obligation to assist the Federation was something of a problem. A lot of effort would now have to be expended, which would take up valuable time and money from the Civil Service. Its view was that assistance could mainly be used when plans and ideas became a project. Now, the official assistance could be overstretched and affect is too diverse: members of the Federation know where to find the officials. The arrangement leads to an appeal to the administrative capacity, which may not always be available at the desired moment.

The Federation, on the other hand, complained about a lack of administrative support. Some of this can be explained by the informal way in which the Federation acts and approaches civil servants. In the 'normal' case, whereby administrators can ask for support and advice, the interaction between administrator and civil servant was clearly regulated and institutionalised. Both parties knew, for example, how to arrange such an interaction and the extent of the support. However, this was not the case with regard to support for the Federation. Officials were not sure to what extent they could support the Federation and they did not see this service as 'part of their normal job'.

Civil servants responded by making the new situation as manageable and clear as possible, through regulations (as much as possible) and the development of a project organisation, in which tasks and responsibilities are clearly divided and defined. The proposed project organisation structure consisted of a programme manager, a steering committee and project groups. Directors of both the municipal and the Federation would participate in the steering committee. At first there was an explicit distinction between different project groups, both from the town and the Federation in order to create workable situation in the eyes of the civil servants. The Federation was approached as a separate organisation with its own structure.

However, at the end of 2009 things were moving in the Civil Service. A programme manager was appointed from within the city council. This person was given the explicit task of assisting the Federation and creating connections to the city

organisation. Also, project groups were formed in which both civil servants and members from the Federation (from the various chambers) were involved. Within these project groups members from the Federation and civil servants work together in making feasible plans that fit within the vision of the Federation. The programme manager plays a very different role in comparison with his or her colleagues, who are responsible for other areas: he or she coordinates, connects and facilitates instead of directing and steering.

## Evolution of Established Institutions

What does the analysis to date indicate with regard to institutional evolution? We distinguish three periods of institutional evolution. The different periods of institutional evolution are summarised in Table 9.1.

*Table 9.1: Periods of institutional evolution within the Broekpolder case study*

<b>Period of institutional evolution</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Involved institutions</b>	<b>Focus on</b>
Period 1 – dissociation (2002-2006)	Exploration, keeping other's institutions at a distance, awaiting, aversion	Civil Service, Federation, Council, Board of Alderman	Controlling, experimentation, seeking for political support
Period 2 – parallelisation (2007–2008)	Institutions are running and working in parallel, there is not enough coordination	Civil Service, Federation, Council, Board of Alderman	Searching for certainties, established institutions seek to absorb the initiative in existing institutionalised practices
Period 3 – synchronisation (2009 and running)	Institutions are to a large extent interwoven, leading to new ways of working together	Civil Service, Federation, Board of Alderman	Searching for effective co-operation mechanisms, embedding within different institutions

In Period 1 of the institutional evolution, there is a tendency for the city council to keep the proto-institution at a distance. There are sceptics within the civil service, as well as among councillors. Councillors are critical about the representativeness and there is uncertainty with regard to the future role of the council with regard to this project. The attitude of civil servants could generally be characterised as reluctant. Civil servants were passive and sceptical towards the citizens' initiative. The proponents of the citizens'



initiative (an alderman, an active civil servant and the chairman of the Federation) are exploring the way in which they could make a fruitful co-operating mechanism. They seek political support and broaden the participation within the Federation with members from different political parties.

We observe a change in Period 2 when the covenant is accepted by the council. Not surprisingly, it was this judicial arrangement that was creating an awareness, 'acceptance' and acknowledgement of the Federation's work and ideas within the Civil Service. Civil servants tried to make the new situation as manageable and as clear as possible. They were doing this in their established way of working: formulating rules and dividing clear responsibilities and tasks. However this is sometimes difficult when confronted with the informal way the Federation works. The council also tries to absorb the initiative into its existing institutionalised practices. It does not accept the formation of an informal political portal and sticks to the usual procedural arrangements with regard to area development. Also, the Board of Aldermen reacted in its practiced way with regard to the development of the vision by activating a regular internal work approach. So, although the covenant was an administrative novelty, it did not cause change within the different institutions. The established institutions of representative democracy and the proto-institution still worked separately, in parallel, according to their own established ways of working.

This changed in the Period 3 (see Table 9.1), which is still running. The Civil Service and the Federation are more interwoven with the emergence of project groups made up of members from both organisations. In this period, the rules and the roles (Goodin 1996) within the Civil Service changed significantly in comparison with other development projects. We could speak of institutional change within the Civil Service. The responsible Alderman for area development supports the relationship between the programme manager and the Federation. The co-operation between the two organisations is in this way embedded within the Board. However, this clearly is not the case with regard to the council. The consequence of the clear separation of Federation activities and council activities is that projects and plans are developed out of sight of the council.

## **Institutional Evolution and Institutional Embedding – Explanatory Factors**

The explanation for the evolution of existing institutions in this case was closely connected to the way in which the new ‘proto-institution’ was linked with the existing institutions. What was the role of the three factors mentioned in our theoretical framework?

The functioning of the *informal network* between members of the Board of Aldermen, the Civil Service and the Federation played a crucial role in the whole process. In the first phase (around 2004), the group of citizens made connections with the Board of Aldermen in an informal way to show their intentions and competences, to test the reaction, and to develop knowledge regarding important procedures and sensitivities within the political arena. After the acceptance of the proposal by the council (end of Period 1, see Table 9.1) a direct connection between the group of citizens and the civil service emerged. The involved civil servant in this matter noticed that contacts with the group of citizens ‘were frequent and mainly informal’. He became part of the informal network and the structural ‘embeddedness’ with the established institutions of representative democracy increased. In co-operation with the group of citizens, he wrote a policy document aimed at organising the relationship between the Federation and the city council.

The Federation tried to expand the informal network with members of the council by proposing a council portal. The council rejected this proposal and this hindered a connection with the informal network. Regarding the latest developments in the council and the coming elections (March 2010), this might be problematic for the future development of the initiative. Because of the weak connection with the city council, one of the major parties – the Christian Democrats – complained about a lack of democratic control.

The *boundary spanners* between the different institutions played an important role in organising the linkage between the proto-institution and the existing institutions. In the

civil service, the Federation and the Board of Aldermen there was such a boundary spanner. At the end of the first phase (2006), there was a committed civil servant who took care of the connection between the administration and the Civil Service. He took on the role of a 'guide of the initiative through the civil service' and he was able to translate the ideas, proposals and informal patterns of behaviour from the Federation into internal procedures, which fitted more with existing patterns of behaviour within the Civil Service. He also organised internal workshops for civil servants aimed at the issue of 'how to deal with two different principals' (the Board and the Federation). When this particular 'boundary spanner' ceased involvement after 2006, the link between the Civil Service and the Federation deteriorated and the aims of the Federation and the Civil Service began to diverge. This is also expressed in Period 2 of institutional evolution (see Table 9.1) which is characterised by 'parallelisation'. At the end of 2009 this connecting role is picked up again by the newly appointed program manager. He adapted his role as program manager in accordance with the partnership. He described his role as "coordinating", "facilitating" and "connecting" instead of directing and steering, which is the regular role of a program manager within the civil service. He facilitated the interaction process between civil servants ('experts') and members of the Federation which was aimed at developing policy proposals for the area. Together with the chairman of the Federation, he organised the formation of the joint project groups, which increased the interaction between both organisations (Period 3, see Table 9.1).

The Federation also had such a boundary spanner in the person of the chairman. With her working experience as a councillor, she was well aware of some important formal procedures and institutions in the municipal organisation. She realised that it was necessary to make connections to existing institutional practices of the city council in order to put the citizens' initiative into practice. In order to obtain the necessary support of councillors and civil servants, the Federation should adopt to some extent the municipal institutional habits, procedures and routines. Together with the boundary spanner in the civil service, she wrote the covenant. This harmonisation with the working methods of the Civil Service provided the necessary clarity among civil servants and councillors. Her approach to the formal procedure of public consultation regarding the

strategic vision was also helpful. Before starting this procedure, she ensured that the governmental entities agreed upon the Federation's approach. The Federation took the formal procedure as point of departure for the public consultation, but changed the process of this consultation according to its own working principles. Instead of seeing this formal procedure as a 'necessary evil', the Federation took advantage of the situation to get communicate with the local population and obtain new ideas and projects.

The third boundary spanner involved was an alderman. He played a crucial role in convincing the council that this experiment with citizens' participation should be given the opportunity to go forward on a trial and error basis. As a policy advocate, he convinced other parties of the added value of this initiative. With regard to the civil service, he focused on 'avoiding the emergence of detailed rules' concerning the initiative and the relationship between the Federation and Civil Service: 'This is a typical reaction of civil servants, but is at the expense of the needed flexibility. For it is about a process and that needs room for development.'

The different boundary spanners connected the logics of the three different entities and played a crucial role in organising and embedding new patterns of behaviour into existing institutional structures. Together they harmonised the differences between the administrative structures and processes of the Civil Service and the informal self-organising ways of the Federation. There was not such a boundary spanner active within the city council.

What can be said about the role of *trust*? The increasing interactions between the city council and the Federation enabled the creation of familiarity, joint understanding and trust. Representatives from the citizens' initiative, Civil Service and the Board got to know each other's intentions and competences and this developed a growing trust. This was important for reducing the scepticism surrounding citizens' participation among civil servants (within the first phase of the interaction process). The committed civil servant 'was touched by the enormous drive and spirit of the involved citizens'. This indicates intentional trust. As an experienced civil servant in this matter, the boundary spanner noticed that many civil servants did not have a high degree of trust in citizens concerning

their participation in projects. The growing co-operation between the Civil Service and the Federation led to a growing trust in the capabilities and application of the volunteers working within the Federation. This was important for the willingness of civil servants to co-operate and to modify their dominant role in formulating policy proposals with regard to the area.

Within the council, a lack of trust is an important factor hindering the realisation of an effective link between the Federation and council. In the beginning, there was a lack of trust because of the strong involvement of Labor Party sympathisers. After broadening the network of citizens and the withdrawal of some Labor councilors, the intentional trust of the councillors in the Federation increased sufficiently to accept the proposal. However, council members were still eager to keep control over their formal roles, tasks and activities. They were very sceptical with regard to the Federation's abilities to produce sound democratic proposals. This indicates a lack of competence trust. There is, however, also a lack of (intentional) trust between council members, which hindered the formation of the political portal. According to the different respondents, some council members are afraid that other council members will try to use this portal for their own political aspirations.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

Our research indicates the difficulty to put participatory forms of democracy into practice within established institutions of representative democracy. Proto-institutions of participatory democracy have to be connected with these established institutions in order to prevent evaporation. Making an effective connection and realising embedding is dependent on different factors, of which trust, informal networks and connective capacity through boundary spanning is of major importance. These factors provide *institutional interaction*, which could be described as a co-evolving process wherein existing institutions slightly change or evolve by interacting agents, operating at the boundaries of these institutions. The boundary spanners connected the logistics of the three different entities and played a crucial role in organising how to embed new patterns of behaviour into existing institutional structures. They merged new ways of organisation with existing

institutional procedures. This is a difficult task and requires individuals who are committed and have the necessary experience.

However, the absence of a boundary spanner within the council and a lack of trust between council members hindered the realisation of the political portal or another form of institutional linkage with the council. The complaint regarding a lack of democratic control in the council is an expected reaction from the viewpoint of the representative institutional settings and relationships where there is little opportunity for participatory democracy. It shows the tension when new forms of participatory democracy meet highly institutionalised forms of representative democracy.

In the case study, we found different periods in the process of institutional evolution. The importance of *institutional design* with regard to changes in the processes is addressed in the literature (e.g. Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). The result of this research emphasises the difficult *processes of institutional evolution*. The co-evolving process of institutional interaction is hard to grasp and could hardly be controlled, designed and directed. Different, interacting factors, comes into play: boundary-spanning persons, informal networks and trust come together in a co-evolving process. It is a process characterised by learning, trial and error and is highly dependent on the interacting actors and specific contextual and cultural conditions of the case. If one of the factors (trust, boundary-spanning actors, informal networks) disappears, the evolution process could be brought to a halt.

We found that besides management and meta-governance (Sorensen & Torfing 2009), trust building was especially important (in Period 3, see Table 9.1) for opening up the established institutions, exploring and developing new interaction processes and behavioural patterns, and synchronising different institutional patterns. Trust provided an acceptance of the citizens' initiative and the input from involved citizens in formulating and developing policy plans. Different aspects and effects of trust have been stressed in the literature (Lane and Bachman 2001; Edelenbos and Klijn 2007). In this study, we observed intentional and competence trust. From this growing trust, the actors were willing to take risks and therefore possibilities for change emerged. In the literature, the

relationship between institutions and trust is mostly studied from the perspective of the stability of institutions and institutional design, which may enhance trust (Farrel and Knight 2003; Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). This study supplies a supplementary view that the presence of trust is an important factor for institutional evolution. It creates the confidence for 'stepping out of the box' and exploring new processes and institutions. This reverse relationship has not been studied widely. Further research should provide more insights in this relationship and the next step is to focus on adaptability (factors) and evolutionary aspects of governance networks.

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