

Unravelling complex processes in grassroots movements: the case of DEEL&Ulrum



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Ulrum1834 (2015). *Ulrum 1834*. Retrieved May 20, 2015, from <http://ulrum1834.nl/>

Executive summary

The village of Ulrum, in the north of Groningen, faces the negative consequences of demographic decline and an ageing society. Dealing with a decreasing role of the government, the inhabitants organized themselves in Stichting Ulrum 2034. Due to their advanced awareness of the necessity to take action, this movement turned out to be a good example for what might become a national trend: the shift towards a participation society. The Stichting aims to achieve a better quality of life for the ageing population of Ulrum through various projects by making use of their own resources and creativity. One of the projects within Stichting Ulrum 2034 is the project DEEL&Ulrum (DU). The aim of this project is to make the houses of Ulrum future-proof by making them more environmentally sustainable and adapting them to needs of the elderly. The collaboration between inhabitants, experts, local contractors and governmental institutions is seen as very important for this. In 2013 Stichting Ulrum 2034 received a substantial subsidy of 1,5 million euro from the province of Groningen.

This report aims to provide insights into the functioning of Stichting Ulrum 2034 and specifically the functioning of DU. This is supposed to enhance the understanding of the project as a learning process. By developing a thorough description of the factors shaping the complex processes of the project we want to contribute to making this process more visual and understandable for outsiders which is the ultimate goal of our commissioner, the Science Shop of Wageningen University.

A focus group discussion followed by more in-depth, semi-structured interviews among the most involved stakeholders provided thick data in the form of narratives. The data collection was complemented by participatory observations during meetings of the project group and by a review of the notes from previous meetings.

The Evolutionary Governance Theory (EGT) has served as theoretical framework, allowing us to understand DU as an evolving governance path. In order to grasp the complexity of the organization, the narratives of the involved actors were analyzed using a selection of relevant concepts: boundaries, performativity and power/knowledge configurations (Van Assche et al., 2014, Beunen et al., 2015). These concepts help to identify the factors shaping the course of the governance path, that is the learning process taking place in DU.

Narratives are defined by actors and define actors and their perceptions of reality. As an outcome the narrator can construct boundaries through assigning certain attributes to different actors. Boundaries can appear in a physical, organizational, social realities and create insiders and outsiders. The concepts of performativity and performance make explicit how discourse and narratives translate into reality. In our research, attention is focused on the performativity of stories of failure and success. Success stories render alternatives invisible while failure stories imply that there needs to be alternatives.

Governance processes result from a continuous strategic use of knowledge and power. This has an effect on the role of actors and the emergence of new plans and policies. Knowing

who has the power to make decisions about changes and who has the expertise or practical knowledge to influence such decisions helps to understand why certain outcomes come about and others did not.

The report contains a thick data description focusing on the recurring themes which were inductively derived from the interviews. We started by illustrating the vision on how to deal with marginalization in the future, which is shared by the different actors. Furthermore, we described the organizational structures of the Stichting and the functioning of project DU in relation to the governmental subsidy. Finally, we present the organization as a learning process and the important role which is played by the process facilitator in that. Taking a holistic perspective on the working of Stichting Ulrum 2034, we could generate a broader subsuming of the individual narratives into one general story. In this story the process facilitator plays a very central role. The distinction between insiders and outsiders is a recurring theme in all interviews forming a clear example of the construction of boundaries. Taking a closer look at the practices, it is evident that these boundaries are continuously crossed by the involved actors. The shift from a welfare state to a participation society inevitably goes together with a shift in power/knowledge relations between citizens and public institutions. In the case of Ulrum, this shift is even taken a step further and is the knowledge of the villagers which is not seen as inferior but as essential to tackle problems like marginalization and ageing society. Framing their innovative approach as a success, the members of the projects might however obscure possible alternatives, which may be better suited to improve the livability in Ulrum. Identifying blurred boundaries, shifting power and knowledge relations and alternative scenarios or perspectives shows how DU and the Stichting as a whole form a dynamic process of constantly searching for the best governance practices. That is, the project is not following one specific pre-determined path, rather, the governance path evolves along the way of various individual actors continuously making conscious and unconscious decisions.

This research aims to combine inductive and deductive methods in order to grasp the processes within DU. The theory was useful to identify the most relevant developments along the evolving governance path. The idea of DU as a learning process is included rather implicitly in this report. Further research could focus more on how this process works in order to understand how the perception of being in a process of learning affects the choices of actors along the way. Besides, more insights about the degree of support for the Stichting among the villagers would be a useful complementation for our research. Furthermore, we provide some points about underlying assumptions for the people of Ulrum to critically reflect upon. Identifying the main lessons learned from the project in Ulrum so far would provide a good indication for the usefulness of this experiment concerning other places under demographic decline.

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1. Introduction

Ulrum is a village located in the north of Groningen, where demographic developments are affecting the life quality (Ulrum2034, 2013). Since 1961 Ulrum has been united in the association Dorpsbelangen Ulrum (DBU), which can be translated as ‘Village Interest Ulrum’. In order to maintain the quality of life within the village despite the consequences of demographic decline and marginalization, this association initiated Stichting Ulrum 2034 in 2009 (Project 2034, n.d.). The main focus of Stichting Ulrum 2034 is to make the village a viable and attractive place to live in the future. One of the key projects within the Stichting is DEEL&Ulrum (DU). This project group aims at contributing to making Ulrum future-proof by focusing on improving the housing in Ulrum. This paper provides insights on the processes that shape the structure and organization of DU.

1.1 DEEL&Ulrum

In 2013 Stichting Ulrum 2034 received a substantial subsidy of 1,5 million euro from the province of Groningen. This subsidy enables the search for sustainable solutions by citizens, local governments, policymakers and other professionals (Kok, 2015). The core objective of the Stichting is to realize projects that increase the quality of life of the inhabitants of Ulrum. The Stichting aims to achieve this by making use of the creativity and resources of the inhabitants of Ulrum (Ulrum2034, 2013), and the subsidy is organized to give room for that.

The rationale behind Stichting Ulrum 2034 is not a fixed vision on how the village must look like in ten years. Rather, they see the process of working together and keeping a continuous transition or adaptation to the current situation as a fundamental instrument for achieving a future-proof Ulrum. Members of the Ulrum grassroots movement agree that the process of continuously working together towards an overarching goal is equally important to the outcome itself. As a fundamental principle they do not have one clear vision, rather they are flexible to adapt to the constantly changing conditions and see the process as equally important as the goal. They consider this focus on the process to be a unique characteristic of their movement in comparison with others. Besides, it explains why they consider themselves as successful: “We never make mistakes – for us, everything is a learning process” (Process facilitator, during the core group meeting organized by the Science Shop, May 21, 2015).

Several sub-projects are initiated by the Stichting to support their goal of enhancing the livability of the village. The first completed project was the development of the Lotus Park, where the terrain of an old gardening company was transformed into a children's playground and meeting place (Project 2034, n.d.). This project was initiated and executed by local inhabitants of Ulrum. Other projects are still running, like GroenLAB, a project group working on improving and maintaining the green facilities of the village (DeelnUlrum, 2015), and Dörpszörg, a project organizing health care at the local level. The most institutionalized and overarching project is DU. A member of the daily board of the Stichting stated, they regard DU as one of their main projects, in particular because a substantial part of the subsidy they received was appointed for this project (Focus group interview).

DU consists of collaboration between inhabitants, experts, companies and local governments (the province of Groningen and municipality De Marne) and its focus lies on housing (Project 2034, n.d.). This project started in January 2014 and tries to solve housing issues with the help of *functieverandering* (which can be translated as adaptive reuse of the specific houses), *opplussen* (translated as upgrading houses, e.g. to make it more accessible for elderly) and *ruilverkaveling* (translated as land consolidation or redistribution of the houses). The DU project group is the unit of analysis for our research. Our internal sources suggested that all different projects within the Stichting are very much interrelated, they link and influence each other (Respondent 5). The processes and the outcomes within DU again shape the entire movement. Because of its established position within the Stichting, DU is a good example for studying the processes. Governmental bodies are involved and provide the institutional and legal framework, moreover, they have an influence in shaping the decision-making of the project group.

Part of their self-appointed ‘success story’ is the considerable amount of government subsidy the Stichting received. Given the structure of the subsidy, the villagers have to work closely together with the governmental institutions at the national, provincial and local level and within their legal and institutional framework. Three different stakeholders are potentially affected and play an important role in shaping the processes that seek for the Stichting’s future success: the DU project group, including the Wierden&Borgen housing corporation (W&B), Stichting Ulrum 2034 and the government on national, provincial and municipal level. For a further description of the stakeholders see appendix A.

1.2 Processes

Uncountable side effects have occurred during the processes at stake in DU, which are difficult to grasp and therefore difficult to predict. However, what is actually meant by ‘processes’? During the first meeting with the stakeholders this term was not further defined. We therefore looked into literature in order to come up with a commonly accepted understanding of what processes are. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO), for example, defines processes as “a set of interrelated or interacting activities which transforms inputs into outputs” (2008, p.3). Hernes (2008) is more precise when he describes processes as “a flow of possibilities, and a conjunction of events and open-ended interactions in time” or as “a sequence of actions, a set of rules, a collection of narratives or a flow of resources” (p. i). According to Hernes intertwined processes are a “black box”.

This is also how we, according to Hernes (2008), as a consultancy team perceive the complex structures of the Ulrum grassroots movement: many different stakeholders are involved in a number of projects that develop their own dynamics, which often results in unforeseeable or unpredicted outcomes. This complexity or “black box” needs to be unraveled in order to make the processes and their intrinsic values visible to outsiders and involved parties. Therefore, there is a need for a thorough description of the processes at stake within the grassroots movement.

This will be done according to the Evolutionary Governance Theory (EGT). As explained above, we will do so by focusing on the DU housing project.

1.3 Objective

The aim of this assignment, as formulated by our commissioner the Science Shop, is to improve insights and enhance understanding of the organic process of the grassroots movement in general and the DU sub-project specifically. By developing a thorough description of the factors shaping the complex processes of the project, we want to contribute to making this process more visual and understandable for outsiders, which is the ultimate goal of our commissioner, the Science Shop of Wageningen University. A deeper understanding and more holistic view will help both insiders and outsiders to better value and assess the intrinsic dynamics and performance of the project and process. Our goal is to develop a thorough description of the processes at stake, which will provide insights into the complexity of the processes within the project. That is essential to contribute to a more holistic view on the performance of the movement as a whole. This is supposed to help the Science Shop to better conduct their research on how to help the movement to better communicate their vision about the functioning of the movement towards the government and other outsiders.

We want to gather first-hand information regarding the stakeholders' perceptions on processes and on what shapes the outcomes of these processes. By describing our empirical data in detail, we aim to make the processes visible and place them into the context. With our analysis, we want to bring our findings to a meta-level, to explain why processes within the grassroots movement are shaped in a certain way. By gaining a further understanding of DU we make the processes more visible and the outcomes more tangible.

1.4 Research question

In order to contribute to understanding the grassroots movement through DU and enhance the insights on the course of the processes at stake, we have formulated the following research question:

What are the main characteristics of the processes within DEEL&Ulrum?

In order to be able to answer this question we will first need to identify the key features of the organization and structure of DU. In order to do this, there are several aspects that have to be analyzed. This analysis can be carried out by answering our following sub-questions:

Who are the main actors involved in DEEL&Ulrum? What are their roles within the organization?

To understand how the project is organized, it is crucial to identify who is involved. Once this is done, a further analysis of the roles these actors play and what is their effect on the organization

and structure of the project is needed. The identified actors will serve as a basis to answer the subsequent questions.

What main themes/topics are used by the actors to describe the organization and structure of DEEL&Ulrum?

To study how the concepts of the EGT are embedded in the case in Ulrum, certain topics and themes that are central for the project have to be identified and analyzed in respect to the different actors. This will provide a focus for the research.

What are the power/knowledge, performativity and boundary configurations shaping the processes of DEEL&Ulrum according to the narratives of the main stakeholders?

In order to be able to understand DU, we will need to understand the different processes that are shaping the movement itself. We will analyze the processes according to the three different configurations distinguished by EGT, since they will give us a critical insight into the evolution of the project.

2. Background

Regarding a broader context there are several things that play a role in the processes within DU, two important ones are the participation society and demographic decline.

2.1 Demographic decline

Demographic decline together with marginalization form of the main rural trends in global population dynamics. According to the Population Reference Bureau (2015), more than 70 percent of the world's population will live in urban areas by 2050. The accelerating urbanization process results in a decreasing number of inhabitants in rural areas. Also in the Netherlands there are some issues with demographic decline, as an increasing number of municipalities and regions are facing the consequences thereof (Verwest, 2011). The municipalities most stricken by a lower population growth are mainly located at the periphery of the Netherlands, especially in south Limburg and north Groningen (Verwest & Van Dam, 2010). Ulrum, located in the north of Groningen, is an example of a village that has to deal with demographic decline and the consequences of this are easily felt by the villagers. Public facilities such as shops and schools are closing down and to change this tide, inhabitants of Ulrum collaborated together. This movement turned out to be a precursor of a national trend: the participation society.

2.2 Participation society

Over the last decades, the organization of the public sphere in the Netherlands has shifted towards a participation society. This requires citizens to organize themselves more in order to react to the societal issues like demographic change and marginalization. The grassroots movement in Ulrum is one example of such a form of self-organization.

The Dutch national policy response has changed from a facilitating ‘welfare state’ towards a so called ‘participation society’ (Nationaal Kompas Volksgezondheid, 2014). In a participation society inhabitants are increasingly considered to be responsible for their own well-being; consequently, there is a decreasing interference of the state. This transition results in an increasing interest in grassroots movements and bottom-up initiatives. Grassroots movements are rapidly blooming in different regions of the Netherlands (Van Meer Naar Beter, 2015). Stichting Ulrum 2034 is considered as an innovative example of this, and has gained attention on the local, national and international level (Ruimtevolk, 2014).

3. Methodology

In order to grasp the complexity of the processes within DU, the methodology of this research is shaped by a combination of induction and deduction. The collection of the empirical data has been on the one hand approached inductively, because the gathered information of specific observations has shaped the focus of our research. Due to the fact that processes are not visible at first sight, this inductive aspect of the research has been crucial. This inductive approach is also visible in the thick description of our data. But on the other hand, the research has been approached deductively, given the active use of our theoretical framework during the research. Hence, during this research the inductive and deductive aspects have been deployed simultaneously.

3.1 Theory

The Evolutionary Governance Theory has served as the basis of our framework, because this comprehensive approach on evolutionary governance relates very well to characteristics of DU; namely being bottom-up, organically built and continuously evolving. The theory also offers an appropriate framework to study an organization with a critical approach, since the concepts provided by the theory can be clearly used to analyze the organization. The theoretical framework has functioned as a crucial instrument to maintain a critical approach during the data collection and analysis. This section is mainly based on the two following books about EGT: Van Assche et al. (2014) and Beunen et al. (2015).

3.1.1. Introduction

The theory is used to analyze and explain the governance of organisations, seeing them as evolutionary paths. We consider this theory to be useful for understanding the processes that shape the outcomes of DU. This project group can be described as a continuous learning process with different actors and ideas entering along the way, which makes it a complex phenomenon to grasp and makes outcomes unpredictable. In order to grasp this complexity we will later analyze the stories or narratives of the involved actors, our interviewees, using a selection of concepts derived from EGT: boundaries, performativity and power/knowledge configurations. The application scheme of the theory is depicted in figure 1.

EGT differs from other theoretical frameworks due to its emphasis on dynamics, meaning that all involved actors and institutions are constantly changing as well as the interplay between each other. This is understood as a co-evolution between discourses, actors and institutions. Its theoretical background is built on social systems theory, institutional economics and post-structuralism. Therefore, it brings a new perspective on market, institutional and societal evolution by focusing on the co-evolution of actors, subjects, objects, formal and informal institutions and knowledge. The course of that evolution is used as the starting point, looking at how different evolutionary paths are created and how they influence each other's development. In line with Michel Foucault's theory (1972), the emphasis on discourse is also substantial in EGT while leaving enough analytical space for actors and their impact on actions.

3.1.2. Theoretical framework

Governance paths

Governance is where decision-making takes place and collective binding decisions are sought. In EGT, governance is understood as a multi-level system, where various governance paths interplay in all possible ways. The evolution of one path can affect other paths. Actors can be part of many different paths and sites (time and space configurations) can be shared by various actors too. For this evolution to happen, the context is crucial. All elements and structures which are produced in governance derive in preconditions for the further reproduction of governance. These preconditions then help us understand that governance evolves as a path which is shaped by three types of dependencies: path dependency, goal dependency and interdependence. In other words, the evolution of governance is affected by the past, by ideas and hopes for the future and the interaction between actors and institutions. Every governance path is a unique combination of the three dependencies.

Actors and institutions

Actors and institutions play key roles in governance, and the different configurations of these have an effect on the outcomes. That means that in a governance path actors and institutions shape each other co-evolving. Actors define themselves through goals which are related to their ideas on how the world should look like, and they consist either of organizations or individuals involved in a governance process. The transformation takes place through interaction and rearrangements of the institutional configurations. In governance, subject formation goes along with the creation of new identities generating further subjectivity as well as new visions about the world. Narratives within the community can alter and the narratives deployed by the actors themselves can change through interaction with others in a process of learning and of confrontation.

Narratives

Actors use narratives as a framework for interpreting, understanding and giving order, meaning and structure to reality. EGT focusses on the structure of the narratives, which can have a

desirable stabilizing effect on, for example, power relations. In other words, narratives can be used to keep existing power relations intact if they do not contradict with the status quo. On the other hand, new narratives tend to have a destabilizing effect when they challenge existing power relations. That is because narratives are linked to value sets, to what is good and bad, what is significant change and so on. Thus, these new and successful narratives, which are produced constantly both consciously and unconsciously, can change the whole discursive landscape in the end.

As said, narratives serve various purposes. They represent interests, topics, organizations, groups and themselves. Actors thus use narratives in order to make sense about situations, topics and other actors. Therefore, actors can be seen as strategic in using and understanding narratives in certain situations.

Boundaries

Narratives can define actors, institutions and their roles and in doing so they create boundaries. Such boundaries are conceptual boundaries which means that they delineate objects and subjects as well as places. The creation of social boundaries can be triggered by spatial boundaries and vice versa. These boundaries are closely related, and thus they appear entangled.

There are certain factors that have an impact on the shape of the boundaries. Identification is one crucial factor: Once boundaries are created, identification within them is normally promoted within either the center, or at the edges, where these boundaries are disputed. History can also be an important factor shaping boundaries since it provides depth to the subjects. This enhances the stabilizing effect of boundaries because history guides the strategies of the actors in developing their identities or identity politics. The result is a less flexible and adaptive governance structure, or in other words, it hardens the boundaries of the actors. Boundaries have a real effect on the construction and the flow of discourses as well as on human actions and material flows.

Boundaries can be crossed, which is very essential for the shaping of reality. After all, when parts of a narrative are reproduced by different actors, within different genres or via different forms of media, this has an effect on how its content is perceived. Boundary-crossing of narrative content is thus not a neutral but a powerful act.

Boundaries can also be subject to change. Through interactions among actors and through a process of learning and confrontation boundaries can alter. Therefore, it becomes important to understand the interactions between actors, as it ultimately helps explaining the evolutionary paths of governance. The importance of analyzing interactions is consolidated when one views governance as competition between actors, and confrontation with their strategies and perceptions of a situation.

Performativity

Performance and performativity are strongly linked and influence each other. Van Assche et al. (2014) pay special attention to the performance of successes and failures. Narratives about

success and failure are characterized by the following features: heroes and villains, dramatic episodes, driving forces and obstacles, a climax, spurring to further action (which means failure) or maintaining the balance (which means success). Success stories render alternatives invisible while failure stories imply that there needs to be alternatives. The concepts of performativity and performance make explicit how discourse and narratives translate into reality.

Power/Knowledge Configuration

Interactions, either in the form of competition or cooperation, can be analyzed as continuous transformations of power and knowledge. Power and knowledge can be regarded as a unity since both are entwined (Flyvbjerg, 1998). Power, as defined by Foucault (1998) is a set on immanent force relations which is present and working everywhere and in every direction. Power does not have to be related to individual or group actions. Rather, it is a network of forces at micro-level which, in aggregation, create a higher level of understanding and authority. Knowledge reflects the way humans understand their environment based on a selection of previous knowledge about power relations. In other words, knowledge is an understanding made possible by earlier insights and the way they interweave with power. Knowledge is not restricted to scientific knowledge, it also includes local knowledge as well as politicized knowledge which are both entwined with power and cannot be decoupled from it. Thus, there is no direct access to the truth embedded in communities because it is impossible to avoid power relations.

Power relations can organize and establish certain forms of knowledge which then is reflected in policies, plans and laws. In essence, governance is a continuous shift of networks of actors that make strategic use of knowledge and power, resulting in policies. When these policies enter an arena they are reinterpreted and used differently depending on the arena. That is why implementation of policies is a process of continuous reinterpretation. Such an interpretation however, is never neutral but a powerful act by which certain types of knowledge are activated.

Concluding, narratives are constructed by and about actors and institutions within a framework of boundaries, performativity and the power/knowledge configuration. Due to the interplay between these concepts all narratives are unique. Despite their uniqueness, different parts of the narratives will be more divergent or convergent.

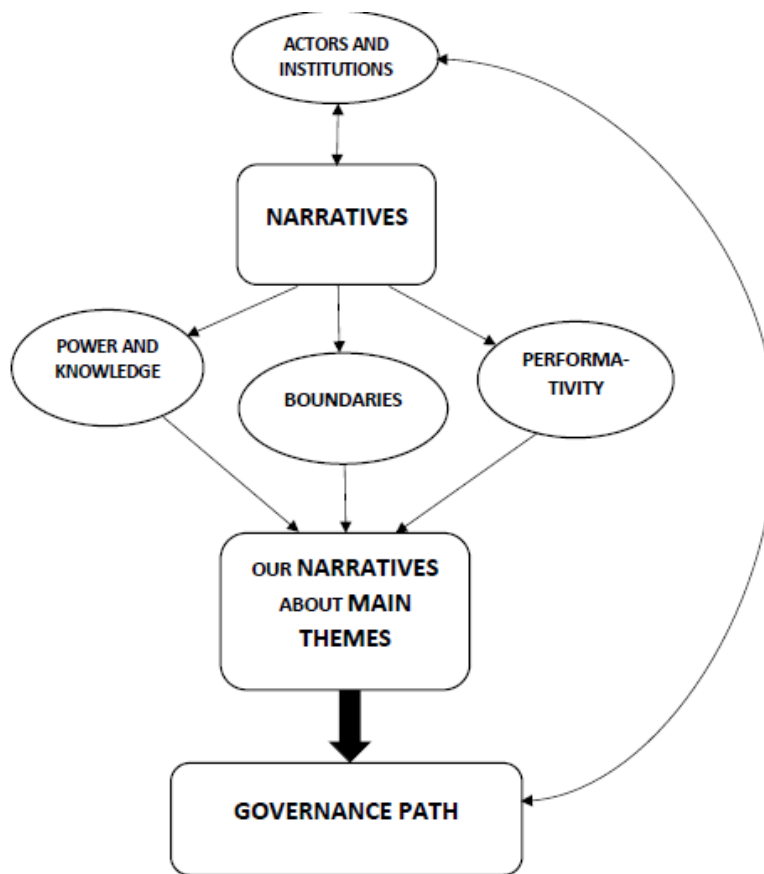


Figure 1. Theory application scheme.

3.1.3. Framework applied to DU

The concept of a governance path is applicable to DU. The idea of a governance path that is evolving according to the present actors and institutions, who themselves are transformed in the process, is a useful concept when trying to unravel the complexity of the processes at work. So in order to identify the factors shaping the governance path and to understand how they contribute to unanticipated outcomes of the projects, this research focusses on the narratives coming from the actors involved in DU. To structure our analysis and understand these narratives, we will use the concepts of boundaries, performativity and power/knowledge configurations. We see narratives as productive and thus consider them to have a real impact on the practices, shaping actors and institutions, which is why we consider them our focus.

This approach makes the concept of performativity useful for us. The way parts of narratives are transmitted across borders is a political act demonstrating power. Looking at how different actors are performing a truth derived from earlier discourses and narratives will provide us with insights about which parts of narratives are given meaning and how they are interpreted. By looking at the characteristics mentioned above we can identify stories of success and failure.

This is very important for a project that relies on learning from failures and turning them into successes.

Narratives give us insights into the interactions between actors, between institutions, and between institutions and actors. Since DU is viewed as a pilot project by the governmental institutions as well as by W&B, we are going to encounter new policies and forms of cooperation between private actors and formal institutions. Stories about power and knowledge will provide us with insights about these interactions and the emergence of new plans and policies. Since DU is marked by trial and error and thus constantly under reposition and adaptation, policies and plans are also subject to reinterpretation and change. Knowing who has the power to make decisions about changes and who has the expertise or practical knowledge to influence such decisions will help us to understand why certain outcomes came about and others did not. Since knowledge always relates to power, we can derive our insights about the power distribution within DU from learning who brings in what knowledge and how this is used by others.

Stories about spatial and social boundaries can be blurry. Identifying and describing the different boundaries established within the DU project is important because actors derive a major part of their identity from articulating such boundaries and behaving accordingly and vice versa. Considering that the project touches very personal aspects of the lives of the inhabitants of Ulrum, we can expect that strong opinions are formed, which may be based on feelings and perceptions rather than on rational reasoning. As described above, boundaries can lead to less flexible governance structures. Therefore, forming a coalition around a certain topic and thus creating boundaries can make actors rather powerful in shaping not only the outcome but the whole process.

The discursive approach of the EGT fits well with our focus on the narratives and their influence on reality within DU. All concepts that we chose and explained above are closely related and complementary. The idea of power within actor/institution configurations is playing a major role and this is also the case for our framework. We would like to emphasize, however, that we do not see power as a negative thing but rather as an indicator for significant moments implying change.

Lastly, analysis is then done in the following order: data collected is classified in the data description according to the main themes, which are then analyzed with the help of aforementioned concepts in order to gain understanding on what kind of governance path DU followed.

3.2 Methods

In this section of the paper the methods used to answer the research questions are explained. Different research methods are used in this research, which consist on literature study and different empirical methods. The empirical methods include a focus group discussion, interviews and participatory observation. For a visualization of the process of our research, see appendix D where a timeline of the research period is shown.

3.2.1 Literature study

The literature study is conducted to complement the findings of the empirical research and to look into additional topics. The minutes of the meetings from the Stichting in which DU has been mentioned have been used to obtain data. These minutes were acquired via a member of the Dagelijkse Leiding (DL) (which can be translated as Daily Management), and were used to gather data about important moments of DU and to supplement the findings of the interviews and participatory observations. Secondly, the literature study about EGT was utilized to develop a critical theoretical framework to guide the data collection and analyze the gathered data. As mentioned above we made a selection of concepts from EGT that we considered applicable to the case in Ulrum; boundaries, performativity and power/knowledge configuration.

3.2.2. Focus group discussion

To get an overview of the complexity of the processes, the data collection started with conducting a focus group discussion. The results of this focus group served as a starting point for the preparation of further interviews. Thus the focus group was the first empirical research method that was conducted. This method was conducted in the second field trip to Ulrum, during the fourth week of the eight-week project.

For the focus group we made use of a participatory research technique aimed at constructing a timeline with the participants. By using this technique, a clear overview was given of historical landmarks, as perceived by the members. This technique helps in obtaining data and in formulating appropriate questions and developing themes for the interviews, but the community members do not end up empty handed, since they have a possibility to get insights in the process and see a clear overview (Kirsch, 2001). Focus group discussions are also a valuable method for identifying existing problems and constraints faced by the participants (Green & Thorogood, 2014). When using this technique, questions should be asked in a certain order, starting broadly and clearly, and going more in depth in a later stage of the interview (Competentiecentrum transitities, n.d.).

In this particular case, the focus group lasted 1.5 hours and was held on June 4, 2015 in the information center of the Stichting. Before the start of the focus group, we prepared a timeline. This timeline only indicated the start of the project and the current situation, leaving all the input, and even the definition of the start of DU to the participants. During the first fifteen minutes of the focus group, the participants were asked to write down important moments of the DU on post-its. They were asked to write down a sentence rather than a word. This individual approach was chosen in order to prevent the participants from influencing each other. The participants could write their important moments on three different colors of post-its, one color to write down the negative moments, one for positive moments and one for neutral moments. After fifteen minutes, the participants were asked to place their important moments on the timeline and to discuss those moments with each other and the researchers (an example of the timeline can be found in appendix B1). During the discussion of the post-its it was possible for the participants to bring in new suggestions for events when they came to mind. They could thus

build further on what others had said. During this part of the focus group, we asked for more explanations and information regarding the events to generate a deeper understanding of the timeline. After all the post-its were placed on the timeline and discussed, the participants were asked if they had other insights they wanted to share related to this topic or discuss new points if they had come to mind.

The focus group discussion was held in Dutch and was conducted by three team members. There was one facilitator who chaired the discussion, introduced the team, explained the purpose of the meeting and asked for an introduction from the participants. The facilitator also encouraged the discussion and asked for clarification when needed. The second researcher was the recorder, who documented the content of the discussion, processes and interactions. Nevertheless, the discussion was also recorded in order to not miss any relevant information. The third researcher assisted in timekeeping, and helped summarizing main points and moving from one to the next topic.

One of the members of DL was asked to select people for the focus group who were relevant to the process of DU, thus snowball sampling was used. He selected people who were directly or indirectly involved in DU, of which three were able to join the focus group. Two of the participants were a member of the DL and the third member was the administrative supporter of DU. From the data gathered during this focus group we have been able to distinguish four main themes that are of importance for DU; vision, subsidy, process facilitator, and consult. These themes have been distinguished due to the fact that the participants of the focus group repeatedly mentioned them. Vision refers to the vision from the different actors involved in DU about livability and the organizational structure. Subsidy refers to the attribution of the Provincial subsidy to Stichting Ulrum 2034 as well as the attribution of the subsidy from DU to the inhabitants of Ulrum. The process facilitator refers to the role of the external process facilitator in the development of DU. The last theme, consult, refers to the role of consult in decision-making processes of DU. These themes have been used as a guidance for the interviews, which will be further elaborated upon below.

3.2.3. Interviews

In order to analyze the processes within DU, we have thoroughly examined the four main themes through the lenses of actors involved, or more precisely, through the content of their narratives. Thus, the interviews are the most crucial part of our data collection. With the information gathered during the focus group, we were able to select some of the important moments during decision-making and other processes and developments of DU. But they were the abovementioned themes which were repeatedly coming back, so we have used them to further reflect upon them individually with our respondents in the interviews.

Gudmundsdottir (1996) perceives narratives as both the phenomenon and the method. It is a phenomenon because the words of respondents are often organized in narratives and interviewers try to 'hear' these narratives, and it is a method because the whole research is essentially a meaning-making process with important narrative features. While the narrative

polishes and shapes the narration of experience, it also selects aspects of experience that are capable of being placed in it, but at the price of ignoring others (Gudmundsdottir, 1996). Therefore we had to be aware of the potential bias in the narrative of our interviewees and our interpretation of their narrative. In our attempt to visualize the complexity of the ‘invisible’ processes, we required tools to “gather, assess and present this complexity” (Zweifela & Van Wezemaela, 2012). Therefore the ‘speech’ of our interviewees is complemented with a technique in which the interviewee, together with the interviewer, drew relevant aspects of important events and reflected upon why and how these things happened in a specific way. During the interviews we first elaborated upon the role of the interviewee within DU and subsequently we invited the interviewee to draw or write his/her thoughts about certain themes on a big piece of paper. For example we asked about one of the selected important moments and asked to write or draw relevant factors and actors to explain why this moment happened. This drawing was used during the interview to ask questions about potential linkages between different factors (an example of such a drawing can be found in appendix B2). This changes the materiality of interviews and also enables the interviewees not to limit their thinking by words (Zweifel & Van Wezemaela, 2012). By visualizing the different paths of these critical events we are able to zoom in on certain aspects and show the complexity of the relationships between subjects, materiality and rules.

In our interviews we attempted to gather insights on processes in retrospect, hence we focused on understanding how and why certain things happened from the respondents point of view. During the interviews we focused on certain critical events and themes within DU and asked our interviewees to explain explicitly what happened in regard to these and why it happened this way.

We found our respondents via several different channels. In the second week of our research, we had a meeting with the core group meeting organized by the Science Shop in Ulrum. During this meeting we could present our research plan and meet several involved actors and request an interview with them. Secondly, we looked at the internet and the different websites related to Stichting Ulrum 2034 and DU to find email addresses and contact different people that were of relevance for our research. From the minutes of the meetings of the DL we also found relevant actors which we invited for an interview. After that, a member of the DL provided us with a list of several more possible respondents, which mostly overlapped with the people we already invited. During our stay in Ulrum we organized one new interview with a freelance contractor. Some respondents were not able to have an interview due to holidays or busy schedules, moreover, not everyone replied to our invitation. The respondents that were interviewed are actors that are or have been relevant during the important moments identified in the focus group interview. We planned interviews in the third and fourth field trip, in the fifth and sixth week of our project.

3.2.4. Participatory observations

In the sixth week our team was in Ulrum for a week, together with the process facilitator. This was during the fourth field trip to Ulrum. During this week a number of important meetings were planned and we decided to conduct our participatory observation during five meetings. These meetings were the Terpen & Wierdenland meeting (16/6/2015), the *ruilverkaveling* meeting (17/6/2015), the Krimpcade (18/6/2015), the Kerkstraat meeting (18/6/2015) and the monthly consult meeting with local contractors (18/6/2015). These meetings provided us with important information about the functioning of the project group, because it enabled us to study our respondents in their environment. The description of this existing situation provided us with a written photograph of the meetings of our selected research site, DU (Kawulich, 2005). This method has been useful for gaining a further understanding of the social, economic and political context, of the relationships between subjects, knowledge, materiality etc.

We conducted a focused participatory observation, which means that we observed the participants based on the insights from the interviews and focus group meeting. The participatory observation can be valuable in order to gather information about rules and norms that exist and that can be taken for granted by the participants, routine actions, and actions and thoughts that are not recognized as relevant for the 'story' (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013). During the meetings we attended, we observed the verbal and non-verbal communication between the different actors; who says what and when and how do the other participants respond or not, who receives a lot of attention, but also who is sitting where, how are the different participants communicating non-verbally.

To conclude, because of our focus on the narrative and interviews being the main source of the data collection, a good participatory observation has been an important addition to the subjective stories told by the actors themselves. The theoretical foundation from the EGT has been used as a guidance to analyze the interplay between actors during these meetings. This has enabled us to compare the single narratives about the processes with the real version of them during meetings.

4. Data description

In this chapter, we will describe the data that was generated by conducting interviews, observing meetings, analyzing minutes of meetings of the DL and the focus group meeting. A list with all respondents and corresponding functions can be found in appendix C. We decided to treat the collected data anonymously and refer to the respondents by numbers instead of names. We decided upon that as we realized that the data collected could be deemed too sensitive to present publicly. We are aware that for the insiders it might be possible to decipher it to a certain extent. This level of anonymity is the most we can assure, because due to our focus on narratives it is essential for this research to know who says what, and from what position. The data is presented according to different themes which we induced from the data. Those themes came up repeatedly in the transcripts and minutes, and therefore we found them relevant. The chapter is divided into two parts, the first part describes all the relevant actors and their function within the process. The

second part consists of the themes that we extracted from the data which are: DU and the subsidy, Vision, Functioning of DU, Communication, Process facilitator and Learning process.

4.1 Actors

Here we will describe the actors are involved in several ways in the processes of DU, which are: DBU, Stichting Ulrum 2034, the process facilitator, the municipality, the Province and the housing corporation W&B.

Stichting Ulrum 2034

Within Ulrum there are different levels of organization. DBU is the representation of, and chosen by, the inhabitants of Ulrum (Respondent 6). DBU is in charge of different functions regarding the Stichting, and provides them with legitimacy (Respondent 6). For example they are the ones that have to approve the members of the DL. Moreover, they also organize a village consultation per month for all project groups. The DBU is mainly focused on the broader village projects of Ulrum (e.g. a disappearing school, a changing bus line) (Respondent 4). DBU is the founder of the Stichting and is linked to the municipality. They are not directly connected to DU, therefore, not central to our research.

In 2009, the inhabitants of Ulrum initiated Stichting Ulrum 2034 in order to tackle the problems of marginalization and an ageing society. They decided to no longer rely on the municipality and Province to provide solutions and started their own projects using their own (financial) resources and skills. These projects range from care for elderly, to playgrounds and meeting centers to local food production. The main difference between DBU and the Stichting is that the latter focusses on the livability of the village, and DBU on older activities and projects in the village. In 2013, the Stichting received a subsidy from the provincial government to improve Ulrum. This has drawn major attention from all over the country towards this village.

The DL is responsible for the daily affairs within Stichting Ulrum 2034. They are for example responsible for the coordination between the different project groups within the Stichting and have to make sure that the basic principles and goals of the Stichting are being followed (Werkprogramma, 2014). The DL develops the policies of the Stichting, and is assisted with legal grounds by the board of the Stichting, who decides on all the economic transfers (Respondent 6).

As mentioned before, the DU is one of the project groups of the Stichting. Its goal is to have an efficient distribution of the houses with different functions to maintain the livability of the village. By investing in houses, the value of the village increases and people are encouraged to stay living there. The focus on housing was initiated by the municipality and was a precondition coming along with the subsidy. At the same time, other projects of the Stichting are connected to DU because they focus on other aspects of the livability of the town. Such as the GroenLAB, which focuses on the environment surrounding the houses, or the Dörpszörg, focused on health care which is related to the *Opplussen*. The difference between DU and other

project groups is that in DU outsiders are involved while the other project groups are organized by Ulrummers only (Respondent 4).

Over the years, there have been certain changes on the way the organization was structured. These changes were needed since there was discontent on the way the supervisory board was working, and therefore it was removed in May 2015. The organigram can be seen in figure 2.

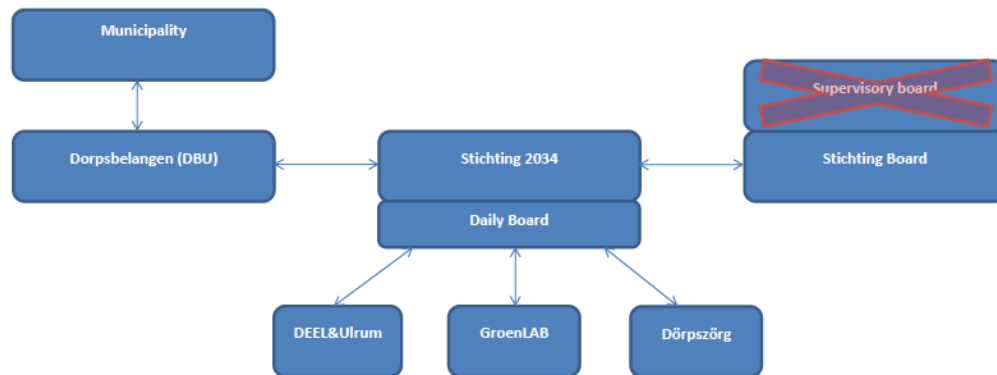


Figure 2. Organigram of the organization (June 2015), X = removed in May 2015

Process facilitator

The process facilitator is an anthropologist and psychologist who was asked by a real estate agent from Ulrum to join the Stichting in order to help them develop the housing project. She has a facilitating role within the project whereby she focusses explicitly on the process and not on the outcomes (Respondent 5). One week per month she stays in Ulrum and lives above the information center. Outside these weeks there is still close contact between the process facilitator and the involved members of DU.

She was invited to the project in 2013, and she is being paid by the municipality De Marne. Several respondents emphasize that she is essential for DU because she combines all involved parties and participants (Respondent 1, Respondent 6, Respondent 7). Her contract was initially ending in September 2015, but the DL decided to extend her contract for one more year. In spite of this, her involvement will be less intensive (one week per two months visit) from September onwards (Observation 5).

Municipality

The relation between Ulrum and the municipality De Marne is often mentioned to be unique (Respondent 8). Already before the national call for “more participation from the citizens, less involvement of the government”, the Ulrummers started to participate and organize themselves (Respondent 11). This is the reason why they received the subsidy from the government. Within the municipality, they gathered certain actors who are involved and supporting their project and are putting (and receiving) a lot of effort and energy in it (Respondent 1). The participatory

approach from the governmental actors involved, is valued to be crucial for the development of the Stichting (Respondent 11).

Within municipality De Marne, three different key actors can be found: The alderman of De Marne who says in a speech for a meeting called *Het Krimpcafé* that the government tries to predict outcomes and sets fixed goals, which often leads to wasting money (Observation 3). Many of the governmental actors that we have interviewed emphasize the importance of the alderman to the development of the Stichting. He has facilitated space for the participatory approach from Ulrum (Respondent 1, Respondent 8, Respondent 9). The second key actor is the vitality officer, who works closely together with the alderman, trying to be a bridge between the inhabitants of the municipality and the municipality itself (Respondent 9). She tries to work outside of the bureaucratic environment. Vitality is more than just demographic decline and working on vitality can serve more goals at the same time (Respondent 9). The third key actor is the senior policy officer who is focused on spatial planning, and he is also the program leader of marginalization and livability (Dutch: *krimp en leefbaarheid*). Together with the civil servant from the Province, he tries to help and contribute to the development of the Stichting (Respondent 1). The senior policy officer got engaged with the Stichting when the subsidy was first mentioned (Minutes DL) and he was involved by initiating the focus on the housing by the Provincial subsidy (Respondent 1).

Province

On the provincial level, the civil servant from Groningen is the most important actor. She used to work for the municipality De Marne and has been connected and involved in Ulrum for a long time. She sees herself as a translator between officials and directors and the village, the organization and the inhabitants (Respondent 8). She has been very important for the provision of the subsidy, since she believed in Stichting Ulrum 2034, had a lot of trust in them and was willing to support them (Respondent 8). She brought the government and Ulrum together (Respondent 1).

Housing corporation Wierden&Borgen

W&B is the housing corporation which owns approximately 30% (170 houses) of the houses in Ulrum (Respondent 7). They consider that they have a responsibility in the livability of Ulrum (Respondent 7). They are closely involved in the DU, directly within the subprojects of *ruilverkaveling* and indirectly in *opplussen*. For the subproject *opplussen* they hired two experts, an engineer and an architect, who are conducting research to look for opportunities and options to improve the houses so that people can live longer in their own house (Respondent 12). W&B aims to involve other stakeholders (as health care insurance, who profits from the consequences of *opplussen*) in the project. A change of board in the W&B was seen as very important by the DL, since then, there is a lot more collaboration and open attitude from W&B (Focus Group Interview). A senior policy officer within W&B is an important actor for DU as she bridges between the needs of the W&B and the needs of Ulrum.

4.2 DEEL&Ulrum and subsidy

The municipality saw the efforts undertaken by the inhabitants of Ulrum and therefore decided that they wanted to support them (Respondent 1). According to many of our respondents specific individuals within governmental functions have played a very important role in making the attribution of the subsidy to the Stichting possible (Respondent 3, Respondent 7, Respondent 8). The current civil servant at the provincial government in Groningen was a seconded employee at the municipality de Marne and thus familiar with Ulrum. Because of her new function she was able to arrange the subsidy for Ulrum (Respondent 1, Respondent 8). A plan had to be made about the entire project that would receive financial support including the project DU.

When the people of Ulrum were starting Stichting Ulrum 2034 in 2009, the project DU was not part of their plans. The idea for a project that would deal with real estate in the broadest sense came from the municipality and not from the villagers themselves (Respondent 1). It is not always clear to the people involved whether the subsidy came before or after the DU was created. One informant told us that the project was first established and then the subsidy was assigned (Respondent 1) while another interviewee sees DU as a precondition for getting the subsidy in the first place (Respondent 4).

One of the ideas behind DU is to maintain existing property, especially in the old center of Ulrum where many shops are now empty and houses are deteriorated (Respondent 1). A considerable amount of the overall subsidy went to this project in order to support locals within the three different focuses of the project; *functieverandering*, *opplussen* and *ruilverkaveling*. Inhabitants could thus come up with a plan of adjusting their houses and receive 40 percent of the total costs from the subsidy budget (with a maximum of 25.000 euros). A prerequisite of receiving this subsidy is that the inhabitants hire local entrepreneurs to make the adjustments to the house, in case that is not possible it still needs to be an entrepreneur coming from as close as possible (Respondent 5, Respondent 6). It is not merely about improving the local housing stock but also about making the local entrepreneurs benefit from the subsidy (Respondent 2, Respondent 5, Respondent 6).

60 percent of the money that is being invested in the improvement of the houses in Ulrum comes from the inhabitants themselves, which means that the subsidy is being multiplied. The investment has another multiplier effect when houses increase in value this also has an effect on the surrounding houses. One respondent emphasized that this contributes to the livability and is also beneficial for banks (Respondent 3).

One member of the board of Stichting Ulrum 2034 mentioned that DU differs from other projects within the Stichting, because it requires quite some interaction with people from outside of Ulrum, like the municipality or a project facilitator who has more expertise (Respondent 4). DU has a part-time employee who deals with the subsidy applications of the villagers (Respondent 1, Respondent 2). He is the only official employee within DU and is paid from the Provincial subsidy (Focus Group Interview). The process facilitator is officially employed by the municipality and W&B (Respondent 1). Next to them, the members of the DL are supporting the

project voluntarily (Respondent 6). Since the project deals above all with properties and real estate, W&B is closely linked to the project group as well (Respondent 7, Respondent 12).

The subsidy has been given to the Stichting so they could distribute it themselves. Before receiving the subsidy, the Stichting had to set up a plan of how to distribute the money along the different projects. They accomplished this together with the senior policy officer of De Marne (Minutes DL). In the case of DU that means that the Stichting had to establish their own rules to regulate the distribution of the money. This meant that also a separate board had to be formed because even though the villagers were handling the money themselves, they needed a legal status to do so (Respondent 6).

4.3 Vision

Stichting Ulrum 2034 originated to find answers to the question on how to improve or maintain livability in Ulrum within a changing context due to the effects of demographic decline (Respondent 6). Trying to identify what makes it attractive for people to live in the village, despite the disappearance of facilities (Respondent 6). The village itself had a lot of plans and already executed a range of activities in order to improve the attractiveness of Ulrum (Respondent 1, Respondent 5). Some actors (mainly the Province and the municipality) emphasized the importance of the physical environment by focusing on the living-proofness of the existing housing stock in order to address the livability of Ulrum (Respondent 1, Respondent 2). At first, the Stichting was not aware of the importance of housing for the livability of the village (Respondent 5, Focus Group Interview), but as was mentioned in the focus group discussion, with the attribution of the Provincial subsidy the different stakeholders involved agreed to focus on the houses in the village with DU.

According to the administrative supporter of DU the vision for DU is something that has been derived from logic: the effects of demographic decline and marginalization have to be addressed, otherwise the quality of the village decreases (Respondent 2). From our respondents we have noticed that the vision of DU consists of two important elements: the vision on livability and the vision on the role of the government and society. Below the two elements will be described separately.

Livability

Actively finding viable answers to the question on how to preserve and enhance the livability is a fundamental part of the vision of DU. The idea of DU is to enhance the livability via the improvement of the houses within the village (Respondent 10).

Livability is a difficult concept to grasp and relates to many other factors than just demographic decline (Respondent 9), and different actors involved in DU define livability differently. For one interviewee it is the ability for people to live independently in their house (Respondent 11), while for others it means the attractiveness of living in the village (Respondent 6), or a combination of different things that lead to a certain energy (Respondent 9, Respondent 10). W&B relates livability to the subjective experience and appreciation of the living

environment, this refers to the question concerning the extent to which a certain area or community is suitable for its inhabitants to live and work. Important dimensions that they take into account are the consequences of demographic decline and the earthquakes. Hence, key to DU is that they let livability be defined by the inhabitants (Respondent 7, Respondent 12).

Although the different actors define livability differently, key features that are mentioned by many interviewees in order to be able to increase the livability are long-term solutions, and the multiplier effect. These key features are reflected in the three different focuses of DU; *functieverandering*, *opplussen* and *ruilverkaveling*. However, not everyone agrees upon the positive effects on the livability of different activities. One interviewee mentioned that the *opplussen*, does not always lead to increased livability since it is sometimes invested in houses that do not really need it (Respondent 10). Decisions that have to be made within DU are constantly measured to fit within their general vision (Respondent 2, Respondent 6). For example, the stairlift is merely a solution for the short-term and therefore did not fit within their vision, so they decided that they could not subsidize it anymore (Respondent 2, Respondent 6, Respondent 11) in collaboration with the municipality who offers a stairlift subsidy (Respondent 6).

Another important feature in their approach is the multiplier effect, this means that for example not only the houses are improved but that contractors from Ulrum can profit as well (Respondent 2). This means that the inhabitants from Ulrum can only be attributed a subsidy if they hire a contractor from Ulrum (Respondent 5 & 6). This multiplier effect is key to many decisions made, they actively try to arrange the actions of DU to generate effects further on than the action itself.

The role of the government and society

Interviewees did not distinguish between the Stichting and DU when describing their vision on the role of the society and the government. Therefore we will describe their vision as if there is no distinction between the Stichting and DU.

The essence of Stichting Ulrum 2034 is reflected in one of their fundamental principles ‘with own people, own means, and own energy’ they want to make the village livable (Respondent 1). This dynamic is at the core of the Stichting and is essential for their power and ideas and an important part of their vision (Respondent 1). Stichting Ulrum 2034 has a bottom-up approach; the questions that arose in the village were the starting point for their actions (Respondent 5). Many interviewees refer to the participation society when they explain the approach of Stichting Ulrum 2034 and emphasize that this already happened in practice before the government mentioned this concept, now it is becoming more visible and articulated. According to one respondent, Ulrum can be seen as an example that there is not really a problem with the participation of citizens, but rather with the participation of the government (Respondent 11). The government does not have the resources anymore to do everything for its citizens from a welfare state approach (Respondent 3); the welfare state view on the government is already outdated (Respondent 9). This shift in roles is being seen as a chance by the Stichting to try to act

themselves, but also by governmental authorities such as the Province and the municipality that try to change into a more facilitative and collaborative role (Respondent 8). The alderman of the municipality also acknowledges and stimulates the importance of searching together and the energy and possibilities that the collaboration between the municipality and society can create (Observation 3). The civil servant of the provincial government in Groningen, perceives the subsidy as a means to give Ulrum the space to learn how to deal with the self-regulation and as a pilot project for others to learn from their experiences. This is more like an investment in learning how to deal with the decreasing role of the government in that region. However, other civil servants from the Province do not understand this approach and neither why the money is given to Ulrum and not to other villagers (Respondent 8).

The name of the project group DEEL (meaning ‘share’) reflects an important aspect of their vision on their role within society. Because DU does not merely aim to address the current issue of empty houses, but aims at providing an integral approach in which everybody can contribute with different parts by sharing for example their connections and knowledge. Combining these different parts by the different actors involved is an important part of the vision of DU (Respondent 5). This relates to the other two parts mentioned in their vision: long-term and multiplier effects.

4.4 Functioning of DEEL&Ulrum

Above we have described how DU is embedded within the broader organization of Stichting Ulrum 2034 and how the subsidy was introduced to the Stichting. We now want to focus on the interaction of people within the project group and how they cooperate with actors from outside the project group. We will focus on three topics that were found to be important in the data, because many of the respondents mentioned these topics in the interviews. First, the organization of the subsidy applications will be described. Second, we will focus on the link between DU and the housing corporation W&B. Finally, we will describe the struggle of keeping the balance between the hierarchical and horizontal organizational structure.

Organization of the subsidy applications

The information center in Ulrum is open twice a week with the administrative supporter present to deal with the applications and questions of the villagers about the possibility of receiving subsidies (Respondent 2). Someone from the DL makes sure that there is always a representative of DL or the board also in order to back up the administrative supporter (Respondent 6). Often Ulrummers visit the information center to discuss their ideas with the administrative supporter and the DL or board members. This happens mostly before they even start with the application. This way it can be discussed beforehand how the subsidy is going to be used in the end. This is why no application has been rejected so far, since possible problems are solved during these encounters (Respondent 2, Respondent 6). In the end, it is the administrative supporter together with the process facilitator and the DL who make decisions about who gets the subsidy (Respondent 2). The respondents involved in making these decisions said that the most important

criteria for the approval of the applications is that they fit within the goal of DU (Respondent 2, Respondent 5, Respondent 6).

Cooperation between DEEL&Ulrum and Wierden&Borgen

As explained above, W&B is strongly connected to the two biggest projects within Stichting Ulrum 2034, namely DU and Dörpszörg, with the common idea of making Ulrum future-proof for an ageing society (Respondent 7). The research that is currently being conducted by the two external actors of W&B (the architect and the engineer) is not only focused on the housing stock from W&B, the generated information is also considered to be relevant for private houses and the public space in the center of the village (Respondent 12), to attend a coherent focus (Respondent 5). The aim of their research is to maintain the value of the houses but also the social values that are inherent to the people (Respondent 12). W&B is investing a lot of money in Ulrum, which they see as a pilot project for other villages that deal with marginalization. The lessons they learn here will help them to invest in other villages more effectively (Respondent 7).

According to the senior policymaker of W&B the idea behind the cooperation of DU is that looking at the issue of housing means taking a broad approach and considering all financial, economic, social and ethical questions (Respondent 7). The *ruilverkaveling*, where private and rented houses might be switched between owners, requires good communication between the different parties (Respondent 7). This is ensured by having regular meetings with W&B, DL and project group members of DU. According to this senior policy officer of W&B, all parties are equal in decision-making. There is discussion and exchange of information until a solution is found but everyone has to decide for themselves whether or not they can justify their decision. In the end, all stakeholders have to contribute their relative share. W&B, for example, invests more money than others in some projects, but they also have a lot to gain from that. When they decide to support a project, they stick to that decision (Respondent 7). W&B also tries to include another important actor into the picture: health insurers. Health insurance companies have a lot to gain by enabling people to stay in their own houses until an old age. If elderly have to leave their homes because they cannot climb the stairs anymore or because they cannot use the walking frame due to uneven floors, they move to a nursing home which costs the insurance much more money in the long run than adapting the houses. Supporting the adaptation of houses and thus increasing the supply of elderly-friendly houses now, will save them money in the future (Respondent 12).

Balance: Hierarchy vs. Horizontal Organizational Structure

As explained above, the initial reason for Ulrum to organize their own projects was because they realized that they could not rely on the government to provide support. They did not only want to do it themselves but also in a different way. Different project groups have their own projects and are linked by the DL in order to establish a non-bureaucratic collaboration (Respondent 1). The senior policy officer of municipality De Marne describes this as “*easycracy*”, which we interpreted as a horizontal organizational structure. When the subsidy was granted, the structure

of the whole organization had to be adapted to some extent. For example, a board and a Stichting had to be formed in order to create a legal status for receiving and applying for subsidies (Respondent 6). Being in charge of distributing the money put a lot of responsibility on the shoulders of the most involved inhabitants of Ulrum. This resulted in the creation of more control layers, like the supervisory board which some respondents see as a constraint for the bottom-up approach that formed the basis for the Stichting (Respondent 2, Respondent 6). The Stichting started to become organized like a small government (Respondent 1, Respondent 6, Respondent 8). This became obvious when during one meeting there was a clear distinction between the board on one side of the room and the rest of the inhabitants on the other (Focus group interview). This was when the organization began to realize that there needed to be an intervention (Respondent 9). The municipality arranged a communication manager to help the Stichting to focus on their initial ideas of the structure of the organization (Respondent 1). Then, one organizational layer, the supervisory board, was removed resulting in increased mutual consult and faster communication (Respondent 2). From that point onwards the Stichting became very much aware of the danger of becoming too hierarchical and they started to be quicker in seeking external help with this (Respondent 3). The quick, direct communication outside of official meetings is perceived to work quite well in Ulrum because people see each other on a daily basis (Respondent 2).

4.5 Communication

Since Ulrum is a small village, almost everyone knows each other, which enables communication to travel fast. This section describes the information retrieved from the interviews about communication and consultation between the different actors directly or indirectly involved in the organization. The information is divided into three parts: communication within Stichting Ulrum 2034, communication towards the village and communication to outsiders of the village.

Communication within Stichting Ulrum 2034

There is a lot of consultation within the organization (Respondent 2). The DL is referred to as a connector between different organizational parts (Respondent 1) and thus has an important role to play in the sharing of information. It is said that they manage to have good contact with other parts of the organization (Respondent 4). An example of this is that DL meetings are preferably attended by someone from the board to create shorter lines between the DL and other parts of the organization (Respondent 6). Project groups are also asked to share their concerns and current status of their project with the DL (Respondent 6). The current status of communication between the DL and some project groups is assessed as something that might need more attention. Though shorter lines between both should activate the project groups in a certain way, this has not yet improved the communication (Respondent 6). The DL has planned a meeting with several project groups to discuss their dissatisfaction about their lack of motivation and interests

(Respondent 6). The DL also has internal consultations in which they openly talk about incidents (Respondent 11).

Communication within the organization takes place in both formal and informal ways (Respondent 4, Respondent 11). Formal communication, for instance, takes place through consultations and sharing of detailed reports of those meetings with other parts of the organization (Respondent 4, Respondent 6). Besides, the whole organization has an official yearly evaluation to discuss the current state of affairs (Respondent 4). Informal contact is, for instance, described as moments where the board asks the DL in an informal setting if there are any questions (Respondent 4). Besides formal and informal ways, the communication process sometimes flows naturally. After all, tasks of different people alternate between actors (Respondent 11) as well as that several actors hold various tasks (Respondent 6). The chairperson of DBU is, for instance, also a board member of the Stichting. Moreover, all people involved in the Stichting have a double role, as they themselves are inhabitants too. Although they try to separate these roles, this can be difficult at times (Respondent 6).

The process facilitator is the one that supports and fuels consultations and contact within the organization. When she is in Ulrum, a lot of meetings take place, but when she is not around she is still in touch with them via email and phone (Respondent 2).

Communication towards the village

There is communication from the organization towards the village and vice versa, about multiple topics, via several paths and from different sources. The villagers give information to the organization by filling in questionnaires for example (Respondent 5). Sources by which the Stichting informs the villagers are, for instance, given via the village newspaper, information evenings, flyers and information letters (Respondent 2, Respondent 11). The local newspaper, Ollerommer, is delivered to 500 households every month in Ulrum (Respondent 4). In this newspaper the Stichting explains what they do and which problems they encounter (Respondent 6, Respondent 9), but people read it selectively (Respondent 6). One interviewee stated that people rather have tangible results instead of merely information (Respondent 6).

Three information meetings for the villagers have been taking place, to explain current issues and share developments. Those meetings have not been very fruitful as the attendance was low (Respondent 8). The Stichting thinks about how to improve the attendance rate but they experience difficulties in engaging the non-involved (Respondent 8). Some interviewees are of opinion that it is not necessary to involve everyone, as you can simply not get everyone on your side (Respondent 8, Respondent 9, Respondent 11). Another complaint about the information meetings was that some of the information came too late, and that the information in general was too extensive and not structured well enough (Respondent 10). W&B has also organized some information evenings, which were poorly attended too (Respondent 12).

Another source for communication is the information center in Ulrum. The information center is a building in the center of the village accessible for everyone (Respondent 2). On the ground floor there is an office and a conference room; the upper floor accommodates an

apartment where guests can stay (Respondent 4). On Monday and Thursday afternoons, the information center holds office hours where people can ask their questions, receive extra information, and submit their request for subsidy (Respondent 2, Respondent 4). When requests are honored, applicants receive a letter (Respondent 2), yet sometimes conflicts occur about the acceptance of applications. This is then being solved by being open and by talking to each other (Respondent 2).

As stated before, one of the requirements for the approval of a subsidy request is that construction work should be done by local contractors. These building companies are informed about the current state of affairs through monthly consult meetings, where some people of the organization and the process facilitator are always present (Respondent 10). These meetings are also held to ensure that the vision of the Stichting is clear for the contractors (Respondent 2). Not all companies are present, as not everyone feels the need to be there (Respondent 10). The consult meetings were useful in the beginning when things were still unclear, yet these days not everyone sees the necessity for it anymore (Respondent 10). However, at the same time it has been said that the communication from the organization towards the constructors has not been sufficient at times (Respondent 10).

In general the Stichting attempts to reach a high degree of transparency in order to provide as many people with the relevant information, partly in case the composition of the DL changes (Respondent 6). However, during the monthly consult meeting with local contractors the DL did not want to share information regarding the subsidy and executors of a particular job, which led to a conflict during the meeting (Observation 5). It is said that the information about the subsidy division is open for everyone, yet in practice not all this information is shared with everyone (Observation 5). Also the personal relations and history between organization members and others might have an influence on the transparency (Observation 5, Respondent 5).

Communication to outsiders of the village

Ulrum and the Stichting have received a lot of interest from outsiders. The municipality and the Province are examples of this. Some people in the government seem to really understand the projects of the Stichting, whereas some of their colleagues do not always know how to place the developments (Respondent 5). Figures and concrete outcomes are needed to show progress and legitimize their existence. In Ulrum they have these figures, as the success of 130 improved houses shows (Respondent 5).

The subsidy and the fact that Ulrum is seen as a pilot project makes that the Province is closely watching the improvements there. A civil servant at the provincial government of Groningen keeps track of the events and tries to translate what happens at the local level to a provincial and national level and vice versa (Respondent 8). In case things go wrong, the Stichting has to explain what happened and communicate this with the aforementioned civil servant and the senior policy officer of the municipality.

Another interesting aspect about the communication to outsiders of the village is that Ulrum isolates itself from other villages (Respondent 9). This is said to be part of their culture, as

well as that it is a more religious village in contrast to most surrounding towns (Respondent 8). Their isolation can be detected in their first encounters with the process facilitator too. In the beginning people were hesitant to share doubts, information and questions with her, therefore the process facilitator decided to come to them, so she went out and socialized with the villagers to know what issues are at stake in Ulrum (Respondent 5). Now the process facilitator knows the inhabitants in a different way, so they come to her, which allows her to do her job for them (Respondent 5).

The contact between the Stichting and W&B is good (Respondent 7). Sometimes W&B even shares important information with the process facilitator and the Stichting before it can officially be shared, just to enhance the process facilitation (Respondent 7). Attitudes of people change when conversations and information sharing are more open (Respondent 7).

4.6 The process facilitator

In all interviews, the process facilitator is mentioned to be a key actor within the processes of DU. Because of her experience in areas facing similar developments as Ulrum, she got invited to work as a process facilitator at DU.

Function

Although nobody seems to have a clear understanding of the exact role and function of the process facilitator, she is often portrayed as '*een spin in het web*' (this is a figurative term that refers to someone who is at the center of things, and who knows what is going on on all parts of a project or team). She is considered to be the only person who has the overview of DU (Respondent 5, Respondent 6). Furthermore, she makes the connections between all the different involved parties (Respondent 6, Respondent 12). Different participants appreciate and name different characteristics of the process facilitator: she is capable of giving people the feeling that something is their own idea which makes it sustainable (Respondent 8); she is the one who makes decisions (Respondent 10); creative and persistent (Respondent 7); she is very sensitive in dealing with people (Respondent 7); she inspires and motivates people to overcome problems and keep on going (Respondent 12); has relevant experience and a useful network (Respondent 6).

In her own vision, the process facilitator does not see barriers or tries to reject them and she portrays herself as the glue of the project (Respondent 5). The positive attitude of the project is a big factor driving the process (Respondent 5). During the *Terpen & Wierden* meeting, we observed that the process facilitator actively explained and framed the problem of unoccupied houses as something that can create positive things (Observation 1). She does not look at the individual's work but at the collaboration between people and the bigger picture (Respondent 5). To do this, she focusses on creating linkages between organizations, people (Respondent 6, Respondent 12), between the personal and the general, between the internal and the external (Respondent 5). During the *ruilverkaveling* meeting it was shown that she actively searches for connections between different actors and projects during the whole meeting (Observation 2). An

important part of the approach of the process facilitator is to create a neutral space where everybody can come, meet and work together (Respondent 5). The information center is an example of this neutral space in Ulrum. The process facilitator asked the owners of the building if they wanted to make it available for the Stichting (Respondent 5). Before the information center members of the Stichting always had to go and visit others, for instance in neighboring villages. Nowadays everyone visits the Stichting in their information center, as it is a neutral meeting space (Respondent 5).

Many respondents mention the fact that the process facilitator is coming from a different part of the Netherlands and does not have a history in Ulrum as an important aspect of her role. Because, as these interviewees emphasize, this enables her to approach people openly and without judgement (Respondent 1, Respondent 12).

Future

Many interviewees considered the process facilitator as crucial for the project and felt that they were not ready to accomplish this alone, so they asked the process facilitator to extend her participation. As mentioned earlier, she accepted this under the condition that it would be less intensive (Minutes DL). Almost all interviewees mentioned that a lot of projects are at risk of an early death without the process facilitator. Already a lot is being accomplished and the projects do not have to continue at the same pace, but one respondent explicitly stated that without her support, skills and knowledge the Ulrummers would not be able to accomplish it on their own (Respondent 7). Due to the extension of the process facilitator's involvement, there is space for her to transfer her role to someone else, for example a member of the DL (Respondent 1).

4.7 Learning process

Pilot project

DU is perceived as an experiment by several actors such as the Province and the municipality. This approach makes it possible to think outside the scope of existing frameworks (Respondent 5). By means of an integral approach, the Stichting determines what direction the project needs to take and how that can be achieved (Respondent 5). Also W&B perceives DU as a pilot project, and their focus is on what they can do with their existing housing stock, and on understanding how the experiences in Ulrum can be unrolled somewhere else (Respondent 6, Respondent 7, Respondent 11, Respondent 12). In addition, to call the project an experiment creates space for the involvement of outsiders (Respondent 7). For W&B it is very important to involve the right parties, to share plans, and to have a shared vision to reach a goal (Respondent 7). Good collaboration among several parties (Respondent 5), good communication and sharing of information is therefore key (Respondent 7 & 12).

Learning by sharing and doing

A departure point of the Stichting is that all ideas are welcome, taking into account that a bottom-up approach is important (Respondent 1, Respondent 5, Respondent 7). As long as things

are viable, they will be worked with (Respondent 8), however, circumstances confine what can and should be done (Respondent 11). When ideas fail it is not seen as problematic, as it is essential that everyone gets their chance (Respondent 8). The real estate project on the Kerkstraat is an example of something that did not go well. Eventually, the association decided to change the external planning commission (Respondent 11). In the meeting about the Kerkstraat we observed that the difficulties and problems were explained and experienced as lessons to learn (Observation 4). Also during the monthly consult meeting with local contractors, the process facilitator explained mistakes as learning points (Observation 5). Thus, although things do not always work out fine, the association still takes the time to explain and explore how the organization works, for instance by changing involved people and involving villagers in the planning (Respondent 8, Respondent 11). Thereby, by making connections between different project groups it is attempted to share and generate knowledge and expertise that can be used for other projects (Respondent 12).

Learning by doing means that one constantly keeps an eye on the vision, and tries to reach that aim in small steps (Respondent 12). Learning by doing is visible by the fact that some changes have occurred within the subsidy distribution (Respondent 11), as well as in the organizational structure of the association (Respondent 6, Respondent 9) as in the course of events, it became clear that the supervisory board contained too much consulting, which made the organization look like a governmental institution (Respondent 6). The subsidy and the additional responsibilities have had an influence on the functioning of the association as well (Respondent 1). As a result, the supervisory board was eliminated from the organization in April 2015, which brought parties closer together (Respondent 6). Nevertheless, the organizational structure is still in motion, as the project groups still have to be activated better (Respondent 6).

The organizational changes up to now have in part been made possible because of the involvement of outsiders, as they might be better able to assess what is going on from a critical perspective (Respondent 1, Respondent 9). From inside the Stichting, it might be difficult to notice and name issues and assess the support amongst people working in groups, which might make it difficult to criticize each other (Respondent 9). Outsiders then play a role in dealing with these struggles (Respondent 1, Respondent 9).

Collaboration and involvement of others

As mentioned earlier, the involvement of and interaction with outsiders distinguishes DU from other projects within the Stichting and other villages (Respondent 1, Respondent 4). This distinction brings about a feeling of pride among the actors directly involved in DU according to the process facilitator (Respondent 5). Guests are invited to share stories and learn from each other. Besides, outsiders might have a different view, which can be confronting but also eye-opening (Respondent 5). Guests are welcome to stay in Ulrum, but are expected to bring something in return (Respondent 5).

Many respondents emphasized the importance of the collaboration with various parties for DU, of which the housing corporation W&B, health institutions and governmental

institutions on the national, provincial and municipal level are examples. The project is thereby always looking for funding, as the subsidy is not sufficient by itself and they aim for a multiplier effect (Respondent 5). There is also cooperation with knowledge institutes, like universities, to exchange knowledge. Contractors are also included as they play an important role in the vitality of the region (Respondent 5), they are therefore actively involved in the learning process, as they will advise villagers and have to pass on knowledge in the future (Respondent 5). One of the contractors confirmed that DU is a learning process in which they are involved, however, he was of the opinion that they only have a limited influence on the subsidy scheme (Respondent 10).

The high degree of participation makes the playing field larger, which results in dealing with issues on a deeper and more concrete level (Respondent 7). This is time consuming, yet it yields more than one could expect (Respondent 5, Respondent 7, Respondent 12), as new ideas and spinoffs like GroenLAB and the adaptation of pavements came about (Respondent 5). The point of departure of collaboration are always the villagers and the project groups (Respondent 5).

The duality of functions of several of the actors also brings in some added value. The experience of assembling and interacting with people is something that one takes along (Respondent 11).

5. Data analysis

In the following chapter, we will analyze the data generated in relation to our theoretical framework. The theoretical framework consists of a set of concepts by which we will study the narratives, boundaries, power/knowledge configurations and performativity. These concepts were introduced in the theoretical framework, and during this analysis we will elaborate on them on the basis of the themes that were explored in the data description. With this analysis, we will be able to describe the differences between the narratives of the different actors in relation to the concepts. This chapter will consist of the analysis of the boundaries, power/knowledge configurations and performativity, via the study of the narratives of the different actors. Then, a conclusion will be presented, in which we elaborate upon the governance paths that the organization follows.

5.1. Boundaries

The following analysis is focused on which types of boundaries are created in relation to Stichting Ulrum 2034, with a focus on DU. By analyzing the narratives of the interviewees, it can be possible to point out what kind of boundaries are created and how they evolve within certain environments. To do this, we identified two sets of boundaries, the boundaries delineating insiders and outsiders of the organization as well as the boundaries within the organization. The analysis also focuses on the dynamics of these boundaries, and how they are crossed, which has an impact on the flexibility and adaptability of the boundaries.

Insider vs Outsider

As explained in the theory section, boundaries create a distinction between insiders and outsiders. From the interviews it became clear that the involved actors make distinctions about insiders and outsiders. The municipality, for instance, believes that the involvement of outsiders and their expertise and knowledge has contributed to the overall success of Ulrum, something that could not have been achieved with the commitment of insiders alone. The division between insiders and outsiders, however, is not as clear-cut as it might sound.

As the description brings to the fore, the role of the process facilitator is an interesting example of the unclear distinction between insiders and outsiders. As the process facilitator comes from another part of the Netherlands she has no history in Ulrum that might enable or constrain relationships there. The process facilitator could thus be conceived as an outsider. Her advantage of not having previous relationships with the villagers makes the process facilitator able to approach people openly and without judgement. This, in combination with her support, analytical skills and knowledge makes that others refer to her as an outsider. The prevailing opinion among our interviewees is that this has contributed to the success rate of DU. The interviews brought to the fore that the level of success can be explained by the distinction between insiders and the involvement of outsiders. Also, the fact that the process facilitator is being paid by the municipality and W&B emphasizes her position as an outsider. By the start of her involvement in Ulrum, the process facilitator noticed that people were not coming to her with questions. However, as time passed, the villagers started to get to know her. Not only the villagers but especially the policy officers from Leens and Groningen started to come to the information center in Ulrum instead of the other way round. From that point onwards she has been embraced by most as one of them. Also the process facilitator herself has added to the depiction of her position as an insider. During the interview she repeatedly referred to herself and her involvement in the project and with others in terms of 'we'. The way the process facilitator talks about guests visiting the information center and their sometimes 'eye-opening' or 'confronting views' about DU also demarcate that her status is different than that of other outsiders.

A similar line of argumentation can be set out for W&B; they too can be regarded as insiders and outsiders at the same time. On the one hand, they are involved as an outside party, wanting to serve their own interests and wanting to successfully facilitate their own pilot project and additional research as they have invested a lot of money in it. For this purpose, they rely on more external expertise in the form of an architect and an engineer. On the other hand, there is close interaction between W&B together with the experts and DU which is very much based on openness and trust. This suggests that, despite the different financial contributions, all involved parties feel like they have an equal say in the consultations. Also, they all share the same goal of achieving a successful *ruilverkaveling* in order to make Ulrum future-proof. Because of this close cooperation and mutual appreciation the boundaries between W&B as outsiders and the DU project as insiders are not very strong.

Another boundary that can be detected is a spatial and social boundary of Ulrum as opposed to other villages. Within municipality De Marne, Ulrum seems to be rather different from neighboring villages. The inhabitants of Ulrum are, for instance, more religious than those in neighboring villages. Another important element that creates this boundary is the way the village and its people work together. It is, for example, said that Ulrummers do not envy each other. Their way of working has gained a lot of interest from various institutions, both abroad and within the Netherlands. It is likely that the attention to the village has hardened the boundaries between Ulrum and surrounding villages. Another factor contributing to this is the fact that only contractors from Ulrum are allowed to do the constructional changes which are paid for by the subsidy. A consequence of these differences and regulations is that Ulrum has maneuvered itself into a rather isolated position, which is supported by the fact that Ulrum is the only village that has not managed to sign up a sports team for the yearly sports event the *Zeskamp*.

Boundaries within the organization

Within Stichting Ulrum 2034, explained by figure 2, it seems that the different parts of this organization are well differentiated. These parts are the DL, the board, the different project groups and the supervisory board (removed in April 2015), which appear to be quite well distinguished on paper. The tasks of each of these segments are strictly divided, resulting in clear-cut boundaries between them. Due to their learning process with regard to the organizational structures, the task division and structures within the organization have changed. This has had an effect on the differentiation and the boundaries between the actors. This became evident when the subsidy arrived and they had to arrange a new board, or with the elimination of the supervisory board. Moreover, the search for the right structure of the organization is still ongoing, making it a very dynamic process. Boundaries will adapt along with the evolution of the processes of the organization.

Another aspect to analyzing the boundaries within DU regards the tasks done by the representatives of the DL and the board. These tasks seem to be clearly distinguished. Yet, since many of the individual members in these two committees have functions in different segments of the organization, the strong delineation of the boundaries between those segments might be disturbed. An example of this; one DL member is also the coordinator of a project that the DL is supervising. As the process facilitator explained, the organization uses an integral approach looking at a higher level to see which linkages can make different parties collaborate. This is also regarded as a positive thing in order to create knowledge and expertise that can be used for other projects. However, it contributes to blurring boundaries between project groups and other segments of the Stichting.

It can be concluded that the boundaries that delineate each part of the organization are quite malleable. Given the adaptability of the boundaries and the functions performed by certain actors, one could point out that the boundaries between different segments of the organization

are continuously unconsciously crossed. This derives in a more adaptable and flexible governance.

5.2 Power and knowledge

In the following section, a deep analysis on the power and knowledge interactions is performed. The way this interaction evolves will be interesting in order to analyze how the governance within DU has developed over the years. The particular characteristics of this case, a grassroots movement which focus lies on the learning process, makes it a unique project to look at. The analysis will show the way the interaction between knowledge and power is shaped on the basis of a certain shift in roles as well as the horizontal structure of the organization, and how other knowledge inputs are involved in this, deriving in a certain set of policies.

Shift in roles

An important part of the knowledge power configuration between the different actors involved in DU is shaped by the initial idea of Stichting Ulrum 2034 to take over responsibility for the livability Ulrum with their own power, with their own means and own energy. This vision reflects the urge to change the power relations and knowledge deployed in the interaction with the different actors involved in addressing the livability of the village. This urge for change emerged due to the fact that the existing power relations with the governmental authorities and the knowledge distribution was not considered sufficient to address the issues of livability within Ulrum. As explained in the theoretical framework, knowledge reflects the way people understand their environment and is based on a selection of previous knowledge about power relations. By a feeling of discontent with the results of the previous power relations between society and government, Stichting Ulrum 2034 realized they had to change the form of collaboration with other actors and the use of knowledge in this collaboration in order to enhance the livability within the village. Many respondents mentioned that the knowledge that should be used to determine the actions of the Stichting Ulrum 2034 should come from the village itself, hence a bottom-up approach.

Moreover, not only Stichting Ulrum 2034 felt the necessity of a redefinition of the different roles within the governance structures, but also the policymakers and the housing corporation involved in DU. This urge for change among policymakers is shaped by a broader political context. One important aspect of this broader political context is the emphasis of the national political discourse in the Netherlands on the changing role of the government. Within this discourse there is a focus on the required shift from the welfare state to a participation society as was mentioned in the background. In this participation society is the government still seeking to define and perform its new role. Hence, the knowledge deployed by policymakers, involved in the creation of DU and its further development is politicized. In the interviews with the different governmental officials it was also emphasized that their involvement in DU is also beneficial for the government. Learning from the movement in Ulrum produces new knowledge which can contribute to the process of redefining their role, especially in areas with demographic

decline. Thus, the deliberate focus on shifting roles in governance by supporting the initiative of DU is a strategic use of existing knowledge and power relations which can be used to shape governance structures and future policies. This strategic approach also appeared to be important for the housing corporation to participate in DU. The existing knowledge gap of the housing corporation on how to respond to the consequences of demographic decline amongst others is filled by their collaboration with DU. This is enabled by the bottom up approach of DU, since by the use of this approach is able to mobilize and extract information from the inhabitants of Ulrum about their views on housing. As a result, the decision to collaborate with DU can be seen as a strategic choice from the W&B to organize and establish certain forms of knowledge about which can be used to decide upon their strategy for the future. Hence, this active use of local knowledge as a starting point has influenced the power and knowledge configuration concerning the interaction with the actors involved, such as the municipality, the Province and the housing corporation. Their willingness to learn from the Stichting Ulrum 2034 implies that these have a certain type of knowledge which brings them into a rather powerful position.

Horizontal organizational structure

The insights about the way of governing and power relations within previous governance structures have influenced the view on how to organize the power distribution and how to deploy knowledge within Stichting Ulrum 2034. The majority of the respondents mentioned that it is essential for the organizational structure of the Stichting to avoid becoming a small government. Therefore, Stichting Ulrum 2034 aimed at establishing a horizontal, low-hierarchical organizational structure with a bottom-up approach. Moreover, the government officials involved have also stimulated the development of this organizational structure by hiring a communication expert to support the Ulrummers in reflecting upon their ways of organizing. Thus, the knowledge used to determine the organizational structure within the Stichting has been shaped by the negative experience of the power relations within the organizational structure of the government. Important for this horizontal structure is an equal distribution of power with few organizational layers between the different actors involved in the Stichting. Different respondents emphasize the importance of sharing information among all the actors involved in order to be able to make decisions based on an equal position. Flyvbjerg (1998) stresses that power and knowledge are intertwined and therefore can be seen as a unity. Hence, this view on the importance of sharing knowledge in order to maintain an equal distribution of power in their collaboration is in accordance with the view of Flyvbjerg on power and knowledge.

All the respondents emphasize the importance of this horizontal organizational structure in order to enhance the livability in Ulrum following a bottom up approach. Still, it becomes clear from the data description that maintaining this horizontal structure is one of the main organizational struggles within Stichting Ulrum 2034, and in DU in particular. This is, for example, illustrated by the proliferation of organizational layers. In the interviews many respondents explicitly name the subsidy and the required organizational structure as one of the main reasons for this struggle, because the attribution of the provincial subsidy resulted in the

creation of additional control layers in order to increase legitimacy. Yet, the proliferation of organizational layers within the Stichting, and DU is not the only factor that seems to influence their organizational structure. The interaction between the different actors involved in DU also plays an important role in the continuous transformations of power and knowledge, and therefore also influences the organizational structure. The different actors, with different backgrounds and different interests, deploy different types of knowledge in different situations. How certain knowledge is used in decision-making depends on the power relations present in each specific situation. The power relations are continuously shifting between different actors. For example, if W&B has to invest the majority of the money for a certain project, then they have a lot of power in determining the direction of the project. But the distribution of power can be completely different in the decision-making process for other activities. Due to the constantly changing configuration of power and knowledge in the interactions, the organizational structure of DU is dynamic. Another factor that also plays an important role in shaping the organizational structure of Stichting Ulrum 2034 is the distribution of knowledge within the Stichting. From the officially formulated organizational structure (figure 2), the distribution of knowledge seems to be fairly equal. As an example the different project groups share the information about their project with the DL, who then shares this with the board. Another example is that there is always someone from the board or the DL present during the opening hours of the information center in order to create some degree of consistency in knowledge exchange. In practice, it seems that the knowledge is not distributed equally, but rather concentrated in a selected group of individuals, such as the process facilitator or the DL members who are the only ones with an overview on the whole project. The data shows that there is a general perception among the respondents that certain individuals, like the process facilitator, cannot be replaced for the success and the continuance of DU. Some even mention that if these individuals would not be involved in DU anymore, it would result in the failure of this and maybe even other projects. Since knowledge is embedded in power relations, the concentration of knowledge in certain individuals also affects the power relations within the organization.

Concerning the power/knowledge configuration of experts, one of them stands out – the process facilitator. Nobody else involved in DU has more impact on both, power relations and knowledge creation. While she is relatively humble about her impact, other actors give her a lot of credit for different reasons. What is apparent, is that she brings in a lot of knowledge concerning processes and group processes in general. She has vast experience in that matter due to her previous work with other movements. Her superiority in knowledge and experience results in her having a big influence on others and impact on the decisions made, making her rather powerful, which is considered soft power, since there are no personal interests involved. The process facilitator's ideas are very much in line with the goals of DU itself which makes her influence less obvious, but of course the goals formulated by the Ulrummers are shaped by her ideas as well.

To her advantage, the process facilitator is not involved in the power relations of the past. The opinion about her role as a decision-maker differs between interviewees, for those who work

with her in DU she is seen as a process facilitator, while those villagers with a distance to the project tend to see her as the one making the major content decisions. As is mentioned in theory section, inherently there is no direct access to the truth embedded in communities, as it is impossible to avoid power relations, but it is important to mention the different views on the process facilitator as a powerful actor.

Other knowledge input

Other expertise we must mention in relation to power and knowledge is the one brought in by the W&B. In terms of knowledge they bring in vast practical knowledge about architecture and construction, prices and housing stock. In addition to that, W&B holds actual power over the housing stock in general. The emphasis on *opplussen* as an important aspect renders the involvement of W&B in the DU project as necessary. If we talk about livability as one of the most important drivers behind the project, W&B can be considered to have decision-making power when it comes to shaping the vision on livability for Ulrum. Contractors from Ulrum seem to be in a lucky position here. The protection of local businesses makes them rather powerful because they now hold the monopoly over construction tasks in Ulrum. This is power framed in economic terms because of the protection and competition support of local business, which is considered to have a multiplying effect in the long run. They also hold political power in the sense that they are invited for a monthly consult with the DL in which they can bring up issues they or their clients encounter. Therefore, they even use the platform to represent the interests of other villagers. There is a number of guests, researchers and students coming to the village. They usually come in order to gain new insights about grassroots movements, but as mentioned before, learning processes are often of a two-way nature. DU increases their knowledge due to the new insights brought in by the outsiders. In exchange, outsiders are attracted by the new knowledge produced in Ulrum. That is the essence of a pilot project or experiment like DU.

Looking at DU as an experiment shows how closely the concepts of power and knowledge are related. The knowledge produced during the learning process of DU is considered as valuable by W&B and the governmental actors involved in order to increase their understanding about how to deal with demographic decline and marginalization. Thus, this ‘new’ knowledge produced by Stichting Ulrum 2034 as an experiment enhances the power of the Stichting in the sphere of governance. Since the whole Stichting came about as a necessity of local participation within the broader governance structures, it was the issue of power distribution which got addressed first. As in every pilot project, there is a high need for new knowledge on how to organize oneself. The balance of power within the organization shifted again. With the subsidy, DU gained not only economic power, but also much more recognition by the outside. With that, it was left to continue in the new knowledge production since that was the reason they got the subsidy in the first place. When one is active in governance, the shift of emphasis on either power or knowledge is done unconsciously, when one is being active part of governance. For the pilot project or experiment like this project, constant reinvention of the focus is essential in order to strategically move forward.

This constant reinvention or reinterpretation is also apparent if we talk about policy outcomes. If we come back to *opplussen* for example, because different actors hold a different amount of authority over decision-making, their influence on the knowledge production obviously differs. What is more interesting for us is that there is constant transformation of knowledge that is used for the practical outcomes. For example, at some point, the decision was made not to subsidize stair lifts. That decision was an outcome of a continuous learning process based on consultation with different parties. Such consultations gradually increase knowledge which allows the actors to decide on a policy and thus shape the practical policy outcome.

5.3 Performativity

In this section we will make use of the concept of performativity. As explained in the theory section this concept refers to the way parts of narratives are perceived as true. In the remainder of this section we will show that different discursive realities exist around various aspects of the project DU out of which stories of success and failure fit best into this analysis. That means that there will be stories of success and failure regarding every issue. These stories do have an impact on the performance of actors and thus shape the course of the process of the project.

For this analysis we chose to look at how the interviewees address the themes livability, communication, the role of the process facilitator and the effect of the subsidy because these were the major recurring themes in the interviews and thus the narratives of our respondents.

Livability – one word, many interpretations

As can be seen from the descriptive section, livability is an important part of the vision of DU. Nonetheless, the idea about what accounts for livability differs among the interviewees. For one, it is the ability for people to live independently in their house, for others it means the attractiveness of living in the village, or a combination of different things that requires a certain amount of energy among the inhabitants. W&B relates livability to the subjective experience and appreciation of the living environment.

All the different ideas about what could improve the livability in Ulrum are being placed under the umbrella of Stichting Ulrum 2034. Different projects cover different aspects of life. However, in order to be able to realize the projects, there needs to be committed people and volunteers. That is why those projects that lack support are not put into practice, which creates a selection mechanism for the successful and failing projects. This means that crucial aspects of what people in Ulrum experience as contributing to livability are not covered by the Stichting because those involved lack the capacity or willingness to do something about it. While it makes sense to ensure that projects are future-proof and have enough support, it is important to make a clear distinction between the crucial factors contributing to the overall livability and projects failing because of lacking a driver behind them. Looking only at whether or not a project is successful does not mean that the idea behind a failing project might not have enhanced the livability. Considering only the success stories as crucial contributions to the livability in Ulrum

includes the chance that important drivers of livability are neglected, possibly decreasing the overall success of Stichting Ulrum 2034.

Communication

Several interviewees emphasized that consultation and openness plays a big role in the communication within the Stichting and DU in particular. Short communication lines are seen as important because they ensure a dynamic atmosphere in which the actors can make quick connections and decisions. Another key element of the communication within and around the Stichting is the informal and continuous consult between the DL, outside stakeholders and villagers. Both elements together generate short and informal lines of communication and continuous on the spot consult with anyone involved which is considered to be the appropriate way of communicating within a horizontal organization.

The Stichting is eager to create an organizational structure with an open character for both insiders and outsiders. Several channels exist to inform the villagers like the village newspaper, information evenings, flyers and letters. This way of open and quick communication is considered to be the only way to organize the project because those in charge of the subsidy face a lot of responsibility and they are not elected to represent the village in this matter. Their vision about open communication is also a way to seek legitimacy and create support among the rest of the villagers. However, this perception about the necessity to provide transparency and clear communication might not be shared by everyone. There are not a lot of villagers attending the information evenings, and the village newspaper is read very selectively. From the interviews we understand that also the DL does not find it necessary to gain the support of all Ulrummers. On the other hand, their strong belief in the non-hierarchical organizational structures based on consensus results in their efforts to gain as much support as possible within the village. The downside to this is that the DL could develop the idea that open communication is all it takes to get people involved. Having a rather strong idea about how successful communication should look like might obscure the possibility that a lack of involvement could originate elsewhere. For instance, the projects might not fit with the people's ideas about enhancing the livability in Ulrum or the unclear organizational structures might be hard to understand for many. Framing the success story about open communication as a failure story of lacking support among locals, might help to see room for alternatives and improvements.

In the case of interacting with W&B the open communication strategy is successful. Although the stakes are high, the informal and direct way of interacting and communicating provides an open atmosphere where the trust among stakeholders is such that nobody hides their real agenda.

The success story of the process facilitator: her role and expectations

The process facilitator plays a very prominent role in the project DU, with her special focus on the process rather than on the content. As elaborated in more detail in the data description, the process facilitator is considered to be very good at making connections between actors and at

motivating the villagers to overcome problems. She is also very experienced in facilitating citizen initiatives and has an extensive network.

These ideas are shared by those who work together with her in the project. They see different qualities in her, but they all agree that she has an advantage of being an outsider. Difficulties in communication and cooperation among the villagers are often explained by the long-term relations the people have established among themselves. These sometimes stand in the way of being open towards each other or of starting an argument based on neutral ground. There is broad consensus among the interviewees on the facilitator being able to approach different groups with a fresh view, enabling her to ask bold or critical questions. She was, for example, able to convince the owners of what is today the current information center to make their property available for the purposes of the Stichting – an achievement that the villagers themselves were not able to accomplish.

This way of talking about the process facilitator assembles in a story of success. The facilitator is the hero that can manage to achieve things nobody else can achieve (like convincing locals or making useful connections with outsiders). Her outsider role makes her superior compared to the rest. She is the one that can motivate everyone to overcome hard times and keep the bigger picture and the goal in mind. The problem with this story is that it is completely focused on the process facilitator as a person. As a result, the Ulrummers in DU tend to assume that they are not capable of taking over her tasks and function themselves because they are too connected to the rest of the village. This might have implications for the future when she leaves the project. If the story was less focused on the facilitator as a person but more on her way of working and on her tasks, it might be easier for the DL or others to take over her tasks and continue with a successful project.

Impact of the provincial subsidy

Stichting Ulrum 2034 is considered to be different than other citizen initiatives, which is also why they received the subsidy and other villages did not. From our interviewees we heard that Ulrum was unique in the sense that the idea of ‘doing it themselves’ without the government was developed the furthest. They showed community spirit and energy when they built the Lotus Park. Again, this story is one of success in which Ulrum was rewarded with the subsidy for being pro-active and showing their willingness to go the extra mile.

The story of the subsidy itself is a controversial one. For some, the money is seen as a great opportunity that enables the Stichting to realize their projects, for others the money was not necessary or even had a negative effect. Looking only at the success story, one could say that the money was very much needed, especially in order to support the DU project, which is quite costly. Looking from that perspective, the money was inevitably needed in order to promote the livability of Ulrum. Seeing it as a failure story in which the money was not necessary or might even have adverse effects, could generate a different scenario. Considering the fact that the initial reasoning behind the project was to do it on their own and with their own resources one could, see their dependency on the subsidy as a failure. Taking this ‘negative’ point of view also raises

the question about how the project would have looked like if there had been no subsidy. Very likely, the project of DU would not have been realized. Some Ulrummers and also outsiders might wonder in how far the *opplussen* contributed towards the livability of Ulrum. This depends very much on the vision one has about livability as discussed in the beginning of this section. After all, one could say that without the money the project could still be successful even though it might look completely different.

One could go a step further and tell a different failure story. Some interviewees were concerned that the initial energy and the commitment of the people gradually decreased during the process of receiving the money and adapting the structures of the Stichting into more formal ones. The search for the balance between hierarchical and more horizontal structures might have cost a lot of energy and resulted in some involved people withdrawing from the projects. While such a learning process is generally considered as positive, the downside of the slow search for the most appropriate way of organizing the Stichting is that some active citizens lose motivation.

Connecting the concepts

This last section shows how the findings from the previous subsections implicitly relate to the narratives of our interviewees. Furthermore, it shows how applying the three concepts help to understand DU and Stichting Ulrum 2034 as a governance process and which paths the organization is following.

It becomes clear from the previous sections that the distinction between insiders and outsiders is a recurring theme in the narratives of the actors involved. As elaborated in more detail in the analytical sub-sections, this distinction serves the purpose of explaining or legitimating certain assumptions with regard to boundaries, power/knowledge configurations as well as performativity. For example, whether or not the process facilitator is considered to be an outsider or an insider depends on what the narrator is trying to say. On the one hand, the process facilitator is successful in what she is doing because her outsider view enables her to approach people on a neutral ground. On the other hand, the process facilitator is seen as successful because she identifies herself with the villagers, talking in the ‘we-form’, which makes others trust her and legitimates her to take decisions for the village. No one draws a clear line to make her either an outsider or an insider because either way it legitimates her superiority towards the rest of the involved stakeholders. This position, in combination with her extensive knowledge about other grassroots movements, makes her the most powerful actor in the network.

The fuzzy boundaries are also actively, though unconsciously, maintained within and between the Stichting and DU. As mentioned earlier, members of the DL can also have the role of a project coordinator and one board member usually is present at DL meetings. This results in actors crossing these organization boundaries (figure 2) and easily take over parts of other people’s roles or responsibilities. This becomes evident when different actors try to explain the structure of the organization. There was consensus on most issues but, for example, two interviewees drew different connection between the DL, DBU and the board. The interpretation of the fuzzy boundaries differs very much per interviewee as a result of his or her own role in the

organization. This again has an impact on the perception of different interviewees on the power relations between different actors. Such perceptions can have a considerable impact on reality. Using again the example of the process facilitator, it becomes evident that the way the narrators talk about her and assign power to her, obscures their ability to distinguish between the process facilitator as a person and her skills. If the focus would be placed more on what she is doing and how she is doing it, rather than linking these to her as a person, the narrators might be able to discover their own strength in achieving the same goals and realize how much they have already learned from her. Becoming aware that skills can be learned and applied by other people than only the process facilitator could contribute significantly to the future strength of the organization. The fact that the process facilitator is going to reduce her involvement in DU shows that she is aware of this.

The boundaries between governmental institutions and citizens are also blurred. Elements of all narratives stress the shift from a welfare society towards a participation society resulting in local movements taking over what used to be the task of the government. This inevitably goes together with changing power/knowledge relations between citizens and public institutions. While the municipality and the provincial government still hold the expertise when it comes to regulations they let go of their leading function and give space for citizens to find their own way of organizing themselves around issues like marginalization in rural areas. In the case of Ulrum, which is seen as an experiment, this is even taken a step further. The government is trying to learn from the way Stichting Ulrum 2034 works in order to use this knowledge for other villages with similar problems. This is quite a remarkable step since the knowledge generated by the villagers is not considered inferior to the knowledge of the public institutions, but rather valuable given its applicability. Both are seen as essential to tackle the negative consequences of marginalization and ageing society. As a result, power relations are also starting to shift. This does not mean that the Stichting can be considered as powerful as the municipality and it probably will never be. These significant changes in the recent past show that there is an ongoing search for a new balance of powers.

Applying the concept of performativity enabled us to evaluate the reality effects of a certain truth as it is established in one or more narratives. The example of high trust between the actors of DU shows that. More or less independently from each other the actors have established the ideal of open and informal communication. Because they all consider this the best way to interact with each other and thus they act accordingly, there is a high level of trust between the actors. This is interesting because at first sight the actors seem to be of unequal powerful positions. W&B can be considered an influential actor in terms of money and authority. However, the way they behave in interaction with the DU project group suggests that they see themselves more as an equal partner.

Furthermore, using performativity helps to differentiate narratives about what the right way of communication is, or whether the subsidy can be considered a positive or a negative thing for the movement or not. Distinguishing these narratives into stories about success or failure results in different points of view on the same issue. Failure stories allow for alternative

scenarios implying that things could have taken different directions. This makes clear that a governance path is the result of many individual choices between alternatives.

Identifying blurring boundaries, shifting power and knowledge relations and alternative scenarios or perspectives show how DU and the Stichting as a whole form a dynamic process of constantly searching for the best governance practices. That is, the project is not following one specific pre-determined path. Rather, the governance path evolves along the way of various individual actors continuously making conscious and unconscious decisions.

6. Conclusion

Generating better insights in the working of DU and Stichting Ulrum 2034 was the main goal of our consultancy activities. Therefore, we employed a holistic perspective on the working of the Stichting Ulrum 2034 and DU especially in order to generate a broader view than the individual narratives that we obtained from our respondents. This broad overview enables us to provide some critical perspective on the construction of reality of our respondents, some of the main actors involved in DU. In this concluding chapter we will summarize the main findings of this research.

We came to understand DU as a governance process that evolves over time as a result of the continuous interplay of different actors involved and the power relations between them. In order to make this complex process more explicit and visible, and thus easier to understand for outsiders, we investigated several sub-questions.

With regard to our first sub-question, we consider the process facilitator, the members of DL, and the board of the Stichting as the most important actors involved in DU. Next to them the municipality, the provincial government and also the housing corporation W&B play a significant role. However, most of the time, the entire organization is not involved simultaneously. Rather, individual actors play a key role in this governance process according to their specific functions within their own institutions. Actors from the governmental institutions provide the space for Stichting Ulrum 2034 to engage in this learning process and think about new organizational structures. The way this space is used is however determined by the DU project team themselves.

Second, we selected the main aspects shaping the governance process of DU by looking at the recurring themes that our respondents used in their narratives. It became very obvious that a certain vision about how to deal with marginalization in municipality De Marne formed the starting point for determining the roles and actions of the different actors. The emphasis of the visions changed according to the role of the narrator, but the main line was consistent among the different actors. Another important theme is the idea of Stichting Ulrum 2034 as an experiment which facilitates a dynamic learning process in which no outcome is considered a mistake. This includes varying perceptions on the role of the subsidy within the Stichting. Moreover, the way communication is organized within and around the Stichting is having a significant effect on the exchange of knowledge among actors and their power relations. The role of the process

facilitator is another recurring theme. In line with her function and the perception about her role by other respondents, she has a significant impact on the direction of the evolving process.

According to the last sub-question, we characterized the interactions and relations between the actors with regard to the abovementioned themes by making use of the theoretical concepts. It became very clear that the processes of establishing boundaries, of shifting power and knowledge configurations and of defining what is good and true are very dynamic. Boundaries between actors are blurred. Not only between insiders, like the DU project group and outsiders like the municipality or W&B, but especially within the organizational structures of the Stichting. Among other factors, this also has an effect on the distribution of power among all actors which has shifted since the start of the project. The Stichting can be considered to have a powerful position vis-a-vis the government, especially compared to what one would expect normally. Due to the mind shift among certain policymakers towards a more participative society, they value the experiences in Ulrum and the knowledge derived from that as highly valuable. Blurred boundaries within DU allow for some actors to switch between different roles. This is confusing because it makes it difficult to understand what their tasks are exactly and how these are executed. On the other hand, this allows them to maintain more informal and quick communication structures which generate trust between actors on various levels.

Questioning the assumptions of the different actors using performativity and establishing alternative scenarios enabled us to see several critical aspects of the otherwise quite successful process. Critically reflecting on these assumptions and their implications will be essential for increasing the future-proofness of Stichting Ulrum 2034. We will elaborate on this further in the section on recommendations.

7. Discussion

Reflection on methodology

This research is aimed at combining inductive and deductive methods in order to grasp the processes within DU. In order to gain a deeper understanding of these processes, which are invisible at first sight, we have inductively started with specific observations. The empirical data gathered from the focus group was used as an important instrument to guide the direction of our research, by for example defining the key themes that we focused on. As Perry & Jensen (2001) also emphasize “the two processes of induction and deduction are always involved, often simultaneously”, which means that data is always theory-loaded. The EGT was used to determine the focus of our research, both during the collection of the empirical data and the analysis.

The combination of inductive and deductive methods was useful to gather relevant data about the processes within DU. Because the interviews were guided by the themes that we extrapolated from the focus group, and the relevant themes from the theory, it was possible to compare the data. The semi-structure of the interviews provided the required space to anticipate upon the information shared by the interviewee. In these semi-structured interviews the interviewees were given room to share what they wanted to share, which gave us the opportunity

to observe the different perspectives on reality. During the interviews we invited the interviewees to visualize what they were saying on a big paper (an example hereof can be found in appendix B2). The majority of the respondents accepted this invitation and drew on the paper when it was deemed important, or to make what they said clearer. This visualization of the interview was very valuable for the collection of our data because of several reasons. Firstly, because processes can be part of certain habits, they can be very difficult to explain, and the limitation of words can constrain the explanation, therefore the drawing also allows the interviewees to explain themselves without being limited by words. Moreover, the drawing also allowed the interviewers to have a certain overview about the information the interviewee was sharing and therefore enabled them to come back to certain parts or ask critical questions about why certain connections had been made. Furthermore, the EGT served as a useful theoretical framework because it helped to refine the focus during the data collection, as well as a valuable framework to critically analyze the gathered data.

Due to the complexity of processes and the time constraints of this research, we have encountered some difficulties with our methods. Due to a lack of time we have not been able to gain a deeper understanding about certain situations in our data collection. It would have been better if we would have had more time to conduct more interviews with other respondents (more local contractors, inhabitants of Ulrum, more governmental actors etc.) and observe more meetings. Since almost all our respondents were actively involved in DU, it could be that our research contains certain bias in favor of DU. However, we tried to decrease this by interviewing stakeholders with other backgrounds. Although the theoretical framework has been useful for the available data, extra data would have enabled us to have a more holistic view on the governance structure within DU and use the theory more thoroughly to critically analyze the data. The inductive approach with emphasis on narratives has been very valuable to grasp the processes within DU. But the dependence on the empirical data to determine our focus can also be regarded as a limitation. The focus group was very important for extracting the main themes that we addressed in our research, but the focus group merely consisted of three participants (two members of the DL and one employee of the DU). Hence, the participants of the focus group did not equally represent the stakeholders in DU and therefore this might have biased the themes we selected for the further research. We aimed at reducing this bias by reflecting upon these themes individually in the interviews. Moreover in this research we tried to focus explicitly on DU, but during the fieldwork it became clear that it is difficult to examine the processes within DU separately from the processes of Stichting Ulrum 2034, as they are highly intertwined.

One more limitation which was not directly related to the methodology, but more to the time constraints, was the language barrier. As two of our team members are non-Dutch speakers, this affected us on two levels. First, since the focus was on the narratives of various actors, the majority of our data was collected via interviews where most of the people interviewed did not speak fluent English. Therefore, the two non-Dutch members were only able to conduct one interview. Since our methods not only included interviews, but a focus group, participatory observation of the meetings and data collection from the minutes of previous meetings which

were in Dutch, these two researchers were unable to help with this as well. To add to that, all the Dutch interviews, on the other hand, had to be if not transcribed, then at least summarized in English, so the data analysis could be conducted by everyone. In the end, transaction costs of this limitation were quite significant, not only in the matter of time, but also in the matter content, given that translation means inevitable loss of details, which could only come out in Dutch language.

8. Recommendation/contribution

In this section we will provide a few recommendations to our commissioner, the Science Shop of Wageningen University and Research Centre, and to the people involved in Stichting Ulrum 2034. These recommendations include suggestions for further research which we were not able to do ourselves given the time constraint of the project. We also experienced some difficulties as described in the discussion section, upon which we will mention some ideas to avoid those in the future. Secondly, we extend our recommendations to people involved in the Stichting and propose some issues for critical reflection. Finally, we will advise our commissioner to investigate the benefits of this project for other movements dealing with the same issues. We consider all these issues crucial issues which should be taken into account for the attempt to visualize the evolution of Stichting Ulrum 2034 as a governance process.

8.1 Follow-up research

As elaborated in more detail in the discussion, due to time constraints, we were unable to take all relevant issues that require a thorough analysis into consideration. We think that there is a need for a follow-up on two aspects. Also we will provide some suggestions about the research methods and theory.

First, we took the implications of seeing DU as a learning process into account but we did this rather implicitly. Focusing more on how this process is working and how this perception affects the whole process would provide an added value. We suggest to conduct more in-depth interviews with a specific focus on how information is exchanged and how this derives into actions and policies. This includes the development of a better understanding on how exactly the organizational structures have been adapted over time and by whom this was done. Furthermore, we think that applying the concept of performativity to the dominant discourse on the learning process would generate useful insights about possible alternatives.

A second aspect that needs further investigation is the degree of support for the Stichting among the villagers of Ulrum. Most of our interviewees experience broad support for the Stichting. We are however wondering how much support there actually is, since we did not talk to anyone that is not directly involved in the project.

The subsidy required an adaptation of the organizational structures and started a whole new learning process which might have led to a shift in support among the villagers. The starting point of the project was to do everything with own means and power, but this principle has been challenged significantly over the past few years. Therefore it would be interesting to examine

how the subsidy and external experts influence this principle, and what the effect of this influence is for the level of commitment among the people of Ulrum.

With regard to the research methods, we think that long-term (participatory) research is essential in order to grasp changes over time allowing the researcher to experience the effect of certain choices. We suggest to interview a broader sample than the one we used. Including more critical voices within the village, but also from the municipality and provincial government will provide the researcher with more data to base his or her results on.

The theoretical framework that we employed has good potential to contribute to the illustration of the project as a whole. It provided us with useful concepts to analyze the relationships between the different actors. The fact that the approach is very much based on discursive theory helps to understand how the individual narratives affect the reality of the project. However, the concepts are rather abstract and require some sort of social science background from the audience. In order to make use of it from a broader public, it would require some simplifications.

8.2 Aspects for critical reflection

This section is not only directed towards our commissioner but also to the people involved in Stichting Ulrum 2034. Through the interviews we became very appreciative of the efforts that are undertaken around Stichting Ulrum 2034. There is a lot of commitment among those involved and the way they organize themselves is very innovative.

Despite all this, we would like share our two critical remarks as outsiders. It is possible that these kinds of reflections are already taking place and we just did not acknowledge them. As explained in more detail in the analysis, the process facilitator is given a big role in DU. While it was very useful to include her and her expertise in the project, it is now time for the rest of the project members to focus on how to take over and compensate for the role the process facilitator, as it is essential to develop a strategy to survive in the future without her. An important first step would be to detach the process facilitator's skills from her as a person and focus on how these can be taken over by other actors. Becoming more aware of this might accelerate the learning process, which is starting now that the process facilitator is decreasing her involvement.

Another suggestion would be to reflect on the idea of livability, of what is actually meant by it, and to what extent it is supported by the rest of the village. So far, failing projects are rather easily set aside, with the reasoning that if they lack the support within the community, they are impossible to uphold in the future. We would recommend to critically look at this reason because it might exclude projects that can give a major contribution to the livability of Ulrum. Even though the current projects are subsidized, it might be a good thing to assess if they are still relevant for the livability of the village.

8.3 Implications for other projects

The fact that the Stichting is a pilot project subsidized as an investment for the future, means that lessons need to be derived as recommendations for similar movements in other villages dealing

with marginalization. Focusing on the learning process in this regard is probably the most useful. The struggle of the Stichting to maintain the balance between hierarchical and horizontal structures is something other movements can use as an example. Of course learning processes need to be experienced by the involved actors personally to some extent and not all aspects of the Stichting are equally useful for all other villages. We would therefore recommend to identify what aspects and which lessons can be learned from the Stichting, and DU in particular, to be useful for other villages facing the same problems.

We think that all aspects mentioned above are important to take into account when coming up with a way of visualizing the functioning of the processes of the Stichting Ulrum 2034.

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Appendix A – Stakeholder Analysis

Inhabitants:

The majority of inhabitants of Ulrum faces the unpleasant development of their home village and experiences the negative implications of demographic decline, marginalization and the expiration of attractiveness. Especially elderly have to find a way of rearranging their daily lives, including their housing situation. They are the most affected by the marginalization of Ulrum which makes their input essential for this research. Not all (elderly) citizens are involved in the movement but it will be very important to know what their vision and degree of participation in the housing project is. The same holds for potential tourists and those citizens that are involved environmental management. Through their personal engagement individual citizens have the possibility to make the village more attractive (according to their personal needs) and to make the village futureproof. A redistribution of houses affects many different kinds of people: elderly as well as single persons and families (both young and old).

Board of Stichting Ulrum 2034:

Paulien Schreuder (Raad van Toezicht), Renne Vogel (Raad van Toezicht), Johan Valkema (Bestuur Stichting), Marianne van der Velden (DL Project 2034), Eiko Swijghuizen:

This is a steering group within the grassroot movement. They are essential in the management and decision-making of within the whole movement.

DL (Dagelijkse Leiding (translation: Daily Management)):

Roelof Noorda, Marianne van der Velden, Hans van der Heide (Johan Velkema):

These individuals form the ‘dagelijkse leiding’ of the project 2034 - a core group of active citizens from Ulrum who are the most important drivers behind the individual projects. One person can be part of different projects. Compared to the more ‘passive’ citizens we assume that this group has a strong impact on the shaping of outcomes.

The housing project ‘DEEL&Ulrum’:

A core group around Petra de Braal is driving this main project within the project 2034 agenda that works together and coordinates the interaction with all other relevant stakeholders, like affected citizens and the government institutions. So the housing project itself involves a steering group (that includes individuals from the aforementioned core group of the movement), the citizens affected and engaged in the redistribution process and government institutions that provide subsidies.

Housing Cooperation Wierden&Borgen:

The housing cooperation Wierden&Borgen is one of the partners of the DEEL&Ulrum project, and is represented by Dinie Rotman. The housing cooperation is an important factor in Ulrum

regarding housing and living and fulfils a participatory and advisory role within the DEEL&Ulrum project.

Process facilitator (consultant, facilitator):

The process facilitator is an external expert and consultant who has already worked with similar projects in Zeeland in the Netherlands. She seems to be one of the facilitators of the housing project group and thus plays an important role, but her contract is about to expire in six months. This development makes the future of the project a bit uncertain.

Municipality (Gemeente De Marne):

The municipality has a positive impact on the Stichting Ulrum 2034 because it provides the space for Ulrum to do activities on their own. On the other hand the staff there is willing to support the citizens of Ulrum where necessary.

Provincial government and national government:

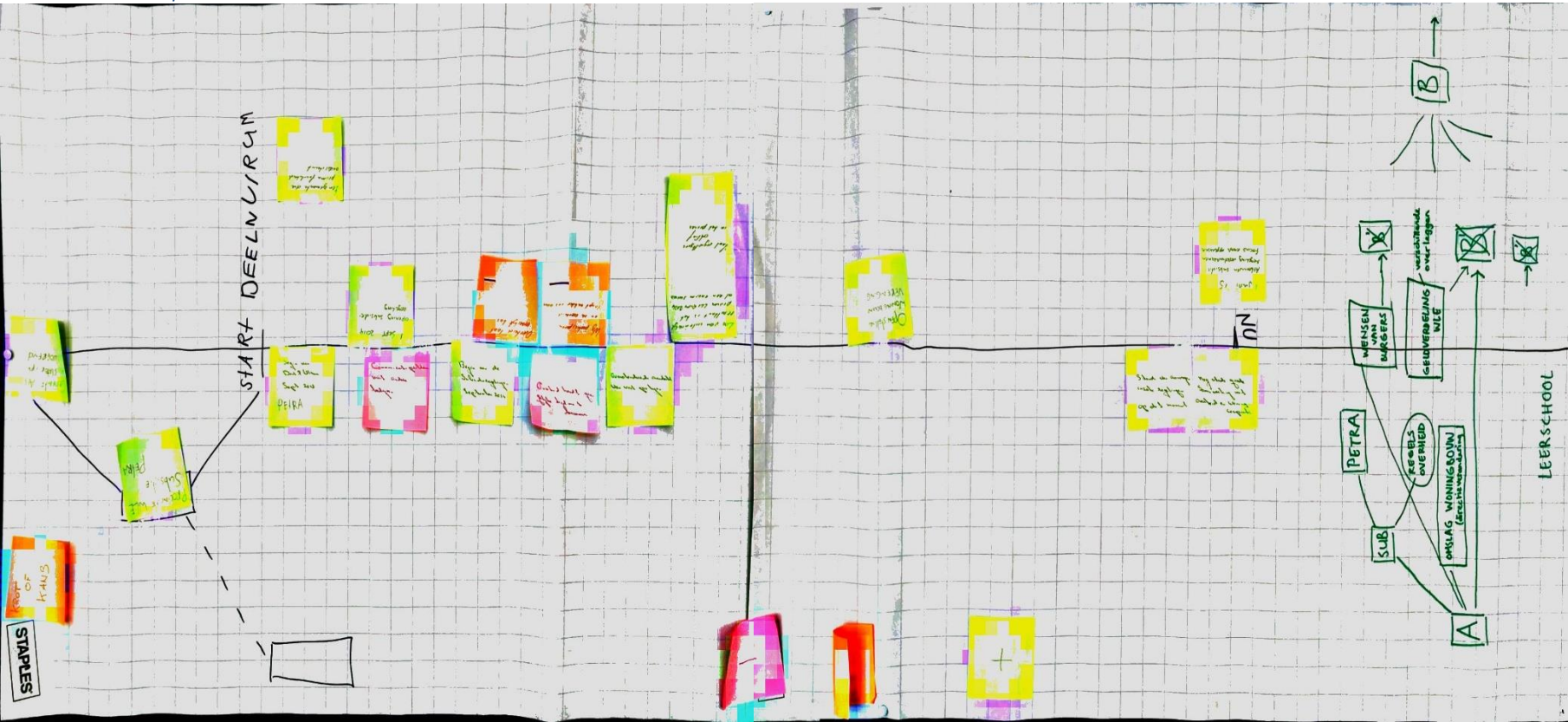
On behalf of the government institutions a significant amount of funding has been allocated to this subproject 'DEEL&Ulrum'. The government on both levels recognizes the problem of marginalizing rural areas as important and fulfils a role in it. Together with the municipality individual officials have close contact with the project leaders. The subsidy will only last until summer 2016.

WUR Science Shop (Bas Breman, Marjolein Elings) - researcher and commissioner:

Bas Breman and Marjolein Elings from the WUR science shop support the project Ulrum 2034 with their expertise on demographic decline and are more interested in the underlying processes of the movement to help and get a clearer view on the complexity of the movement. They aim to contribute to an info graphic that shows the development and the workings of the grassroots initiative.

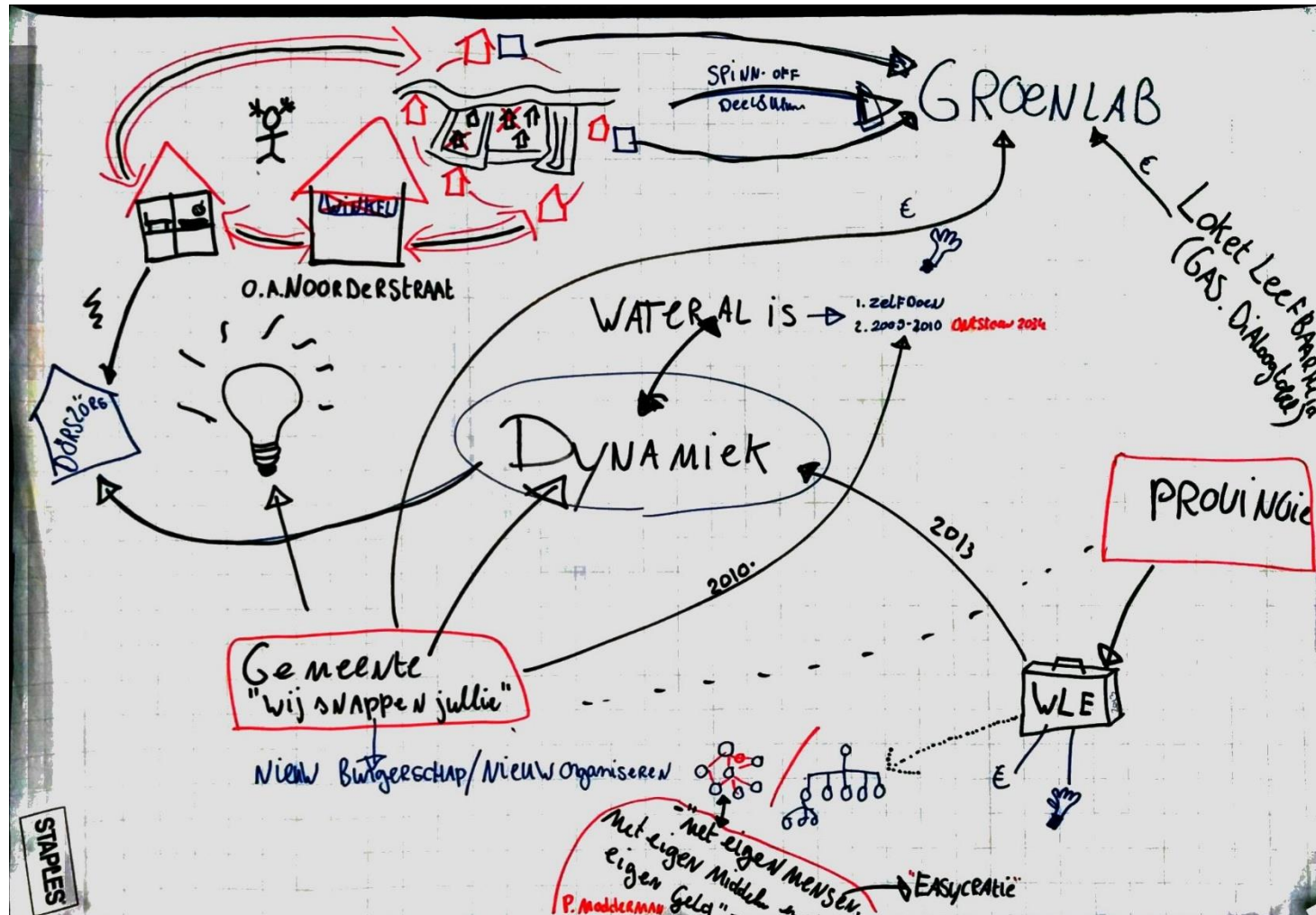
Appendix B1 - Focus Group Timeline

Picture 1 Focus Group Timeline



Appendix B2 - Interview drawing

Picture 2 One of the drawings of the interviewees



Appendix C - Interview list

Table 1 Interview list

Number	Interview/observation	function and organization	Name	Date
1	Interview	<u>Senior Policy Officer</u> at municipality de Marne and Program Coordinator for Marginalization and Livability	Respondent 1	09.06.2015
2	Interview	<u>Administrative support</u> Stichting Ulrum and Policy Officer at municipality de Marne	Respondent 2	10.06.2015
3	Interview	Researcher and Phd-candidate at Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (RUG)	Respondent 3	11.06.2015
4	Interview	Chairperson of Dorpsbelangen Ulrum and board member of Stichting Ulrum 2034	Respondent 4	15.06.2015
5	Interview	Project Facilitator at Kasus.nu	Respondent 5	16.06.2015
6	Interview	<u>Member Daily Leadership Team</u> of Stichting Ulrum 2034	Respondent 6	17.06.2015
7	Interview	<u>Senior Policy Officer at W&B</u> (Housing corporation)	Respondent 7	17.06.2015
8	Interview	<u>Civil Servant at the Provincial Government Groningen</u>	Respondent 8	17.06.2015
9	Interview	<u>‘Vitality Officer’</u> at municipality de Marne	Respondent 9	18.06.2015
10	Interview	Freelance contractor at Ulrum	Respondent 10	18.06.2015
11	Interview	Member Daily Management Team of Stichting Ulrum 2034, Municipality Council Member and Coordinator of project ‘Dörpzörg’	Respondent 11	19.06.2015
12	Interview	<u>Architect</u> at Ritsema Bureau - architectuur & stedenbouw	Respondent 12	19.06.2015
1	Observation	<u>Terpen en Wierdenland meeting</u>		16.06.2015
2	Observation	<u>Ruilverkaveling meeting</u>		17.06.2015
3	Observation	<u>‘Krimpcafe’ in Zoutkamp</u>		18.06.2015
4	Observation	<u>Meeting about project ‘Kerkstraat’</u>		18.06.2015
5	Observation	<u>Monthly consult meeting with local contractors</u>		18.06.2015

Appendix D - ACT Project Timeline

