THE COLLECTIVE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN A DUTCH NEIGHBOURHOOD NETWORK

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Abstract

How do street-level officers of different organisations develop interorganisational practices if they have to collectively implement integrated project plans? That is the central question of this paper. In integrated projects a range of organisations work together. Because of this, there can be important differences in the frames that officers hold. These differences somehow have to be accommodated in order to be able to work together. In this paper it is described how 'boundary practices' and 'boundary discourse' enable this process. This is illustrated by the detailed analysis of the start of a Dutch neighbourhood network for youth care. The theoretical relevance of the paper is that it points to the need for and possible benefits of a discursive approach of interorganisational coordination in policy implementation. The discourse analysis enables us to see the very subtle discursive processes and practices that take place at the workfloor to accommodate for frame differences during policy implementation.

1. Introduction of the case: the neighbourhood network for youth care

The neighbourhood network for youth care is a well-developed policy concept in the Netherlands. There are about 200 of these networks functioning throughout the country (Pannebakker en Vorstermans, 1994). The concept is well described in a practical handbook and all coordinators are required to go through a course that is officially acknowledged by the national government. The main goals of a neighbourhood network of youth care are preventing, signaling, and solving problems of children.

In a middle-sized, Dutch city, two neighbourhood networks for youth care have been in existence for several years. The local government considered these networks important and successful instruments for the prevention of juvenile crime (Eindrapportage Jeugd en Veiligheid, 1999). The city council decided to establish four more of these networks in different neighbourhoods of the city. The local welfare service was subsidized to appoint a coordinator who was responsible for starting up the new networks.

The coordinator started with one. She talked to all the relevant professionals in the neighbourhood: the headmaster of the primary school in the neighbourhood, the internal counsellor of this school, the school nurse of the public health service, the two nurses of the infant welfare centre, the policewoman on the beat, the child social worker of the community centre, the nursery school teacher, the local worker in the pre-school education project, and the local worker in the project for elder immigrants. She used the talks to examine the problems these professionals are confronted with and to explore what they see as possible goals and opportunities for the network. They all indicated that they see multiple problems with respect to the youth, such as multi-problem families, aggressive children, maladjusted behaviour of children, difficult communication with parents, and cultural or language problems. In the words of the headmaster of the primary school in the neighbourhood:

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1 All quotes in the paper are taken from one-on-one interviews that the author conducted with separate participants of the network, unless specified otherwise.
As a school we have experienced that the neighbourhood in which our school functions as a primary school, that this neighbourhood has changed a lot in a very short period of time. A change of the make-up of the public, the original residents pulling out of the neighbourhood, the intake of a growing number of foreign parents from all possible countries, not only Turkish families, but mainly Turkish, the intake of asylum seekers, the intake of problem families, the assignment of housing in this neighbourhood to divorced parents by the department of social services. To put it briefly, we have noticed that, through the fact that the talk in the staff room, was more and more about the pressure of work, about the problem children, about the parents who come to school drunk, about breaking engagements, about, well, in short, irritations, ugliness, threatening situations, for school, threatening situations for teachers, for little kids.

Against the background of the growing problems in the neighbourhood, the attitude of the professionals towards establishing a network for preventative and remedial interventions was generally positive. However, at the same time they indicated that they were somewhat sceptical about its effectiveness. They had difficulty imagining what exactly the benefits of the network would be. The terms they used to denote their expectations included prevention of problems in the neighbourhood, solving children’s and families’ problems, and a better exchange of information and disciplinary knowledge. These were all goals that could be, and already were, pursued with different means than interorganisational networking. The two nurses from the infant welfare centre and the school nurse had already established a yearly consultation about the transference of children. Likewise, the nursery and the primary school had a similar consultation arrangement about the children that move from the former to the latter. The primary school coordinated the extended care team in which various disciplines worked together and cooperated closely with the police in the so-called ‘Get your act together!’-project. The local worker of the pre-school education project came to the nursery school once every two months to talk about the children in the project that visited the nursery school. Finally, most professionals from these various organisations maintained ad-hoc contacts concerning specific cases too. Given these pre-existing bilateral collaboration structures, it was perhaps understandable that the internal counsellor of the primary school stated her doubts about the added value of the neighbourhood network:

Because I have something like, when something is brought up in the neighbourhood network, then we already have, I did say that too in that second meeting, I say, yeah, but, then everything has been discussed already, all possibilities that exist, could exist, we have tried already, and then I ask myself, what new things can the neighbourhood network bring to that?

The child social worker of the community centre put her doubts like this:

I’m not sure that I will stay in. I don’t think that it is very useful for my work as such.

In the end, however, all the relevant professionals agreed to see what the network would bring and decided to participate in the network. They started meeting once every six weeks. Even though clear guidelines about the design and operation of neighbourhood networks for youth care were available from outside sources, the cooperation process that got underway in this neighbourhood can best be characterised as exploratory. As seen by the local headmaster (first quote) and the neighbourhood nurse (second quote):
Look, we have very little experience in this of course, and er, it is a very, I feel, the feeling that it gives me is, very much exploring, yeah. 

In which respect mostly so? 

My experience is that nobody actually already knows like, when to introduce a child? And should we really do that? Isn’t it scary? And what will actually happen, if we introduce a child? Really, this could happen or that. And we, I feel that, that people are very careful about that.

We really are in the starting fase. That I do notice.

During these explorations, the roles and contributions that various actors might make became clear. At the same time, certain constraints and differences between the parties showed up. The school nurse related her experience of this in the following quote. She talked about the case of a family with two sons that both attend the local primary school. The school took the view that the oldest son should transfer to a primary school for special education, because of his learning difficulties. The parents disagreed however, and did not give their permission to have the boy tested nor did they permit a school transfer. One of the discussions with the parents ran out of hand, the parents threatened the school personnel, and the school had the police remove the parents from the school. The school wanted both children to transfer to another school.

But what I do notice are the differences from one discipline to another. 

Can you go into that a little more?

Yeah, that a school really takes a very different, a teacher takes a very different view of specific matters.

But especially the first two [swallows: "meetings", MM], let me think, what did I feel all the time, that I thought, also especially with Jack [headmaster of the primary school, MM], like that would scare me too as a parent, if you had approached the whole problem that way, but I have to focus again on this particular problem now. I felt a little bit like, that it was also a little bit of a fight as teachers, like, yeah, but we are not going to let this happen to us. And, while, I think that that just as a nurse, that you differ, that you efface yourself a little more in that, like how can we keep helping and supporting those parents. And what’s a little bit of an issue here is, they pushed things too far. And that is of course very well possible. I wasn’t there and I didn’t go through that, the police getting down on them, but it is also a little bit of a fight between the internal counsellor and the headmaster, like, they can say this, but we are not going to put up with it any longer. Because not only that one child, but also the other child would actually have to quit school. Yeah, but what is at stake are still those children. Not the father or the mother. And that’s how you see that we have a very different approach to such a child.

The coordinator who was tasked to set up and maintain the network had similar experiences:

What I do see is, what people are already trying in the meetings, like Marianne Peters, the neighbourhood nurse, who is really trying like, yeah, it is also very important to go and stand next to parents, isn’t it? She’s already talking about approach really. Well, Jack is just diametrically opposed to that, they are flatly opposed to each other now.

Yeah, Marianne Peters is, she has studied remedial education. She just knows, she can see things very sharply, and she is trying, and that is typically female, I guess, like yeah, we go, and that may be an approach that’s too soft, and then I think, and that’s what I said too like ‘I don’t think that’s
the soft approach at all!’, but that’s just a specific approach how to handle parents and which is really very effective. Parents want, if you give them the feeling that the problems they have are real, and they are really there for parents, so that you go and stand next to them, but not go and stand above them, then they dare to trust you too and if you have that trust, you can make moves. Well, that is what she explains to him, but then she uses the term soft. Well, for him that’s ‘UANG!’ immediately. ‘No, we are not soft! And er…’ Well, then I think, man, listen to what she is saying, but that’s what he’s not able to do. And I don’t know if you, and that’s typical teachers’ behaviour I feel, I’m exaggerating of course, but er, what she er, our line, and er, I stand in front of a class alone, I have to handle things on my own, and then you are not going to tell me, that I can’t er… Whereas he is crying out for, for clues how to get to work with this group.

So I carefully try to tell him some things about that, but he doesn’t pick up on that yet. So I am curious how that will work out in the network.

It became clear that there were important differences in the participants’ views of the problems at hand and the way they should act upon them. These differences somehow would have to be accommodated in order to be able to work together. The description above has told us several things about the difficult circumstances under which the participants had to succeed in this. Firstly, the neighbourhood had changed: there was a growing number of families and children that either had or caused problems. The network participants were confronted with these problems in their work. These were pressing problems that dominated ‘the talk in the staff room’ and they could easily walk away from. Second, it has been shown that, even though the problems the neighbourhood network would deal with are serious, the participants had their doubts about what they would gain by participating. They were not sure what the exact benefits of the network would be. This meant that it was not self-evident what the participants collectively wanted to strive for. Getting the network to work, also meant developing a collective sense of what to strive for as a network. Third, we have seen that the starting up of the network was a process of exploring. Nobody knew exactly how to go about basic practices like what type of cases to introduce, when to do it, and who would intervene in what way after the introduction of the case. This implied that getting the network to work, also meant developing collective practices. In the remaining part of the paper we will see how the differences in the participants’ views would be accommodated for during the development of the network. To do this, we will first describe the differences in the participants’ views of the problems at hand more precisely.

2. Frames

What were exactly the differences in the way the participants in the network perceive problems of or with children? To describe these we will use the concept of frames. A frame can be defined as “a normative-prescriptive story that sets out a problematic policy problem and a course of action to be taken to address the problematic situation” (Rein en Laws, 2001: 93). Two dominant frames appear to be used by the members of the network: the ‘social work’ frame and the ‘responsibility’ frame. The content of these two frames has been constructed by the researcher. The data that were used for this construction are transcripts of interviews with all participants and transcripts of four meetings. The question that guided the construction was: “How must the actors be making
diagnostic sense/prescriptive sense of the situation in order to act in the ways we find them acting?" (Rein en Schön, 1996: 91)

The 'social work' frame

The idealtypical content of the 'social work' frame can be roughly described as follows. Some children have problems. This is usually caused by the way they are raised. Some parents lack the capabilities to bring up their children well or have lost the motivation to do something about their problems. If one wants to help these children, one has to bring about changes in their home situations through talking with parents. Pedagogical support of parents is only effective if this is given on a voluntary basis and if parents trust the social worker. Thus, it is necessary to gain the trust of parents and to motivate parents to accept (the need for) pedagogical support. Only if one successfully motivates parents an actual improvement of the home situation can be established.

The actors who use this frame are the network coordinator, the school nurse of the public health service, the neighbourhood nurses of the infant welfare centre, the child social worker of the community centre, the local worker of the pre-school education project, and the local worker of the project for elder immigrants.

The following observation by the neighbourhood nurse of the infant care centre is illustrative of the ‘social work’ frame. She is talking about the way cases should be introduced in the network: anonymously or by name.

You had a discussion about the pros and cons of introducing anonymously, what was your view on this?

Well, my idea about this is that you have to discuss this with parents as much as you can. So that means you only introduce anonymously if you really think that there is no other way. And that means that you, my experience is that if you talk to parents in a specific way, that they really, well, what I’ve said just now, they want to be helped. So if you, and that also often has to do with treatment too and cultures. If you really try to stand next to the parent, like, gosh, it really doesn’t work and, so that you, from the position, on equal level, you’re on their side, if you can give them that feeling, then parents simply give permission to that. And that is a really important condition to help them further. So once you have achieved that, you have tremendous, that is a very important approach. So then you already have a whole lot, then you’re in a very good position to go help them further, because then things catch on. Because then you look along with people, instead of opposing them. Then you look along with them. In my opinion that is preceded by a whole lot of work, before you reach that point, but I do believe that you have to invest a lot, to reach that point, to, from there, then to go and see, what are we going to do about this? So such a simple rule of anonymous, to introduce anonymously yes or no, in my case that is preceded by a whole lot with a family.

The 'responsibility' frame

The content of the ‘responsibility frame’ differs from the ‘social work’ frame and can be roughly described in the following terms. The fact that specific children cause problems
stems from the way they are being raised. If one wants to help these children, one has to bring about changes in their home situations. Many parents do not take sufficient, or even any, responsibility for the way they bring up their children or they lack the discipline to do this adequately. Parents who fail to raise their children adequately should therefore be forced to take their own responsibility and to change their behaviour.

This alternative frame was held by the headmaster and the internal counsellor of the primary school, as well as by the area police officer. The following comments from the internal counsellor (the first two) and the headmaster of the primary school (the third) are illustrative of the ‘responsibility’ frame.

Well, that’s talk after talk, and you often start a conversation like that, the teacher and I are there and if it doesn’t work out, then you ask the headmaster to join another time, and it’s also the case, we just took the position that, if parents do not want anything, then we would like them to sign something which states that the responsibility for the, well, all problems that the future will bring, that the parents take responsibility for that and not us. And even that causes problems, you know. Then parents say, we simply are not going to sign anything at all. Well, and then you are just powerless to do anything. The nasty thing about that is that when you get to the end of the primary school period, in group eight, and there are problems, then the secondary school is going to ask us questions, why didn’t you do something about that? About these problems? So that’s why we want parents to sign another form.

And then we are not going to put time in children anymore of whom we know that parents are not really interested in what’s happening to their child. Because that’s my view, if you don’t want anything, then you do not really care. Some parents easily say, well, why don’t you keep my child in the nursery class for four years? Well, that’s insane of course, then children are seven or eight years old, before they graduate to group three.

*And if we put that concretely, what kind of solutions are they? If you say we get down to work? Practical. Practical. Because, let’s be clear about that, these are people who often are disadvantaged. You shouldn’t talk to them too much, because there’s no point to it.*

The contents of the two dominant frames are summarized in table 1. Table 2 shows which frame is used by the respective network members.

### Table 1: Dominant frames used in the example project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant frames</th>
<th>‘Social work’ frame</th>
<th>‘Responsibility’ frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem</strong></td>
<td>Problems of children and/or their families</td>
<td>Problems with children and/or their families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cause</strong></td>
<td>Lack of motivation or capabilities of parents</td>
<td>Lack of responsibility of parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solution</strong></td>
<td>Motivating parents to accept help and giving them pedagogical support</td>
<td>Forcing parents to take responsibility and to change their behavior</td>
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### Table 2: Network members per frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Social work’ frame</th>
<th>‘Responsibility’ frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Network coordinator</td>
<td>● Policewoman on the beat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● School nurse of the public health service</td>
<td>● Headmaster primary school</td>
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3. **The development of boundary practices**

We have seen that there were differences in the way the participants in the network perceived problems of or with children and the way they acted upon it. Still, they had decided to cooperate together in the network. How did they go about it?

First, by simply starting to gather together once every six weeks. A fixed day of the week and time was found at which everybody was available, and a meeting schedule for the rest of the school year was settled upon. A location for the meetings was found: the headmaster’s room in the primary school. The headmaster arranged that an article was placed in the school paper in which the network was introduced and explained to parents. It was decided that minutes would be drawn up of every meeting, but that they would be kept very general and would not contain any specific information on children or families. These are all very down-to-earth matters, but they are the very basic requirements for the establishment of the network as a collective entity and important contributions to the sense of the network as a cooperative group. It is easy for participants to lay down the phone if they would disagree in an ad-hoc conversation about a specific problem child, but it is more difficult to propose to the rest of the network to forget about the whole network and the meeting schedule for the rest of the year after these collective practices have developed. In theoretical terms introduced by Wenger (1998): they are a beginning source of coherence of a community of practice. They do so, because they give the sense of a joint enterprise and mutual engagement. They are the beginnings of a shared repertoire of practices.

Next to these down-to-earth practices, more subtle collective practices developed. One of these was the use of the so-called child card. This is a card stating a list of information items, such as ‘date of introduction’, ‘year of birth’, ‘country of birth of the child’, ‘country of birth of the mother / father’, ‘family characteristics’ and ‘main problem after deliberation’. Some of these items have standard answer categories. These comprise not only the relative straightforward information items such as dates or countries, but also more complex items. The category ‘main problem after deliberation’ has been operationalised in terms of physical complaints, a lag in physical development, learning difficulties, developmental retardation, emotional problems, lack of social skills, behavioral problems, physical negligence, physical abuse, mental negligence, mental abuse, sexual abuse and pedagogical problems. Interestingly, this diagnostic regime serves also to reduce complexity: even though most children that are introduced are characterised as multi-problem children, the card indicates that only a maximum of three main problems may be checked!

Let us see how the use of the child card worked in a meeting. The following conversation was part of the third meeting of the network. The coordinator went along a number of categories of the child card:
At first sight, this is a straightforward conversation about clear-cut items. However, a simple item like the country of birth of the parents opens up different worlds for the various participants, for example because of cultural or language problems that may possibly affect the communication with the parents and the child. This can be illustrated by the following quotes. The first one illustrates the headmaster’s view about language abilities:

Imagine, you are in the neighbourhood network and you say something like, well, Jack, the way you talk about that family, I don’t understand. You are nagging about the fact that that child is only able to speak Turkish, but that really is a good thing, because otherwise they would not understand grandpa and grandma from Turkey, and they would not understand aunt Ali and uncle Ali from Turkey, when they come over to Holland for a holiday sometime. Then it’s nice that that little kid can understand his uncles and aunts, isn’t it? Well, then we have a problem, because then I say, well, of course it’s a nice incidental circumstance if I can understand those grandpa’s and grandma’s that drop by from Turkey once in a while, but in my view it is far more important that you can understand your teacher who you listen to every day from half past eight to three o’clock, that you can understand her once in a while. Get it? So in that case we would have a problem.

The headmaster makes clear that he thinks Turkish children should be able to speak Dutch. Implicitly, he also makes clear who bears the responsibility for language problems: not the local professionals, but foreign people themselves. His norm is that Turkish children in the neighbourhood should speak Dutch and that they should learn to do so at home. In contrast, the school nurse asks herself later during the third meeting:
Do they both speak Dutch? (…) That might be the reason that the mother doesn’t understand everything very well.

For her, language problems are simply a reason why some parents do not understand everything immediately and a signal to take that into account as a professional: maybe something has to be explained to the parents in different terms or once more. Because the deliberations in the part of the meeting transcribed above are structured by the child card, these different interpretations do not always surface. In this way the situation of the child and family can be mapped for all participants without opening up too many difficult discussions. The child card enables coordination, but it does so without actually creating a bridge between the perspectives of the various participants, but by standardisation of the items to be discussed (Leigh Star in Wenger, 1998: 107).

Another more sophisticated practice that facilitates interaction is the arrangement that all participants keep their own notes. In the minutes only general matters are drawn up, such as the name of the new alderman for youth, the procedures of the new indication committee of the local youth care service, and the job change of a network member. The coordinator fills out the child cards, so that they can be used in the future as a basis for an evaluation report to the local government about the number of children introduced and the results achieved. Apart from this, all participants keep their own notes about the problems of children and the actions they agree to take. In this way, the notes about children’s problems and views on the preferred interventions do not become the subject of plenary discussion. This is a practice that enables multiple interpretations to exist at the same time without all too much confrontation. It is a connecting practice in that it enables more or less concerted action, but at the same time facilitates disconnection where otherwise multiple interpretations may collide. This can be regarded as a form of “coordination by accommodation” (Leigh Star in Wenger, 1998: 107).

4. Boundary discourse

We have seen that there were differences in the ways participants in the network perceived problems of or with children and the way they acted upon these perceptions. We also have seen that nevertheless a shared repertoire of practices developed in the network. This gave participants a sense of being part of a joint enterprise and stimulated mutual engagement. With their interactions arranged in this fashion some forms of coordination became possible, for example standardisation or accomodation. Still, this mode of interaction could not eradicate all differences, particularly those between actors adhering to different frames. Let us now have a look how such differences were handled discursively during meetings. The following discussion about how to introduce cases in the network took place during the third meeting of the network:

Coordinator And the last time, we have also talked about exploring a little, didn’t we? Anonymously, not anonymously, and that for some partners it really is not possible, if it is introduced anonymously, because then you don’t get out optimal, er…
Internal counsellor: Plus that you can get the wrong family in your mind, that you get strange ideas…
Coordinator: So it is very important to get permission from the parents, but yeah…
Internal counsellor: In this case that doesn’t work.
Coordinator: And then at some stage, you can go beyond that, or then you think like, well, as a professional I feel it’s very important to introduce it, because we have to get closer to assistance or whatever, because a child is in a threatened situation, then I feel that you really, that you should be able to introduce it.

(...)
Coordinator: Let’s see, in the future it’s also practical, because I don’t know if you er, this is your first neighbourhood network, isn’t it?
School nurse: Yeah, yeah.
Coordinator: Yeah, because Jill [associate school nurse at the health centre, MM] participates in a neighbourhood network too and she often brings information about children. Yeah, I don’t know how…
School nurse: If the name of the child is known…
Coordinator: Yes, if the name is known, yes, you’re right, that’s true. But then she brings her files, to check these. And she also takes notes in her files, well, that’s what you’re doing now.

As a consequence of privacy regulations, participants in the neighbourhood network are only allowed to exchange information about families and children if they have permission to do so by the parents. That’s not the only constraint in this matter, however. A whole range of practical, moral, and legal constraints comes into play. In the transcript above the participants are exploring together which constraints they have to reckon with. The coordinator even literally uses the term “exploring” for this. It becomes clear that they have to cope with at least the following constraints:

- if the child is introduced anonymously, the other participants are not able to use any information for their own work, because they do not know which child is being talked about;
- if the child is introduced anonymously, there is a chance that the participants may take the wrong family or child in mind;
- it is not possible to obtain parental consent to introduce a child in the network in all cases;
- if a child is being threatened, introducing it in the network may be necessary, even if there is no parental consent;
- if the child is introduced anonymously, the other participants cannot look up which information is available in their own organisation.

The deliberation does not end with a clear conclusion. The various constraints are mutually conflicting and do not allow that. Moreover, the constraints are of different importance to the various participants. For those adhering to the social work frame the parental consent is very important. The school however encounters many cases where it is unable to obtain parental consent and the school personnel feels children are threatened by the lack of responsibility of their parents. This is a second reason why a clear-cut conclusion about how to proceed is not easily drawn. By exploring all the different constraints that apply to the situation however, what is clear to everyone is the area of tension they are operating in together. The participants get a picture of which constraints
are important to the other participants. This is all ‘deliberative work’ that the participants have to do to be able to cooperate. In theoretical terms of Forester (2000) the ‘deliberative space’ is filled in.

Similarly, the coordinator tries to do justice to both frames during meetings. She actively tries to balance the two. In the following quote, for example, she summarised the preceding deliberations about a case in which the school wants to have two children removed as a consequence of a severe conflict with the parents, and other participants have begun to ask some questions about the situation of the family and possible problems they have, such as language problems.

Coordinator: Exactly, so the question is how, how do we see it through, or er, does one have to see it through, because er...

In the ‘social work’ frame the school should be talking to the parents to see what drives them and to gain their trust to solve the conflict. For them the question is really ‘how the school should see it through’. The school has indicated however that they clearly have had it with the behaviour of the parents. They take the stand that they do not have to take the responsibility any longer when the parents do not do that themselves. They feel they are no longer obliged ‘to see it through’. The coordinator wraps up the whole discussion in the subtle and balanced wording of the two questions.

Another illustrative example follows a part of the meeting where the headmaster has been talking about the negative attitude and irritative behaviour of the same two parents for quite a while. The coordinator then brings up the following remark:

Coordinator: Now do you have any idea what those parents want?

This question originates from the ‘social work’ frame. The discussion was tilted for sometime towards the ‘responsibility’ frame, the coordinator balances it again by asking this question.

5. Conclusion

In integrated projects a range of organisations work together. Because of this, there can be important differences in the frames that street-level officers hold, as has been shown for the neighbourhood network described above. These differences somehow have to be accommodated in order to be able to work together. In this paper it has been described how 'boundary practices' and 'boundary discourse' enable this process.

What is the relevance of this all in theoretical terms? The goal of the network in general is interorganisational coordination (IOC) in the prevention, signaling, and solving of problems of children. Three theoretical approaches to IOC have been distinguished (Alexander, 1995). Exchange theory emphasizes the need to exchange resources between
organisations. *Contingency and organisational ecology* theories stress the organisations’ need to adapt to its environment in order to survive. *Transaction cost* theory focuses on the need for organisations to minimize the relative costs of coordination. These three approaches all take their departure from a logic of consequence: the need for coordination arises from rational consequential calculation of the organisations concerned (March and Olsen, 1989).

These approaches sufficiently explain why the city council decided to initiate four more neighbourhood networks in the city: to reach the goal of more effective prevention of juvenile crime. However, these approaches cannot fully explain IOC dynamics in the implementation of networks such as the one described above. First, it has become clear that it was neither straightforward, nor uncontested what was in the interest of some participants. The headmaster of the primary school was “crying out for clues how to get to work” with problematic parents and children, but when participants like the school nurse, the neighbourhood nurse or the coordinator try to “carefully tell him something about how to do that, he doesn’t pick up on that”. The headmaster thought it was in his best interest “not to talk to disadvantaged parents too much, because there is no point to it”. The people reasoning from the ‘social work’ frame thought that that was exactly what he should do to get to work with these parents: have a good conversation with them on an open and equal basis. Apparently, the participants perceived their own or other participants’ interests according to their own perceptions of the situation. Second, approaches that focus on rational calculation do not provide us with the concepts and analytical methods that we need to see the very subtle discursive processes and practices that took place at the workfloor to accommodate for frame differences during policy implementation. The discursive approach that has been used in this paper has opened up for us the world of ‘boundary practices' and 'boundary discourse' that facilitated cooperation.
**References**


Local authority: *Eindrapportage Jeugd en Veiligheid*, 1999.\(^2\)


\(^2\) To guarantee the anonymity of the project the references are not completely reported.